

# Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy

The Critical Citizen's Guide to Argumentative Rhetoric

Donald Lazere

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been equally inspiring. Hugh Rank's several works developing his "Intensify-Downplay Schema" are the main source for my "Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" and other variations on playing up and downplaying in argumentation. Gerald Graff's notion of "teaching the conflicts" is probably the strongest influence, and my long-running friendship with and professional encouragement by Jerry and Cathy Birkenstein-Graff have been priceless.

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## Preface to Teachers(and Curious Students)

The humanities lead beyond “functional” literacy and basic skills to critical judgment and discrimination, enabling citizens to view political issues from an informed perspective..... (12)

Educational policy makers at all levels should define critical thinking as a basic skill and recognize the value of the humanities for developing it (22)

High schools should concentrate on an articulated sequence of courses in English, history, and foreign languages. Courses in these disciplines should not divorce skills and methods from knowledge of content and cultural context..... English courses need to empha

size the connections between expression, logic, and the critical use of textual and historical evidence. (44)

—*The Rockefeller Foundation Commission on the Humanities*, *The Humanities in American Life*, 1980

This rhetoric with readings addresses the need for college students to develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills for self-defense amid the arguments that inundate them in American public discourse, especially as filtered through the mass media. Within the format of a textbook, mainly for the second term of first-year English or a more advanced composition course, it presents an original theory of argumentative rhetoric, an ideological framework for understanding public controversies, and a practical method for analyzing them.

The approach to argument here is based on the principles of “critical thinking”—a term that has all too often been used as a vague, catchall concept in textbooks but that I use with specific reference to the definitions developed by specialists in the discipline over the past two decades. In brief, this conception of critical thinking avoids technical terminology, complicated theoretical schemas such as “the Toulmin model” or “stasis theory,” and elaborate classification of types of arguments, all of which have limited practical use outside of artificial classroom assignments. Instead, it emphasizes commonsense reasoning about familiar controversies in everyday life, along with analysis of cultural influences and psychological dispositions that lead to open-minded or closed-minded reasoning. To put it another way, what distinguishes this book from most other textbooks is that it asks, What do we need to know, in terms of both factual information and aspects of rhetoric, to understand the information and arguments we read or hear every day about current events and controversies, in news and entertainment media, political statements, the classroom, the local bar or beauty salon—and what skills do we need to apply to every particular case in critically evaluating it? So rather than focusing at the outset, *deductively*, on abstract principles and contriving examples to illustrate them, our approach is to begin *inductively* or *empirically*, with actual arguments in the public sphere—for example, those studied in chapter 1 about financial pressures on today’s college students and the pros and cons of dissent by writers after September 11, 2001—and then to enable students to determine

what rhetorical or critical thinking issues they pose and what measures we need to take in evaluating them. Thus this approach is based on the process through which we all have to deal with arguments as we encounter them in the public sphere every day.

My approach to critical thinking and argumentation incorporates principles from the philosophy of general semantics—emphasizing the role in argumentation of definition of terms, connotative language, and verbal slanting and the need to concretize verbal abstractions and to perceive the complexity of, and diversity of possible viewpoints on, controversial xi

issues. The approach to diversity of viewpoints further draws from the ideas of psychologist Carl Rogers, who was allied with the International Society of General Semantics, emphasizing the needs to attempt to understand and empathize with views differing from our own and to establish good-faith dialogue between opponents. The book provides distinctively in-depth examination of stereotyping and prejudice, polemics and invective, rebuttal, conflicting causal analyses, the use and misuse of statistics and emotional appeal, and logical or rhetorical fallacies like special pleading, stacking the deck, double standards, plain folks, straw man, ad hominem, and *ad populum* in public controversies. An emphasis on developing extended lines of argument through recursiveness, cumulation, and levels of meaning in reading, writing, and reasoning is reinforced in the structure of the book itself, which develops cumulatively and contains many cross-references forward and back among text sections and readings, in order to highlight different rhetorical issues within each segment. Key terms are boldfaced on first occurrence in each Chapter to indicate that they are defined in the glossary or in the list of logical fallacies in Chapter 12.

In contrast to the many textbooks whose primary aim is for students to generate papers based on their own ideas and arguments, the main focus here is on writing papers that demonstrate understanding and critical evaluation of arguments in sources from books, newspapers, magazines, speeches, student writings, and elsewhere. The justification for this is that in my own and many other teachers' experience, most college students can only begin to express themselves effectively about public controversies after they have acquired a base of factual, historical, and current knowledge about them (what E. D. Hirsch calls "cultural literacy"). They further need to have studied a diversity of sources on them, learning to analyze the ideological positions and rhetorical patterns of opposing sources. These processes are so extensive in themselves as to warrant an entire textbook.

Moreover, the concept of civic literacy mentioned in the title involves mainly the application of more or less traditional elements of academic discourse toward the development of critical citizenship. That is to say, the book is not primarily a guide for argumentation in the arena of service learning or community activism, which presents quite a different set of rhetorical challenges. Currently available textbooks for this purpose are themselves valuable supplements to this one, which nevertheless includes exercises encouraging students to apply the studies here to various forms of activism.

Many of the examples presented for analysis in the text and readings focus on issues in current political economy that impinge directly on students' present and future lives, such as the growing gap between the wealthy and the middle class and poor; concentration of corporate ownership and corporate political influence; the global economy and sweatshop labor; the decline in recent decades of job prospects and real income for most workers; the escalating cost of college education and reduction of financial aid; inequities in tax and wage policy; crime and welfare among the poor versus the rich. These issues are presented through opposing viewpoints in readings from conservative, liberal, libertarian, and leftist authors, with glosses analyzing rhetorical aspects of the points of opposition and prompting student debates on them. A culminating, extended section of readings and analyses on these topics forms a casebook, within the context of a guide to writing documented argumentative papers. The opposing viewpoints in the readings and citations serve as a who's who of current commentators on the American right, including William J. Bennett, Rush Limbaugh, Christina Hoff Sommers, Thomas Sowell, Bernard Goldberg, Jeff Jacoby, Lynne Cheney, David Horowitz, Diane Ravitch, James Pinkerton, Charles Krauthammer, Fred Barnes, George Will, Deroy Murdock, P. J. O'Rourke, and the Young America's Foundation, and on the left, including Jonathan Kozol, Katha Pollitt, Bob Herbert, Naomi Wolf, Michael Kinsley, Martha Nussbaum, Henry Giroux, Holly Sklar, June Jordan, Edward Herman, Jim Hightower, Adolph Reed, David Brock, Joel Bleifuss, Susan Douglas, David Moberg, and Steve Brouwer.

In contrast to the common textbook approach to logical fallacies that assumes they result only from unintentional lapses in reasoning, the book confronts the hard truth that real-life arguments frequently are tainted by deliberate deception, political partisanship and polemics, special pleading, double standards, conflicts of interest, "hype," and other forms of propaganda or outright lying. Moreover, it alerts students to sources of biased arguments including political "spin doctors," public relations agencies, lobbies, and partisan foundations and think tanks that sponsor journalism or research.

Thus the book assumes that college students are capable of dealing with public disputes in which the truth is often fiendishly difficult to determine, even for the most knowledgeable analysts. However, political and economic issues are not addressed at the same level or in the same manner as they would be in social science courses. They are addressed, rather, at the level of campaign speeches, news and entertainment media, op-ed columns, general-circulation journals of opinion, and other realms of public discourse to which everyone is exposed every day. The political vocabulary and information covered here are no more specialized than what every citizen in a democracy should be expected to know, even before taking a college argumentative and research writing course—although definitions and explanations of political concepts are provided for those students who need them. Chapter 15, "Thinking Critically about Political Rhetoric," provides a basic glossary and extended explanation of political terms and ideological positions. "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric," "Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric," and "The American Political Spectrum:

Media and Commentators from Left to Right” provide heuristics for identifying the viewpoints of the authors of readings in the book and elsewhere.

One danger in an approach like this is that it and courses in which it is applied can all too easily be turned into an indoctrination to the author’s or instructor’s personal political ideology, or into an excuse for teaching political science instead of critical thinking and writing. This concern has certainly been warranted by the tendency of some “politically correct” teachers to assume that all students and colleagues agree—or *should* agree—with their particular views. So one of my main concerns has been how to avoid turning this book and the kind of course for which it is intended into indoctrination into any particular ideological position. To be sure, this book’s project of Socratic, critical questioning of the conventional assumptions of our society, including the ethnocentrism of American nationalism and its capitalistic economy, is bound to be predominantly liberal, by the dictionary definition of “free of or not bound by traditional or conventional ideas, values, etc.; open-minded” (*Random House Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*). Whether those Americans who are considered “liberal” act consistently in accord with these principles is, of course, a source of constant dispute between liberals and conservatives. This is one of many points on which the very definitions of these opposed terms are highly ambiguous—a problem highlighted throughout the book.

So while the authorial viewpoint is liberal to leftist, the book raises as an explicit topic for rhetorical study the issues of political subjectivity, partisanship, and bias in sources of information, including not only the media but also teachers and authors of textbooks—including this one. The principle is that any writer or reader addressing controversial issues will almost inevitably have a subjective, partisan viewpoint. There is nothing wrong with having such a viewpoint; indeed, a clear-cut expression of a particular partisan viewpoint can be a rhetorical virtue, particularly if the viewpoint is relatively unbiased, supported through sound argumentation, and explained in evenhanded contrast to opposing views. The book’s aim is to enable students to identify and understand the full range of viable ideologies in today’s world (including those mostly excluded from the American public agenda, like democratic socialism and libertarianism), so that they can then perceive the viewpoint of any given source and weigh its rhetorical quality against opposing points of view.

In the same way, the book stresses that we all can benefit from learning to identify our own ideological viewpoint, and possible biases, as readers and writers, and certainly as teachers. I believe that teachers or textbook writers should not coyly hide their viewpoint, as they often do, but that they should honestly identify it and present it, not as the assumed truth, but as one viewpoint among others, needing to be scrutinized for its own biases and fair-mindedly justified against opposing ones. Thus, because total objectivity may never be attainable, dealing honestly with our own subjectivity may be the best way to approximate objectivity. This principle obliges me to come out from the hiding place of authorial anonymity and pretended objectivity that is the convention in textbooks and to speak as “I” from time to time throughout the book, especially in addressing contentious issues where it is most difficult for anyone to present an

objective, impartial analysis. In such sections, students are directed to sources whose viewpoint opposes mine. Likewise, more-conservative teachers can readily engage the views in the book from their own critical viewpoint, thus advancing the open-ended dialogue called for.

The intention of this method, then, is to guarantee that students will not be indoctrinated into my ideology (or that of any other writer or teacher) but rather that the scope of students' own critical thinking, reading, and writing capacities will be broadened so as to empower them to make their own autonomous judgments on opposing ideological positions in general and on specific issues. It is exactly this intention, of encouraging students to view social issues from diverse perspectives and in their full complexity, that ultimately justifies the emphasis on political issues here, within a *rhetorical* framework quite different from anything students are apt to encounter in social science courses.

Finally, the book seeks to transcend arbitrary disciplinary divisions between the humanities and social sciences, as well as the divisions within English studies among composition, literature, and rhetoric. My view that literature and literary criticism provide perhaps the richest models for critical thinking about public discourse is supported in the many citations throughout the book of literary sources illustrating principles like questioning ethnocentrism, recursiveness, recognizing complexity, multiple perspectives and levels of meaning, irony and paradox, and drawing fine lines in ethical or aesthetic distinctions. These sources include Plato, William Shakespeare, Michel de Montaigne, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Albert Camus, Joseph Heller, James Baldwin, and Sylvia Plath, along with contemporary literary artists or critics including Alice Walker, Gloria Anzaldua, June Jordan, Susan Sontag, Barbara Kingsolver, Arundhati Roy, Adrienne Rich, and Edward Said.

The organization of the book is flexible enough to invite teachers to change the order of chapters to accord with their own preferred emphasis. Teachers who wish to concentrate on writing instruction from the outset might want to begin with Chapter 4, "Writing Argumentative Papers," and to bring in Chapter 21 early, "Collecting and Evaluating Opposing Sources: Writing the Research Paper," supplemented by the reference materials for documentation and using research resources in Part V.

For me the conceptual heart of the book is Chapter 15, "Thinking Critically about Political Rhetoric." This discussion of denotation and connotation in political language, definitions of various party and ideological positions—along a worldwide and nationwide spectrum—and predictable patterns of political rhetoric is foreshadowed throughout much of the earlier sections. Some reviewers have suggested moving this Chapter nearer the beginning. This would have obvious advantages, but I think it would have the disadvantage of suggesting that the book was entirely about political rhetoric. I do believe that it is essential to apply principles of rhetoric and critical thinking to politics, and that this application warrants much more emphasis than in most other

textbooks, but I also believe that there are many other important dimensions and applications of rhetoric and critical thinking that precede and perhaps transcend politics; thus my decision, at least for this edition, to put that Chapter about halfway through. Certainly, though, teachers whose courses focus centrally on politics might well assign that chapter, and perhaps the following one, “Thinking Critically about Mass Media,” toward the beginning. In any case, I welcome suggestions from teachers and students about changing this and other organizational choices in future editions.



# **Part 1: Preliminaries**

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# Chapter 1. An Appeal to Students

Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English support the efforts of English and related subjects to train students in a new literacy encompassing not only the decoding of print but the critical reading, listening, viewing, and thinking skills necessary to enable students to cope with the sophisticated persuasion techniques found in political statements, advertising, entertainment, and news.

—*Resolution Passed in 1975*

I believe in the development of a critical, skeptical, humorous habit of mind—in the development of a liberally educated consciousness, a sensitivity to nuances and unstated implications, an ability to read between the lines and to hear undertones and overtones—both for the sake of political and social enlightenment and for the sake of our personal enlightenment and pleasure as individuals. I am a teacher of literature and of writing because I believe that precision, clarity, beauty and force in the use of language, and appreciative perception of these qualities in the language of others, not only make us harder to fool but are good things in themselves; since in a free society we are not only citizens but also individuals. I believe that the more sensitively we perceive things the more fully we can live and the less likely we are to be imposed on by advertisers, politicians and other Savors.

—*J. Mitchell Morse, The Irrelevant English Teacher*

## English as a Survival Skill

This is a textbook primarily for the second term of first-year English or a more advanced composition course emphasizing argumentative rhetoric, the research paper, and writing from sources. It is also a survival guide for self-defense against manipulation by politicians, the media, teachers, and assorted propagandists. Our culture places huge value on physical fitness and self-defense. Newspapers and television are filled every day with ads for building muscles, working off fat, and martial arts. There are not many ads for building our 3 mental muscles, reducing the fat in our brain, or defending ourselves in argumentation. Isn't it equally important to be able to fight back against those trying to take verbal and intellectual advantage of us?

A bizarre feature of American public discourse in the early twenty-first century has been a parade of best-selling nonfiction books with titles like *Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism* and *Slander: Liberal Lies about the American Right* (Ann Coulter), *Deliver Us from Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism,*

*and Liberalism* (Sean Hannity), *Bias: A CBS Insider Explores How the Media Distort the News* (Bernard Goldberg, excerpted here in Chapter 16), *Weapons of Mass Distortion: The Coming Meltdown of the Liberal Media* (Brent Bozell), *What Liberal Media? The Truth about Bias and the News* (Eric Alterman), *Stupid White Men: And Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation!* (Michael Moore), *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right* (Al Franken), *Big Lies: The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How It Distorts the Truth* (Joe Conason), *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* and *The Republican Noise Machine: Right-Wing Media and How It Corrupts Democracy* (David Brock). In such books as well as on competing talk-radio networks and cable channels, liberals (including Alterman, Moore, Franken, Conason, and Brock) and conservatives (including Coulter, Hannity, Goldberg, and Bozell), Democrats and Republicans shrilly accuse the other side of diabolically deceptive, monopolistic control of American politics, media, culture, and education, while portraying their own side as powerless, persecuted, and wholly virtuous. What are we to make of this dizzying, vicious circle of accusation? How can we possibly tell who in fact is telling the truth and who is lying? Among the aims of this book is to approach these questions through the systematic application to them of principles of critical thinking and argumentative **rhetoric**<sup>(1)</sup> (defined as the study of elements and patterns of persuasion—both scrupulous and unscrupulous ones, though popular usage tends to equate rhetoric solely with the latter).

Most argumentation textbooks cover a very wide variety of subjects, in the hope of providing something for everybody, but with the unfortunate consequence that their diffuseness and lack of continuity reproduce the fragmented thought patterns in most other realms of American public discourse, which impede the coherent, **synthesizing** mental activity necessary to critical thinking. So *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* mainly concentrates on rhetorical approaches to some of our most pressing current political and social controversies, in the length and depth necessary to develop coherent understanding of them, through studying them **cumulatively** and **recursively**, and to follow and write extended lines of argument about them.

## Politics Is Interested in You

Uh-oh! At the first mention of the word “politics,” many students start groaning, “I’m just not interested in politics.” As a plea to persuade you not to turn off right here, let me argue that “politics” doesn’t just refer to dry matters of the branches of government, the structure of parties and electoral processes, and such. Many Americans believe their life and work are wholly personal matters and under their own control, and thus they can ignore what happens in the public sphere; to the extent they are aware of larger national or international forces, they believe that those forces are beyond their

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<sup>(1)</sup> Repeat of footnote : Geoffrey Chaucer, fourteenth-century author of *The Canterbury Tales*.

understanding or control, hence not worth thinking about. You may not think you are interested in politics; however, politics is interested in *you*.

Americans were especially shocked by the events of September 11, 2001, because many had little or no knowledge of the Qaeda terrorist organization, the location of Afghanistan where we were soon plunged into war, or the long-term political conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia that were necessary background for full understanding of these events. Among the reactions to the attacks was a widespread recognition that this was a wake-up call for Americans to make much more effort to educate themselves about historical and current events throughout the world, especially those in which America's government, military, and corporations are directly involved and in which the consequences of that involvement can change any of our personal lives. (See Martha Nussbaum's "Can Patriotism Be Compassionate?" in Chapter 3). When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, tens of thousands of young men and women in the armed services, many of whom had entered the military mainly for its vocational or educational opportunities, found themselves fighting in a distant Part of the world for a cause they knew little about, other than what they had been indoctrinated in by their commanding officers, and in a foreign culture about whose language, religion, and customs they knew even less. At this writing, in mid-2004, the United States is facing increasing resistance to its invasion and occupation of Iraq; the toll of American troops' death is rising, amid calls for a larger military force there. The possibility that many more college students and other young men and women will be pressured to join the military, perhaps even through a draft, has suddenly brought the war in distant Iraq closer to home and caused previously indifferent students to engage in the public disputes over whether the administration of George W. Bush deceived us in its justifications for the war. All these issues surrounding the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and Iraq are "politics."

Shortly after teaching an American literature survey course at the University of Tennessee in spring 2004 in which we had briefly discussed the Iraq war in relation to Henry David Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience," I received the following e-mail from a student in the class:

I just wanted to tell you that I have gotten much more into politics since I started your class and feel that it has become more important to me now that I am getting older. The events in Iraq over the last few months have disturbed me very much in relation to the prisoner abuse and the beheadings. In addition, one of my closest friends from high school was killed in Iraq over the weekend and his death has very much disturbed me since I was so close to him. He was a U.S. Marine stationed and killed in Fallujah, and now I have another good friend who is being sent back to Iraq in the next few weeks. Now, I feel like all of this mess in Iraq was pointless and I am frustrated that my friend laid down his life for a fiasco. I finally feel like the whole situation in Iraq has become very real to me after his death. It is very scary when

people mention the possibility of a draft after a tragedy like this. I only wish we could have talked more about this in your class during the past semester.

Politics further includes controversies about **money**, a subject that interests *everyone*. We live today in a political economy in which personal concerns like the cost of living, availability of jobs, access to and cost of health care, tax policy, placement of and return on our investments (especially retirement pensions) are determined by national and international forces that we cannot afford to ignore. The concentration of corporate ownership in recent decades, the growing gap in the distribution of income, power, and taxation between the rich and the middle class and poor, and between big business and small, individual businesses—all of these directly influence everyone's daily life. Your ability to find a job in the location of your choice, and at the salary of your choice, may be determined by corporate mergers, downsizing, bankruptcies (like those of Enron and WorldCom in the early years of this century), automation, or movement of industries globally into cheap labor markets. Your family business or farm may be subject to a corporate takeover or at least be affected by fluctuations in international stock and monetary markets, competition from companies that have moved to Third World countries with lower operating costs, or other forces in the global economy. As a character in the film *Network* (excerpted in Chapter 8) puts it, "We are no longer an industrialized society; we aren't even a post-industrial or technological society. We are now a corporate society, a corporate world, a corporate universe."

You are certainly concerned about the quality of secondary education that you have received, how adequately it has been financed through the taxes your parents or you pay for it and other public services, and how fair the distribution of the tax burden is on different income levels. You are concerned about the increasingly high cost of college tuition, textbooks, and housing; how much financial aid is available to you and at what cost; what parttime jobs are available to you as a student, how much they pay; and—above all—what your occupational and financial prospects are after you graduate. (On this topic, see Adolph Reed's article "Majoring in Debt" in this chapter.) But how are public policies on all these matters determined, and by whom? Not by impersonal, uncontrollable forces like the weather. They are mostly controlled by human agents, by struggles for dominance between opposing political parties and ideologies (an **ideology** is a system of political concepts, such as liberalism and conservatism, or of economic concepts like capitalism and socialism), between interests representing corporate management versus those of employees, between the public sector (government employees, schools and colleges, and other nonprofit organizations) and the private, for-profit sector (corporations and small businesses, professions like law and medicine), between supporters of a planned economy and of the free market, and so on. Whether you ever become conscious of it or not, you have the choice either to become aware of the workings of all these forces and to attempt actively to influence them, or to go through a life controlled by them without your ever understanding or exerting any influence on them.

The model student research paper in Chapter 21, which was written at the University of Tennessee, was prompted by a financial crisis in Tennessee in 2002 in which large deficits in state spending resulted from the refusal of voters and legislators to enact an income tax in a state whose overall tax rates are among the lowest in the country. Because the budget debate remained deadlocked beyond the deadline for the coming fiscal year, the state government was shut down for Part of a week, half the state employees were temporarily “furloughed” (a **euphemism** for laid off), the university’s summer term was curtailed (leaving some students unable to graduate as planned), campus staff and services were reduced, and yet another in an annual series of tuition increases was implemented. These events woke students up to the political forces controlling the conditions of their education and motivated many of them to join lobbying efforts on behalf of the university community at the state capitol in Nashville, in opposition to well-financed antitax lobbies that had prevailed in the legislature for years. In this lobbying campaign students found a quite meaningful real-life application of rhetorical skills acquired in academic study.

The author of this paper became further interested in researching the ideological views underlying the debates over flat-rate sales taxes versus progressive income taxes, a subject that has been a major source of controversy between conservatives and liberals from the presidency of Ronald Reagan to that of George W. Bush. The student found that debates over the success or failure of “Reaganomics” in the 1980s were directly pertinent to the present state of the economy in the United States and in Tennessee.

Beyond controversies over political economy, other issues like environmentalism, feminism, racism, affirmative action, abortion, gun control, and capital punishment are sometimes perceived as political, but it is often far from clear in public disputes over them that they all involve a dimension of **partisan** politics, along liberal versus conservative or left versus right ideological lines, though not always Democratic versus Republican party lines— as will be explained in Chapter 15. Indeed, a **predictable pattern of political rhetoric** is for those arguing about such issues to conceal the partisan nature of their arguments under a guise of nonpartisanship. Of course, not all public arguments fall into left versus right oppositions—but a lot *do*, and the failure of many citizens to perceive the nature of these oppositions can leave them without adequate understanding of the issues. For example, following 9/11, Republican and Democratic leaders lined up in bipartisan support of President Bush and American military responses, but opinion among journalists, scholars, and other writers soon divided along long-established ideological oppositions between the right and left, as illustrated in the contrast of views in “A Preview Case,” following this chapter, between conservative William J. Bennett and liberals Susan Sontag, Barbara Kingsolver, and Arundhati Roy.

## Who Makes the Rules?

The Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964, was set off in Part by many students' frustration over the feeling that college education had become a process just to turn them into cogs in the machinery of business, professions, or government. The movement's most eloquent leader, twenty-two-year-old Mario Savio, asserted about the university:

The best among the people who enter must for four years wander aimlessly much of the time questioning why they are on campus at all, doubting whether there is any point in what they are doing, and looking toward a very bleak existence afterward in a game in which all of the rules have been made up—rules which we can not really amend..... The “futures” and

”careers” for which American students now prepare are for the most Part intellectual and moral wastelands. This chrome-plated consumers' paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children.

(See Savio's speech, “An End to History,” later in this chapter.) Do you too perhaps have the feeling that you are being educated to play a game, vocationally and politically, in which someone else has made all the rules? This textbook attempts to present a beginning toward the kind of knowledge and critical skills you need, first, to learn the language of those who make the rules and, ultimately, to become an active participant in making them.

This kind of knowledge and critical skills begins with the value of opening your mind and broadening your perspective on the beliefs with which you were brought up. One way of doing that is to try to look at your beliefs in a new way: in regard to any belief that you are convinced is based on facts or the truth, ask yourself how you came to believe it is true. In other words, what is your **viewpoint** on it, and how did you acquire that viewpoint? From what sources did you get the belief—your family, teachers, peers, church, political leaders, news, entertainment, and advertising media? Others? Where did *those* sources get their beliefs? What might be the limitations or biases in your knowledge, and in that of your sources? Those sources' views are often colored by conscious or unconscious **ethnocentrism**, self-interest, and ideological biases, to say nothing of outright **hype**, **propaganda**, and deception on occasion. So we need to develop a critical perspective on *them* to evaluate their reliability. In contrast, then, to the common textbook approach that assumes faulty arguments result only from unintentional lapses in reasoning, this book confronts the hard truth that real-life arguments frequently contain deliberate deception, **special pleading**, partisanship, propaganda, and out-and-out lying, as well as ideological biases that may be conscious or unconscious.

Some students and teachers will react against this orientation by complaining that it is too “negative,” with all the emphasis on detecting and defending against deceptive, fallacious arguments. If you react this way, I urge you to ask yourself two questions as you are reading: Is this “negative” approach *realistic* in relation to the state of American



public discourse? And does it enable you to be a more critical and active participant in that discourse? An article titled “You’re on Your Own,” by Daniel Kadlec, which appeared in *Time* (January 28, 2002) after the collapse of Enron Corporation and its accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, presented an unusually frank acknowledgment—especially in a magazine that has long been a booster of American free enterprise:

We are now responsible for so many decisions requiring so much homework that many of us feel helpless and paralyzed. The risks of inaction or unwise action are rising, even as many of the professionals on whom we would like to rely for guidance are proving untrustworthy and even corrupt. We now know we can’t trust stock analysts and financial planners, who

often get paid more for selling us shaky stocks and mutual funds than for selling us solid ones. The Enron scandal has shown us or perhaps reminded us that when money is

involved, we are truly on our own. (24-25)

Finally, try to keep in mind that the purpose of training yourself to spot fallacious arguments is not to cynically dismiss each side in every dispute as equally fallacious but to be able to distinguish invalid arguments from valid ones, liars from truth tellers—so as to inspire you to give your wholehearted support to the truth tellers.

Another response to the charge of negative thinking is that the prevailing emphasis in American society and education on “positive thinking” and “feeling good about yourself” can sometimes serve the function of ostrichlike **sentimentality** and **denial** of the gravity of our national problems. This point was addressed in an op-ed (an opinion column on the page opposite the editors’ own editorials) by Michael Kinsley in the *Los Angeles Times* (June 22, 2004, online edition), following the death of President Ronald Reagan, titled “The Trouble with Optimism.” Kinsley wrote:

Thanks to Reagan, optimism is now considered an essential ingredient of any presidential candidate’s public self-presentation. Could there be an emptier claim made on behalf of

someone hoping to lead the United States of America than to say that he is “optimistic”? Optimism may or may not be part of the American character, but it is pretty insufficient as either a campaign promise or a governing principle..... If forced to choose between a leader

whose vision is clouded by optimism and one clouded by pessimism, there is a good case that pessimism is the more prudent choice. Another name for pessimism is a tragic sensibility. It is a vivid awareness that things can go wrong, and often have done so. An optimist thinks he can pop over to Iraq, knock Saddam Hussein off his perch, establish democracy throughout the Middle East and be home for dinner. A pessimist knows better.

While in most other democracies students are immersed in public controversies and instruction in debating them from an early age, much of American culture and education tends to shelter high school and even college students from such controversies, thereby trying to keep them in the mentality of adolescence rather than leading them

toward thinking and acting like adults. Remember Mario Savio's words, "This chrome-plated consumers' paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children." Even adults are treated like children by many public "leaders." In "A Preview Case," Susan Sontag describes the Bush administration's statements after 9/11 as "a campaign to infantilize the public." In William Safire's book *Before the Fall*, about his experiences as a speechwriter in the Nixon White House, President Richard Nixon is quoted as saying, "The average American is just like the child in the family" (649), and, "We sophisticates can listen to a speech for a half hour, but after ten minutes, the average guy wants a beer" (315). When Howard Jarvis, sponsor of Proposition 13, the influential 1978 tax-cutting ballot initiative in California, was asked why he spent all his advertising money on TV and radio rather than newspapers, he replied, "People who decide elections today don't read" (quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 10, 1980, pt. 2, p. 1).

To provide a few exemplary **anecdotes** from my own experience, in my younger years when I was working as a copy-writing trainee at one of the world's largest advertising agencies, on Madison Avenue in New York, I was assigned to suggest a campaign for the latest model of a brand-name refrigerator. The account executive explained to me, "There's really no difference between this year's model and last year's, but we have to keep putting out a new model every year to hype up profits, and the average housewife is too stupid to know the difference." I worked as a public relations agent (a euphemism for propagandist) for wealthy individuals and corporations, making them look like saints, especially in "damage control" after they had been caught in misbehavior. I also worked in public relations for Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, and backstage at the telecasts, I overheard the adult managers of teenage singing stars snickering contemptuously at their clients' and their audiences' "moronic pimple music." After several years at such jobs, I became ashamed of being an agent of this kind of manipulation (albeit a well-paid one) and decided to go to graduate school in English and prepare instead to teach students how to defend themselves against manipulation. My long years of teaching and writing this book are based on the conviction that the average housewife, or the average American voter, or the average college student is not "too stupid to know the difference," provided that he or she receives the encouragement and resources to think critically.

The subject of infantilization illustrates a rhetorical term, **self-fulfilling prophecy**, which refers to a situation in which because people are induced to believe something is true, it becomes true; this is a variant on another term, **vicious circle**, in which an **effect** of some **cause** itself reinforces that cause, creating a loop that is difficult to break. In this case, if authorities treat people like children, many will act like children. After all, it's so much easier to be a child than an adult. Who doesn't prefer candy to vegetables, junk food to a nutritious diet, the teacher who gives you an easy A to one who makes you work hard for it? Everything in my teaching experience, however,

has indicated that although many students at the conscious level prefer everything to be made simple and painless for them, deep down they understand that junk-food education does not help them grow and insults their intelligence. So this book attempts to break the vicious circle of infantilization by assuming that college-age students want to deal with adult realities and complexities, especially concerning the socioeconomic issues emphasized here, frustrating as they may be. (Older students who have had more hard experience of the world will not need to have this point labored.)

## Go to the Mall Instead?

Back to the “negative” attitude toward politics and public discourse in this book, it would be hard to outdo the fear and loathing that many American students and adults alike already feel toward politics. The widespread attitude is, “Politicians are all a bunch of crooks, and politics has gotten so complex and corrupt that it’s a waste of time even to think about it. Leave it to the professionals.” On the surface, this attitude appears perfectly sensible. When you plunge into the kinds of disputes aired in the readings throughout this book and find that on virtually every issue not only Democrats and Republicans or liberals and conservatives but also libertarians and radical leftists (or socialists) present diametrically opposed versions of the truth, each persuasively argued and supported by impressive evidence, a natural reaction is to throw your hands in the air, despair of ever knowing whom you can believe, and go to the beach or mall instead. Moreover, many Americans are kept so busy just scrambling to get the necessary credentials in school to get a job, and then working at that job while worrying about being able to pay their bills from one month to the next, that they feel they cannot spare the time to take courses about public affairs or inform themselves about what is going on politically, to vote, or to take Part in political organizations and activities.

Consider, though, that this reaction is another vicious circle, playing right into the hands of the crooks and the **special interests** that spend a great deal of money and effort trying to obscure the truth. If enough ordinary citizens give up on pursuing the truth and participating in the political process, it will guarantee that the deceitful, corrupt “professionals,” with

no one keeping tabs on them, become ever more corrupt and win by default. As the freed slave and abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass put it on the brink of the Civil War in 1857, “Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them..... The limits of tyrants are pre

scribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress” (quoted in Wolfgang Mieder, *“No Struggle, No Progress”: Frederick Douglass and His Proverbial Rhetoric* 31).

The most famous commentary on the principles being developed here is George Orwell’s 1946 essay “Politics and the English Language,” in which Orwell observes:

Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes; it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration. (249)

Orwell is discussing another vicious circle here, using the **analogy** of the drunkard: the clarity of our language is eroded by political and economic causes that prevail partly because they numb clear thinking about them, and unclear thinking leads to unclear language; but our unclear language itself then becomes a cause for unclear thinking—and for further political decay (some examples that Orwell presents will be cited in later chapters). Similar vicious circles have been described here: if you treat people like children, they are likely to behave like children; the more that Americans believe politics is hopelessly corrupt and obscure, the more corrupt and obscure it *will* be; and as students are forced by financial and social pressures to specialize in occupational majors at the expense of general education, they deprive themselves of precisely the kind of education they need to understand the causes of those pressures and to launch an organized movement against them. However, Orwell continues, the circle of corrupt politics-thought-language might be broken by our starting to clarify our language. Orwell insists that he is not talking about proper grammar or usage, which are incidental, but about forming words and ideas that accurately correspond to external reality, or “language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought” (259).

Similarly, perhaps a starting point for American students and citizens to break the vicious circles they are caught in is to develop the critical vocabulary and rhetorical concepts enabling them to understand ideas like vicious circle. The thesis of this book, then, is that a framework of rhetorical terms and concepts like those identified by bold-facing throughout this Chapter and subsequently can provide us with a beginning point for becoming more critical and active citizens, the weapons we need to defend ourselves against infantilization.

Without buying into conspiracy theories, it seems reasonable to conjecture that the tendencies in American politics, media, and education toward keeping people in childlike ignorance, deemphasizing the importance of civic education, and presenting political issues in a superficial, incoherent manner are perpetuated because they serve, directly or indirectly, the interests of those who benefit from maintaining the present hierarchies of power. What is certain is that the pervasiveness and

elaborate engineering of both political and commercial propaganda in our time far exceed that in any past period of history, and that the level of American public rhetoric—mainly under the influence of televised and talk-radio political news (especially on twenty-four-hour-a-day cable networks), debates, and advertising—has been declining steadily toward ever shorter and more irrational “sound bites.” The professional consultants who developed the rapid-fire “top-forty-stories” format for local newscasts justified it by claiming, “People who watch television the most are unread, uneducated, untraveled and unable to concentrate on single subjects more than a minute or two” (*San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle*, March 16, 1975, 14).

Political party organizations and government administrations employ television performance consultants and “spin doctors,” often from advertising or public relations agencies accustomed to using market research to sell products, who calculate their messages not for their truth-value but for whether they will be “bought” by the largest, least informed segment of the public. So social policies and even wars are now sold like soap flakes (see the readings in Chapter 18), and prime qualifications for public office are telegenic good looks and acting ability (including the ability to lie convincingly), rather than wisdom and honesty. This situation, in both politics and “entertainment” forms like talk radio, is inevitably a breeding ground for the **demagogue**, a public figure who manipulates the ignorance and prejudices of the masses for his or her own power or profit. (The very fact that so few American students or citizens know the meaning of the word *demagogue* increases their vulnerability to demagoguery.)

These destructive influences on public discourse are very likely among both the leading causes and effects of the facts confirmed by many recent reports on literacy in the United States, along with books and articles by both conservative and liberal social commentators, indicating an alarmingly low level of interest and knowledge in young Americans of precisely those areas of education—including basic knowledge of history, economics, political science, and sociology—that are most necessary for them to exert democratic control over the forces influencing their lives. Deficiencies in a base of factual knowledge about social science and in critical thinking proficiency in evaluating that knowledge cut across nearly all social segments of American high school and college students. Since the voting age was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen in 1973 (a concession, it should be noted, to the student and anti-Vietnam War protests of the sixties), the lowest rate of voting has been precisely in the eighteen-to-twenty-one-year-old bracket, and the United States now has the lowest rate of voting of any democracy in the world. According to an article in the *Boston Globe* (February 15, 1999), “Each year of the past five, the annual survey of national freshman attitudes conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles has hit a new record low with students who say it is important to keep up with political affairs. At 26 percent this year, it was down from 58 percent when the survey was first done in 1966.”

None of this bad news is meant to **imply** that your generation of students is “dumb.” It would be a foolhardy **overgeneralization** to suggest that a whole generation was

born intellectually deficient. The more valid generalization would be that this generation, by and large, is inadequately educated and informed about politics, through little fault of its own. (To place the fault on *the students* is an example of the **causal fallacy of blaming the victim**.) My experience with students tells me that their indifference toward politics is largely the product of the skimpy amount and poor quality of the political education they have received; students avoid political issues largely because their education has provided little help in understanding them—and, as noted earlier, that understanding is made all the more difficult because the discourse of American politics, media, and even education tends to approach political issues incoherently and superficially, without providing any explanatory overview of opposing ideologies or viewpoints that would help provide a context for full understanding. I believe most students are perfectly capable of understanding and taking an interest in political issues if those issues are explained in a comprehensible, step-by-step manner and within a coherent framework of ideological concepts, as this book attempts to do.

## The Role of English Studies

Educators and students at every level and in every pertinent academic discipline face a vital challenge to reorient our schools toward enabling young Americans to become more informed and active citizens. But what distinctive role can English studies, and composition courses in particular, play in achieving this goal, and what is the difference between their orientation and that of political science or other social sciences? English studies can apply basic reading and research skills (including an introduction to locating and evaluating sources of information on public affairs, in periodicals, books, and reports), the critical insights of literature and literary theory, the analytic tools of logic, argumentative rhetoric, and general semantics to education for critical citizenship—and more specifically to the “new literacy” described in the National Council of Teachers of English resolution cited at the head of this chapter.

Of course, it would not be helpful to pitch this book at a level far above the heads of what first- or second-year college students are prepared to understand. It attempts to start at a level comprehensible to most lower-division college students and—on the assumption that they are willing and able to stretch their cognitive and emotional capacities—to move from there toward more sophistication and the ability to engage in public controversies at the level of liberally educated adults. The book culminates cumulatively in Part 5, in which everything before is synthesized into a suggested process for writing a critical research paper on the subject “The Rich, the Poor, and the Middle Class,” which includes parts of several papers by students who have gone through this process in my own courses.

Moreover, issues are analyzed in this book at the level at which they are addressed, not in social science scholarship, but in political speeches, news and entertainment media, op-ed columns, general-circulation journals of opinion, and other realms of public discourse to which everyone is exposed every day. The political vocabulary and infor-

mation covered here are no more specialized than what every citizen in a democracy should be expected to know, even before taking a college argumentative and research writing course. Nevertheless, in sections dealing with political rhetoric, especially Chapter 15, elementary definitions and explanations of political concepts are provided for those students who need them, and they may benefit from jumping ahead to read that Chapter first and returning to it for reference throughout the book.

Indeed, one of the main points stressed in this book is the difference in levels of rhetoric between public and scholarly treatments of political issues, and the need for students to take courses in more specialized disciplines to gain deeper knowledge of these issues. Students *can* learn in argumentative writing classes, though, to develop a more complex and comprehensive rhetorical understanding of political events and ideologies than that provided by politicians and mass media—or, for that matter, by most social science courses, which usually emphasize factual exposition or theory at the expense of rhetorical analysis.

## Avoiding Political Correctness

Finally, an approach like mine can invite the danger of being turned into an indoctrination to the instructor's personal political ideology, or into an excuse for teaching political science instead of rhetoric and writing. This concern has certainly been warranted by the tendency of some “politically correct” teachers (usually liberal or leftist, though there are also cases of conservative political correctness) to assume that all students and colleagues agree—or *should* agree—with their particular view. So one of my main efforts has been to avoid turning this book and the kind of course it is intended for into indoctrination into any particular ideological position. My method involves addressing as an explicit topic for rhetorical study the issues of political subjectivity, partisanship, and bias in sources of information, including teachers and authors of textbooks—including this one. The principle is that any writer or reader addressing controversial issues will almost inevitably have a subjective, **partisan viewpoint** (that is, a viewpoint siding with a particular party or ideology). There is nothing wrong with having such a viewpoint; indeed, a clear-cut expression of a particular partisan viewpoint can be a rhetorical virtue in enabling you to understand what that viewpoint stands for, particularly if the expression is relatively unbiased and supported through sound argumentation. Our aims should simply be to learn to identify and understand what the viewpoint of any given source is, so that we can weigh its rhetorical quality against that of opposing viewpoints.

In the same way, we need to learn to recognize our own ideological viewpoint, and possible biases, as readers and writers, and certainly as teachers. I do not believe that teachers or textbook writers should coyly hide their viewpoint, as they often do, but that they should honestly identify it and present it, not as “the truth” or “the facts” but as one viewpoint among others, needing to be scrutinized for its own biases and fairly

evaluated against opposing ones. Thus, although total objectivity may never be attainable, dealing honestly with our own subjectivity may be the best way to approximate objectivity. This principle obliges me to come out from the hiding place of authorial anonymity and pretended objectivity that is the convention in textbooks and to speak as “I” from time to time throughout the book, especially in addressing issues where it is most difficult for anyone to present an objective, impartial analysis. On several such issues I provide a “Reader Advisory” alerting you to my possible biases. The intention of this method, then, is to guarantee that students will not be indoctrinated into my own or any teacher’s or writer’s ideology, but rather that the scope of students’ own critical thinking, reading, and writing capacities will be broadened so as to empower them to make their own autonomous judgments on opposing ideological positions in general and on specific issues. It is exactly this intention that justifies introducing political issues in writing courses, within a *rhetorical* framework quite different from anything you are apt to encounter in political science or any other courses. All this may sound terribly **abstract** to you right now, but it will be **concretized** throughout the body of the book.

## Critical Education in Historical Perspective

Their critical approach to value choices does not put the humanities at odds with the traditional social mission of American schools— preparing students for citizenship by teaching the democratic values that have shaped the American heritage. For learning to be critical does not imply disloyalty to traditional values. Indeed, questioning, debate, and dissent are central to our heritage. They leaven the stable values of citizenship—charity, tolerance, and goodwill—that enoble the American definition of civic virtue.

—*Rockefeller Foundation Commission on the Humanities, The Humanities in American Life (1980)*

The academic study of writing, and particularly argumentative writing, in modern times derives primarily from two historical sources: rhetoric and literature, both of which have been closely related to philosophy and other traditional fields of humanistic study. In ancient Greece and Rome, argumentative rhetoric formed the center of general, or liberal, education, and the central purpose of rhetorical education was preparation for active involvement in civic affairs. (The availability of such education was limited, to be sure, mainly to white males and also excluded slaves and the lower classes.) The germinal text in rhetorical education, the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, written in the fourth century BC, focuses first and foremost on political rhetoric. Aristotle took a largely pragmatic, “how to” approach to its skills and devices. Aristotle’s teacher Plato, by contrast, viewed purely pragmatic rhetoric as unscrupulous, associating it with the school of the Sophists—hence the modern terms *sophistry* and *sophistic* as synonymous with deceptive rhetoric: “making the weaker argument appear the stronger,” as Socrates, the hero of Plato’s dialogues, described the Sophists’ method (*Apology* 35).



Socrates and Plato viewed authentic rhetoric as the embodiment in speech of the philosophical search for truth and justice. Socrates himself was brought to trial, however, under charges of undermining the authority of the state and under false accusation by jealous rivals of teaching his students deceptively clever rhetoric in the manner of the Sophists. He began his defense, recorded in Plato's *Apology*, by declaring, "I shall prove that I am not a clever speaker in any way at all—unless, indeed, by a clever speaker they mean someone who speaks the truth" (21). He continued by urging the judges, "Never mind the manner of my speech—it may be superior or it may be inferior to the usual manner. Give your whole attention to the question, whether what I say is just or not? That is what is required of a good judge, as speaking the truth is required of a good orator" (350).

The concept of education in rhetoric for critical citizenship was also essential in the origins of the United States, with the significant innovation that this kind of education was deemed necessary and proper for all citizens, not just the social elite. (Here again, of course, the democratic ideal of education fell short in practice, as women, African Americans, Native Americans, and others were excluded, and continued to be well into the twentieth century, and the ideal of equal access to liberal education has still not been realized.) The study of public rhetoric was assumed by the eighteenth-century founders to be at the heart of secondary and higher education, and active involvement in civic debates by the entire populace was considered the essence of American democracy. One of the defining statements of this period was the essay "What Is An American?" (1782) by J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a Frenchman who emigrated to the New World shortly before the Revolution. About typical Americans, he wrote, "As citizens it is easy to imagine that they will carefully read the newspapers, enter into every political disquisition, freely blame or censure governors and others" (46).

Thomas Jefferson was the founder of free public education in America and of the first public college, the University of Virginia. He expressed his concept of the primary value of public education in a famous letter to John Adams disputing Adams's belief that America should maintain a hereditary aristocracy as a ruling elite. Jefferson described the model for education that he had proposed in Virginia:

To establish in every ward a free school for reading, writing and common arithmetic; to provide for the annual selection of the best subjects from these schools, who might receive, at the public expense, a higher degree of education at a district school, and from these district schools to select a certain number of the most promising subjects, to be completed at a university, where all the useful sciences [subjects of study in general] should be taught. Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts

This . . . would have raised the mass of the people to the high ground of moral respectability necessary to their own safety, and to orderly government; and would have completed the great object of qualifying them to select the veritable aristoi [aristocrats],

for the trusts of government, to the exclusion of the pseudalists [the pseudo-aristocracy of inherited privilege]. ("The Natural Aristocracy," 1308)

## Intellectuals as Dissenters

From ancient times to the present, a long line of writers and scholars in the fields of rhetoric and philosophy, as well as many literary artists, has been inspired by Socrates' mission of fidelity to the language of truth and justice in public life, often against the grain of public opinion and official authority. The quotation above from J. Mitchell Morse aptly captures the respect for qualities like "precision, clarity, beauty and force in the use of language" that commit, or ought to commit, writers and students of both rhetoric and literature to "political and social enlightenment." Dedicated artists, writers, and scholars tend to be nonconformists, to resist going into more "practical" occupations in order to devote their lives to the search for wisdom and truth, serving in effect as society's voice of conscience. Thus the English poet of the nineteenth-century romantic age Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in his "Defense of Poetry," "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind"; *Newsweek* writer David Gates makes an **allusion** to Shelley's line in "The Voices of Dissent" following this chapter.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1837 speech "The American Scholar" remains the classic American reaffirmation of the responsibility of the man or woman of letters (unfortunately, only "the man" in Emerson's dated usage, which includes other terms that strike us now as sexist) to speak truth to power, for "there can be no scholar without the heroic mind" (94). "It becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry" (102).

It is a shame to him if his tranquillity, amid dangerous times, arise from the presumption that like children and women, his is a protected class; or if he seek a temporary peace by the diversion of his thoughts from politics or vexed questions, hiding his head like an ostrich in the flowering bushes, peeping into microscopes, and turning rhymes, as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. So is the danger a danger still; so is the fear worse. Manlike let him turn and face it What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what overgrown error you behold,

is there only by sufferance,—by your sufferance [allowing it]. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow. (104-105)

Although Emerson insists on scholars' and artists' responsibility to confront political issues, he adds that their manner of doing so must provide wiser, deeper, longer-range consideration than politicians or news media themselves exercise:

The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. He plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation..... The world of

any moment is the merest appearance. Some great decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man, is cried up by half of mankind and cried down by the other half, as if all depended on this particular up or down. The odds are that the whole question is not worth the poorest thought which the scholar has lost in listening to the controversy. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom. In silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction, let him hold by himself; add observation to observation; patient of neglect, patient of reproach, and bide his own time,—happy enough if he can satisfy himself alone that this day he has seen something truly

If the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. (102-103, 115)

Higher education in both composition and literature, then, has the unique, Emersonian mission of bringing to bear on current events the longer view, the synthesizing vision needed to counteract the hurriedness, atomization, and ideological hodgepodge that debase our public discourse as well as our overdepartmentalized curricula and over-specialized scholarship. As Emerson's disciple Henry David Thoreau advised: "Read not the Times [the name of a newspaper]. Read the Eternities" ("Life without Principle," 437). "The world of any moment is the merest appearance." Think, for example, about how the American public and media rushed to accept the appearances presented by the Bush administration in 20022003 for going to war in Iraq, and how quickly those appearances changed within a year. (They undoubtedly will have changed again, in unpredictable ways, by the time you read this.)

Emerson's Platonic belief that social falsehood, injustice, and fragmentation should be offensive to men and women of letters' sense of linguistic and literary wholeness has been echoed by many subsequent writers in the United States and elsewhere throughout the world, including Ernest Hemingway, who reputedly replied to the question of what makes a good writer, "Every good writer has a built-in BS detector." As recently as September 2001, the same idea was reaffirmed in an article titled "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals," by Edward Said, a prominent professor of literature at Columbia University and activist for the Palestinian cause in the Middle East: "At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the writer has taken on more and more of the intellectual's adversarial attributes in such activities as speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority" (*Nation*, September 27, 2001, 27). The following *Newsweek* article, "The Voices of Dissent," presents a similar account of the tradition of writers as dissenters from the political and social mainstream, indicating why writers like the three discussed there, Susan Sontag, Arundhati Roy, and Barbara Kingsolver—along with teachers and students of writing—tend to be political liberals, in the sense of critically questioning the social status quo. And that is why there are constant culture wars between writers, scholars, and other intellectuals, versus conservatives like William J. Bennett who accuse them of being unpatriotic, "moral relativists," a destructive "adversary culture," and perpetrators of their own, "politically correct"

status quo in their own realms of power, including university humanities departments. The antagonism between American conservatives and liberal intellectuals has resulted over the past three decades in the sponsorship by conservative political and corporate leaders of what they term a “counter-intelligentsia” based in the media, foundations, and research institutes (such as Bennett’s Empower America)—the source of many of the readings by conservatives that are counterpoised to liberal ones throughout this book.

The modern term *intellectual*, as Said uses it, is broadly used to refer to the class of people who seek to emulate the critical mind-set discussed above of rhetoricians and philosophers, literary and other artists, scholars, and responsible journalists. Unfortunately, although most of the founders of the United States were among the leading intellectuals of their time, since the mid-nineteenth century the word *intellectual* has taken on a negative **connotation** in this country that it does not have in most other societies. (The actual historical behavior of intellectuals has sometimes, alas, provided sound reasons for that connotation). And although most students do not go to college with the purpose of becoming intellectuals, intellectual culture nevertheless remains synonymous with humanistic education, and your exposure to college education should, ideally, provide you basic acquaintance with and respect for the positive aspects of that culture, which can serve you as a survival tool applicable to your everyday life as your personal “BS detector.”

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

What are the primary aims of learning, writing, and argumentation as they are developed in Chapter 1? Do they differ from those you are accustomed to being taught in school? In what way?

Write a paper weighing the pros and cons of these aims—in terms of their personal value to you—in comparison to the aims pursued in other courses you have taken, and in relation to the more “practical” or occupational aims of a college education.

Write a paper summarizing the various aspects of the distinctive role of English studies in fostering critical citizenship that this Chapter develops, using quotations from several of the cited sources for support, and evaluating the persuasiveness of the argument made here that this is an English textbook, not one for political science.

Today many Americans believe that the primary goal of education is to enable one to become wealthy. In the excerpt from Jefferson’s essay “The Natural Aristocrat,” exactly what is he suggesting as the proper role of education in relation to wealth; that is, does he say that education should enable one to get rich, or what? Why do you suppose American attitudes have changed so much from Jefferson’s? Do some research on the history of American education in this regard.

In the passage quoted from Emerson’s essay “The American Scholar,” you may have been struck negatively by his assumption that the scholar is a “he” and by the phrases “like children and women, his is a protected class,” “as a boy whistles to keep his courage up,” and “Manlike let him turn and face it.” In your opinion, to what extent do these sexist phrasings, which largely reflect the culturally conditioned assumptions and

limitations of Emerson's time, detract from the validity of the ideas he is expressing here? Support your opinion.

What connotation does the noun "intellectual" have for you? What is your reaction to the suggestion here that the purpose of a general education should be to make you, to some extent, an intellectual?

*An End to History*]]

Mario Savio

From *Humanity* December 1964

Last summer I went to Mississippi to join the struggle there for civil rights. This fall I am engaged in another phase of the same struggle, this time in Berkeley. The two battlefields may seem quite different to some observers, but this is not the case. This same rights are at stake in both places—the right to participate as citizens in [a] democratic society and to struggle against the same enemy. In Mississippi, an autocratic and powerful minority rules, through organized violence, to suppress the vast, virtually powerless, majority. In California, the privileged minority manipulates the University bureaucracy to suppress the students' political expression. That "respectable" bureaucracy masks the *financial plutocrats*: that impersonal bureaucracy is the efficient enemy in a "Brave New World."

In our free speech fight at the University of California, we have come up against what may emerge as the greatest problem of our nation—depersonalized, unresponsive bureaucracy. We have encountered the organized status quo in Mississippi, but it is the same in Berkeley. Here in Berkeley we find it impossible usually to meet with anyone but secretaries. Beyond that, we find functionaries who cannot make policy but can only hide behind the rules. We have discovered total lack of response on the Part of the true policy makers. To grasp a situation which is truly Kafkaesque, it is necessary to understand the bureaucratic mentality. And we have learned quite a bit about it this fall, more outside the classroom than in.

As bureaucrat, an administrator believes that nothing new happens. He occupies an

a-historical point of view. In September, to get the attention of this bureaucracy which had issued arbitrary edicts suppressing student political expression and refused to discuss its action, we held a sit-in on the campus. We sat around a police car and kept it immobilized for over thirty-two hours. At last, the administrative bureaucracy agreed to negotiate. But instead, on the following Monday, we discovered that a committee had been appointed, in accordance with usual regulations, to resolve the dispute. Our attempt to convince any of the administrators that an event had occurred, that something new had happened, failed. They saw this simply as something to be handled by normal University procedures.

The same is true of all bureaucracies. They begin as tools—means to certain legitimate goals—and they end up feeding their own existence. The conception that bureaucrats have is that history has in fact come to an end. No events can occur, now

that the Second World War is over, which can change American society substantially. We proceed by standard procedures as we are.

The most crucial problems facing the United States today are the problem of automation and the problem of racial injustice. Most people who will be put out of jobs by machines will not accept an end to events, this historical plateau, as the point beyond which no change occurs. Negroes will not accept an end to history here. All of us must refuse to accept history's final judgment that in America there is no place in society for people whose skins are dark. On campus students are not about to accept it as fact that the University has ceased evolving and is in its final state of perfection, that students and faculty are respectively raw material and employees, or that the University is to be autocratically run by unresponsive bureaucrats.

Here is the real contradiction: The bureaucrats hold history as ended. As a result significant parts of the population both on campus and off are dispossessed, and these dispossessed are not about to accept this ahistorical point of view. It is out of this that the conflict has occurred with the University bureaucracy and will continue to occur until that bureaucracy becomes responsive or until it is clear that the University can not function.

The things we are asking for in our civil rights protests have a deceptively quaint ring. We are asking for the due process of law. We are asking for our actions to be judged by committees of our peers. We are asking that regulations ought to be considered as arrived at legitimately only from the consensus of the governed. These phrases are all pretty old, but they are not being taken seriously in America today, nor are they being taken seriously on the Berkeley campus.

I have just come from a meeting with the Dean of Students. She notified us that she was aware of certain violations of University regulations by certain organizations. University Friends of SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], which I represent, was one of these. We tried to draw from her some statement on these great principles—consent of the governed, jury of one's peers, due process. The best she could do was to evade or to present the administration party line. It is very hard to make any contact with the human being who is behind these organizations.

The university is the place where people begin seriously to question the conditions of their existence and raise the issue of whether they can be committed to the society they have been born into. After a long period of apathy during the fifties, students have begun not only to question, but, having arrived at answers, to act on those answers. This is Part of a growing understanding among many people in America that history has not ended, that a better society is possible, and that it is worth dying for.

This free speech fight points up a fascinating aspect of contemporary campus life. Students are permitted to talk all they want so long as their speech has no consequences.

One conception of the university, suggested by a classical Christian formulation, is that it be in the world but not of the world. The conception of Clark Kerr by contrast is that the university is Part and parcel of this particular stage in the

history of American society; it stands to serve the needs of American industry; it is a factory that turns out a certain product needed by industry or government. Because speech does often have consequences which might alter this perversion of higher education, the university must put itself in a position of censorship. It can permit two kinds of speech: speech which encourages continuation of the status quo, and speech which advocates changes in it so radical as to be irrelevant in the foreseeable future. Someone may advocate radical change in all aspects of American society, and this I am sure he can do with impunity. But if someone advocates sit-ins to bring about changes in discriminatory hiring practices, this can not be permitted because it goes against the status quo of which the university is a part. And that is how the fight began here.

The administration of the Berkeley campus has admitted that external, extra-legal groups have pressured the University not to permit students on campus to organize picket lines, not to permit on campus any speech with consequences. And the bureaucracy went along. Speech with consequences, speech in the area of civil rights, speech which some might regard as illegal, must stop.

Many students here at the University, many people in society, are wandering aimlessly about. Strangers in their own lives, there is no place for them. They are people who have not learned to compromise, who for example have come to the University to learn to question, to grow, to learn—all the standard things that sound like cliches because no one takes them seriously. And they

## Majoring in Debt

*By Adolph L. Reed Jr.*

From *The Progressive* January 2004

Higher education is a basic social good. As such, it should be available to all, without find at one point or another that for them to become Part of society, to become lawyers, ministers, business men, or people in government, very often they must compromise those principles which were most dear to them. They must suppress the most creative impulses that they have; this is a prior condition for being Part of the system. The university is well structured, well tooled, to turn out people with all the sharp edges worn off—the well-rounded person. The university is well equipped to produce that sort of person, and this means that the best among the people who enter must for four years wander aimlessly much of the time questioning why they are on campus at all, doubting whether there is any point in what they are doing, and looking toward a very bleak existence afterward in a game in which all of the rules have been made up—rules which one can not really amend.

It is a bleak scene, but it is all a lot of us have to look forward to. Society provides no challenge. American society in the standard conception it has of itself is simply no

longer exciting. The most exciting things going on in America today are movements to change America. America is becoming ever more the utopia of sterilized, automated contentment. The “futures” and “careers” for which American students now prepare are for the most part intellectual and moral wastelands. This chrome-plated consumers’ paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children. But an important minority of men and women coming to the front today have shown that they will die rather than be standardized, replaceable, and irrelevant.

cost, who meet admission standards. The federal government, as the guarantor of social rights, should bear primary responsibility for providing free college for all.

This proposal isn’t prohibitively costly; the total bill for all students currently enrolled in public institutions is under \$27 billion, less than one-third of what George W. Bush is spending on Iraq this year. Closing recently opened corporate tax loopholes would also more than meet the program’s cost, even if enrollments doubled as a result of eliminating tuition as a constraint.

Moreover, this program isn’t pie in the sky. It has a clear precedent in living memory. The GI Bill paid full tuition and fees, as well as a living-wage stipend, for nearly eight million returning World war II veterans. We’ve done it before, we can do it again, and this time for everyone.

The crisis in public education is intensifying. As almost every state reels from the effects of recession and tax cuts, legislatures slash funding for higher education, the largest discretionary item in most state budgets. Colleges respond with hefty tuition increases, reduced financial assistance, and new fees. These measures put an extra burden on the average family, whose net worth has declined over the last two years for the first time in half a century.

Increased tuition, coupled with dwindling financial aid, is a significant problem for millions of families. According to the College Board, over the last decade, average tuition and fees at public four-year colleges increased 40 percent, and last year alone it increased by 14 percent. Community colleges increased tuition by a similar percentage last year.

Financial aid is not picking up the slack. Three decades ago, the financial aid system, with Pell grants as the backbone, guaranteed access to public colleges for primarily low and moderate-income students. Millions of Americans earned college degrees as a result. In 1975, the maximum Pell grant covered 84 percent of costs at a four-year public college. Now, the grant covers only 42 percent of costs at four-year public colleges and only 16 percent of costs at four-year private colleges.

Meanwhile, colleges are shifting away from grants and toward loans. A decade ago, 50 percent of student aid was in the form of grants and 47 percent was in the form of loans. Today, grants are down to 39 percent of total aid; loans have increased to 54 percent.

What’s worse, many of these loans are irrespective of need. In 1992, Washington decided to further help out the wealthier by making unsubsidized loans available to all students, changing the definition of need, and increasing the limits for subsidized



loans. Now unsubsidized loans, although the most expensive, account for more than half of all federal loan monies.

In a bureaucratic maneuver, the Bush Administration recently changed the federal needs formula that determines how much of a family's income is really discretionary—and therefore fair game for covering college costs. A report by the Congressional Research Service states that the new financial formula will reduce Pell grants by \$270 million, disqualify 84,000 students from receiving any Pell grants, and reduce the amount of Pell grants for hundreds of thousands more students.

Skyrocketing tuition and reliance on interest-carrying loans force some students to forgo college altogether, while others drop out or delay graduation.

By reducing tuition subsidies, public colleges violate their mandates to individuals and to society to provide a quality education to all who qualify. Many universities are retreating from their commitments to provide low-cost education for state residents, as they shift the balance of admissions more toward out-of-state applicants who pay substantially higher tuition. State schools have traditionally been the ladders to good jobs for students from working families. Soon, only the wealthiest will be able to afford the best public colleges and universities.

In fact, the Congressional Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance reports that by the end of this decade as many as 4.4 million college-qualified high school graduates will be unable to enroll in a four-year college, and two million will not go to college at all because they can't afford it.

Many students who do go to college have to work long hours, which adversely affects their education. A whopping 53 percent of low-income freshmen who work more than thirty-five hours per week drop out and do not receive a degree. Contrast this with low-income freshmen who work fewer hours: Of those who work one-to-fourteen hours per week, only 20 percent do not receive a degree, according to the Congressional Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.

Those who graduate carry an enormous debt. The majority of students (64 percent) graduate with an average debt of almost \$17,000, up significantly from \$8,200 in 1989. Faced with repaying huge loans, students often reconsider their career plans. Our society suffers if students abandon lower paying occupations in teaching, social services, and health care in order to seek courses of study that lead to higher income jobs that speed loan repayment.

Budget cuts and tuition increases ripple throughout the academic community. They result in more hiring freezes and early retirements among full time faculty. Poorly paid and overworked contingent instructors replace them, classrooms become more crowded, and students have fewer courses to choose from.

Another widespread effect of budget cuts is to make public institutions more private, as they seek to supplement their loss of public monies with private gifts. This fits right in with the Bush Administration's agenda to privatize public services. And it will only make the promise of education for all more remote.

These days, many young people see the military as their only way to get an education. But Uncle Sam uses a bait and switch. The offer ‘Join the Army and earn up to \$50,000 for college’ does not often pan out. Almost 66 percent of recruits never get any college funding from the military (although they have paid into the college fund), and many who do qualify end up getting far less than \$50,000.

To receive any education benefit from the Montgomery GI Bill and the Army College Fund or Navy Fund, enlistees must contribute \$100 per month for the first twelve months of their tour. Even if recruits change their minds about attending college, the military will not cancel the monthly payment or refund the accumulated \$1,200. The military bestows benefits only on those who receive a fully honorable discharge; ‘general’ discharges and those ‘under honorable conditions’ mean no college benefits.

To be eligible for the \$50,000 benefit, enlistees must qualify (and only one in twenty enlistees do) for the Army or Navy College Fund by scoring in the top half of the military entry tests and enlisting in specific military occupations, typically unpopular jobs that have no transferable skills in the civilian job market. To receive the maximum amount, the military requires graduation with a four-year degree, achieved only by 15 percent of those who qualify. However, the majority of enlistees attend two-year schools and therefore can receive only a maximum of \$7,788.

It’s time for us now to demand that the federal government guarantee access to higher education, just as it does for K-12. This is the norm in nearly all other industrialized countries and even much of the impoverished Third World. Today, the intensifying crisis of affordability provides a perfect opportunity to insist on the principle of higher education as a basic right.

This issue resonates widely, and you can hear it finally in the Democratic Presidential race. John Edwards was the first Presidential candidate to address this issue. More than year ago, he proposed a program that would pay all tuition costs for the first year for every student meeting academic standards.

John Kerry also has drawn attention to the crisis and has called for substantial increases in the Pell grant program.

Dennis Kucinich has made free college education for all a central plank in his campaign, and the other candidates have indicated their general support for the view that the federal government should have a responsibility to ensure access.

Most recently, Howard Dean unveiled an elaborate proposal that combines loan subsidies, tax credits, and grants with requirements of work and public service to offer tuition relief to many, if not most, students.

But a crucial limitation of most of the Democratic Presidential candidates’ proposals is that they don’t boldly assert access to higher education as a right.

Universities themselves are responding. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recently announced a plan to cover the full costs of education for poor students without forcing them to take on loans. Students will have to work in state and federal workstudy programs at a manageable ten-to-twelve hours per week.

However, it is a mistake to imagine that states can shoulder this burden on their own. Because of the budget crisis, Georgia, for instance, may discontinue its decade-old scholarship program for all students who maintain a B average.

The Debs-Jones-Douglass Institute, a non-profit educational organization associated with the Labor Party, is building a national campaign to make higher education a right, available to everyone meeting admission standards and without regard to cost and ability to pay. The campaign calls for the federal government to pay all tuition and fees for all students attending two-year and four-year public colleges and universities. Period.

Early response to the campaign has underscored how great a concern the cost of higher education is with students and their families. The campaign for Free Higher Education already has been adopted by dozens of union bodies and other organizations, including large faculty and staff unions in Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and California, as well as the state federations of labor in Oregon and South Carolina.

We can generate a vibrant, exciting national movement around it on campuses, at workplaces, and in communities around the country.

This is an issue that can be won.

## **Students Stand Up for Workers' Rights**

*David Moberg*

From *In These Times*, May 27, 2002

On campuses across the country, a groundswell of student organizing focused on workers rights has become the dominant stream of campus politics after a period when identity politics held center stage. Born out of critiques of globalization, the new labor-oriented student movement has turned its global outrage inward, focusing on workers in the United States and, especially, at the universities themselves.

The new interest in labor issues started with campaigns against sweatshops, especially providers of university-logo clothing. But the anti-sweatshop movement, while still growing and gaining sophistication, has also turned toward support for exploited workers in the United States, from New Era cap makers on strike since last summer to farm workers picketing Taco Bell. Students are also a growing force behind unionization on campus, such as food service workers at Sodexho, and living-wage campaigns for university employees or contractors—given a big boost by a sit-in last spring at Harvard (and simultaneously though less publicized, at the University of Connecticut). Increasingly, students who work at universities—especially graduate teaching and research assistants, but even undergraduate resident assistants—are also organizing themselves.

"There's been this explosion of student interest in labor issues," says Andrea Calver, the full-time liaison to the student movement on the staff of the Hotel Employees and

Restaurant Employees Union (HERE), which won a contract for Pitzer College food service workers in California last year with student support.

This academic year has been “the biggest influx in a long time” of groups joining the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), says field coordinator Amber Gallup. About 40 new affiliates have boosted the organization’s total to 109, but there are another 250 college chapters that are less formally linked to USAS. Meanwhile, the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP), a joint venture of the U.S. Student Association and Jobs with Justice, pulled together roughly 110 events for its third annual National Student Labor Day of Action on April 4, roughly double the number the first year.

The number of campus living-wage movements has tripled this year too, and a national tour of Harvard janitors and students, organized by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has sparked interest on roughly 80 campuses. Inspired by the organizing and legal victories of New York University teaching and research assistants, who negotiated their first contract in February, graduate student workers at Columbia, Brown, Yale, Harvard and other universities are at varied stages in their fights for union recognition. Teaching assistant organizing has also encouraged nascent organizing among non-tenured adjunct professors, such as 4,500 faculty at NYU who will be voting on union recognition.

Most progressive campus activists see themselves as advocates of social justice who have focused on labor organizing as a vehicle. “I just got interested in doing labor work because it’s what took hold of me initially,” says Tom Cogswell, a USAS organizer from Central Michigan University. “I could just as easily have got involved in doing environmental issues. The basic issue is there’s no representation in the government and no respect for individual liberties and gross inequalities and institutionalized racism. I generally work for labor rights, but I see a larger issue at hand.”

Students seem more interested in workers rights in large Part because protests against corporate globalization have brought corporate power and economic issues to the forefront of their consciousness. But corporatization of the university has also driven student workers to organize and to critique university policies on everything from logo merchandise to subcontracting. Movements feed off a common spirit of “forcing universities to be moral actors, both in what they sell in bookstores or how they treat students or other employees,” says SLAP coordinator Laura McSpeddon.

The evolution of the corporatized university has changed how students experience higher education. Like for-profit businesses, universities increasingly have subcontracted work, often resulting in fewer benefits, lower wages and less tolerable work regimens. The story for professors and janitors is remarkably parallel. Contingent academic workers—nontenured and part-time—made up a third of faculty in 1987 but comprise 46 percent now, and, according to one survey of humanities and social sciences, graduate students are 15 to 25 percent of all teachers.

The power of undergraduate students with a new consciousness about labor has made a huge difference for workers both on and off campus. “They’ve been leading,

and we've been following," acknowledges Stephen Lerner of the SEIU, which represents janitors on 110 campuses. "At Harvard, they were way ahead of us."

The entrenched, conservative SEIU local leadership in Boston that had opposed the Harvard living-wage movement has since been removed. "In many cases, there's been stagnation and erosion of standards," says Lerner, architect of SEIU's successful Justice for Janitors organizing. "The upsurge in student activity changes the playing field. Our members get totally excited and much braver when students are working with them and administrators are nervous."

Similarly, a student campaign against Sodexho, a French multi-national which is one of three global giants that dominate institutional food services, focused on its ownership of private prisons (which the company still operates in England and Australia, despite its divestiture from the Corrections Corporation of America). Vulnerable because of the campaign, Sodexho also faces further problems if it resists unionization of its workers by HERE. Recently the president of Xavier University in Ohio instructed Sodexho to recognize the union if a majority of workers sign union cards.

Importantly, workers rights campaigns are beginning to involve a wider range of campuses and a greater variety of students. At Ohio State, for example, black and women's student groups mobilized to support striking campus workers, mostly minority women, and then helped form a USAS anti-sweatshop group. At the University of Tennessee, where there was no union, students and campus workers have formed their own independent union, an indication that universities might be an important beachhead for organizing in the South.

Graduate student teaching and research assistants now are organized at more than 30 universities. The big breakthrough came in November 2000 when the National Labor Relations Board ruled that teaching assistants were indeed employees with the right to unionize, contrary to the continued arguments of universities that their teaching is simply Part of their educational program. Brown and Columbia have appealed recent elections that organizers are confident they've won on the same grounds. "We say to these universities, we're not going to let anyone slow down this organizing trend," says Julie Kushner of the United Auto Workers, which organized NYU, Brown and Columbia teaching assistants. "It's clear graduate students want a voice in the workplace. You're going to have to recognize this."

The University of Illinois has resisted state Supreme Court rulings that graduate student workers are employees, so teaching assistants this year have gone on strike and occupied buildings, finally pushing the university into negotiations. "It's only with direct action that they've agreed to work something out," says Illinois Federation of Teachers organizer Mike Stewart.

The graduate students are succeeding— and adjunct professors are getting a boost—in Part because of the new awareness of workers rights issues among undergraduates. "The undergrads at NYU were there for us at every juncture," Kushner says. "They were the key to our success at Columbia as well."

Off-campus, the student anti-sweatshop movement has also scored significant victories. The Workers Rights Consortium, a monitoring organization covering 96 universities that grew out of the student movement, has conducted serious research on working conditions that has underpinned student campaigns against New Era (forced to negotiate after eight campuses suspended contracts) and Kuk Dong (where student pressure helped 500 Mexican workers win recognition of an independent union as well as pay and benefit hikes from the Koreanowned Nike contractor—since renamed Mex Mode). Following the lead of Occidental College, which contracted with a union shop in the United States to manufacture its college logo clothing, a new unionized garment factory, called SweatX, is now bidding for the socially conscious apparel market.

University campuses have become one of the most important fronts for revitalization of the labor movement. But the new student activism does pose challenges for unions. As Craig Smith of the American Federation of Teachers notes, both the new campus unions and student groups “see themselves as Part of a social movement to a more democratic, more just society.”

Although some unions have worked closely with students, training and recruiting many leaders, and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has repeatedly joined campus protests, the challenge to the labor movement will be not simply to bring more of these new workers and supporters into the heart of the labor movement, but to transform the movement itself to incorporate the new movement’s broad mandate for social justice. As Gallup says of the students, “They want to be organizers, not just foot soldiers.”

## **The Abandoned Generation:**

### **Democracy Beyond the Culture of Fear**

*Henry A. Giroux*

*Unpublished manuscript, 2004.*

One of the most serious, yet unspoken and unrecognized, tragedies in the United States is the condition of its children. We live in a society in which too many young people are poor, lack decent housing and health care, attend decrepit schools filled with overworked and underpaid teachers, and who, by all standards, deserve more in a country that prides itself on its level of democracy, liberty, and alleged equality for all citizens. For many young people, the future looks bleak, filled with the promise of low-paying, low-skilled jobs, the collapse of the welfare state, and, if you are a person of color and poor, the threat of either unemployment or incarceration.

This article suggests that it is time for educators, community leaders, parents, young people, and others to take a stand and remind themselves that collective problems deserve collective solutions and that what is at risk is not only a generation of young people but the very promise of democracy itself. Urban Debate Leagues represent a

promising, innovative effort to reinforce substantive democratic education and tradition by fostering rigorous and passionate discussions about social change and how it is to be achieved. I believe in Urban Debate Leagues (UDLs) because their organizers and participants believe it is not only possible to think against the grain, but crucial to act in ways that demonstrate political conviction, civic courage, and collective responsibility.

Increasingly, children seem to have no standing in the public sphere as citizens, and thus are denied any sense of entitlement and agency. Children have fewer rights than almost any other group and fewer institutions protecting these rights. Their voices and needs are almost completely absent from the debates, policies, and legislative practices that are constructed in terms of their needs. This is not to suggest that adults do not care about youth, but most of those concerns are framed within the realm of the private sphere of the family. Children seem absent from any public discourse about the future and the responsibilities it implies for adult society.

Further, youth are excluded from public spaces outside of schools that once offered young people the opportunity to learn a sport, play music, participate in debate, hang out in a youth club, and develop their own talents and sense of self-worth. Young people are now forced to hang out in the streets, and at the same time are increasingly subject to police surveillance, anti-gang statutes, and curfew laws, especially in poor, urban neighborhoods.

The hard currency of human suffering as it impacts on children can be seen in some of the astounding statistics that suggest a profound moral and political contradiction at the heart of the United States, one of the richest democracies in the world: 20 percent of children are poor during the first 3 years of life and over 13.3 million live in poverty; 9.2 million children lack health care insurance; millions lack affordable child care and decent early childhood education; in many states, more money is being spent on prison construction than on education; **nationally, more money is spent on beauty products than on public education**; and the infant mortality rate in the United States is the highest of any industrialized nation; When broken down along racial categories, the figures become even more deplorable. For example, "In 1998, 36 percent of black and 34 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty, compared to 14 percent of white children."<sup>1</sup> "In some cities, such as the District of Columbia, the child poverty rate is as high as 45 percent."<sup>2</sup>

Urban Debate Leagues have started in major cities, from New York to Los Angeles, that are on the front lines in this country's war against youth. Urban Debate Leagues prove that, rather than occasions for despair, the problems we face offer opportunities for organizing our passions and energies in order to reaffirm democratic commitments to equality, liberty, justice, and critical citizenship. Edward Lee, a graduate from an

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are taken from Child Research Briefs, "Poverty, Welfare, and the Children: A Summary of the Data." Available online at [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org).

<sup>2</sup> These figures are taken from Child Poverty Research Brief 2, "Child Poverty in the States: Levels and Trends from 1979 to 1998." Available online at [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org).

Atlanta Public Schools debate program, describes debate as “a pedagogical tool desperately needed to prevent an ever-increasing number of academically under-privileged children from wasting away in misery and hopelessness.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed the foundations for new Urban Debate Leagues are currently being set around the country, demonstrating the broader truth that the time has come for adults and young people to organize together, to create the conditions necessary to reject cynicism, and to struggle collectively for a more just world and the possibility of a realizable democracy. Lee offers a compelling vision for advancing the struggle for human dignity and democracy by building more UDLs. He asks us to, “imagine graduating from high school each year millions of underprivileged teenagers with the ability to articulate their needs, the needs of others and the ability to offer solutions.”<sup>4</sup>

As those public spaces that offer forums for debating norms, critically engaging ideas, making private issues public, and evaluating judgments disappear, it becomes critical for educators to raise fundamental questions about what it means to revitalize public life, politics, and ethics in ways that take serious such values as patriotism, “citizen participation,... political obligation, social governance, and community.”<sup>5</sup>

Educators are confronted with the problem as well as the challenge of analyzing, engaging, and developing those public spheres that help create citizens who are equipped to exercise their freedoms, competent to question the basic assumptions that govern political life, and skilled enough to participate in shaping the basic social, political, and economic orders that govern their lives. Two factors, however, work against such debate. First, there are very few public spheres left that provide the space for such conversations to take place. Second, it is increasingly difficult for young people and adults outside of the market to translate private problems into public concerns or to relate public issues to private considerations. For many young people and adults today, the private sphere has become the only space in which to imagine any sense of hope, pleasure, or possibility. Reduced to the act of consuming, citizenship is “mostly about forgetting, not learning.”<sup>6</sup>

The decline of democratic values and informed citizenship can be seen in research studies done by The Justice Project in 2001 in which a substantial number of teenagers and young people were asked what they thought democracy meant. The answers testified to a growing depoliticization of American life and were largely along the following lines: “Nothing,” “I don’t know,” or “My rights, just like, pride, I guess, to some extent,

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Lee. “Memoir of a Former Urban Debate League Participant.” *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* 19 (1998): 93-6.

<sup>4</sup> High School Debate: Changing Lives with the Power of Words. *U.S. Program Notes: A Newsletter of the Open Society Institute*. July 1999. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Boggs, *The End of Politics* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000) ix.

<sup>6</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 82.



and paying taxes,” or “I just think, like, what does it really mean? I know it’s our, like, our government, but I don’t know what it technically is.”<sup>7</sup>

One consequence of this decline is that all levels of government are being hollowed out, their role reduced to dismantling the gains of the welfare state as they increasingly construct politics that criminalize social problems and prioritize penal methods over social investments. When citizenship is reduced to consumerism, it should come as no surprise that people develop an indifference to civic engagement and participation in democratic public life.

Unlike some theorists who suggest that politics as critical exchange and social engagement is either dead or in a state of terminal arrest, I believe that the current depressing state of politics points to an urgent challenge: reformulating the crisis of democracy as a fundamental crisis of vision, meaning, education, and political agency. Central to my argument is the assumption that politics is not simply about power, but also, as Cornelius Castoriadis points out, “has to do with political judgments and value choices,”<sup>8</sup> meaning that questions of civic education— learning how to become a skilled citizen— are central to democracy itself.

Educators at all levels need to challenge the assumption that politics is dead, or the nature of politics will be determined exclusively by government leaders and experts in the heat of moral frenzy. Educators need to take a more critical position, arguing that knowledge, debate, and dialogue about pressing social problems offer individuals and groups some hope in shaping the conditions that bear down on their lives. Public civic engagement is essential if the concepts of social life and the public sphere are to be used to revitalize the language of civic education and democratization as Part of a broader discourse of political agency and critical citizenship in a global world. Linking the social to democratic public values represents an attempt, however incomplete, to link democracy to public action, as Part of a comprehensive attempt to revitalize individual and social agency, civic activism, and citizen access to decision making while simultaneously addressing basic problems of social justice and global democracy.

Urban Debate Leagues represent one reason for hope. Hope is more than romantic idealism, it is also the condition that highlights images of an alternative politics and pedagogy. Hope is not simply wishful thinking; it is written into those various struggles waged by brave men and women for civil rights, racial justice, decent working conditions, and a society cleansed of war. Hope is the refusal to stand still in the face of human suffering, and it is learned by example, inflamed by the passion for a better life, and undertaken as an example of civic courage.

The work of Urban Debate Leagues provides a tangible reason to be hopeful. Urban debaters, as they devour newspapers and periodicals, confront information detailing certain realities about our world including the use of war, the severity of environmental

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Ann Greenberg, “What Young Voters Want,” *The Nation*, February 11, 2001, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, “Institution and Autonomy,” in Peter Osborne, *A Critical Sense: Interviews with Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 8.

degradation, and the increasing gap between the rich and working poor. In the face of these realities, the mere optimistic tendency to expect the best possible outcome cannot and does not suffice. The students and teachers who participate in UDLs hold on to hope because they have seen loved ones get kicked and stand back up. Those attracted to UDLs understand that when a person gets kicked and stands back up, she asserts her basic human dignity. Urban debaters bring hope with them to the activity, and then through their participation in debate they gather the tools necessary to be the architects of a new, more equitable, future.

In a world where high stakes testing is a given, it is crucial to invest in substantive efforts that help schools reach accountability measures by improving the quality of teaching and learning. Urban Debate Leagues represent one crucial and exciting way to improve an urban public school system's curriculum and its academic ethos and norms. I am enormously impressed with the way that UDLs support teachers who seek to build classrooms and schools that represent student voices, foster rigorous and critical investigations into pressing issues of social concern, and prepare students to be active and engaged learners. The UDL movement understands that we can not afford to stifle the critical and creative impulses and passions of our teachers and students. In UDLs teachers and students who might otherwise fall through the cracks instead find an outlet. In the words of Anthony Grobe, an English teacher at Cleveland Naval Academy in St. Louis, "Coaching energizes me after a long school day. The passion and commitment of my debaters validates my work as a teacher. The after school practices are invigorating, the students are excited about ideas. They work with each other in order to research and write about issues concerning their lives."<sup>9</sup>

The work of Urban Debate Leagues is aligned with forms of assessment that enhance the possibility for self and social empowerment among children, forms of assessment that promote critical modes of inquiry and creativity as opposed to those that shut down self-respect and motivation by instilling a sense of failure or humiliation. UDLs embody an effort to improve education by embracing assessments that get students to reflect on their work and the work of others-as a measure of deliberation, critical analysis, and dialogue. The way that UDLs approach the question of assessment makes it clear that accountability needs to be Part of a broader agenda for equity, and must be understood within a notion of schooling that rejects learning simply as the mastery of discrete skills and bodies of information.

Despite the war against youth and efforts to dismantle the notion and reality of quality public education, many youth and educators around the country are choosing to embrace a politics of hope. Local efforts to ignite student passion for substantive democracy and racial and economic justice, such as Urban Debate Leagues, demon-

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<sup>9</sup> This quote is taken from an interview with Anthony Grobe. The excerpt is available online at [www.urbandebate.org/endorsements](http://www.urbandebate.org/endorsements).

strate that power as a form of domination is never absolute and oppression always produces some form of resistance. Fortunately, UDLs are adding their voices to a larger chorus as more and more young people nationally and internationally are mobilizing, and they are struggling to construct an alternative future in which their voices can be heard as Part of a broader movement to make democracy and social justice realizable.

The message that appears to unite this generation of youth, and it is a message that resonates deeply with the UDL movement, is that a more democratic and just world is possible. Such a world, however, can only be realized through the collective struggles of many people willing to unite in their efforts to make real the possibilities and promises of a truly democratic world order.

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### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Discuss with classmates and express your opinions (with concrete support) about the continuing validity today of the following statements in Savio's speech:

"The most crucial problems facing the United States today are the problem of automation and the problem of racial injustice." [The problem of automation refers to the dwindling availability of jobs because of automated services, in factory production as well as in kinds of work like automated bank tellers and telephone response lines.]

"The university is the place where people begin seriously to question the conditions of their existence and raise the issue of whether they can be committed to the society they have been born into."

"Many students here at the University, many people in society, are wandering aimlessly about. Strangers in their own lives, there is no place for them. . . . [They are] looking toward a very bleak existence afterward in a game in which all of the rules have been made up—rules which we can not really amend."

"The university is well structured, well tooled, to turn out people with all the sharp edges worn off—the well-rounded person." (Explain Savio's use of irony here.)

"The 'futures' and 'careers' for which American students now prepare are for the most part intellectual and moral wastelands. This chrome-plated consumers' paradise would have us grow up to be well-behaved children."

Savio characterizes the university administration as a bureaucracy. Write about any experiences you have had with bureaucracy at your college or university that would confirm or contradict his account. Have you and your schoolmates discovered any effective means of getting satisfaction in dealing with such bureaucracies?

Write a paper tracing the continuity of ideas in the citations from Crevecoeur, Jefferson, and Emerson, and the readings by Savio, Moberg, and Giroux. What similar concern is expressed in Jefferson's comments on the power of the wealthy and Savio's on "the financial plutocrats"? (See the definition of plutocracy in chapter 15.) Savio was referring to the regents of the University of California, political appointments by the governor consisting primarily of conservative executives of the largest corporations in California, who pressured the University of California's president Clark Kerr to crack down on student activism in the civil rights movement and other off-campus liberal political causes. You might want to do some research on the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley or of the civil rights movement in the fifties and sixties.

Singly or in discussion groups, compare Adolph Reed's "Majoring in Debt" with your own situation regarding the cost of college, student loans and other financial aid, and the need to work at outside jobs to get through college. If the conclusion is in agreement with Reed, discuss ways in which this issue might become a platform for student activism and draft a resolution for legislative action at the state and national level. Dis-

cuss possible tactics with your student government leaders. Compare the positions on college costs and financial aid of the Republican and Democratic parties and their leaders, nationally and in your state. Write letters to, or interview, your national and state senators and representatives, candidates for office, and political party committees to voice your concern and ask them if they would support a program of legislative action. Write opinion columns for your campus or community newspaper and local TV and radio stations. Or contact the organization Reed discusses in the concluding section, the Debs-Jones-Douglas Institute, about its campaign for free higher education.

The main premise of Reed's "Majoring in Debt" is, "Higher Education is a basic social good. As such, it should be available to all, without cost, who meet admission standards. The federal government . . . should bear primary responsibility for providing free college to all." This assertion, which expresses an opinion that is politically to the left of Democratic Party liberals on the issue (the article appeared in the leftist *Progressive* magazine, and Reed identifies with the leftist Labor Party), clearly runs contrary to established American policies. On what ideological grounds would conservatives oppose it? (See the points of opposition between conservatives and liberals or leftists in Chapter 15.) An editorial on the same topic as Reed's article, titled "Public Colleges, Broken Promises," in the *New York Times*, May 5, 2002, p. 14, said, "Once seen as a benefit to society as a whole, a college education is now viewed as a boon to an individual, who should be forced to pay for it." The editorial, like Reed, disagrees with this current view. Discuss and write about whether society or the individual should bear the primary financial responsibility for college, and why. Liberals in general argue that public money spent on education is one of the best investments a society can make, producing financial returns far exceeding the investment. Can you find conservative refutations of this argument? Do some research on the financial costs and benefits of public spending on colleges and universities for communities and the nation, as well as for corporate and other employers and beneficiaries of university research, and on the financial productivity of college graduates versus high school graduates. In most other democracies, higher education at the best universities remains free or costs relatively little. The Scandinavian countries even pay all college students a salary; do research on their justification for this and what the socioeconomic consequences are.

One obvious conservative rebuttal to Reed is that his proposal would be exorbitantly expensive, necessitating large tax increases. What sources for financing it does he recommend, and how persuasive is his case for claiming they would not necessitate tax increases for individuals? (Research his claim about "recently opened corporate tax loopholes," in, for example, Paul Krugman's *The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century*.) Debate the pros and cons of his implication that tax money would be better spent on education than on war in Iraq. He further supports his case with an analogy with the GI Bill of Rights after World War II. Debate the soundness of this analogy, and research the history of the GI Bill. He also makes an analogy with the federal government guaranteeing access to primary and secondary education. How accurate is this analogy?

How does Giroux's account in "The Abandoned Generation" of the situation of young people in America today match up with your personal experience and observations? He is talking mainly about poor, urban youth, but to what extent does what he says extend to other segments of society? Look up the sources in his footnotes 3, 4, and 9 to find out more about Urban Debate Leagues and the possibility of starting similar activities in secondary schools or colleges in your area.

Regarding Giroux, Moberg's "Students Stand Up for Workers' Rights" and the Young America's Foundation (YAF) Web site, the social concerns and forms of activism that Moberg and Giroux describe (and obviously endorse) are all liberal or leftist, while the YAF's forms are conservative. Contrast the issues that the two sides consider most important for student activists. Are there any points on which you think they might agree? What can you infer about the basic ideological differences between them and what lines of argument each would use in rebuttal to the other? (See "A Guide to Political Terms and Positions" in Chapter 15.) Do you think the forms of campus activity Giroux and Moberg advocate would fall in the category of what YAF considers "political correctness"? Debate the accuracy of this label in application to these articles. Do some primary research, singly or in teams of students, on what organizations and forms of conservative and liberal activism are currently represented on your own and neighboring campuses or communities. Interview representatives of these organizations, as well as students, faculty, and administrators, to get a diversity of opinions for and against them. Also see the two readings on the campus antisweatshop movement in Chapter 6. See Chapter 23 for a list of conservative and liberal or leftist student organizations, Web sites, and Listservs.

## A Preview Case: September 11, 2001

The three articles "The Voices of Dissent," "Thoughts on September 11," and "Faced with Evil on a Grand Scale, Nothing Is Relative" appeared shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The opposing viewpoints within them serve well both as an illustration of ideas expressed in the preceding chapter, such as the tradition of writers and intellectuals as critics of mainstream social opinion, and as an introduction to the rhetorical and critical-thinking topics addressed throughout this book, as indicated in the exercises following the readings. The opposed voices were those of William J. Bennett, a prominent conservative spokesperson for the Republican Party and indirectly for the administration of President George W. Bush, and Susan Sontag, Arundhati Roy, and Barbara Kingsolver, all of whom are intellectuals who write novels and essays and who are political leftists—that is, more liberal than the current leadership of the Democratic Party. However, Sontag, Roy, and Kingsolver are not themselves speaking in "The Voices of Dissent" but are represented by David Gates, a *Newsweek* staff member writing an opinion column, so their views are filtered **semantically** through his secondhand, subjective account. (See chapters 2 and 5 on evaluating

sources' subjective biases.) The text of Sontag's article that Gates discusses follows his article, so you can check the accuracy of his account, particularly as to whether or not he commits the fallacy of **quotation out of context**. You also might do an Internet search to find the texts of the articles by Roy in the *Guardian* (London), and Kingsolver in the *San Francisco Chronicle* following September 11. By the time you read this, some of the issues in these pieces will undoubtedly have become dated; however, this fact can help provide the basis for a historical analysis through which you can judge how well each of the authors' views holds up in retrospect, and it is a safe prediction that the "scripts" of the opponents here will be replayed on whatever similar issues may develop in the meantime.

While short opinion columns like these are instructive for revealing their authors' particular viewpoint and lines of argument, they are usually inadequate for providing much supportive reasoning and documentation. If you write a paper on these topics, particularly one the length of a term paper, you will need to research a diversity of more substantiated sources on issues like the history in recent decades of American involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and elsewhere in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as the nature of terrorist organizations. Short articles also almost inevitably necessitate a degree of **oversimplification** of complex issues and of overgeneralization. (See discussion of these topics in chapters 7 and 10.) Our analysis here will address this issue in the source readings.

*The Voices of Dissent*]

David Gates

*Newsweek*, November 19, 2001

Despite Shelley's old wheeze about poets beworld, writers don't have a great track record in the unacknowledged legislators of the when it comes to politics. For every savvy

Chaucer<sup>10</sup> (a career diplomat) or Vaclav Havel,<sup>11</sup> there seem to be a dozen Allen Ginsbergs<sup>12</sup> trying to levitate the Pentagon. Most writers are dissenters by nature—and dissent, by definition, implies an orthodoxy that's getting its way. The hell of it is, history often proves dissenting writers weren't crazy. Now, had Robert Lowell<sup>13</sup> rather than Robert McNamara been LBJ's secretary of Defense . . . oh well.

Since September 11, political dissent has seemed a decadent luxury, rather than a democratic necessity. The new united-westand orthodoxy holds that we're all engaged in a war of unquestionable good against inexplicable evil—that, in fact, the attempt to

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<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, fourteenth-century author of *The Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>11</sup> Vaclav Havel, Czechoslovakian playwright who was imprisoned for writing and speaking against Soviet domination of his country in the 1980s, then became its president after the fall of Communism.

<sup>12</sup> Allen Ginsberg, American poet who led a mock-serious ceremony in Washington in the late 1960s attempting to end the Vietnam War by causing the Pentagon building to levitate.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Lowell, another prominent American poet who was an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War.



understand the enemy's perception of us is disloyal—and that bombing Afghanistan, approved by 90 percent of Americans, is both morally and practically justified. These assumptions are worth questioning, if only for prudential reasons. But our official opposition party has signed on; so have most of the world's leaders. And again, the writers won't get with the program. John le Carre and Alan Gurganus have written to critique the war and the United States' arrogance; Alice Walker has been ridiculed for saying the only "punishment" that will work on Osama bin Laden is love. (Didn't this ring a bell with the Bible-reading Christians around the president?) But the most audible voices have been those of Susan Sontag and Barbara Kingsolver, and the Indian novelist Arundhati Roy.

Sontag, the essayist and author of the National Book Award-winning "In America: A Novel," drew a bizarrely fierce reaction for a 473-word New Yorker piece. She called the president "robotic" (mild by pre-September 11 rules), said the attacks were motivated by "specific American alliances and actions" (it must have been *something*), deemed courage "morally neutral" (ask a GI who fought the SS) and broadly hinted that high-altitude bombing was more cowardly than flying airplanes into buildings (inflammatory, but arguable). But her main point was that the government was talking down to us. "They consider their task to be . . . confidencebuilding and grief management. Politics, the politics of a democracy—which entails disagreement, which promotes candor—has been replaced by psychotherapy." For this, she was called a "traitor" and a "moral idiot." On ABC's "Nightline," Sontag expressed astonishment; she thinks the bombing is a bad idea, but she's no pacifist, believes there can be no compromise with Islamist extremism—"and, no, I don't think we have brought this upon ourselves, which is of course a view that has been attributed to me."

Sontag denied that the bombing of Afghanistan is morally equivalent to the attack on the World Trade Center; but Roy, author of "The God of Small Things," believes it is. "Each innocent person that is killed must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilians who died in New York and Washington," Roy wrote in London's Guardian. Her belletristic<sup>14</sup> analysis of bin Laden as "the American president's dark doppelganger"<sup>1516</sup> crosses over into Sillyville. But her image of America is something we should take seriously: "Its merciless economic agenda . . . has munched the economics of poor countries like a cloud of locusts." But for Americans, Roy's strongest argument against the war may be the practical one. "Operation Enduring Freedom is ostensibly being fought to uphold the American Way of life. It will probably end up undermining it completely. It will spawn more anger and terror across the world. For ordinary people in America, it will mean lives lived in a climate of sickening uncertainty: will my child be safe in school? . . . Will my love come home tonight?"

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<sup>14</sup> Belletristic. Literary. From a French term for literature, *les belles lettres*, literally "beautiful letters."

<sup>15</sup> Another writer in these pages, David Anson, in *Newsweek*.

<sup>16</sup> "Doppelganger." German, "double."

Both Sontag and Roy declined requests for an interview. But Kingsolver—whom another writer in these pages<sup>(2)</sup> has called “mindless”—was glad to talk. “Well, I’m babbling,” the author of “The Poisonwood Bible” said after summarizing the essay she’d just sent to her agent about FDR’s “Four Freedoms” speech. “You haven’t even asked me a question.” What got my colleague up on his hind legs was a line from a San Francisco Chronicle op-ed piece suggesting that the flag has come to stand for “intimidation, censorship, violence, bigotry, sexism, homophobia, and shoving the Constitution through a paper shredder. Whom are we calling terrorists here?” But Kingsolver was simply talking about the hard right’s co-opting of patriotic symbolism: “My patriotic duty is to recapture my flag from the men now waving it in the name of jingoism and censorship.”

Ever since September 11, Kingsolver has been pouring out editorials and essays. Her dissent, like Roy’s, is both moral and practical. “If our goal is to reduce the number of people in the world who would like to kill us,” she says, “this is not the way to go about it.” She resents having her patriotism impugned. “I’m speaking out *because* I’m a patriot,” she says. “Because I love my country and I want it to do the right thing.” And she also resents being told—as she has been lately—that she should stick to writing novels. “It’s a nasty slapdown that’s been used against those of us, particularly Arundhati Roy, who have spoken out,” Kingsolver says. “As if the fact of our being novelists disqualified us for any other sort of speech. I can’t make any sense of that. Words are my tools. Words are what I have to offer.”

*Thoughts on September 11, 2001*]

*By Susan Sontag*

From *The New Yorker* September 24, 2001

The disconnect between last Tuesday’s monstrous dose of reality and the self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions being peddled by public figures and TV commentators is startling, depressing. The voices licensed to follow the event seem to have joined together in a campaign to infantize the public. Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a “cowardly” attack on “civilization” or “liberty” or “humanity” or the “free world” but an attack on the world’s self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How

many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? And if the word “cowardly” is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday’s slaughter, they were not cowards.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Words in **boldface** throughout the book refer to terms whose definitions can be found in the glossary of rhetorical and critical thinking terms at the end of the book and/or in Chapter 12, “Logical and Rhetorical Fallacies.” The boldfacing also calls attention to ways these terms can be incorporated into critical writing.

Our leaders are bent on convincing us that everything is O.K. America is not afraid. Our spirit is unbroken, although this was a

day that will live in infamy and America is now at war. But everything is not O.K. And this was not Pearl Harbor. We have a robotic President who assures us that America still stands tall. A wide spectrum of public figures, in and out of office, who are strongly opposed to the policies being pursued abroad by this Administration apparently feel free to say nothing more than that they stand united behind President Bush. A lot of thinking needs to be done, and perhaps is being done in Washington and elsewhere, about the ineptitude of American intelligence and counter-intelligence, about options available to American foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East, and about what constitutes a smart program of military defense. But the public is not being asked to bear much of the burden of reality. The unanimously applauded, self-congratulatory bromides of a Soviet Party Congress seemed contemptible.

The unanimity of the sanctimonious, reality-concealing rhetoric spouted by American officials and media commentators in recent days seems, well, unworthy of a mature democracy.

Those in public office have let us know that they consider their task to be a manipulative one: confidence-building and grief management. Politics, the politics of a democracy—which entails disagreement, which promotes candor—has been replaced by psychotherapy. Let's by all means grieve together. But let's not be stupid together. A few shreds of historical awareness might help us understand what has just happened, and what may continue to happen. "Our country is strong," we are told again and again. I for one don't find this entirely consoling. Who doubts that America is strong? But that's not all America has to be.

## **Faced with Evil on a Grand Scale, Nothing Is Relative**

*By William J. Bennett*

*From Los Angeles Times October 1, 2001*

In the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, America will be changed politically, militarily, culturally, psychologically. It is too close to the events to understand their full impact. But one certain result is that these events have forced us to clarify and answer again universal questions that have been muddled over the past four decades.

Speaking about World War II, C. S. Lewis put it this way: "The war creates no absolutely new situation. It simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice."

For too long, we have ignored the hostility shown toward America and democratic principles by some Muslims who adhere to a militant and radical interpretation of the Koran. We have created a moral equivalence between Israel and the Palestinians who seek to eradicate Israel. We have ignored Islamic clarion calls for our destruction and

the bombings of our embassies and the U.S. destroyer Cole. This situation has not changed, but now we realize what the situation is.

This is a moment of moral clarity in the United States. For almost 40 years, we have been a nation that has questioned whether good and evil, right and wrong, true and false really exist. Some—particularly those in our institutions of higher learning and even some inside our own government—have wondered whether America is really better than its enemies around the world. After the events of Sept. 11, we should no longer be unsure of these things, even in the academy. We have seen the face and felt the hand of evil. Moral clarity should bring with it moral confidence and we must be reassured of some things.

Good and evil have never gone away; we merely had the luxury to question their existence. At the beginning of Allan Bloom's classic "The Closing of the American Mind," he says, "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: Almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative." Can one culture, it was asked, really presume to say what should be the case in other cultures? Are there any cross-cultural values?

Yes. The use of commercial airplanes as missiles, guided into buildings where civilians work, is evil. The goal of the hijackers was the intentional destruction of innocent life so as to strike fear into the heart of America. And what they did was wrong, Not wrong given our point of view or because we were the victims or because of our JudeoChristian tradition but simply wrong.

It has been said that these attacks were the inevitable reaction to modern-day American *imperialism*. They are retribution, it is claimed, for our support of Israel, our attacks on Saddam Hussein, cruise missiles launched at Afghanistan and Sudan.

This is nonsense. America's support for human rights and democracy is our noblest export to the world. And when we act in accord with those principles, time after time after time, we act well and honorably. We are not hated because we support Israel; we are hated because liberal democracy is incompatible with militant Islam. Despite what Hussein and Osama bin Laden and, shamefully, some American clerics have said, America was not punished because we are bad, but because we are good.

It is, therefore, past time for what novelist Tom Wolfe has called the "great relearning." We have engaged in a frivolous dalliance with dangerous theories—relativism, historicism, values clarification. Now, when faced with evil on such a grand scale, we should see these theories of what they are: empty. We must begin to have the courage of our convictions, to believe that some actions are good and some evil and to act on those beliefs to prevent evil.

And so we must respond to these attacks and prevent future attacks. We do this to protect our own citizens and our own way of life. We do this to protect the idea that good and evil exist and that man is capable of soaring to great heights and sinking to terrible lows. We do this, in the end, to prevent the world from becoming the prisoner of terrorists, their way of battle, their way of thinking, their way of life, their way of death.

The recognition that some things are right and some things are wrong has come at a terrible cost of thousands of lives lost. The only comparable tragedy in American history, I believe, was the Civil War. And so we must join in the hopes of our 16th president and pray ‘that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth.’”

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Probably the most frequent point of disagreement in public disputes concerns the causes of the events at issue. (See Chapter 13, “Causal Analysis.”) Certainly a major point of opposition between Bennett and the three authors discussed in Newsweek lies in their causal analysis of the reasons that many people in Muslim countries and elsewhere hate America. Sontag sees the terrorist attacks as a consequence of “specific American alliances and actions,” including “the ongoing American bombing of Iraq” and “American foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East” (referring mainly to America’s support of Israel against Palestinians), and Roy sees as one cause the destructive effects of American global economic policies on poor countries (presumably like India, her native country). Bennett likewise mentions (in order to refute them) alleged “reaction to modern-day American imperialism” and “our support of Israel, our attacks on Saddam Hussein [in Iraq], cruise missiles launched at Afghanistan and Sudan [during Bill Clinton’s presidency].” Bennett’s alternative explanation is that “we are not hated because we support Israel; we are hated because liberal democracy is incompatible with militant Islam.” (A couple of points may be unclear here. First, it is ambiguous whether Bennett is constructing an enthymeme with a hidden premise or implied assertion [see Chapter 2] , that Israel is a democracy, which is why it and its American support are hated by militant Islam, or whether he is saying that American democracy, not our support of Israel, is what militant Islam hates. Second, it is not clear in what sense he is using the adjective “liberal” before “democracy” here, since he is not using the word in opposition to his own well-known conservatism.) Do research on a diversity of sources supporting these opposed causal analyses.

Refer to “A Guide to Political Terms and Positions” in Chapter 15. Among the items in the column under Leftists tend to support are: “Civil [constitutional] and personal liberties,” “Internationalism,” “Pacifism,” and “Questioning of authority—skepticism.” The corresponding items under Rightists tend to support are “Controls on civil and personal liberties” (especially applicable in wartime), “Nationalism,” “Strong military and willingness to go to war,” and “Acceptance of authority, especially in military, police, and strong ‘law and order’ policies.” (Conservatives tend to use the word patriotism, with its positive connotation, rather than the more neutral nationalism; however, leftists typically argue that they too believe in patriotism, but with a more complex definition of the term. See topic 4 below.) To what extent do these terms serve to identify Bennett’s arguments as conservative and Sontag’s, Roy’s, and Kingsolver’s as liberal? Can you infer that Gates’s own viewpoint is liberal, conservative, or neutral?

Another opposition in this list that might have been implicitly involved in these articles is, “Government spending for public services like education” versus “Government spending for military,” since liberals argued that the Bush administration’s willingness to go to war in Afghanistan was partly motivated by the strong influence of military-industrial special interests on that administration and by the exploitation of the war to increase military spending at the expense of public spending for peaceable services. Likewise, in the later list in Chapter 15, “Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric,” which oppositions between right and left lines of argument were implicit in disagreements like these over terrorism and Afghanistan?

Bennett says, “We have seen the face of evil and felt the hand of evil,” and “America was not punished because we are bad, but because we are good.” He opposes the “moral clarity” of this judgment to the “relativism” bred by professors and other intellectuals. To what extent might these be oversimplifications and overgeneralizations? Do they perhaps involve the either-or fallacy, and a false dilemma? That is, few of Bennett’s liberal adversaries (including Sontag, Roy, and Kingsolver) would deny that the terrorist attacks were evil, but they would say that the issues are more complex than the way Bennett poses them. They might argue that it is a logical non sequitur to jump from the proposition that the terrorists were evil to the second proposition, that America is absolutely good—that is, totally innocent in our relations with countries in the Muslim world and elsewhere. They might add that it is not moral relativism to entertain both the beliefs that these attacks were evil and those who died in them were innocent victims and that American foreign policy, past and present, has also created many innocent victims, breeding justifiable anger in many parts of the world. They might agree with Bennett that fanatic Islamic fundamentalism was the immediate cause of the attacks and needed to be retaliated against, while also qualifying that agreement by arguing that the fanatics draw support from Islamic masses and other Third World peoples with legitimate grievances against America, so that retaliating against terrorist acts without addressing those legitimate grievances might be, to some extent, an example of the fallacy of confusion of cause and effect.

Can you find statements by Sontag, Roy, or Kingsolver that might be considered similar oversimplifications, overgeneralizations, or exaggerations? Consider Kingsolver’s suggestion that the American flag has come to stand for “intimidation, censorship, violence, bigotry, sexism, homophobia, and shoving the Constitution through a shredder. Whom are we calling terrorists here?” What kind of evidence would be needed to support these allegations? How could that evidence be balanced against the positive traits of America like those cited by Bennett? Is it a false equation to use the word terrorists in this context, even if the allegations are supportable, in comparison to the mass murders of September 2001?

Gates quotes Roy’s description of Osama bin Laden as “the American president’s dark doppelganger.” Do you agree with Gates’s opinion that her implication that bin Laden and George W Bush are doubles is “Sillyville”? Find the entire text of Roy’s article to see how she supports the claim.

Gates indirectly quotes Alice Walker saying “the only ‘punishment’ that will work on Osama bin Laden is love,” and comments, “Didn’t this ring a bell with the Bible-reading Christians around the president?” What do you think Gates meant by this rhetorical question? Is Walker’s recommendation a credible and realistic one for Christians? See Bennetts book *Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and the War on Terrorism* (2002), pp. 15-43, for an attempt to reconcile Christian pacifist beliefs with the notions of anger and a “just war.”

**Debate these pros and cons of all these arguments among your classmates.**

The tone of all of the authors here is polemical if not invective. (As these terms are defined in Chapter 11, polemical describes a heatedly partisan argument, but one that may or may not be well reasoned and fair minded; invective is an extreme form of polemics that is not well reasoned or fair minded, but one-sided and insulting toward opponents.) Here and in other writings of the same period, Bennett accuses many intellectuals and academics (presumably like Sontag, Roy, and Arundhati) of being “moral relativists” who do not believe “good and evil . . . really exist” or that “America is really better than its enemies around the world.” Do you find this attitude in the statements of the three novelists, and if so, does Bennett’s criticism accurately apply to them, or is he attacking a straw man in their case? Commenting on CNN about Sontag’s *New Yorker* article, Bennett said that she is “a moral idiot.” Sontag denounces “the self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions being peddled by public figures,” “a campaign to infantilize the public,” and “the sanctimonious, realityconcealing rhetoric spouted by American officials and media commentators.” Do you think she would consider Bennett’s column an example of such “selfrighteous drivel”? Would this be an accurate description or just unsubstantiated name-calling? To what extent do you think your responses to these questions are influenced by your own prior political viewpoint? Might you be indulging in rationalization—that is, wishful thinking or believing what you want to believe, rather than trying to make an objective judgment?

Several semantic issues are involved here. Sontag comments on the subjectivity of the words courage and cowardly. Her point is that our ethnocentrism inclines us to apply positive words selectively to our own side and negative ones to our enemies, without considering that they too may be courageous and patriotic, even if we believe their causes are evil. She also suggests that American officials have a double standard in characterizing suicide bombers as “cowardly” while that word might more accurately apply to “those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky,” as in American bombing of Iraq or Afghanistan, ordered by distant officials in Washington. How would you reply to these arguments, and how do you think Bennett would?

Another semantic dispute surrounds the word patriotism. In his book *Why We Fight*, Bennett says of “those in our institutions of higher learning” and other intellectuals that

“those who are unpatriotic are those who are, culturally, the most influential” (141). He explicitly includes Barbara Kingsolver in this group. On the other side, Kingsolver insists, “My patriotic duty is to recapture my flag from the men now waving it in the name of jingoism and censorship.” (Jingoism is a nineteenth-century term meaning flag-waving manipulation of the masses by politicians or the media into unthinking support of a war that might not be just.) Do you think she would include Bennett among those men? Does Bennett’s article imply that he would censor media coverage or public criticism of American military actions? (Government censorship of media during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is a good topic for research and debate, especially with the historical perspective of what has become known about it by the time you read this.) How would you make the distinction between jingoism and authentic appeal to patriotism, and how can we make that distinction in a particular case like the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq? Look up a couple of dictionary definitions of patriotism and see if you can reconcile Bennett’s and Kingsolver’s apparently different definitions.

Roy is quoted as saying, “Each innocent person that is killed [by American forces in Afghanistan] must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of victims who died in New York and Washington.” What moral or practical arguments in support of and against this position can you think of? Does the quotation support Gates’s claim that Roy believes “the bombing of Afghanistan is morally equivalent to the attack on the World Trade Center” and Bennett’s criticism of those who “have wondered whether America is really better than its enemies around the world”? Did those who argued that our killing of an equivalent number of Afghani civilians was a way of “getting even” commit the fallacy of two wrongs make a right?

In Gates’s account, both Roy and Kingsolver follow a line of argument exemplifying one of the critical thinking skills outlined in Chapter 3, “The ability to predict probable consequences of an event or series of events.” Roy says the war against Afghanistan “will spawn more anger and terror across the world.” Kingsolver is quoted as saying, “If our goal is to reduce the number of people in the world who would like to kill us, this is not the way to go about it.” Defenders of America’s invasion of Afghanistan argued that civilian casualties were a necessary evil in the cause of tracking down Al Qaeda leaders and overthrowing the repressive Taliban government. At the time you are reading this, how accurate do these opposing predictions of consequences look? Apply the same question to the similar debates about America’s war on Iraq in 2003.

How specific are Kingsolver, Sontag, and Roy in proposing alternative policies in retaliation against and prevention of attacks like those in September 2001? How specific is Bennett in the policies he advocates? How would you evaluate all four authors in the semantic terms of abstract versus concrete arguments (see Chapter 9)?

Kingsolver responds to critics who say writers like her, Roy, and Sontag should stick to writing novels by saying, “As if the fact of our being novelists disqualified us for any other sort of speech.” Do you think being a novelist qualifies one as an authority on political subjects, or is this an example of the fallacy of transfer of authority? A novel is fictional or imaginative, as opposed to factual writing. The novels of these three



writers, however, do deal with political topics. To what extent does their authority to speak on real political issues depend on how wellinformed, well-written, and true to life their fictional treatment of political issues is? You might read their novels—Sontag’s *In America: A Novel*, Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, and Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible*—as well as their more extensive, nonfiction political writings (such as Roy’s book of essays *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*) in search of answers to these questions.

# Chapter 2. What Is an Argument?

## What Is a Good Argument?

In everyday life, an argument usually means any kind of disagreement—who should clean up the room, did one member of a couple do what the other accused him or her of, and so on. Such arguments often end in screaming matches of “Did not!” “Did too!” Although many public arguments often unfortunately consist of similar screaming matches such as *Crossfire* and political attack ads, it is sometimes possible for personal arguments to be resolved on a more reasoned level, while we as critical citizens should always demand the same of public arguments. Thus the meaning of argumentation in responsible speaking or writing is not simply the expression of an opinion or attitude—though many people are confused on this point—but reasoned *support* for an opinion. To put it another way, when someone expresses a controversial opinion or assertion of truth, the critical citizen asks “*Why* is that true? How do you know that? What reasons or evidence do you have to support it?” If the person expressing the opinion can answer these questions with supporting reasons, she will be making an argument.

Writers of letters to the editor, for example, often simply sound off without any real arguments. Here is one responding to an excerpt in the *San Francisco Chronicle* from a book, *The End of Racism*, by Dinesh D’Souza, a prominent conservative:

*The Chronicle* has done the public a service by allowing D’Souza’s hopelessly twisted rhetoric to besmirch its pages. This allows more thinking citizens to become aware of D’Souza, the right wing’s current lawn jockey, as a grand manipulator of fact and logic, in the spirit of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.

Hopefully, as word spreads about this demagoguery, this will allow more thinking folks to rationally discriminate his message to its rightful place on the trash heap.

The letter is filled with **name-calling**, along with **guilt by association** with Hitler, but fails to provide any evidence that the name-calling is warranted. Furthermore, while the pure expression of an opinion like this one about D’Souza is calculated to win unquestioning agreement from those in our own party and to antagonize those in the opposing party, an effective spoken or written argument intends to *persuade* those who disagree with us to come around to our position, through a process of reasoning, which in this case might consist of quoting “hopelessly twisted rhetoric” in passages from D’Souza’s book, then providing evidence that they are unfactual and illogical.

# What is a Good Argument?

The word *good* here is unfortunately vague and subjective. We are all inclined to judge any argument that agrees with our biases a good one, and any that disagrees a bad one, regardless of its substantive merits. Nevertheless, let us try to define some more-or-less objective criteria.

## A Good Argument Is Well Supported

The means of supporting an argument in a written argument (say, a student paper) include (1) evidence from the writer's personal experiences, examples, anecdotes, reasoned analysis, or common knowledge (truths that are generally acknowledged without significant dispute), (2) **primary research** conducted by the writer (interviews, polls, study of data, experiments, etc.), and, most frequently, (3) **secondary research** (presenting facts, figures, and lines of argument put forth by reputable scholars, journalists, research institutes, or officials, mainly published in periodicals and books, whom you cite in your text, introduced by phrases like "According to Author X," "Author X presents evidence that" or "As Author X argues"). Many of the analyses of arguments in the readings throughout this book focus on disagreements about the quality of opposing sides' supporting evidence.

Of course, it is impractical to provide evidence supporting every assertion you speak or write, and one rhetorical challenge that every writer (including myself throughout this book) faces with every sentence is calculating which assertions of fact or opinion your readers are likely to accept without support and which ones some readers are likely to demand support for in order to be persuaded of their truth. In conversation, when the speaker makes an assertion that the listener disputes, the listener will *ask* the speaker for support, but when you are writing, without immediate feedback from the audience, you need to imagine your readers' response. Thus, developing your consciousness of writing for an **audience** consists largely of this calculation of what the exact mind-set is of your readers, so that you can anticipate what assertions you need to support.

## A Good Argument Distinguishes Facts from Opinions, Takes Care to Verify Facts, and Expresses Informed Opinions

The distinction between fact and opinion may seem like a simple one, but it is the source of constant, fierce disagreements in public rhetoric, even—or *especially*—among the most knowledgeable scholars, journalists, and politicians. In many of the courses you take, you learn facts that have been verified beyond much reasonable dispute— $2 \times 2 = 4$ , water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, and so on. But when it comes to issues like why the American Revolution took place or exactly what the political beliefs of the Founding Fathers

were, there is wide disagreement among historians over the facts. In such issues, and nearly always in more contemporary public controversies, what is involved is actually differing viewpoints on, opinions about, or interpretations of the facts. Confusion arises, however, when people feel certain that they know the facts rather than simply having a **viewpoint** on the facts that may be faulty.

In writing arguments yourself or evaluating other writers' arguments, then, you need first to distinguish between arguments that are phrased as statements of fact and those phrased as statements of opinion. If you write, "George W. Bush was the best president in

American history" or "George W. Bush was the worst president in American history," you really mean your opinion is that this is a fact, so you should preface the assertion by a phrase like "In my opinion." For practical purposes, however, making the distinction between statements of fact and opinion is less important than establishing the quality of *support* for assertions, whichever way they are worded; in either case you need to present *evidence* about Bush in comparison to his predecessors.

*Verifying Facts.* Scholarly writing, by either professors or students, along with responsible journalism and book publishing, is distinguished from the flood of information emitted by mass media, political propaganda, and barroom argumentation by scrupulous attention to getting facts right. "Responsible" newspapers, magazines, and book publishers hire professional fact-checkers who go to great lengths to verify that any "facts" published are accurate. Unfortunately, fact-checking has been a casualty of the rise of 24/7 cable news networks, talk radio, and trash-talking political books, which typically do not employ fact-checkers and are concerned little or not at all with distinguishing facts from rumors.

*Informed versus Uninformed Opinions.* Some college students fall into one of two extreme positions in regard to expressing opinions. At one extreme are those who somewhere in their education were taught never to write in the first person or express opinions in writing or who for other reasons are reluctant to do so. This attitude often seems to derive from instruction in scientific or technical report writing, which is supposed to be objective and in which the writer's personality and opinions would be irrelevant. In many other forms of writing, however, the expression of the writer's personal viewpoint or opinion is perfectly legitimate and valuable. Newspapers and magazines have a page or an entire section devoted to opinion, including editorials (written by the publication's own editorial board), letters to the editor, and opinion columns written by staffers, syndicated columnists, or freelance contributors and commonly published on the "op-ed" page, opposite the editorial page (the shorter papers—say 1,000 words or less—that you write in an argumentative-writing class can be similar in form). Serious journalistic reports in periodicals or books (more like what you will write for term papers or a senior project) also often contain a large degree of opinion, and there are many magazines known as "journals of opinion" that are essential reading for college students and graduates and that provide models of writing throughout this book. The

writing of opinion, then, is a perfectly legitimate form; however, you do need to learn the qualities that distinguish an effective expression of opinion from an ineffective one.

At the other extreme from students who are overly shy about expressing their opinions are those students—and many older citizens—who have a know-it-all attitude, or **primary certitude**. They are apt to make comments like “It’s a free country, and everyone’s entitled to their opinions,” or “My opinion’s as good as anybody else’s.” Unfortunately, these attitudes are misguided when applied to college studies. It is true that everyone is entitled to express his or her opinions, but it is not true that all opinions about all subjects are equally “good”; an opinion that is educated, or informed, on the subject at issue and well supported, is more worth listening to—and certainly more worth *reading*—than one that is uninformed and poorly supported. The act of writing lends statements permanence and the need for verification more than speaking them usually does. Uninformed or poorly supported statements might slip by in the rush of conversation, but writing freezes them on the page where their weaknesses become visible, especially in rereading.

Know-it-alls are typically unaware that their opinions are not well informed or supported. They are already convinced that their opinions correspond to the facts, or the truth, so that they do not need any support, and they have closed their minds to any evidence to the contrary. In other words, their opinions are *prejudiced*—that is, they have prejudged the issue on insufficient study and evidence, or have expressed a *hasty judgment*. The fault here is not expressing strong or emotional opinions in itself; not every strong opinion is a prejudiced one. An unprejudiced opinion, however adamant or emotional, is one that is justified by the facts of the situation, as verified by evidence, and by the knowledge and broad-mindedness undergirding the speaker’s or writer’s arguments. The quality of support for any opinion is one of the many judgment calls you need to make in writing your own arguments and evaluating others’.

Another common misunderstanding about opinions is reflected when, in response to some particularly outrageous statement by a public figure, someone comments, “Well, that’s just his opinion,” as though that is all there is to it. For example, in Rush Limbaugh’s passage on Anita Hill quoted in Chapter 5, he states—as if it is a fact, not just his opinion—that Hill lied about Clarence Thomas, and he implies that Hill was put up to lying by the NAACP and other civil rights organizations. To make this kind of accusation in public without providing sufficient evidence to support it amounts to slander, and Hill could have sued Limbaugh. (The ever growing frequency of such slanderous accusations through the media, however, has made legal action impractical in most cases.) Moreover, the opinions of an influential figure like Limbaugh can affect public opinion and even sway elections—Republican leaders in fact paid tribute to Limbaugh for contributing to their victory in the 1994 congressional elections. Public figures have a responsibility not to make defamatory statements without adequate

support; yet such statements have proliferated in public discourse in recent years, especially under the influence of talk radio and political negative campaigning and attack advertising, where the stakes seem to increase toward ever more inflammatory rhetoric. If audience members shrug off such rhetoric by saying it's just opinion, then they are contributing to a serious debasement of our national discourse.

The increasing tendency for Americans to express strong opinions on public topics about which they are ignorant is the subject of the following article from the *New Yorker*:

\*\*\*\*“The Intellectual Free Lunch”

By Michael Kinsley

From *The New Yorker* February 6, 1995

The weekend before President Clinton's State of the Union Address, the *Wall Street Journal* assembled a focus group of middle-class white males—the demographic group *du jour*—to plumb the depth of their proverbial anger. The results were highly satisfactory. These guys are mad as hell. They're mad at welfare, they're mad at special-interest lobbyists. “But perhaps the subject that produces the most agreement among the group,” the *Journal* reports, “is the view that Washington should stop sending money abroad and instead zero in on the domestic front.”

A poll released last week by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland contains similar findings. According to this survey, seventy-five per cent of Americans believe that the United States spends “too much” on foreign aid, and sixty-four per cent want foreign-aid spending cut. Apparently, a cavalier eleven per cent of Americans think it's fine to spend “too much” on foreign aid. But there is no denying the poll's larger finding that big majorities say they think the tab is too high.

Respondents were also asked, though, how big a share of the federal budget currently goes to foreign aid. The median answer was fifteen per cent; the average answer was eighteen per cent. The correct answer is less than one per cent: the United States government spends about fourteen billion dollars a year on foreign aid (including military assistance), out of a total budget of a trillion and a half. To a question about how much foreign-aid spending would be “appropriate,” the median answer was five per cent of the budget. A question about how much would be “too little” produced a median answer of three per cent—more than three times the current level of foreign-aid spending.

To the International Policy folks at the University of Maryland, these results demonstrate “strong support for maintaining foreign aid at current spending levels or higher.” That's just their liberal-internationalist spin, of course. You might say with equal justice that the results demonstrate a national wish to see foreign aid cut by two-thirds. It's true that after the pollsters humiliated their subjects with the correct answer to the question about how much (or, rather, how little) the United States spends on foreign aid, only thirty-five per cent of the respondents had the fortitude to say they still

wanted to see it cut. But what people will say after being corrected by an authority figure with a clipboard hardly constitutes “strong support.”

This poll is less interesting for what it shows about foreign aid than for what it shows about American democracy. It’s not just that Americans are scandalously ignorant. It’s that they seem to believe they have a democratic right to their ignorance. All over the country—at dinner tables, in focus groups, on call-in radio shows, and, no doubt, occasionally on the floor of Congress—citizens are expressing outrage about how much we spend on foreign aid, without having the faintest idea what that amount is. This is not, surely, a question of being misinformed. No one—not even Rush Limbaugh—is out there spreading the falsehood that we spend fifteen per cent of the federal budget (two hundred and twenty-five billion dollars) on foreign aid. People are forming and expressing passionate views about foreign aid on the basis of no information at all. Or perhaps they think that the amount being spent on foreign aid is a matter of opinion, like everything else.

Populism, in its latest manifestation, celebrates ignorant opinion and undifferentiated rage. As long as you’re mad at hell and aren’t going to take it anymore, no one will inquire very closely into what, exactly, “it” is and whether you really ought to feel that way. Pandering politicians are partly to blame, to be sure. So is the development christened “hyperdemocracy” by last week’s *Time*: the way the communications revolution is eroding representative government by providing instant feedback between voters’ whims and politicians’ actions. But ubiquitous opinion polls are Part of the problem, too.

The typical opinion poll about, say, foreign aid doesn’t trouble to ask whether the respondent knows the first thing about the topic being opined upon, and no conventional poll disqualifies an answer on the ground of mere total ignorance. The premise of opinion polling is that people are, and of right ought to be, omni-opinionated—that they should have views on all subjects at all times—and that all such views are equally valid. It’s always remarkable how few people say they “aren’t sure” about or “don’t know” the answer to some pollster’s question. (Never thought about it,” “Couldn’t care less,” and “Let me get back to you on that after I’ve done some reading” aren’t even options.) So, given the prominence of polls in our political culture, it’s no surprise that people have come to believe that their opinions on the issues of the day need not be fettered by either facts or reflection.

Add opinions to the list of symptoms of the free-lunch disease that blights American politics. First, in the early nineteen-eighties, came the fiscal free lunch: taxes can be cut without cutting middle-class government benefits. Then, with the end of the Cold War, came the foreign-policy free lunch: America can strut as the world’s super power without putting blood or treasure at risk. Now there’s the intellectual free lunch: I’m entitled to vociferous opinions on any subject, without having to know, or even think, about it.

All this may sound horribly snooty. But it isn’t. It is not the argument that Walter Lippmann made in “Public Opinion,” where he advocated relying on elite “bureaus” of

wise men to make crucial policy decisions. Lippmann's belief was that modern life had rendered public policy too complex for the average voter. But there is nothing especially complex about the factual question of how much the country spends on foreign aid. It may be too heavy a burden of civic responsibility to expect every citizen—what with work and family and life outside politics—to carry this number around in his or her head. But it is not asking too much to expect a citizen to recognize that he or she needs to know that number, at least roughly, in order to have a valid opinion about whether it is too large or too small. Americans are capable of making informed, reflective decisions on policy questions. But they often seem to be under the impression that they needn't bother.

We need a new form of democratic piety. It shows respect, not contempt, for "the people" to hold them to something approaching the intellectual standard you would apply to yourself or a friend. By contrast, it is contemptuous, not respectful, to excuse "the people" from all demands of intellectual rigor or honesty on the ground that their judgments are wise by definition. We honor our friends by challenging them when we think they're wrong. It shows that we take them seriously. Believers in democracy owe "the people" no less.

Note Kinsley's qualification, or **drawing the line**, that he is not snobbishly saying that the masses of Americans are incapable of having informed opinions; on the contrary, he says, "It is contemptuous, not respectful, to excuse 'the people' from all demands of intellectual rigor or honesty on the ground that their judgments are wise by definition." Also note Kinsley's suggestion that an honest way of responding to such poll questions might be "aren't sure," "don't know," or best of all, "Let me get back to you on that after I've done some reading." This suggestion is especially good advice for college students studying controversial current events. You should never be reluctant to admit that you simply don't know enough about a given subject to have a strong opinion on it, nor should your feelings be hurt at the suggestion that you may be ignorant about it. Being ignorant is not the same thing as being *dumb.* Ignorant simply means not knowing something. Even the most brilliant and well-educated people are ignorant about many subjects, and the more honest ones cheerfully admit it. After all, aren't you in college taking courses because you want to overcome your ignorance about the subjects of those courses?

Learning to understand the difference between educated and uneducated, or ignorant, opinions on public issues is in large Part what college study is about. College study, that is, not just in vocational or preprofessional education, but in liberal or general education, which forms the entirety of traditional college education and remains the core of required courses even in most vocationally oriented colleges because it is vitally important for every citizen to understand this difference. This is not to claim that every college graduate has learned to form educated, unprejudiced opinions; some



have not, but they have missed what they should have learned in this regard. Nor is this to claim that no one who is not a college graduate is capable of forming educated opinions; many people who have never gone to college, and who may even have dropped out of high school, develop educated opinions through their own mental initiative. The autobiography of Frederick Douglass is a classic story of a nineteenth-century slave's self-education, against the rigid opposition of his owners, into a powerfully persuasive writer and speaker. Mark Twain is another example; he left school at twelve but educated himself, beginning with his work as an apprentice typesetter at a newspaper, to the point where he became one of the best-read and wisest people of his time.

## A Good Argument Is Cogently Reasoned

Scholars of rhetoric, philosophy, and formal logic split hairs disagreeing about the correct terminology for the elements and structures in reasoning and the criteria for evaluating its quality. Much of this terminology, along with extensive elaborations of formal logic, is not essential for coping with the kinds of arguments we are commonly exposed to in everyday discourse. For the purposes of this book, then, a few simple terms are sufficient to begin with, though they will be refined somewhat further in subsequent sections, especially chapter 11. Arguments are constructed in just a few standard expository sequences. In one sequence, an **assertion** of either opinion or fact, also sometimes called a **claim**, is followed by various kinds of support for it, with phrasing like "because," "for the following reasons," "on the basis of the evidence that," or "for example." (This would be the form of the D'Souza letter if it had supported the assertion about D'Souza's "hopelessly twisted logic" by presenting and analyzing examples of them after making the initial claim.) In another sequence, a series of items of evidence leads to, or supports, a **conclusion** or **inference**, which is introduced by phrases like, "therefore," "thus," or "it follows that." (The D'Souza letter could take this form if the writer began with a series of examples of D'Souza's manipulations of fact and logic, then drew the conclusion from them that his logic is hopelessly twisted.)

These two sequences are simply variants in expository order for making the same argument. There are also two important *categories* of argumentative reasoning, **induction** and **deduction**, both of which can be incorporated in either of these expository sequences. Induction marshals **empirical** evidence (based on systematic observation or experiment), data (facts and figures), or specific examples either to support an assertion or to lead to a conclusion or inference. (An oddity of common usage is the expression "I deduce that," which in fact means "I induce," as in "I induce from all these antique cars on this road that they are probably going to, or from, a car show.") There are many forms of inductive reasoning, including *reasoning by analogy* (for example, Republicans might argue that the Democratic presidential candidate is very similar to Democratic presidential candidates of the past, so we should expect similar policies if that candidate is elected); *causal reasoning*, where typically we use correlations between two events or kinds of events and other reasons as supporting evidence for claims

that one event caused the other; *hypothesis testing*, where the predictions from a hypothesis that turn out to be correct are used as supporting evidence for the correctness of the hypothesis; and *argument to the best explanation*, where there are competing explanations or theories and one explanation is chosen because it explains the evidence more accurately and straightforwardly than its competitors and/or it explains a wider range of evidence.

In each of these kinds of inductive argument, although the supporting reasons, if correct, don't exactly guarantee the assertion they are used to support (you could still hypothesize alternative assertions as being correct), they still provide solid grounds for accepting the assertion. When the reasons or evidence do not adequately support the conclusion drawn from them, this kind of **non sequitur** ("It does not follow") is, especially in blatant cases, called an **inductive leap**.

Deductive reasoning is based historically on the **sylllogism** in classical logic, in which two **premises** lead inescapably to a conclusion, as in the standard example, "All humans are mortal. Socrates is a human. Therefore, Socrates is mortal." (A syllogism can also take the form "If all humans are mortal, and Socrates is a human, then Socrates is mortal.") A common variant is the **enthymeme**, in which one of the premises is **implied** or **hidden**, not explicitly stated: "Socrates is a human; therefore, Socrates is mortal." The D'Souza letter could have been written as an enthymeme, something like: "D'Souza manipulates facts and logic; therefore, he is not a credible source." Here the implicit premise is "Anyone who manipulates facts and logic is not a credible source," a premise that doesn't really need to be made explicit because it is self-evident.

The next question is when a sequence of inductive or deductive reasoning adds up to a *good* argument. Actually, logicians, mainly in the discipline of philosophy, use an array of more specifically definable terms than *good*, such as *valid*, *sound*, *strong*, and *cogent*. Some logicians use *valid* to refer only to the internal logic of a deductive argument—whether the conclusion follows inescapably from the premises, regardless of the adequacy of support for the premises—so that rules this word out for broader use. Let's try instead to use *sound* here, then, just to judge the logic of an argument. Most broadly, in inductive reasoning, a sound argument is one in which the evidence presented is accurate and adequate to support the initial assertion or claim, or to justify the conclusion or inference reached from the evidence. In deductive reasoning, a sound argument is one in which (1) the evidence supporting the premises is accurate and adequate, and (2) the conclusion follows from the premises.

One theoretical difference between induction and deduction is that the truth of the conclusions reached through induction typically has only a greater or lesser degree of *probability* or empirical verifiability, whereas the truth of deductive conclusions, if they are soundly reasoned, is *certain*. When I observe the string of antique cars on the highway, the inference that they are going to or from a car show is pretty probable, though it is not certain. I *could* verify the inference empirically by following the cars to their destination or asking their drivers, in which case the inference would be correct for all practical purposes. On the other hand, in a syllogism like the one about

Socrates, the conclusion has the certainty of a mathematical proof: all humans belong to the class or set of mortals; Socrates belongs to the class or set of humans; therefore, the conclusion that Socrates is mortal is inescapable. In common practice, however, deductive arguments—even if they are internally *valid*—are only as good as their premises, which must be arrived at and evaluated by the same criteria as inductive assertions. So the weakness in many deductive arguments lies in the disputability of their explicit or implicit premises.

A common form of deductive non sequitur results from an enthymeme containing a hidden premise, like the D’Souza example above, but one that is more disputable than in that example. The hidden premise is assumed by the writer or speaker to be true, but if it is in fact disputable, then the conclusion drawn from the explicit premise is disputable too. For example, in Mario Savio’s speech “An End to History” in Chapter 1, Savio asserts that the student protesters were simply asking to be treated, in the governance of the university as well as in the larger society, as citizens entitled to “due process of law” and regulations arrived at through the consent of the governed. This argument can be recast as an enthymeme:

*Premise:* Citizens of American democracy are entitled to constitutional rights. *Conclusion:* Students are entitled to constitutional rights within the university.

The hidden premise here is that the university is a democratic institution, within which students are entitled to all the same rights citizens have in the broader society. But this premise was in fact disputed by the University of California (UC) administrators and other critics of the Free Speech Movement, who argued that the administration and faculty must have certain kinds of authority over students that differentiate this relationship from that between a democratic government and its citizens. Savio’s argument would have been stronger, then, if he had addressed this objection and indicated where to draw the line in granting students more legitimate democratic rights, without this position being vulnerable to being pushed to extremes, such as claiming that students have the same right to teach courses as professors.

## A Good Argument Is Relevant, Consistent, and Free of Fallacies

All your arguments should be directly relevant to the issue in dispute, avoiding fallacies of irrelevance like **evading the issue**, **ad hominem**, **straw man**, and **red herring**; a good argument is often distinguished by its ingenuity in calling attention to a particularly relevant, salient point. It might be worth your time now to read ahead to chapters 12 and 13 to familiarize yourself with the definitions of the other most common logical and rhetorical fallacies, which are referred to all through the intermediate chapters. In addition, all your arguments must be consistent with one another, without contradictions or **shifting ground**.

## A Good Argument Is Well Balanced, Fair-Minded, and Qualified

You should evenhandedly acknowledge the strong and weak points of both sides and reach a conclusion that balances them judiciously. If you are arguing for one side in a dispute, you must show that you understand the central arguments on the opposing side and can summarize them in a manner that opponents would accept (avoiding straw-man distortion of the opposition), in order for your **rebuttal** or **refutation** of the opposing position to be effective. (See Chapter 5 for further aids here.)

Academic argumentation is, or should be, characterized by a certain modesty of tone and wording, an avoidance of primary certitude, **hasty conclusions**, and **overgeneralization**. Academic writers tend to use nonabsolute phrases like “tend to.” Instead of saying, “Limbaugh commits the ad hominem fallacy in attacking the motives of civil rights leaders,” they say, “Limbaugh might be committing,” or they pose questions instead of making assertions: “Might Limbaugh be committing . . . ?” In concluding your papers you should be similarly cautious. The kind of wording to aim for is something like, “I have not yet studied this

subject in enough breadth and depth to come to an absolute conclusion about who is right. However, on the basis of the limited number of sources I have studied, I conclude that side X has made the better case.”

## A Good Argument Effectively Refutes Opposing Arguments

All of these aspects of argument, and of support for them, are incorporated in another key element in many arguments, rebuttal or refutation, in which the writer or speaker does not just present her or his own argument but responds to (rebutts) or shows the unsoundness of (refutes) someone else’s line of argument, often that of an opponent. An effective refutation typically criticizes the argument under analysis by accurately pointing out weaknesses on one or more of the above points: that it is *not* factually accurate, well informed, well reasoned, relevant, consistent, well balanced, fair-minded, or qualified, or it commits specific logical fallacies. (See further discussion of refutation in Chapter 11.)

An effective refutation must speak *directly* to an opposing argument. Often writers or speakers will claim to be refuting the opposition, but rather than doing so directly, will simply make another argument supporting their own side. This is a form of the fallacy of **irrelevance** through evading the issue.

## Analysis, Synthesis, and Judgments

This bare-bones account of the traits of sound arguments is only the first step toward understanding of good argumentative writing or speech. Most argumentation is not

limited to a single line of reasoning but consists of more than one argument, built into an extended line of argument and integrated with other elements including exposition (the Part of any kind of writing or speaking that summarizes whatever background information is needed, often incorporating narration and description), analysis and synthesis, style and tone, and moral or value judgments. Each of these elements can be more or less well executed.

Extended arguments incorporate various modes of **analysis**, a process that can consist of identifying and interpreting key issues and elements in them; of establishing relationships between events or facts (frequently through **analogy**, **equation**, or comparison and contrast); of breaking a subject down into components and defining, grouping, or ordering them; or of making reasoned moral or evaluative judgments of ideas, arguments, or actions. For example, this Chapter analyzes the concept of good argumentation through definition, division into components, and criteria for evaluative judgment. Every discipline employs its own distinctive modes of analysis. Those in the natural and applied sciences are mostly beyond the scope of this book. The social sciences, which provide source material for several of the political controversies studied in this book, employ analysis of statistical and socioeconomic data and social psychology. However, most of the topics and readings throughout this book emphasize modes of analysis that are distinctive to humanistic studies, including rhetorical analysis (incorporating analysis of logical soundness), semantic analysis (see Chapter 9), causal analysis (see Chapter 13), and historical analysis. (For a model of an extended, analytical line of argument, with marginal notes on its development, see “A Historical-Causal Analysis of the White Problem,” later in this chapter.) English studies further emphasize stylistic analysis and critical analysis—the modes of reviews of and commentaries on books, films, music in concerts or recordings, and other cultural events. These analyses typically begin with a summary or abstract of the work and then go into interpretation and evaluation from a variety of critical perspectives, aesthetic and/or ideological.

**Synthesis** involves cumulatively connecting or assembling data or arguments (including those previously analyzed) into an extended line of argument, leading to a conclusion. A typical argumentative sequence might look like this:

1. Summary exposition of the situation
2. Analysis of the situation through one or more of the above modes
3. Synthesis of the analysis into a moral or value judgment
4. Conclusion (or **peroration**, in classical rhetoric), often with an exhortation or call for action to support a policy that the argument has shown to be desirable, or to change one that is undesirable, morally wrong, or socially unjust

Consider, for example, Mario Savio’s speech “An End to History” in Chapter 1. Savio’s brief exposition begins with a *summary* of then recent events in the civil rights movement in Mississippi and the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, which he relates to one another through an *analogy* or *equation* supported by the evidence of several points of similarity. He then *defines* the bureaucratic mentality, particularly in university

administrators, as it functions to dehumanize students and to block challenges to the social status quo. He gives the *examples* of the students protesting denial of free speech on campus and being unable to meet with anyone but secretaries and of the administration appointing a committee instead of directly negotiating the protesters' grievances with them. He next *identifies* the relevant larger social issues of the time, racial injustice and automation, and the unwillingness of governing bureaucracies to address the human needs of African Americans, workers, and students who are being treated as "raw material."

Savio then *asserts* that the protesters are simply asking to be treated, in the university as well as in the larger society, not as "well-behaved children" but as citizens entitled to due process of law. (As noted above, his reasoning perhaps falters here, in his unqualified equation of the university with civic society.) He next *contrasts* two views of the university: "the place where people begin seriously to question the conditions of their existence and raise the issue of whether they can be committed to the society they have been born into," as opposed to UC president Clark Kerr's view of it as "a factory that turns out a certain product needed by industry or government." (You might read Kerr's memoirs, *The Gold and the Blue*, to contrast his viewpoint on these issues with Savio's.) In a *causal analysis*, Savio argues that as a result of the conflict between these different conceptions, "the best among the people who enter must for four years wander aimlessly much of the time questioning why they are on campus at all" and "[look] toward a very bleak existence afterward in a game in which all of the rules have been made up—rules which one can not really amend." Savio's concluding paragraph reiterates his *moral judgment* against "the utopia of sterilized, automated contentment" and tacitly *exhorts* students: "But an important minority of men and women coming to the front today have shown that they will die rather than be standardized, replaceable, and irrelevant."

## Style and Tone, Eloquence and Moral Force

Aristotle's handbook, *Rhetoric* (Greek, fourth century BC), defined three key elements in argument: **logos**, which translates as logic or reasoning; **pathos**, or **emotional appeal**; and **ethos**, which concerns the **tone**, or moral or intellectual character, that speakers or writers project, as well as the kind of identity they establish with their listeners or readers. The Greek word *ethos* is the root of the English word *ethics*, so we can extend the meaning of ethos to include the ethical dimension in argument, including the previously mentioned moral judgments and the quality of support for them, as well as the forcefulness of the emotion and language supporting the judgment or action being advocated, which when most successful deserve the description of *eloquence*. Emotional appeal is, of course, an ambiguous quality, as often used for deplorable purposes as for noble ones (the uses and abuses of emotional appeal are the subject of Chapter 14); the word *eloquence*, however, is usually reserved for language that is both

emotionally moving and on a high moral plane, such as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Eloquence also is distinguished by memorably articulate, ingenious, and apt language—as the eighteenth-century English poet Alexander Pope put it, in what is itself a famously eloquent phrase, "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed." So an outstanding writing **style**, such as characterizes enduring works of literature, contributes to eloquence. Conversely, poor writing detracts from the force of an argument. The writer of the letter about Dinesh D'Souza says, "Hopefully, as word spreads about this demagoguery, this will allow more thinking folks to rationally discriminate his message to its rightful place on the trash heap." The repetition of "this" is awkward, the word "discriminate" is misused (in place of something like "relegate" or "deposit"), and "rationally" is superfluous, as is the clichéd **metaphor** of "the trash heap." Essentially the whole sentence adds nothing substantial to what has already been said.

Elements of style and tone will be defined more fully in chapters 9 and 11, but for now, let us just look at how the combination of emotional appeal and forceful style contributes to the ethos and eloquence of Savio's "An End to History." Savio at the outset invokes the moral and emotional authority of the civil rights movement, at a time when many activists in the South had recently been murdered, beaten, or imprisoned. His broader description of many young people's sense of alienation from the social and educational institutions in post-World War II America struck a chord of emotional identification, not only with his immediate audience of students at Berkeley, but also with others throughout the country and world. (He was articulating a prominent theme of many social and cultural critics of the late 1950s and 1960s, such as Paul Goodman in his 1961 book *Growing Up Absurd* and Tom Hayden, the principal author of the Students for a Democratic Society's 1962 manifesto, *The Port Huron Statement*.) When my students read this speech today, many are moved by its continuing timeliness. Stylistically, this almost extemporaneous speech was quite literary in its use of **allusions**, **figures of speech**, and poetic techniques like the rhythm and alliteration (repetition of consonants) in the description of America in the metaphor "this *chrome-plated consumer's paradise*." There are allusions to Franz Kafka's novels about mysterious bureaucracies, Aldous Huxley's futuristic novel *Brave New World*, and the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution in "due process of law," "committees of our peers," and "consensus of the governed."

At the heart of the speech is an **extended metaphor** developing the theme of automation by comparing the university to a factory, as in the punning image, "The university is well structured, well tooled, to turn out people with all the sharp edges worn off—the well rounded person." Soon after this, Savio delivered another speech protesting disciplinary actions taken by the university against him and other Free Speech Movement leaders in contravention of assurances that their grievances would be negotiated without punitive action. (This speech was captured on film in the documentary *Berkeley in the Sixties*.) Here Savio continued to develop the factory metaphor

and used a classical oratorical technique of rhythmically repeating phrases and adding items incrementally in them, to build toward a climax:

If this is a firm, and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, and if President Kerr in fact is the manager, then I'll tell you something—the faculty are the workers, and we're the raw material. But we're a bunch of raw material that . . . don't mean to be made into any product, don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the university, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor—be they anyone. We're human beings!

Savio's peroration exhorted his audience:

There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears, and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop, and you've got to indicate to the people who own the machine that until you are free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.

In this sentence Savio was probably alluding consciously to one of the most influential argumentative essays ever written, Henry David Thoreau's 1849 "Civil Disobedience." In this essay, also originally a speech, Thoreau protested slavery and the American acquisition of Texas as a slave state through the Mexican-American War. He said, "If the injustice . . . is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine" (1798). Savio's speech prompted a sit-in at the administration building by some eight hundred students that indeed prevented the machine of the university from working at all for several days and eventually precipitated the administration's acceptance of the students' demands for restoration of free speech.

## Conclusion

The extensive analysis of Savio's speech here is merely intended to indicate how many elements can contribute to good argumentative writing, beyond just logical soundness, which is a necessary element, to be sure, but not sufficient in itself. Savio, speaking in immediate response to a distinctive, highly emotional public situation, managed to draw from a wide base of historical, political, and literary knowledge, as well as his personal experiences in the civil rights and Free Speech movements, in synthesizing an argument that was both soundly constructed (though not above possible critical disagreements) and memorably eloquent in emotion and style.

There is not, however, any fixed formula, like a computer program, that you can follow to produce good argumentative writing for any occasion. Some student readers of this book, especially older ones, might presently be engaged in comparable public activities that require argumentative writing or speaking, on their campus, in their community, or elsewhere, but many are probably not, though they may well



be sooner or later. While this Chapter and the rest of the book provide some broad guidelines for engaging in such arguments, that is not the central aim. (If that is what you need immediately, there are several good texts addressing that need, such as Linda Flower, *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing in College and Community*, Harcourt-Brace, 1998; and Thomas Dean, *Writing Partnerships: Service Learning in Composition*, NCTE, 2000.) The aim of this book, rather, is to enable you, as a critical citizen, to understand what distinguishes good from poor arguments in sources that you encounter in reading, watching, and listening to public discourse, and to write papers incorporating that understanding both in your own rhetorical practices and in your analyses of sources and arguments.

Toward this aim, there follows an invention guide, or **heuristic** (a prompt list), both for analyzing arguments made by your sources and for checking over arguments you make on your own, which synthesizes the major and rhetorical and critical thinking issues raised throughout this book. (Several dimensions of these issues—psychological, semantic, social, and political—will be addressed more systematically in Chapter 3 and throughout parts 2, 3, and 4.) Obviously, not every point here will be pertinent to every subject, but the guide provides a broad “menu” from which to select the most pertinent sections. In incorporating these questions into your writing, you should try to adjust the wording to your own natural style rather than sounding like you’re just parroting them word for word.

## Rhetoric: a Checklist for Analyzing Your Own and Others’ Arguments

1. When you are expressing your views on a subject, ask yourself how extensive your knowledge of it is, what the sources of that knowledge are, and what restrictions there might be in your vantage point. When you are studying a writer on the subject (or when she cites a source on it), try to figure out what her qualifications are on this particular subject. Is the newspaper, magazine, Web site, book publisher, or research institute he is writing for (or citing) a reputable one? What is its ideological viewpoint?

2. Are you, as reader or writer (or is the author), indulging in **rationalization**, or wishful thinking—believing something merely because it is what you *want* to believe? In other words, are you distinguishing what is personally advantageous or disadvantageous from what you would objectively consider just or unjust?

3. Are the actions of the author, or those she is supporting, consistent with their professed position, or are they saying one thing while doing another? (This is one form of **compartmentalization**, the other most common one being internal inconsistencies in the author’s arguments.)

4. Are all of the data (“facts”) or quotations correct? Are any data used misleadingly or any quotes taken out of context?

5. Semantic issues: Does she make it clear, either by explicit definition or by context, in exactly what sense she is using any controversial or ambiguous words? In other words, is she using vague, **unconcretized abstractions**, or is she concretizing her abstractions? Are there any evasive **euphemisms** (i.e., “clean” words that obscure a “dirty” truth)?

6. Are the **generalizations** and assertions of opinion—especially those that are disputable or central to the argument—adequately qualified and supported by reasoning, evidence, or examples? In your own writing, if you haven’t been able to provide this support, it may be a good idea not to make these assertions.

7. Is there any unjustifiable (i.e., not supported by adequate evidence) emotional appeal through empty “conditioned response” words (or “**cleans**” and “**dirtyies**”), name-calling, straw man, or innuendo?

8. Are the limits of the position defined, or are they vulnerable to being pushed to absurd logical consequences (reduction to absurdity)? In other words, does the author indicate where to draw the line?

9. Are all of the analogies (saying two situations are similar) and equations (saying two situations are the same) valid?

10. Does the author honestly acknowledge the opposition, fairly balancing all the evidence and arguments of one side against those of the other, giving each side’s arguments accurate weight and evaluating them in accurate proportion to each other? Or does she dishonestly **stack the deck** through using a **double standard** or **selective vision**? That is, is she using **half-truths**, leaving out arguments or suppressing facts that might contradict her arguments? Are there faults on her side that correspond to the faults she has pointed out in the opposing position?

11. Are there any faulty **causal analyses**? Does the author view any actions as causes that may really be effects or *reactions*? Does he use any post hoc reasoning—that is, when he asserts that something has happened because of something else, might it be true that the second event happened irrespective of, or even in spite of, the first? Has he reduced a probable multiplicity of causes to one (reductionism)? When he argues that a course of action has been unsuccessful because it has been carried too far, might the opposite be true—that it has been unsuccessful because it has not been carried far enough (or vice versa)?

12. Does the argument contain other logical fallacies, especially evading the issue, non sequiturs (conclusions that don’t follow logically from the arguments preceding them, or two statements that seem to be related but aren’t), **either-or thinking**, false dilemmas, or false dichotomies?

13. Theory versus practice: Are the theoretical proposals practicable or the abstract principles consistent with empirical (verifiable) facts and probabilities, and are they based on adequate firsthand witness to the situation in question?

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Choose an issue that you are concerned about on your campus, in your community, in the nation, or in the world and write a speech or article about it, following this model (see Chapter 4 for further writing guidelines):

## Summary exposition of the situation

Analysis of the situation through one or more of the modes discussed above c.  
Synthesis of the analysis into a moral or value judgment

Conclusion, with an exhortation or call for action to support a policy that the argument has shown to be desirable, or to change one that is undesirable, morally wrong, or socially unjust

Analyze any of the readings for Chapter 1 in terms of (1) the logical cogency of individual arguments in it, (2) the quality of its supporting evidence, (3) its overall expository and argumentative organization, (4) the effectiveness of its rebuttals to opposing positions, (5) its style and tone, (6) the quality of its moral judgments and force.

In an article titled “The Age of Irony” in *Journal of Advanced Composition* (Fall 2002), Susan Searles Giroux writes:

The pay gap between top executives and production workers grew from 42:1 in 1980 to a staggering 419:1 in 1998 (excluding the value of stock options), according to *Business Week*’s “Forty-ninth Annual Executive Pay Survey.” The same report notes that “Had the typical worker’s pay risen in tandem with executive pay, the average production worker would now earn \$110,000 a year and the minimum wage would be \$22.08” instead of the current wage of \$5.15. And how does this wage figure in terms of yearly salary? A 40-hour week at \$5.15 per hour “nets a pre-tax annual income of \$10,300, or about \$6,355 below the official 1998 poverty line for a family of four.” In contrast to these poverty wages, “the average large company chief executive was paid \$10.6 million, a 36 percent jump over 1997.”

Students were assigned to write their responses to these data, as present or future possible workers. (Grammatical note: in Latin, datum is a singular noun, though it is rarely used in English; the more common data is plural.) Here are two responses. Evaluate their relevance to Giroux’s assertions.

Student A: “The wealth gap is increasing every day, but is that all bad? I think not. Giroux’s article outlines how the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, but is comparing a minimum wage worker to a big chief executive fair? This is like comparing diamonds to rocks.”

Student B: “For many years there has been a wealth gap in America, but it looks as though there is not really a way to fix this gap. Raising taxes is not the answer. People should be able to work and reap the benefits of their hard work. Corporate executives work hard and deserve every dollar they earn. Most poor people dropped out of school along the way and in return for their lack of motivation have lived in poverty. I don’t care for the fact that my taxpayer money goes towards welfare to support them.”

Giroux's data here form Part of an inductive argument. What are some reasonable inferences or conclusions that could be drawn from these figures, in terms of present socioeconomic conditions and in their implications for the future? What economic or moral judgments could reasonably be based on them? For related arguments that do make such inferences and judgments, see Adolph Reed's "Majoring in Debt" in Chapter 1 and all of Chapter 21.

The following are two deductively structured arguments in recent debates over the First Amendment to the Constitution and separation of church and state. a. In an op-ed column in the Los Angeles Times titled "In God We Trust . . . Let's

Affirm It in Laws" (February 6, 1983), Pat Robertson, then head of the Christian Coalition, one of the largest evangelical Christian organizations in America, argued for reversing the Supreme Court's 1962 decision against prayer in public schools. This was his conclusion:

According to the Gallup Poll, 94% of the American people believe in God. Without question, those who believe must give the 6% who do not believe the freedom to speak, write, broadcast and disagree. But I do not think that the believing majority has an obligation to the disbelieving minority to dismantle our public affirmation of faith in God. Nor do we owe this 6% minority an absolute veto over a constitutional amendment . . . that would restore our freedom to address Almighty God in our schools and public places.

Robertson argues from the premise that 94% of the public believe in God to the conclusion that we should amend the Constitution to restore prayer in schools. There are at least a couple of hidden premises implicit in this enthymeme; identify them and evaluate their logical soundness and implications for the conclusion. Is Robertson's adpopulum argument relevant to the constitutionality of prayer in school? Robertson is a political conservative and influential figure in the Republican Party (he once ran for the Republican nomination to be president). Conservatives generally express a belief in individual liberties against infringement on them by government (especially the federal, as opposed to state, government), strict adherence to the Constitution, and opposition to rash or drastic change. Is there an inconsistency between these professed beliefs and Robertson's call here for a constitutional amendment, or the more recent conservative campaign for a constitutional amendment banning homosexual marriage?

b. More recently, Erwin Chemerinsky, a liberal professor of law and political science at the University of Southern California, wrote an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times titled "Next Time, Court Should Rule 'Under God' Out of Pledge" (June 17, 2004), in which he argued:

As a matter of First Amendment law, the Pledge of Allegiance case should be easy. For more than 40 years, the Supreme Court has held that government-sponsored religious activity is not allowed in public school classrooms. The words "under God" are inherently religious. . . .

But every day, children feel pressure to say “under God” in public school classrooms. Such government-sponsored religion is a clear violation of the establishment clause [in the First Amendment].

Here we see, in classic deductive form, two explicit premises leading to a conclusion. What are the two premises? Does the conclusion follow logically from them? Conservative disagreement with this line of argument would most likely focus, not on the internal logic of the argument, but on a semantic issue in the first premise concerning the phrase “government-sponsored religious activity.” The First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” Chemerinsky implies that “establishment of religion” is equated with any government-sponsored religious activity. However, the exact meaning of “establishment of religion” is the major source of disagreement on this issue. As a research-paper topic, study some opposed views on it by legal scholars or historians.

In another view on the issue of separation of church and state, a public address by Roane County, Tennessee, high school principal Jody McCloud, delivered before a football game in 2003, was circulated on the Internet (<http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/roanecounty/html>)[[www.deceptioninthechurch.com/roanecounty/html](http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/roanecounty/html)]. McCloud said:

It has always been the custom at Roane County High School football games to say a prayer and play the National Anthem to honor God and Country. Due to a recent ruling by the Supreme Court, I am told that saying a prayer is a violation of Federal Case Law. As I understand the law at this time, I can use this public facility to approve of sexual perversion and call it an alternate lifestyle, and if someone is offended, that’s OK. I can use it to condone sexual promiscuity by dispensing condoms and calling it safe sex. If someone is offended, that’s OK. I can even use this public facility to present the merits of killing an unborn baby as a viable means of birth control. If someone is offended, no problem. I can designate a school day as earth day and involve students in activities to religiously worship and praise the goddess, mother earth, and call it ecology. I can use literature, videos and presentations in the classroom that depict people with strong, traditional, Christian convictions as simple minded and ignorant and call it enlightenment. However, if anyone uses this facility to honor God and ask Him to bless this event with safety and good sportsmanship, Federal Case Law is violated. This appears to be at best, inconsistent and at worst, diabolical. Apparently, we are to be tolerant of everything and anyone except God and His Commandments.

Argue the pros and cons of McCloud’s analogy between permitted and nonpermitted activities here, the soundness of his assertion that it is inconsistent to bar prayer at football games, and the legitimacy, in relation to the First Amendment, of a public high school principal making a public statement like this.

As supplements to “A Historical-Causal Analysis of the White Problem,” read James Baldwin’s “My Dungeon Shook” in Chapter 10; Jonathan Kozol’s “Other People’s Children” and William J. Bennett’s “Crisis in American Education” in Chapter 13(also see the topics for discussion and writing on them in that chapter); and Charles Krautham-

mer's "Lies, Damn Lies, and Racial Statistics," Robert Weissburg's "White Racism: The Seductive Lure of an Unproven Theory," and Thomas Sowell's "Look Behind Statistics for Changing Definitions" in chapter 9. What evidence or reasoning do each of these present either in support or refutation of the arguments in "A Historical-Causal Analysis"? Which side's arguments more effectively refute the other side's? Write a paper or prepare a debate presentation synthesizing these readings, along with additional sources, fair-mindedly acknowledging the strongest arguments on both sides, then judging which side makes the better case on balance.

Summarize and evaluate the implicit line of argument and rhetorical techniques in the following "Mallard Fillmore" cartoon. On what issues is the cartoon's viewpoint conservative, by the terms of the "Guide to Political Terms and Positions" in Chapter 15?

In the 2004 presidential election campaign, John Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, made a speech appealing for more civility in politics, with particular criticism of the "un-American" attack mode of some conservative politicians and media. When she was aggressively questioned on the speech by a conservative newspaper editor, she told him, "Shove it." Of what rhetorical fault might this be considered an example?

## A Historical-Causal Analysis of "The White Problem"

White Americans used to talk about "the Negro problem," but during the 1960s, writers like James Baldwin argued that this very phrase indicated the kind of **double-think** mentality that obscured the fact that what we have always had in this country is "the White problem," and that the kind of **rationalizations** that whites have concocted amount to mass delusion.

The most common white rationalizations are the following: "Slavery and discrimination against blacks were all in the past. Why do they keep complaining now, when they have all the advantages?" "My family never had slaves, and I don't discriminate, so why should I feel guilty or responsible?" "Other immigrant groups have come to this country and overcome adversity. Why haven't the blacks?" And, "Blacks have a high rate of crime and immorality, which causes legitimate fears and disapproval by whites."

A historical perspective on this problem begins with the question, "When did the past end, and the present begin" (William Faulkner wrote, with specific reference to the persistent after-effects of slavery in the South, "The past isn't dead, it isn't even past.") Specifically, since exactly what date has discrimination against blacks been a thing of the past? Let us look at the chain of **historical causation**.

**Introduction:**

**Thesis statement**

**Summary of positions to be refuted**

**Transition to main body**

Many immigrant groups have endured vicious prejudices, but none have **Main Body:** suffered as African Americans have from legally authorized, systematic perse[**Introduction to**

cution, from this country's beginnings, one generation after another, down to [r]<sub>a</sub>[e]<sub>na</sub>[u]<sub>i</sub>[t]<sub>o</sub>[a]<sub>g</sub>[ti]<sub>y</sub>[o]<sub>w</sub>[n] i[o]<sub>th</sub>

the present. The first black slaves were brought to this country in 1617—three immigrant

years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock—in the Jamestown, Vir[groups]

ginia, colony. The last slaves were imported in 1808, and few blacks ever “immigrated” here voluntarily before the twentieth century. That means most African Americans' families have been in this country far longer than most white

Americans', as well as most immigrant groups'. (So much for comments like, “Why don't they go back to Africa if they don't like it here”) This is one of many points on which the **analogy** between African Americans and other ethnic groups, other than Native Americans, is inaccurate. What is the heritage of black Ameri**Transition to** cans from the nearly 400 years their ancestors have been here? [*hist. evidence*]

Blacks were kidnapped and brought here from Africa in chains on ships **Historical** under subhuman conditions in which hundreds of thousands died en route. [*evidence*]

They were stripped of their own language, religion, and culture—even their names. Families were broken up as husbands, wives and children were sold as separate chattel. They were deliberately kept illiterate as a means to keep them from gaining any possible means of enlightenment about their situation or of communication with others in insurrection, and—as Frederick Douglass reports in his autobiography—they were encouraged to get drunk and party on off hours to let off the steam that might otherwise lead to revolt.

### **Development of refutation of analogy with immigrant groups**

Most ethnic groups immigrating from other countries have been able to maintain their family ties, cultural traditions, and access to education. As they arrived, many stayed in contact with and received aid from kinspeople in the old country or from those already established here. By the time slavery was abolished, however, blacks had been cut off from their African roots for some two hundred fifty years, the continuity of their families and cultural heritage destroyed and their access to education deliberately blocked. As Alex Haley's *Roots* and other recent studies have shown, many throughout the period of slavery and subsequently struggled against all odds to maintain their family ties and traditions; nevertheless, African Americans have always had to live with the burden of being aliens in their “own” country and with the absence of a sense of belonging anywhere.

Whites tend to think of slavery (if they think about it seriously at all) as a **Economic** moral or social institution, but it was always first and foremost an *economic analysis* institution. Slavery was an immensely profitable *business*, both in the slave trade and in the fruits of slave labor, which in the 17th and 18th centuries produced huge returns

in capital investment for Southern plantation owners. As James Baldwin observed ironically in *The Fire Next Time*, white Americans pride themselves on the myth that the prosperity of this country was created through rugged individualism and the puritan work ethic—God rewarded those who work hard; but in the South, black slaves did all the work and a handful of white plantation owners got all the rewards. Some recent historians have argued that this country’s prosperity was due *primarily* to slave labor. Certainly, some of the country’s greatest fortunes were amassed by slaveowners, and *some* of their descendants today are still living off those fortunes. What have the [Trans. to chain] descendants of their slaves gotten out of their ancestors’ centuries of hard work? *[o causation]*

Slavery was abolished in 1861 and the Civil War ended in 1865. Many people who have not studied this history seem to assume that abolition marked the end of African Americans’ grievances, and that ever since, white America has shown good will in helping blacks gain equality. But have you ever thought about how Southern slaveowners, white workers, and others who benefitted economically from slavery must have reacted to abolition? Do you suppose most of them opened their arms lovingly to welcome freed slaves as equal citizens? Here were some eight million workers, one-third of the population of the South, who had been providing unpaid labor for two hundred fifty years, now competing for wages with whites in the poorest Part of the country. Many whites obviously perceived that their interests lay in keeping blacks in conditions as close to slavery as the law now permitted. Following abolition, the federal government promised each freed slave family “forty acres and a mule” to start homesteading, but this legislation was killed in Congress by Southerners and Northern industrial interests motivated by maintaining a cheap labor pool. The hun[Step Two:] dred years following the Civil War saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, mass s[H]<sub>u</sub>[u]<sub>b</sub>[n]<sub>se</sub>[d]<sub>q</sub>[re]<sub>u</sub>[d]<sub>ent</sub> lynchings, segregation in social life and education (with “separate but equal” a **years of rationalization** for inferior schools), and “Jim Crow” laws denying Southern [segregation] blacks voting and other civil rights.

#### **Step One: Immediate aftermath of abolition**

So, while the many waves of immigrants from other countries have been **Further** enabled to gain a foothold and eventual advancement here, blacks have been [development of] **refutation of** more or less systematically kept at the bottom of the social ladder, providing a **immigrant** permanent “underclass” socially and economically, and humiliated by the fact [analogy] that each newly arrived ethnic group has been allowed to step over them in social assimilation (Perhaps the most **analogous** group to blacks in this respect has been Mexican and other Latin American farm and domestic workers, who have suffered comparably deliberate economic exploitation.)

Under the conditions of continuing oppression in the South, millions of South**Step Three:** ern blacks understandably migrated North to seek better opportunities, in wave <sub>N</sub>[M]<sub>o</sub>[ig]<sub>r</sub>[r]<sub>th</sub>[ati]<sub>a</sub>[o]<sub>n</sub>[n]<sub>d</sub>[t]<sub>i</sub>[o]<sub>ts</sub> after wave from the early twentieth century to the 1980s—constituting the largest **consequences.** migration in American history, according to Nicholas Lemann’s *The Promised Land*: **[First]** *The*



*Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*, a powerfully written history [c]w[o]h[n]i[s]t[e]e[q]r[u]e[e]a[n]c[c]ti[e]o[:].ns of this period. Lemann recounts that as blacks arrived in Northern cities, white residents, fearful of loss of their property value, resorted to the same kind of hate crimes blacks thought they had left in the South, including Ku Klux Klan terrorism, lynchings, riots culminating in beatings and house-burnings. (The frustrations of blacks too erupted periodically in rioting, most recently in Los Angeles after the Rodney King trial.) As blacks moved into urban neighborhoods, white **Step Four:**

residents and businesses moved out to the suburbs, taking with them jobs and the [Flight of jobs] base of property-tax and corporate-tax income needed for the support of neigh[an tax ase;]

#### **segregation in Northern housing and schools**

borhood schools, police, hospitals, street repair, and other essential community services. “Restrictive covenants,” clauses in deeds to houses and apartment buildings restricting their sale or residence in them to whites (and in many cases Christians), were legal and widespread throughout the North well into the 1950s, before they were declared unconstitutional; many figures who are still prominent in American politics and public life bought and sold houses with such covenants. Thus, in Northern housing and schools, there has been segregation in fact (*de facto*) if not by law (*de jure*), as in the South, with a low tax base guaranteeing deprivation in education and other formative influences that perpetuated economic disadvantages generation after generation.

Discrimination not only in housing and education but in employment, insurance, legal justice, medical care, and the cost of commodities further contributed to the cycle of poverty in Northern ghettos. The lack of good jobs and the resulting despair led many residents to turn to crime, drugs, alcoholism, and prostitution, with dealing in drugs, liquor, weapons, and sex becoming among the few relatively prosperous work options. Contrary to common **stereotypes**, however, the majority of ghetto residents have managed to maintain high moral standards, as documented in “Beverly Hills Versus The South Bronx” (in Chapter 7); many also managed to work their way into middle-class status, at which point most understandably moved up out of the ghetto, inadvertently contributing to segregation along class as well as racial lines.

#### **Step Five: Other conditions leading to vicious circles**

#### **Step Six: Relocation of manufacturing abroad since 1960s**

In one of the many vicious circles here, all these conditions in turn discouraged large employers from investing in inner cities. These conditions steadily worsened throughout the twentieth century, the latest turn for the worst coming since the 1960s, when large manufacturers have relocated from inner cities and other American sites into Third World locations providing even cheaper labor. Jonathan Kozol’s 1991 book *Savage Inequalities* succinctly describes the **causal** sequence in the Lawndale section of Chicago:

Between 1960 and 1970, as the last white families left the neighborhood, North Lawndale lost three quarters of its businesses, one quarter of its jobs. In the next ten years, 80 percent of the remaining jobs in manufacturing were lost.

"People carry a lot of crosses here," says Reverend Jim Wolff, who directs a mission church not far from one of the deserted factories. "God's beautiful people live here in the midst of hell."

As the factories have moved out, he says, the street gangs have moved in. Driving with me past a sprawling red brick complex that was once the world headquarters of Sears, Roebuck, he speaks of the increasing economic isolation of the neighborhood: "Sears is gone, International Harvester is gone. Western Electric has moved out. The Vice Lords, the Disciples and the Latin Kings have, in a sense, replaced them. (42)

The whole peculiar history of crime and sexuality between whites and blacks is another element differentiating African Americans from any other ethnic or immigrant group in America. Throughout and long after the slavery period, until the 1960s, virtually any white man was free to murder or rob any black, to rape or force into being a prostitute or mistress any black woman, without taking responsibility for the resulting babies; indeed, white men were encouraged to father children by black women because any such children were defined by law as black, providing more slave labor or, after abolition, cheap labor. (Blacks themselves were tacitly encouraged to have illegitimate children among themselves for the same economic benefits to whites.) Consequently, this country is filled with the descendants of mixed race parentage—making the whole concept of a "white" and a "black" race in America largely a fabrication.

Yet, white America has always applied **compartmentalized thinking** and a **double standard** toward crimes by blacks against whites versus those by whites against blacks. Above all, in spite of the countless instances of white men raping black women with impunity, a black man raping, or even being perceived as making advances to, a white woman was always the ultimate taboo, the most frequent incitement to lynching; fears of the purity of white blood being polluted by black insemination of white women was the foremost obsession of racists. Knowledge of this history was necessary to understand the possible **implications** of the broadcast in George Bush's 1988 presidential campaign of a TV commercial criticizing Bush's opponent, Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts for having allowed a weekend furlough to Willy Horton, an imprisoned rapist, during which he raped and murdered a woman. Horton was black, the woman white; nothing was said of this in the commercial and Bush's defenders said the incident was not racist because Horton was guilty of the crime. The **between-the-lines** issue, however, was whether the commercial was playing subconsciously on the entrenched white double standard on rape, and whether the Bush campaign would have chosen to make an issue of the case if the rapist had been white and his victim black.

Consider in the larger historical perspective the most frequent allegations against blacks today—they have high rates of illiteracy, crime, alcohol or drug abuse, and illegitimate births. To whatever extent such allegations are grounded in fact (and this

is highly disputed ground), doesn't it seem likely that these present day conditions are the predictable consequence of nearly four hundred years of the conditions forced on American blacks, and that those consequences are unlikely to disappear within a few decades of blacks' attainment of equal legal rights in the 1960s? However, precisely because many American whites have not learned *to* think in terms of historical **cause and effect**, they **decontextualize** the present behavior of a deviant minority of blacks and see it as a cause of social problems rather than an **effect** or **reaction**. This does not excuse any such misbehavior or absolve individuals from responsibility; it simply indicates that the problem must be approached in broad social and historical terms beyond individual cases.

### **Whites' double standard and confusion of cause and effect in thinking about black criminality**

#### **Avoiding implication that blacks are absolved from individual responsibility**

Now, if you follow this entire chain of causation over nearly four hundred Summary of years, it becomes apparent that "the past is not even past," that today's racial **arguments to** problems are inseparable from this unbroken chain of causation; it also becomes **[this point]** apparent that, from beginning to end, African Americans on the whole have not been responsible or to blame for any of the injustices that have blighted their lives generation after generation (although as individuals they have coped with the **effects** of these injustices with varying degrees of personal responsibility). Their bewilderment was summed up by a brilliant **metaphor** in the title of a song written in the 1940s by Fats Waller: "What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue?"

What explanation can there be, then for the hatred that so many whites **White hatred of** have vented on blacks throughout the centuries? This would seem to be a clas**[blacks as]** sic case of **blaming the victim**. Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* explores the psy<sub>v</sub>**[b]**ic<sub>a</sub>**[a]**t<sub>m</sub>**[m]**im<sub>ing</sub>**te** chology of this mind-set, in the mix of willful ignorance, **ethnocentrism**, and **rationalization**, **rationalization** that have led whites to be "the slightly mad victims of their own **[projection]** brainwashing" (137). Baldwin sees whites as being in a state of psychological **denial** of the truth of the crimes whites have committed against blacks throughout American history, and of **projection** of those crimes into **stereotypes** of blacks as the criminal class. He says that although many whites in the past and present have sincerely wanted to enable blacks to attain equality, many others have been driven by fear that if blacks gained economic, political, and sexual equality, they would want to "get even" and take revenge on whites for all the past crimes; rather than admit that they are unwilling to see blacks gain equality—or at least to give up any of their own advantages, as necessitated by policies like affirmative action and welfare—they rationalize that blacks are themselves to blame for failing to "pull themselves up."

One of the more recent varieties of this "brainwashing," in Baldwin's view, is many whites' belief that the attainment of civil rights and increased opportunities by blacks since the 1950s has resulted out of the goodness of white America's heart; he argues,

on the contrary, that whites have given ground only when they have been forced to by the pressures of the civil rights movement, the influence of newly independent African and other Third-World nations, the economic obsolescence of segregated society, and—above all—by the fear instilled since the midsixties by highly destructive ghetto riots and the Black Power movement.

Now throughout this entire tragic sequence of events from the Emancipation Proclamation to the present, most of the damage done to blacks has probably not resulted from the ill will of individual whites, but from a series of social consequences that has followed inevitably from the throwing of millions into the labor market and civic life without adequate accommodation by American society for their assimilation. For generation after generation, down to your own, with no adequate corrective policies by the society at large, individual whites have been able to say, “It isn’t my fault. I never owned slaves or discriminated.” This kind of statement, though justified to a point, reflects a typical American tendency to reduce every problem to personal attitudes, while ignoring the responsibility we each have for the collective political and economic policies that have perpetuated racism and that would need to be changed in order finally to end it. This attitude also disregards the historical truth that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and that present generations might have to make sacrifices or suffer injustices to redress injustices done by previous generations.

Young whites have come into the world at the latest stage in this inheritance of evasion and are likely to see only the current *consequences*, not the *causes*. Policies like welfare and affirmative action, insofar as they have been intended to aid blacks, have been designed as minimal efforts to deal with these consequences, not with their causes at the roots; nevertheless, it is unlikely that most of those who loudly denounce affirmative action and welfare have much understanding of the historical causes justifying these policies, or any more effective solutions to suggest for repairing the continuing damage done by the causes.

**Conclusion: Fallacy of whites reducing racial problems to personal attitudes, while ignoring responsibility for political and economic policies and present consequences of past injustices**

**Necessity of addressing *causes* of conditions of which welfare and affirmative action are *consequences*.**

# Chapter 3. Definitions and Criteria of Critical Thinking

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This Chapter will briefly explain the scholarly background for the content of subsequent chapters and the sequence in which they are organized. Around 1980 American educators began to identify critical thinking as a subject that needed increased, explicit emphasis in our high schools and colleges, and as an essential element in civic literacy. The Rockefeller Foundation's Commission on the Humanities reported in 1980, "The humanities lead beyond 'functional' literacy and basic skills to critical judgment and discrimination, enabling citizens to view political issues from an informed perspective Educational policy mak

ers at all levels should define critical thinking as a basic skill and recognize the value of the humanities for developing it" (*The Humanities in American Life*, 12, 22).

Also in 1980, Chancellor Glenn Dumke announced the requirement of formal instruction in critical thinking throughout the nineteen California State University campuses, serving some three hundred thousand students. The announcement read:

Instruction in critical thinking is to be designed to achieve an understanding of the relationship of language to logic, which should lead to the ability to analyze, criticize, and advocate ideas, to reason inductively and deductively, and to reach factual or judgmental conclusions based on sound inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief. The minimal competence to be expected at the successful conclusion of instruction in critical thinking should be the ability to distinguish fact from judgment, belief from knowledge, and skills in elementary inductive and deductive processes, including an understanding of the formal and informal fallacies of language and thought.

Similar requirements were soon adopted by community colleges and secondary schools throughout California and elsewhere. Here is the list of "basic critical thinking skills" in the California State Department of Education's Model Curriculum for Grades 8-12 in 1984.

1. *Compare similarities and differences*

The ability to compare similarities and differences among two or more objects, living things, ideas, events, or situations at the same or different points in time. Implies the ability to organize information into defined categories.

2. *Identify central issues or problems*

The ability to identify the main idea or point of a passage, argument, or political cartoon, for example. At the higher levels, students are expected to identify central issues in complex political arguments. Implies ability to identify major components of an argument, such as reasons and conclusions.

3. *Distinguish fact from opinion*

The ability to determine the difference between observation and inference.

4. *Recognize stereotypes and clichés*

The ability to identify fixed or conventional notions about a person, group, or idea.

5. *Recognize bias, emotional factors, propaganda, and semantic slanting*

The ability to identify partialities and prejudices in written and graphic materials. Includes the ability to determine credibility of sources (gauge reliability, expertise, and objectivity).

6. *Recognize different value orientations and different ideologies*

The ability to recognize different value orientations and ideologies.

7. *Determine which information is relevant*

The ability to make distinctions between verifiable and unverifiable, relevant and nonrelevant, and essential and incidental information.

8. *Recognize the adequacy of data*

The ability to decide whether the information provided is sufficient in terms of quality and quantity to justify a conclusion, decision, generalization, or plausible hypothesis.

9. *Check consistency*

The ability to determine whether given statements or symbols are consistent. For example, the ability to determine whether the different points or issues in a political argument have logical connections or agree with the central issue.

10. *Formulate appropriate questions*

The ability to formulate appropriate and thought-provoking questions that will lead to a deeper and clearer understanding of the issues at hand.

11. *Predict probable consequences*

The ability to predict probable consequences of an event or series of events.

12. *Identify unstated assumptions*

The ability to identify what is taken for granted, though not explicitly stated, in an argument.

Some scholars make a distinction between critical thinking *skills*, related formally or informally to traditional logic, and *dispositions* that foster or impede critical thinking within the broader context of psychological, cultural, social, and political influences. Dispositions that foster critical thinking, also studied throughout Part 2 (partly from the perspective of semantics, especially in Chapter 9), include the development of skepticism, open-mindedness, autonomous thought, and reciprocity (psychologist Jean Piaget's term for the ability to empathize with other individuals, social groups, nationalities, ideologies, etc.). Dispositions that act as impediments to critical thinking include **culturally conditioned assumptions**, **egocentrism** and **ethnocentrism**,

**authoritarianism, rationalization, compartmentalization, stereotyping, prejudice, and defense mechanisms.** These positive and negative dispositions will be surveyed in the following chapters.

## Critical Thinking and Cultural Literacy

Much debate in academic circles has centered on the relative importance of learning critical thinking skills versus factual knowledge related to specific disciplines like history, social science, or the natural sciences. This debate seems to me a classic **either-or fallacy**, since common sense dictates that both are indispensable and inseparable in practice. The leading recent advocate of increased emphasis on factual knowledge in American education, E. D. Hirsch, in his controversial 1987 book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, agrees:

The old prejudice that facts deaden the minds of children has a long history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and includes not just the disciples of Rousseau and Dewey but also Charles Dickens who, in the figure of Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, satirized the teaching of mere facts. But it isn't facts that deaden the minds of young children, who are storing facts in their minds every day with astonishing voracity. It is incoherence—our failure to ensure that a pattern of shared, vividly taught, and socially enabling knowledge will emerge from our instruction.

The polarization of educationists into facts-people versus skills-people has no basis in reason. Facts and skills are inseparable. There is no insurmountable reason why those who advocate the teaching of higher order skills and those who advocate the teaching of common traditional content should not join forces. (133)

Hirsch and many other authorities concur that historical facts are foremost among the fields of knowledge essential for critical thinking—not for the purpose of rote memorization of dates and names, but for the purpose of reasoning back and forth between the past, present, and future, of being able to understand present conditions in comparison and contrast to past conditions and in a sequence of causal analysis explaining how conditions have evolved to their present state. As *The Humanities in American Life* puts it:

The humanities do not impose any single set of normative values, whether moral, social, or aesthetic; rather, as a record of the ideals that have guided men and women in the past, they give historical perspective. Students made sensitive to what it might be like to live in a different time, place, or culture can make value choices without automatically assuming that contemporary reality has no precedent, or that quick scientific or humanistic prescriptions can remedy every problem. The humanities bring to life the ideal of cultural pluralism by expanding the number of perspectives from which questions of value may be viewed, by enlarging young people's social and historical consciousness, and by activating an imaginative critical spirit. (30)

And, on the relation of English courses to history and other humanistic disciplines:

High schools should concentrate on an articulated sequence of courses in English, history, and foreign languages. Courses in these disciplines should not divorce skills and methods from knowledge of content and cultural context English courses need to emphasize the

connections between expression, logic, and the critical use of textual and historical evidence. (44)

"The critical use of textual and historical evidence" is the subject of large portions of *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy*, since the most important Part of inductive argumentation is learning to provide persuasive evidence in support of your opinions or assertions, and since that evidence must frequently be drawn from historical sources.

The most important link between critical thinking and cultural literacy is the vocabulary of words denoting mental operations, rhetorical terms, and factual knowledge that constantly expands over the course of our education and varied life experience. In *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing* (1977), Mina Shaughnessy, a pioneer scholar in the learning challenges to students in college writing courses, summed up the kinds of words that college students are being introduced to and that constitute what she termed "the vocabulary of general literacy," though she might equally well have referred to the vocabulary of "critical thinking," "cultural literacy," or "academic discourse":

1. Words that allude to events, places, and people that are assumed to be commonly, if but vaguely, known (Gandhi, the French Revolution, the Nile, etc.).

2. Words that serve as formal equivalents to concepts already familiar to the student in different words (as *atheist* is the equivalent to "someone who doesn't believe in God").

3. Words that serve to identify complex historical movements (Renaissance, Marxism, evolution, etc.).

4. Words that, although Part of the nomenclature of certain fields, are also used in the wider culture with variant meanings (in literature, for example, such terms as *fiction*, *drama*, or *novel*).

5. Words that are intended to initiate highly specific academic activities (*define*, *compare*, *generalize*, *document*, *illustrate*, *prove*, *summarize*, *interpret*, etc.).

6. Words that are used in deliberately ambiguous ways in order to enrich or refine meaning (*irony*, *figures of speech*, etc.).

7. Words that articulate relationships such as addition, negation, condition, or causation (*moreover*, *therefore*, *however*, etc.).

8. Words that represent Latin or Greek-based synonyms for familiar words (i.e., *initiate* or *commence* for *begin*) and that tend to give an academic flavor to the writing and speech of teachers. (217)



## Making Connections

To the young mind, every thing is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things, and see in them one nature, then [to join] three, then three thousand.....

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar”

Scholars in developmental psychology, sociolinguistics, and composition theory have identified other critical thinking skills that distinguish advanced stages in reading, writing, and reasoning (sometimes termed “higher-order thinking”), which will largely form the subject matter of the rest of Part 2. These include the abilities to retain and apply material previously studied and to sustain an extended line of argument in reading, writing, and speaking, incorporating **recursive** and **cumulative thinking** (the abilities to refer back to previously covered material and to build on that material in developing stages in an argument).

These skills and others further contribute to the abilities to make connections between diverse experiences, ideas, and subjects studied, through **analysis** and **synthesis**, which were introduced in Chapter 2. The most important analytic and synthetic skills (again illustrated in many of the readings and exercises throughout this book) include the abilities to reason back and forth between (and connect) the concrete and the abstract; between the personal and the impersonal; between the literal and the figurative, the explicit and the implicit (“reading between the lines”); between the actual and the hypothetical or between what presently exists and conceivable alternatives; between the past, present, and future; and between causes and effects. Other skills include the abilities to understand (within personal, historical, and political contexts) multiple levels of meaning or points of view and to recognize irony, paradox, and ambiguity in disparities between what is said and meant, between appearance and reality (especially between what people say and what they do), and between intentions and results. A classic discussion of analytic and synthetic reasoning is found in the opening passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s 1837 Phi Beta Kappa address, “The American Scholar,” later in this chapter. (See the topics for discussion and writing after that reading.)

On a negative note, some critics of contemporary American society and culture make the case that many individuals’ development of analytic and synthetic skills—indeed their capacity to make connections between events and ideas at all—has actually been impaired by the atomizing “sound bites” and low reasoning level of mass political discourse and media and that, in a **vicious circle**, the diminished level of the public’s reasoning skills is pandered to by politicians and media “giving the people what they want,” a point further developed in Chapter 16. As sociologist Stanley Aronowitz puts it in “Mass Culture and the Eclipse of Reason: The Implications for Pedagogy”:

Research suggests a correlation of television watching (and consumption of mass culture in general) to a tendency toward literalness in thought. Put succinctly, children of all social

classes . . . seem unable to penetrate beyond the surfaces of things to reach down to those aspects of the object that may not be visible to the senses The problem of abstraction

becomes a major barrier to analysis because students seem enslaved to the concrete. Finally, teachers notice that many have trouble making connections between two objects or sets of concepts that are not related to each other in an obvious manner The critical project of

learning involves understanding that things are often not what they seem to be and that abstract concepts such as “society,” “capitalism,” “history,” and other categories not available to the senses are nonetheless real. This whole critical project now seems in eclipse. (282-3)

## Dialogue in Critical Thinking and Literature

Only by art can we get outside ourselves, know what another sees of his universe, which is not the same as ours and the different views of which would otherwise have remained unknown to us as those there may be on the moon.

—*Marcel Proust*, *Remembrance of Things Past*:

*The Past Recaptured*

Plato’s works about Socrates, written in fourth-century-BC Greece and among the greatest influences on the whole history of Western philosophy, rhetoric, and literature, are in the form of dramatic dialogues between Socrates and other characters. In these dialogues, the truth is pursued through dialogic (or dialectical) exchange and refinement of positions, as opposed to a monologue by one author or character. As we will see in Chapter 5, the crucial role of dialogue in current models of critical thinking is apparent in the use of methods like **Rogsonian argument** and “Believers and Doubters,” which help us to get outside our own egos and empathize with others’ viewpoints. The dialogic dimension of critical thinking is also incorporated throughout this textbook, in my drawing attention to my own subjective viewpoint and periodically inviting challenges to it from opposing ones, as well as in the pairing of readings that directly or indirectly oppose one another on a point-by-point basis.

The emphasis on dialogue in critical thinking scholarship coincides with a long tradition in creative literature from Plato onward. Indeed, it might be said that every work of literature or art engages the reader in dialogue and making a compassionate connection with an alien viewpoint, as expressed in the quotation here from French novelist Marcel Proust’s multivolume masterpiece *Remembrance of Things Past*. (It is also implicit in Emerson’s “American Scholar” and Whitman’s “Noiseless, Patient Spider” that the intellectual connections made by the scientist, scholar, and poet also serve to connect all human beings in compassion.) For Albert Camus, the French Nobel Prize-winning author, this concept of literature as dialogue formed the link between his career as a writer of fiction and drama and his commitments as a political journalist

and activist. In an essay titled “Neither Victims nor Executioners,” written in 1946 in the wreckage of World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War, he called for a new “civilization of dialogue” between individuals of all countries that would transcend the contrived, deadly hatreds and propagandistic language of nationalistic rivalry: “What is necessary to defend is dialogue and universal communication between men. Servitude, injustice, and falsehood are the scourges that shatter that communication and forbid that dialogue” (18). Elsewhere he writes:

The mutual understanding and communication discovered by rebellion can survive only in the free exchange of conversation. Every ambiguity, every misunderstanding, leads to death; clear language and simple words are the only salvation from this death. The climax of every tragedy lies in the deafness of its heroes. Plato is right and not Moses and Nietzsche. [References to Moses handing down the Ten Commandments from the mountaintop and to Nietzsche’s monologic *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.] Dialogue on the level of mankind is less costly than the gospel preached by totalitarian regimes in the form of a monologue dictated from the top of a lonely mountain.

On the stage as in reality, the monologue precedes death. (*The Rebel*, 283-84)

The reading later in this chapter, “Can Patriotism Be Compassionate?” by Martha Nussbaum, a classics scholar, is a good example of the applicability of these themes in classical humanism to our thinking about current issues like the events following September 11, 2001.

## Recursiveness, Cumulativity, and Levels of Meaning

Writing, the clearest demonstration of the power of analytical and sequential thinking, seems increasingly to be an alien form to many of our young, even to those who may be regarded as extremely intelligent... The electronic information environment, with televi-

sion at its center, is fundamentally hostile to conceptual, segmented, linear modes of expression; thus, both writing and speech must lose some of their power. Language is, by its nature, slow-moving, hierarchical, logical, and continuous. Whether writing or speaking, one must maintain a fixed point of view and a continuity of content; one must move to higher or lower levels of abstraction; one must follow to a greater or lesser degree rules of syntax and logic. Every word contains the possibility of multiple meanings and therefore of multiple ideas..... The young in particular are experiencing an acute

inability to make connections, and some have given up trying. The TV curriculum, we must remember, stresses the fragmented and discrete nature of events, and indeed is structurally unable to organize them into coherent themes or principles.

—Neil Postman, *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979)

The word *recursiveness* is related to the *cursor* of a computer, and similarly refers to moving forward and back. In reading others' texts and writing your own, it involves the process of rereading as many times as necessary to decode the author's full, complex meaning (or to encode your own), to follow the development of theme or thesis and of the reasoning (or lack thereof). Good writing requires such rereading and holds up, or even appears better, under many rereadings, but poor writing falls apart thematically, stylistically, or logically under closer scrutiny. In your own writing, the counter Part to rereading is *revision* (*revision*). About this process, Orville Schell, a distinguished journalist and dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Berkeley, writes:

Nine-tenths of good journalism is writing a piece over and over until you get it right. I would love to teach a course in which each student writes one article and spends the whole semester editing it over and over, which is maybe not something you can always do in the real world but which builds an awareness that good writing is not a question of getting it right the first time, it's a question of sticking with it until you can get it to sing. (*San Francisco Examiner*, June 16, 1996, B-9)

**Cumulativeness** refers to the continuous building and retention by the writer or reader of knowledge (**cultural literacy**), ideas, and reasoning throughout a particular work, and from that work to future ones. The entire process of general education, from kindergarten to graduate school and beyond, depends on this steady accumulation. But many cultural forces today impede any such accumulation. Postman, Aronowitz, and other cultural critics consider the atomized discourse of television and politics foremost among these forces, but the structures of education itself in many ways work against cognitive accumulation. Maybe you have been lucky in the schools you have attended, but for many students, high school and college education consists of what I call "jumping through hoops." How accurately does this correspond to your experience of schooling?

You're taking four or more courses each term, few of which have much continuity with the others or with ones you've taken earlier or will take later. Many individual courses are structured as a sketchy sequence of modular units with little sense of building on what has been learned previously. Assignments and tests cover only the current unit, and you have been conditioned into the attitude that studying consists of cramming for each day's assignment and then forgetting it to go on to the next one. So even when class discussion is lively, it is hard to retain enough from last week's or yesterday's to continue it today. And with all the pressure put on "getting the grade," short-term efforts to do so naturally take precedence over motivation to truly learn. So education is reduced to a sequence of jumping through hoops, doing no more than what is needed to finish each day's assignment, to pass the exam, to get the grade, to get the diploma, to get the job—with the result that in the end you are apt to have retained little of what you have studied at all. This textbook is structured in a way that attempts to provide an antidote to these negative cognitive influences and to model the process of cumulative learning, within the discipline of English or rhetoric, and in application to critical citizenship.

In approaching serious academic studies, it is necessary not only to read or write recursively and cumulatively, on a linear or horizontal plane, so to speak, but also to stop frequently to process **levels of meaning**—varieties of information stacked or compressed “vertically” in a text, through rhetorical and stylistic techniques that will be defined and described (recursively and cumulatively!) in subsequent sections.

First reading

Recursion to

Second reading, with cumulation to trace development of theme, argument, or images

Recursion to

Third reading, for levels of meaning:

Multiple or complex meanings; irony, paradox, etc.

Figures of speech

Allusions or references (cultural literacy)

Between-the-lines implications

Words to look up in a dictionary

Facts to look up in reference works

Citations to check for accuracy and further information

Figure 3.1

These three processes are summed up in the diagram in figure 3.1.

## Drawing the Line and Establishing Proportion

One more important facet of critical thinking to emphasize near the outset of our studies here has to do with item 8 in “Rhetoric: A Checklist For Analyzing Your Own and Others’ Arguments” in Chapter 2: “Are the limits of the position defined or are they vulnerable to being pushed to absurd logical consequences (**reduction to absurdity**)? In other words, does [the author] indicate where to **draw the line**?” One of the most frequent fallacies committed by argumentative writers is first setting two positions in opposition to each other and then siding absolutely with one, without qualifications or recognition of sensible limits beyond which that position would no longer be viable. A similar fallacy is to reject an extreme position on one side then to lurch to the **equal and opposite extreme** on the other.

A good example of this problem comes up in the discussion of the model student paper in Chapter 4 about “the beauty myth.” One of Christina Hoff Sommers’s arguments against Naomi Wolf is that “Stressing the importance of diet and fitness can hardly be considered as an insidious attempt by the male establishment to disempower women.” One of the students in the discussion argues that Sommers is attacking a **straw man** version of Wolf’s position, since Wolf never denies the importance of fitness and attractiveness—to a point. Her case is that the beauty industry has pushed these values to an unhealthy extreme, in anorexic models of beauty and an overload

in marketing of beauty products. Both Wolf and Sommers, then, need to draw the line on exactly what degree of fitness and attractiveness is healthy and what degree is unhealthy, and you as a critical reader need to evaluate how effectively each does so.

The same principle is central to arguments about the increasing inequality of incomes and wealth between the rich and the middle class and poor over the past few decades in the United States, a topic explored in Part 5 of this book. One student writes, "It's a good thing that Bill Gates's wealth more than doubled last year from \$18 billion to \$39 billion. The more successful Microsoft is, the more employees they will need and the more taxes it and its employees will be paying. When corporations are successful, they give back to the people as dictated by the trickle-down theory." This assertion **evades the issue** of the logical consequences of the effect on American society of the accumulation of a constantly larger percentage of national wealth and power in the hands of a few individuals and corporations—consequences that have prompted antimonopoly legislation against Microsoft. In other words, this student fails to draw the line on a possible point at which the compounding of Gates's and Microsoft's wealth would be socially counterproductive. So the position could be reduced to absurdity by an opponent imagining an America totally owned by Gates!

At the other extreme, a second student writes, "It's criminal that someone like Bill Gates is allowed to gain wealth beyond the net worth of several of the world's countries. His billions should be confiscated through taxes and used toward eliminating poverty in the United States and the rest of the world." This student fails to draw the line on exactly what kind and degree of income equalization would be feasible and just, without going to the opposite extreme of the total equalization of income imposed by dictatorial governments under Communism.

The aim of good argumentation, then, should be to apply a sense of proportion and limits in delineating an exact degree of validity in any position argued for, following Aristotle's principles of "the golden mean" and "nothing in excess." The following reading by Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism," is a good model of drawing the line. Ravitch delineates the extent to which multiculturalism provides a valuable corrective to Eurocentric biases in American education, and the point at which some multiculturalists go to the equal and opposite extreme of glorifying other cultures in an equally biased manner.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

On the basis of the lists of critical thinking skills and dispositions here, think back on courses you have taken through high school and college. Which of them promoted these skills and dispositions, and how? Which of them fit the later description of just "jumping through hoops"? From which set have you retained more useful knowledge?

The quotations here from Stanley Aronowitz and Neil Postman suggest destructive effects on thinking and learning that result from growing up on television and other electronic media. Do these analyses strike you as accurate? Has the critical thinking

involved in college study presented you with a difficult adjustment from a TV-oriented mind-set? How much TV do you watch in college compared to high school?

Discuss a work of literature (or another work of art such as a movie, song, painting, or sculpture) that has caused you to “decenter” from your accustomed ethnocentric viewpoint and enabled you to identify more compassionately with a viewpoint with which you were previously unfamiliar or unsympathetic.

Find examples of arguments where the author either does or does not do a good job of “drawing the line.”

## **From The American Scholar**

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge in 1837.

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

I greet you on the recommencement of our literary year. Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor. We do not meet for games of strength or skill, for the recitation of histories, tragedies, and odes, like the ancient Greeks; for parliaments of love and poesy, like the Troubadours; nor for the advancement of science, like our contemporaries in the British and European capitals. Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. As such it is precious as the sign of an indestructible instinct. Perhaps the time is already come when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the polestar for a thousand years?

In this hope I accept the topic which not only usage but the nature of our association seem to prescribe to this day,—the AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Year by year we come up hither to read one more Chapter of his biography. Let us inquire what light new days and events have thrown on his character and his hopes.

It is one of those fables which out of an unknown antiquity convey an unlooked-for wisdom, that the gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself; just as the hand was divided into fingers, the better to answer its end.

The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is One Man,—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an

engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the *divided* or social state these functions are parcelled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The fable implies that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But, unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man.

Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any ideas of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney a statute-book; the mechanic a machine; the sailor a rope of the ship.

In this distribution of functions the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state he is Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking.

In this view of him, as Man Thinking, the theory of his office is contained. Him Nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites. Is not indeed every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? But the old oracle said, "All things have two handles: beware of the wrong one." In life, too often, the scholar errs with mankind and forfeits his privilege. Let us see him in his school, and consider him in reference to the main influences he receives.

I. The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, Night and her stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing—beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find,—so entire so boundless. Far too as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without center, without circumference,—in the mass and in the particle, Nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. Classification begins. To the young mind every thing is individual, stands by itself, By and by, it finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem. It presently



learns that since the dawn of history there has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts. But what is classification but the perceiving that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also a law of the human mind? The astronomer discovers that geometry, a pure abstraction of the human mind, is the measure of planetary motion. The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts. The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact; one after another reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and their law, and goes on forever to animate the last fiber of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight.

Thus to him, to this schoolboy under the bending dome of day, is suggested that he and it proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that root? Is not that the soul of his soul? A thought too bold; a dream too wild. Yet when this spiritual light shall have revealed the law of more earthly natures,—when he has learned to worship the soul, and to see that the natural philosophy that now is, is only the first groupings of its gigantic hand, he shall look forward to an ever expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator. He shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it Part for part. One is seal and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And, in fine, the ancient precept, “Know thyself,” and the modern precept, “Study nature,” become at last one maxim.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

This section at the beginning of the speech introduces Emerson’s survey of the subjects of study he advocated for American students that differed from traditional European education and culture. The three main sources of wisdom for scholars (and implicitly for poets and other creative writers) should be—in order of importance—nature, books and history, and action (which includes the section cited in Chapter 1 about the necessity for political involvement by scholars and intellectuals). In the four paragraphs beginning, “It is one of those fables,” Emerson contrasts the Platonic ideal of “the whole man” with the state of man in “the divided or social state,” especially in the time of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, with its division and specialization of labor and the resulting dehumanization of the worker “into a thing” (the theme of “reification” that is also central in the writings of Emerson’s German contemporaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels). In this divided state, “the scholar is the delegated intellect”—that is, thinking, learning, and creativity have become reduced to specialized intellectual occupations like teaching rather than being common traits of all Americans as they should be.

Emerson then contrasts this divided state with his ideal of Man Thinking, whose mind analyzes and synthesizes all fields of knowledge. Emerson shows the connections

between every aspect of nature, made visible by the various sciences, and he lauds the capacity of the active human mind to perceive, or imaginatively create, those connections. Emerson was primarily a poet and theorist of literary transcendentalism, a movement that celebrated the human capacity for transcending, through the exercise of intellect and will power, the routinized, conformist thinking of conventional life, into the realms of artistic, scientific, sociopolitical, and spiritual independence and creativity. Although he is discussing science here, the language in which he describes it is highly poetic in its use of figurative language (that is, language that makes symbolic connections—see Chapter 9), so that the passage also implicitly (“between the lines”) demonstrates the similarity between scientific and aesthetic thought. For example, he draws a metaphor from botany in depicting “the young mind . . . discovering roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem,” in the same way that the poet connects and unifies diverse phenomena through linguistic symbolism like this. A brief passage such as this illustrates the distinctive capacity of literary language to embody multiple traits of critical thinking.

In the paragraph beginning, “The first in time,” identify all the different branches and phenomena of science that Emerson alludes to, directly or indirectly—for example, in the sentence, “Far too as her splendors shine.” In the sentences, “He shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it Part for part. One is seal and one is print,” the word “opposite” means counter Part or mirror image. “Seal” refers to the soft wax that was used to stamp letters or legal documents, and “print” was the tool to imprint the wax. So what does this metaphor suggest about the relation between nature and the human soul or mind?

## A Noiseless Patient Spider

*By Walt Whitman*

From *Leaves of Grass*, 1868

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself, Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.  
And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them, Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold, Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Whitman was a mid-nineteenth-century American disciple of Emerson, and this poem embodies ideas similar to those in the passage from “The American Scholar.”

The first five-line stanza is a **literal**, almost scientific description of the spider building a web. The second stanza uses **figurative language** (**symbolic analogy** through verbal substitution of one word for another) to connect the spider and Whitman's own "soul" or mind, which is similarly isolated in the universe yet (metaphorically) is ceaselessly "seeking the [celestial] spheres to connect them." We can **infer** that "seeking the spheres to connect them" means something like Emerson's description of the scientific mind making connections between diverse aspects of nature, and/ or suggests the transcendentalist quest to connect life on earth with a higher, spiritual reality symbolized by the spheres—which Emerson similarly describes as "this web of God." Metaphors like this do not appear only in poetry but are common in everyday life—for example, the World Wide Web.

Whitman, like Emerson, merges the scientific imagination with the poetic through his use of metaphors like "spheres," "bridge," "anchor," and "thread" to describe the activities of his mind, so he is not only writing a poem about a spider but is implicitly writing a poem about the symbolic web of connective language and ideas that constitute poetry. Whitman's poem "Song of Myself," which opens the collection *Leaves of Grass*, begins:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (885)

The theme runs throughout *Leaves of Grass* that Whitman's poems connect his "solitary self" with his readers and all humans. In this light, it seems likely that "A

Noiseless, Patient Spider" has a further **level of meaning** on which it is a statement about how poetry creates a web of communication linking the solitary poet with other humans. Like "The American Scholar," then, Whitman's poem condenses many aspects of critical thinking into a few words through the resources of literary language.

Discuss the plausibility of this interpretation of the poem, along with other possible levels of meaning you might find in it.

## Can Patriotism Be Compassionate?

*Martha Nussbaum*

From the *Nation*, December 17, 2001

In the aftermath of September 11, we have all experienced strong emotions for our country: fear, outrage, grief, astonishment. Our media portray the disaster as a tragedy that has happened to our nation, and that is how we very naturally see it. So too the ensuing war: It is called "America's New War," and most news reports focus on the meaning of events for us and our nation. We think these events are important because they concern us—not just human lives, but American lives. In one way, the crisis has expanded our imaginations. We find ourselves feeling sympathy for many people who did not even cross our minds before: New York firefighters, that gay rugby player who

helped bring down the fourth plane, bereaved families of so many national and ethnic origins. We even sometimes notice with a new attention the lives of Arab-Americans among us, or feel sympathy for a Sikh taxi driver who complains about customers who tell him to go home to “his country,” even though he came to the United States as a political refugee from Punjab. Sometimes our compassion even crosses that biggest line of all, the national boundary. Events have led many Americans to sympathize with the women and girls of Afghanistan, for example, in a way that many feminists had been trying to get people to do for a long time, without success.

All too often, however, our imaginations remain oriented to the local; indeed, this orientation is implicit in the unusual level of our alarm. The world has come to a stop in a way that it never has for Americans when disaster has befallen human beings in other places. Floods, earthquakes, cyclones—and the daily deaths of thousands from preventable malnutrition and disease—none of these typically make the American world come to a standstill, none elicit a tremendous outpouring of grief and compassion. The plight of innocent civilians in the current war evokes a similarly uneven and flickering response.

And worse: Our sense that the “us” is all that matters can easily flip over into a demonizing of an imagined “them,” a group of outsiders who are imagined as enemies of the invulnerability and the pride of the allimportant “us.” Just as parents’ compassion for their own children can all too easily slide into an attitude that promotes the defeat of other people’s children, so too with patriotism: Compassion for our fellow Americans can all too easily slide over into an attitude that wants America to come out on top, defeating or subordinating other peoples or nations. Anger at the terrorists themselves is perfectly appropriate; so is the attempt to bring them to justice. But “us versus them” thinking doesn’t always stay focused on the original issue; it too easily becomes a general call for American supremacy, the humiliation of “the other.”

One vivid example of this slide took place at a baseball game I went to at Chicago’s Comiskey Park, the first game played there after September 11—and a game against the Yankees, so there was a heightened awareness of the situation of New York and its people. Things began well, with a moving ceremony commemorating the firefighters who had lost their lives and honoring local firefighters who had gone to New York afterward to help out. There was even a lot of cheering when the Yankees took the field, a highly unusual transcendence of local attachments. But as the game went on and the beer flowed, one heard, increasingly, “U-S-A, US-A,” echoing the chant from the 1980 Olympic hockey match in which the United States defeated Russia. This chant seemed to express a wish for America to defeat, abase, humiliate its enemies. Indeed, it soon became a general way of expressing the desire to crush one’s enemies, whoever they were. When the umpire made a bad call that went against the Sox, the same group in the stands turned to him, chanting “U-S-A.” In other words, anyone who crosses us is evil, and should be crushed. It’s not surprising that Stoic philosopher and Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, trying to educate himself to have an equal respect

for all human beings, reported that his first lesson was “not to be a fan of the Greens or Blues at the races, or the light-armed or heavy-armed gladiators at the Circus.”

Compassion is an emotion rooted, probably, in our biological heritage. (Although biologists once portrayed animal behavior as egoistic, primatologists by now recognize the existence of altruistic emotion in apes, and it may exist in other species as well.) But this history does not mean that compassion is devoid of thought. In fact, as Aristotle argued long ago, human compassion standardly requires three thoughts: that a serious bad thing has happened to someone else; that this bad event was not (or not entirely) the person’s own fault; and that we ourselves are vulnerable in similar ways. Thus compassion forms a psychological link between our own self-interest and the reality of another person’s good or ill. For that reason it is a morally valuable emotion—when it gets things right. Often, however, the thoughts involved in the emotion, and therefore the emotion itself, go astray, failing to link people at a distance to one’s own current possibilities and vulnerabilities. (Rousseau said that kings don’t feel compassion for their subjects because they count on never being human, subject to the vicissitudes of life.) Sometimes, too, compassion goes wrong by getting the seriousness of the bad event wrong: Sometimes, for example, we just don’t take very seriously the hunger and illness of people who are distant from us. These errors are likely to be built into the nature of compassion as it develops in childhood and then adulthood: We form intense attachments to the local first, and only gradually learn to have compassion for people who are outside our own immediate circle. For many Americans, that expansion of moral concern stops at the national boundary.

Most of us are brought up to believe that all human beings have equal worth. At least the world’s major religions and most secular philosophies tell us so. But our emotions don’t believe it. We mourn for those we know, not for those we don’t know. And most of us feel deep emotions about America, emotions we don’t feel about India or Russia or Rwanda. In and of itself, this narrowness of our emotional lives is probably acceptable and maybe even good. We need to build outward from meanings we understand, or else our moral life would be empty of urgency. Aristotle long ago said, plausibly, that the citizens in Plato’s ideal city, asked to care for all citizens equally, would actually care for none, since care is learned in small groups with their more intense attachments. Reading Marcus Aurelius bears this out: The project of weaning his imagination from its intense erotic attachments to the familial and the local gradually turns into the rather alarming project of weaning his heart from deep investment in the world. He finds that the only way to be utterly evenhanded is to cultivate a kind of death within life, seeing all people as distant and shadowlike, “vain images in a procession.” If we want our life with others to contain strong passions—for justice in a world of injustice, for aid in a world where many go without what they need—we would do well to begin, at least, with our familiar strong emotions toward family, city and country. But concern should not stop with these local attachments.

Americans, unfortunately, are prone to such emotional narrowness. So are all people, but because of the power and geographical size of America, isolationism has particularly

strong roots here. When at least some others were finding ways to rescue the Jews during the Holocaust, America's inactivity and general lack of concern were culpable, especially in proportion to American power. It took Pearl Harbor to get us even to come to the aid of our allies. When genocide was afoot in Rwanda, our own sense of self-sufficiency and invulnerability stopped us from imagining the Rwandans as people who might be us; we were therefore culpably inactive toward them. So too in the present situation. Sometimes we see a very laudable recognition of the interconnectedness of all peoples, and of the fact that we must join forces with people in all nations to defeat terrorists and bring them to justice. At other times, however, we see simplifying slogans ("America Fights Back") that portray the situation in terms of a good "us" crusading against an evil "them"—failing to acknowledge, for instance, that people in all nations have strong reasons to oppose terrorism, and that the fight has many active allies.

Such simplistic thinking is morally wrong, because it encourages us to ignore the impact of our actions on innocent civilians and to focus too little on the all-important project of humanitarian relief. It is also counterproductive. We now understand, or ought to, that if we had thought more about support for the educational and humanitarian infrastructure of Pakistan, for example, funding good local nongovernmental organizations there the way several European nations have done in India, young people in Pakistan might possibly have been educated in a climate of respect for religious pluralism, the equality of women and other values that we rightly prize instead of having fundamentalist *madrassahs* as their only educational option. Our policy in South Asia has exhibited for many years a gross failure of imagination and sympathy; we basically thought in terms of cold war values, ignoring the real lives of people to whose prospects our actions could make a great difference. Such crude thinking is morally obtuse; it is also badly calculated to advance any good cause we wish to embrace, in a world where all human lives are increasingly interdependent.

Compassion begins with the local. But if our moral natures and our emotional natures are to live in any sort of harmony, we must find devices through which to extend our strong emotions—and our ability to imagine the situation of others—to the world of human life as a whole. Since compassion contains thought, it can be educated. We can take this disaster as occasion for narrowing our focus, distrusting the rest of the world and feeling solidarity with Americans alone. Or we can take it as an occasion for expansion of our ethical horizons. Seeing how vulnerable our great country is, we can learn something about the vulnerability that all human beings share, about what it is like for distant others to lose those they love to a disaster not of their own making, whether it is hunger or flood or war.

Because human beings find the meaning of life in attachments that are local, we should not ask of people that they renounce patriotism, any more than we now ask them to renounce the love of their parents and children. But we typically do ask parents not to try to humiliate or thwart other people's children, and we work (at least sometimes) for schools that develop the abilities of all children, that try to make it possible for everyone to support themselves and find rewarding work. So too with the world:

We may love our own nation most, but we should also strive for a world in which the capacities of human beings will not be blighted by hunger or misogyny or lack of education- or by being in the vicinity of a war one has not caused. We should therefore demand an education that does what it can to encourage the understanding of human predicaments-and also to teach children to recognize the many obstacles to that pursuit, the many pitfalls of the self-centered imagination as it tries to be just. There are hopeful signs in the present situation, particularly in attempts to educate the American public about Islam, about the histories of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and about the situation and attitudes of Arab-Americans in this country. But we need to make sure these educational efforts are consistent and systematic, not just fear-motivated responses to an immediate crisis.

Our media and our systems of education have long given us far too little information about lives outside our borders, stunting our moral imaginations. The situation of America's women and its racial, ethnic and sexual minorities has to some extent worked its way into curricula at various levels, and into our popular media. We have done less well with parts of the world that are unfamiliar. This is not surprising, because such teaching requires a lot of investment in new curricular initiatives, and such television programming requires a certain temporary inattention to the competition for ratings. But we now know that we live in a complex, interconnected world, and we know our own ignorance. As Socrates said, this is at least the beginning of progress. At this time of national crisis we can renew our commitment to the equal worth of humanity, demanding media, and schools, that nourish and expand our imaginations by presenting non-American lives as deep, rich and compassion-worthy. "Thus from our weakness," said Rousseau of such an education, "our fragile happiness is born." Or, at least, it might be born.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

What aspects of critical thinking surveyed in this Chapter are most prominently applied in Nussbaum's article?

What is the conflict between patriotism and compassion in the title? What arguments does Nussbaum present that the two often are in conflict, and how persuasive are her reasons for trying to overcome the conflict? Is it realistic to expect us to have the same concern for the suffering of people in distant countries that we have for Americans, or is this just "bleeding-heart liberalism?" Does Nussbaum present convincing arguments that it is in our practical interests to develop such concern? To what extent did the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, make you more aware that events in those distant countries, and American policies there, can have a direct influence on our lives?

You may find Nussbaum's line of argument somewhat hard to follow. It might help to try to outline it. Can you find an introduction, main body, and conclusion? Is there a single, explicit or implicit thesis statement, or is her thesis more complex than that?

To what extent is Nussbaum's argument that Americans should develop greater awareness of conditions in other parts of the world related to the past and present nature of American and other Western intervention there? The paragraph beginning "Such simplistic thinking" uses the example of "support for the educational and humanitarian infrastructure of Pakistan." Why Pakistan? You may need to do research on the history of American and European involvements in Pakistan, on the role of Pakistan in relation to Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, and on the India-Pakistan conflict as an important factor in world peace. You might find Arundhati Roy's book *Power Politics*, written from a liberal Indian viewpoint, a useful source here.

How effective for her thesis are her **anecdotes** about the baseball game and the 1980 Olympics? Might it be a fallacy of **false analogy** or **equation** for us to act as though our attitude toward sports events should be similar to that toward international or military conflicts, or as though different countries' sports teams really represent their nation as a political entity? Look for examples in political and media discourse of war being described in sports metaphors, and think about how they affect our perceptions of the realities of war. In Chapter 9, one criterion given for whether a figure of speech is effective or not is whether it makes the reality it describes more concrete and immediate, or more abstract and distant. For example, before the war on Iraq in 2003, Central Intelligence Agency director George Tenet reportedly told President George W. Bush that finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq would be "a slam dunk." Did this basketball metaphor accurately describe the situation that awaited American troops in Iraq?

"Our media and our systems of education have long given us far too little information about lives outside our borders, stunting our moral imaginations." If you think this is true, why do you think it is, and in what ways can you imagine the media and schools doing a better job here?

As a scholar of classics, Nussbaum alludes to the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates (specifically to "The Apology," which will be discussed in Chapter 5) and Aristotle, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, and to the eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. What relevance does she find in each of their ideas for Americans today, and how effective do you think the **allusions** are?

## Multiculturalism

*Diane Ravitch*

From *American Scholar*, Summer 1990.

Questions of race, ethnicity, and religion have been a perennial source of conflict in American education. The schools have often attracted the zealous attention of those who wish to influence the future, as well as those who wish to change the way we view the past. In our history, the schools have been not only an institution in which to teach young people skills and knowledge, but an arena where interest groups fight to preserve



their values, or to revise the judgments of history, or to bring about fundamental social change. In the nineteenth century, Protestants and Catholics battled over which version of the Bible should be used in school, or whether the Bible should be used at all. In recent decades, bitter racial disputes—provoked by policies of racial segregation and discrimination—have generated turmoil in the streets and in the schools. The secularization of the schools during the past century has prompted attacks on the curricula and textbooks and library books by fundamentalist Christians, who object to whatever challenges their faith-based views of history, literature, and science.

Given the diversity of American society, it has been impossible to insulate the schools from pressures that result from differences and tensions among groups. When people differ about basic values, sooner or later those disagreements turn up in battles about how schools are organized or what the schools should teach. Sometimes these battles remove a terrible injustice, like racial segregation. Sometimes, however, interest groups politicize the curriculum and attempt to impose their views on teachers, school officials, and textbook publishers. Across the country, even now, interest groups are pressuring local school boards to remove myths and fables and other imaginative literature from children's readers and to inject the teaching of creationism in biology. When groups cross the line into extremism, advancing their own agenda without regard to reason or to others, they threaten public education itself, making it difficult to teach any issues honestly and making the entire curriculum vulnerable to political campaigns.

For many years, the public schools attempted to neutralize controversies over race, religion, and ethnicity by ignoring them. Educators believed, or hoped, that the schools could remain outside politics; this was, of course, a vain hope since the schools were pursuing policies based on race, religion, and ethnicity. Nonetheless, such divisive questions were usually excluded from the curriculum. The textbooks minimized problems among groups and taught a sanitized version of history. Race, religion, and ethnicity were presented as minor elements in the American saga; slavery was treated as an episode, immigration as a sidebar, and women were largely absent. The textbooks concentrated on presidents, wars, national politics, and issues of state. An occasional "great black" or "great woman" received mention, but the main narrative paid little attention to minority groups and women.

With the ethnic revival of the 1960s, this approach to the teaching of history came under fire, because the history of national leaders—virtually all of whom were white, Anglo-Saxon, and male—ignored the place in American history of those who were none of the above. The traditional history of elites had been complemented by an assimilationist view of American society, which presumed that everyone in the American melting pot would eventually lose or abandon those ethnic characteristics that distinguished them from mainstream Americans. The ethnic revival demonstrated that many groups did not want to be assimilated or melted. Ethnic studies programs popped up on campuses to teach not only that "black is beautiful," but also that every other variety of ethnicity is "beautiful" as well; everyone who had "roots" began to look for them

so that they too could recover that ancestral Part of themselves that had not been homogenized.

As ethnicity became an accepted subject for study in the late 1960s, textbooks were assailed for their failure to portray blacks accurately; within a few years, the textbooks in wide use were carefully screened to eliminate bias against minority groups and women. At the same time, new scholarship about the history of women, blacks, and various ethnic minorities found its way into the textbooks. At first, the multicultural content was awkwardly incorporated as little boxes on the side of the main narrative. Then some of the new social historians (like Stephan Thernstrom, Mary Beth Norton, Gary Nash, Winthrop Jordan, and Leon Litwack) themselves wrote textbooks, and the main narrative itself began to reflect a broadened historical understanding of race, ethnicity, and class in the American past. Consequently, today's history textbooks routinely incorporate the experiences of women, blacks, American Indians, and various immigrant groups.

As a result of the political and social changes of recent decades, cultural pluralism is now generally recognized as an organizing principle of this society. In contrast to the idea of the melting pot, which promised to erase ethnic and group differences, children now learn that variety is the spice of life. They learn that America has provided a haven for many different groups and has allowed them to maintain their cultural heritage or to assimilate, or—as is often the case—to do both; the choice is theirs, not the state's. They learn that cultural pluralism is one of the norms of a free society; that differences among groups are a national

resource rather than a problem to be solved. Indeed, the unique feature of the United States is that its common culture has been formed by the interaction of its subsidiary cultures. It is a culture that has been influenced over time by immigrants, American Indians, Africans (slave and free) and by their descendants. American music, art, literature, language, food, clothing, sports, holidays, and customs all show the effects of the commingling of diverse cultures in one nation. Paradoxical though it may seem, the United States has a common culture that is multicultural.

Our schools and our institutions of higher learning have in recent years begun to embrace what Catherine R. Stimpson of Rutgers University has called "cultural democracy," a recognition that we must listen to a "diversity of voices" in order to understand our culture, past and present. This understanding of the pluralistic nature of American culture has taken a long time to forge. It is based on sound scholarship and has led to major revisions in what children are taught and what they read in school. The new history is—indeed, must be—a warts-and-all history; it demands an unflinching examination of racism and discrimination in our history. Making these changes is difficult, raises tempers, and ignites controversies, but gives a more interesting and accurate account of American history. Accomplishing these changes is valuable, because there is also a useful lesson for the rest of the world in America's relatively successful experience as a pluralistic society. Throughout human history, the clash of different cultures, races, ethnic groups, and religions has often been the cause of bitter hatred,

civil conflict, and international war. The ethnic tensions that now are tearing a Part Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and various republics of the Soviet Union remind us of the costs of unfettered group rivalry. Thus, it is a matter of more than domestic importance that we closely examine and try to understand that Part of our national history in which different groups competed, fought, suffered, but ultimately learned to live together in relative peace and even achieved a sense of common nationhood.

Alas, these painstaking efforts to expand the understanding of American culture into a richer and more varied tapestry have taken a new turn, and not for the better. Almost any idea, carried to its extreme, can be made pernicious, and this is what is happening now to multiculturalism. Today, pluralistic multiculturalism must contend with a new, particularistic multiculturalism. The pluralists seek a richer common culture; the particularists insist that no common culture is possible or desirable. The new particularism is entering the curriculum in a number of school systems across the country. Advocates of particularism propose an ethnocentric curriculum to raise the self-esteem and academic achievement of children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Without any evidence, they claim that children from minority backgrounds will do well in school *only* if they are immersed in a positive, prideful version of their ancestral culture. If children are of, for example, Fredonian ancestry, they must hear that Fredonians were important in mathematics, science, history, and literature. If they learn about great Fredonians and if their studies use Fredonian examples and Fredonian concepts, they will do well in school. If they do not, they will have low self-esteem and will do badly.

At first glance, this appears akin to the celebratory activities associated with Black History Month or Women's History Month, when schoolchildren learn about the achievements of blacks and women. But the point of those celebrations is to demonstrate that neither race nor gender is an obstacle to high achievement. They teach all children that everyone, regardless of their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or family origin, can achieve self-fulfillment, honor, dignity in society if they aim high and work hard.

By contrast, the particularistic version of multiculturalism is . . . deterministic. It teaches children that their identity is determined by their "cultural genes." That something in their blood or their race memory or their cultural DNA defines who they are and what they may achieve. That the culture in which they live is not their own culture, even though they were born here. That American culture is "Eurocentric," and therefore hostile to anyone whose ancestors are not European. Perhaps the most invidious implication of particularism is that racial and ethnic minorities are not and should not try to be Part of American culture; it implies that American culture belongs only to those who are white and European; it implies that those who are neither white nor European are alienated from American culture by virtue of their race or ethnicity; it implies that the only culture they do belong to or can ever belong to is the culture of their ancestors, even if their families have lived in this country for generations.

The war on so-called Eurocentrism is intended to foster self-esteem among those who are not of European descent. But how, in fact, is self-esteem developed? How is the sense of one's own possibilities, one's potential choices, developed? Certainly, the school curriculum plays a relatively small role as compared to the influence of family, community, mass media, and society. But to the extent that curriculum influences what children think of themselves, it should encourage children of all racial and ethnic groups to believe that they are Part of this society and that they should develop their talents and minds to the fullest. It is enormously inspiring, for example, to learn about men and women from diverse backgrounds who overcame poverty, discrimination, physical handicaps, and other obstacles to achieve success in a variety of fields. Behind every such biography of accomplishment is a story of heroism, perseverance, and self-discipline. Learning these stories will encourage a healthy spirit of pluralism, of mutual respect, and of self-respect among children of different backgrounds. The children of American society today will live their lives in a racially and culturally diverse nation, and their education should prepare them to do so.

The pluralist approach to multiculturalism promotes a broader interpretation of the common American culture and seeks due recognition for the ways that the nation's many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have transformed the national culture. The pluralists say, in effect, "American culture belongs to us, all of us; the U.S. is us, and we remake it in every generation." But particularists have no interest in extending or revising American culture; indeed, they deny that a common culture exists. Particularists reject any accommodation among groups, any interactions that blur the distinct lines between them. The brand of history that they espouse is one in which everyone is either a descendant of victims or oppressors. By doing so, ancient hatreds are fanned and recreated in each new generation. Particularism has its intellectual roots in the ideology of ethnic separatism and in the black nationalist movement. In the particularist analysis, the nation has five cultures: African American, Asian American, European American, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American. The huge cultural, historical, religious, and linguistic differences within these categories are ignored, as is the considerable intermarriage among these groups, as are the linkages (like gender, class, sexual orientation, and religion) that cut across these five groups. No serious scholar would claim that all Europeans and white Americans are Part of the same culture, or that all Asians are Part of the same culture, or that all people of Latin-American descent are of the same culture, or that all people of African descent are of the same culture. Any categorization this broad is essentially meaningless and useless.

Particularism is a bad idea whose time has come. It is also a fashion spreading like wildfire through the education system, actively promoted by organizations and individuals with a political and professional interest in strengthening ethnic power bases in the university, in the education profession, and in society itself. One can scarcely pick up an educational journal without learning about a school district that is converting to an ethnocentric curriculum in an attempt to give "self-esteem" to children from racial minorities. A state-funded project in a Sacramento high school is teaching

young black males to think like Africans and to develop the “African Mind Model Technique,” in order to free themselves of the racism of American culture. A popular black rap singer, KRS-One, complained in an op-ed article in the *New York Times* that the schools should be teaching blacks about their cultural heritage, instead of trying to make everyone Americans. “It’s like trying to teach a dog to be a cat,” he wrote. KRS-One railed about having to learn about Thomas Jefferson and the Civil War, which had nothing to do (he said) with black history.

Pluralism can easily be transformed into particularism, as may be seen in the potential uses in the classroom of the Mayan contribution to mathematics. The Mayan example was popularized in a movie called *Stand and Deliver*, about a charismatic Bolivian-born mathematics teacher in Los Angeles who inspired his students (who are Hispanic) to learn calculus. He told them that their ancestors invented the concept of zero; but that wasn’t all he did. He used imagination to put across mathematical concepts. He required them to do homework and to go to school on Saturdays and during the Christmas holidays, so that they might pass the Advanced Placement mathematics examination for college entry. The teacher’s reference to the Mayans’ mathematical genius was a valid instructional device. It was an attention-getter and would have interested even students who were not Hispanic. But the Mayan example would have had little effect without the teacher’s insistence that the class study hard for a difficult examination.

Ethnic educators have seized upon the Mayan contribution to mathematics as the key to simultaneously boosting the ethnic pride of Hispanic children and attacking Eurocentrism. One proposal claims that Mexican-American children will be attracted to science and mathematics if they study Mayan mathematics, the Mayan calendar, and Mayan astronomy. Children in primary grades are to be taught that the Mayans were first to discover the zero and that Europeans learned it long afterwards from the Arabs, who had learned it in India. This will help them see that Europeans were latecomers in the discovery of great ideas. Botany is to be learned by study of the agricultural techniques of the Aztecs, a subject of somewhat limited relevance to children in urban areas. Furthermore, “ethnobotanical” classifications of plants are to be substituted for the Eurocentric Linnaean system. At first glance, it may seem curious that

Hispanic children are deemed to have no cultural affinity with Spain; but to acknowledge the cultural tie would confuse the ideological assault on Eurocentrism.

This proposal suggests some questions: Is there any evidence that the teaching of “culturally relevant” science and mathematics will draw Mexican-American children to the study of these subjects? Will Mexican-American children lose interest or self-esteem if they discover that their ancestors were Aztecs or Spaniards, rather than Mayans? Are children who learn in this way prepared to study the science and mathematics that are taught in American colleges and universities and that are needed for advanced study in these fields? Are they even prepared to study the science and mathematics taught in *Mexican* universities? If the class is half Mexican-American and half something else, will only the Mexican-American children study in a Mayan and Aztec mode or

will all the children? But shouldn't all children study what is culturally relevant for them? How will we train teachers who have command of so many different systems of mathematics and science?

Every field of study, it seems, has been tainted by Eurocentrism, which was defined by a professor at Manchester University, George Ghevarughese Joseph, in *Race and Class* in 1987, as "intellectual racism." Professor Joseph argues that the history of science and technology—and in particular, of mathematics—in non-European societies was distorted by racist Europeans who wanted to establish the dominance of European forms of knowledge. The racists, he writes, traditionally traced mathematics to the Greeks, then claimed that it reached its full development in Europe. These are simply Eurocentric myths to sustain an "imperialist/racist ideology," says Professor Joseph, since mathematics was found in Egypt, Babylonia, Mesopotamia, and India long before the Greeks were supposed to have developed it. Professor Joseph points out too that Arab scientists should be credited with major discoveries traditionally attributed to William Harvey, Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, and Sir Francis Bacon. But he is not concerned only to argue historical issues; his purpose is to bring all of these different mathematical traditions into the school classroom so that children might study, for example, "traditional African designs, Indian *rangoli* patterns and Islamic art" and the "language and counting systems found across the world."

Particularism . . . takes as its premise the spurious notion that cultural traits are inherited. It implies a dubious, dangerous form of cultural predestination. Children are taught that if their ancestors could do it, so could they. But what happens if a child is from a cultural group that made no significant contribution to science or mathematics? Does this mean that children from that background must find a culturally appropriate field in which to strive? How does a teacher find the right cultural buttons for children of mixed heritage? And how in the world will teachers use this technique when the children in their classes are drawn from many different cultures, as is usually the case? By the time that every culture gets its due, there may be no more time left to teach the subject itself. This explosion of [particularism] . . . (which, we should remember, comes from adults, not from students) is reminiscent of the period some years ago when the Russians claimed that they had invented everything first; as we now know, this nationalistic braggadocio did little for their self-esteem and nothing for their economic development. We might reflect, too, on how little social prestige has been accorded in this country to immigrants from Greece and Italy, even though the achievements of their ancestors were at the heart of the classical curriculum.

Particularism can easily be carried to extremes. Students of Fredonian descent must hear that their ancestors were seminal in the development of all human civilization and that without the Fredonian contribution, we would all be living in caves or trees, bereft of art, technology, and culture. To explain why Fredonians today are in modest circumstances, given their historic eminence, children are taught that somewhere, long ago, another culture stole the Fredonians' achievements, palmed them off as their own, and then oppressed the Fredonians.

I first encountered this argument almost twenty years ago, when I was a graduate student. I shared a small office with a young professor, and I listened as she patiently explained to a student why she had given him a D on a term paper. In his paper, he argued that the Arabs had stolen mathematics from the Nubians in the desert long ago (I forget in which century this theft allegedly occurred). She tried to explain to him about the necessity of historical evidence. He was unconvinced, since he believed that he had uncovered a great truth that was beyond proof. The Part I couldn't understand was how anyone could lose knowledge by sharing it. After all, cultures are constantly influencing one another, exchanging ideas and art and technology, and the exchange usually is enriching, not depleting.

It is hardly surprising that America's schools would recognize strong cultural ties with Europe since our nation's political, religious, educational, and economic institutions were created chiefly by people of European descent, our government was shaped by European ideas, and nearly 80 percent of the people who live here are of European descent. The particularists treat all of this history as a racist bias toward Europe, rather than as the matter-of-fact consequences of European immigration. Even so, American education is not centered on Europe. American education, if it is centered on anything, is centered on itself. It is "Americentric." Most American students today have never studied any world history; they know very little about Europe, and even less about the rest of the world. Their minds are rooted solidly in the here and now. When the Berlin Wall was opened in the fall of 1989, journalists discovered that most American teenagers had no idea what it was, nor why its opening was such a big deal. Nonetheless, Eurocentrism provides a better target than Americentrism.

In school districts where most children are black and Hispanic, there has been a growing tendency to embrace particularism rather than pluralism. Many of the children in these districts perform poorly in academic classes and leave school without graduating. They would fare better in school if they had well-educated and well-paid teachers, small classes, good materials, encouragement at home and school, summer academic programs, protection from the drugs and crime that ravage their neighborhoods, and higher expectations of satisfying careers upon graduation. These are expensive and time-consuming remedies that must also engage the larger society beyond the school. The lure of particularism is that it offers a less complicated anodyne, one in which the children's academic deficiencies may be addressed—or set aside—by inflating their racial pride. The danger of this remedy is that it will detract attention from the real needs of schools and the real interests of children, while simultaneously arousing distorted race pride in children of all races, increasing racial antagonism and producing fresh recruits for white and black racist groups. The rising tide of particularism encourages the politicization of all curricula in the schools. If education bureaucrats bend to the political and ideological winds, as is their wont, we can anticipate a generation of struggle over the content of the curriculum in mathematics, science, literature, and history. Demands for "culturally relevant" studies, for ethnostudies of all kinds, will open the classroom to unending battles over whose version is taught, who gets credit

for what, and which ethno-interpretation is appropriate. Only recently have districts begun to resist the demands of fundamentalist groups to censor textbooks and library books (and some have not yet begun to do so).

The spread of particularism throws into question the very idea of American public education. Public schools exist to teach children the general skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in American society, and the specific skills and knowledge that they need in order to function as American citizens. They receive public support because they have a public function. Historically, the public schools were known as “common schools” because they were schools for all, even if the children of all the people did not attend them. Over the years, the courts have found that it was unconstitutional to teach religion in the common schools, or to separate children on the basis of their race in the common schools. In their curriculum, their hiring practices, and their general philosophy, the public schools must not discriminate against or give preference to any racial or ethnic group. yet they are permitted to accommodate cultural diversity by, for example, serving food that is culturally appropriate or providing library collections that emphasize the interests of the local community. However, they should not be expected to teach children to view the world through an ethnocentric perspective that rejects or ignores the common culture. For generations, those groups that wanted to inculcate their religion or their ethnic heritage have instituted private schools—after school, on weekends, or on a full-time basis. There, children learn with others of the same group—Greeks, Poles, Germans, Japanese, Chinese, Jews, Lutherans, Catholics, and so on—and are taught by people from the same group. Valuable as this exclusive experience has been for those who choose it, this has not been the role of public education. One of the primary purposes of public education has been to create a national community, a definition of citizenship and culture that is both expansive and *inclusive*.

The curriculum in public schools must be based on whatever knowledge and practices have been determined to be best by professionals—experienced teachers and scholars—who are competent to make these judgments. Professional societies must be prepared to defend the integrity of their disciplines. When called upon, they should establish review committees to examine disputes over curriculum and to render judgment, in order to help school officials fend off improper political pressure. Where genuine controversies exist, they should be taught and debated in the classroom. Was Egypt a black civilization? Why not raise the question, read the arguments of the different sides in the debate, show slides of Egyptian pharaohs and queens, read books about life in ancient Egypt, invite guest scholars from the local university, and visit museums with Egyptian collections? If scholars disagree, students should know it. One great advantage of this approach is that students will see that history is a lively study, that textbooks are fallible, that historians disagree, that the writing of history is influenced by the historian’s politics and ideology, that history is written by people who make choices among alternative facts and interpretations, and that history changes as new facts are uncovered and new interpretations win adherents. They will also learn



that cultures and civilizations constantly interact, exchange ideas, and influence one another, and that the idea of racial or ethnic purity is a myth. Another advantage is that students might once again study ancient history, which has all but disappeared from the curricula of American schools. (California recently introduced a required sixth grade course in ancient civilizations, but ancient history is otherwise *terra incognita* in American education.)

The multicultural controversy may do wonders for the study of history, which has been neglected for years in American schools. At this time, only half of our high school graduates ever study any world history. Any serious attempt to broaden students' knowledge of Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America will require at least two, and possibly three years of world history (a requirement thus far only in California). American history, too, will need more time than the one-year high-school survey course. Those of us who have insisted for years on the importance of history in the curriculum may not be ready to assent to its redemptive power, but hope that our new allies will ultimately join a constructive dialogue that strengthens the place of history in the schools.

As cultural controversies arise, educators must adhere to the principle of "E Pluribus Unum." That is, they must maintain a balance between the demands of the one—the nation of which we are common citizens—and the many—the varied histories of the American people. It is not necessary to denigrate either the one or the many. Pluralism is a positive value, but it is also important that we preserve a sense of an American community—a society and a culture to which we all belong. If there is no overall community with an agreed-upon vision of liberty and justice, if all we have is a collection of racial and ethnic cultures, lacking any common bonds, then we have no means to mobilize public opinion on behalf of people who are not members of our particular group. We have, for example, no reason to support public education. If there is no larger community, then each group will want to teach its own children in its own way, and public education ceases to exist.

History should not be confused with [particularism] History gives no grounds for race pride. No race has a monopoly on virtue. If anything, a study of history should inspire humility, rather than pride. People of every racial group have committed terrible crimes, often against others of the same group. Whether one looks at the history of Europe or Africa or Latin America or Asia, every continent offers examples of inhumanity. Slavery has existed in civilizations around the world for centuries. Examples of genocide can be found around the world, throughout history, from ancient times right through to our own day. Governments and cultures, sometimes by edict, sometimes simply following tradition, have practiced not only slavery, but human sacrifice, infanticide, clitoridectomy, and mass murder. If we teach children this, they might recognize how absurd both racial hatred and racial chauvinism are.

What must be preserved in the study of history is the spirit of inquiry, the readiness to pen new questions and to pursue new understandings. History, at its best, is a search for truth. The best way to portray this search is through debate and contro-

versy, rather than through imposition of fixed beliefs and immutable facts. Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of school history is its tendency to become Official History, a sanctified version of the Truth taught by the state to captive audiences and embedded in beautiful mass-market textbooks as holy writ. When Official History is written by committees responding to political pressures, rather than by scholars synthesizing the best available research, then the errors of the past are replaced by the politically fashionable errors of the present. It may be difficult to teach children that history is both important and uncertain, and that even the best historians never have all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, but it is necessary to do so. If state education departments permit the revision of their history courses and textbooks to become an exercise in power politics, then the entire process of state-level curriculum-making becomes suspect, as does public education itself.

The question of self-esteem is extraordinarily complex, and it goes well beyond the content of the curriculum. Most of what we call self-esteem is formed in the home and in a variety of life experiences, not only in school. Nonetheless, it has been important for blacks—and for other racial groups—to learn about the history of slavery and of the civil rights movement; it has been important for blacks to know that their ancestors actively resisted enslavement and actively pursued equality; and it has been important for blacks and others to learn about black men probably lessens racial prejudice and provides inspiration for those who are descendants of slaves. But knowing about the travails and triumphs of one's forebears does not necessarily translate into either self-esteem or personal accomplishment. For most children, self-esteem—the self-confidence that grows out of having reached a goal—comes not from hearing about the monuments of their ancestors but as a consequence of what they are able to do and accomplish through their own efforts.

As I reflected on these issues, I recalled reading an interview a few years ago with a talented black runner. She said that her model is Mikhail Baryshnikov. She admires him because he is a magnificent athlete. He is not black; he is not female; he is not Ameri-

and women who fought courageously against  
can-born; he is not even a runner. But he  
racism and who provide models of courage,  
inspires her because of the way he trained  
persistence, and intellect. These are instances  
and used his body. When I read this, I  
where the content of the curriculum reflects  
thought how narrow-minded it is to believe  
sound scholarship, and at the same time  
that people can be inspired *only* by those who  
are exactly like them in race and ethnicity.

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Note the several points at which Ravitch draws the line in distinguishing between what she considers valid versions of multiculturalism and excessive ones, and evaluate the arguments she makes in support of the distinction. How well supported do you find her opposition between “pluralism” and “particularism”? Might strong advocates of multiculturalism consider this a **false dichotomy**, or otherwise **refute** her arguments?

What similarities and differences do you find between this article and Nussbaum’s “Can Patriotism Be Compassionate?” Both authors believe that education should challenge ethnocentrism and “Americentrism,” but what dimension of this issue does Ravitch address that Nussbaum does not?

Ravitch’s article can be considered a Rogerian argument in showing a highly sympathetic understanding of the arguments for multiculturalism and then explaining where she disagrees with them. Outline the sequence of her arguments in doing this.

The controversy over multiculturalism has divided along liberal versus conservative lines. Ravitch is generally considered a conservative, having served in the U.S. Department of Education under President Reagan and the first President Bush. However, in the suggested spectrum of relative political positions in Chapter 15, she would be placed to the left of more militant conservatives whose readings on education and culture are included in this book, like William J. Bennett in chapters 1 and 13, Rush Limbaugh in Chapter 5, and David Horowitz in Chapter 15. Do you find similarities between some of her arguments and those of the others? How would you characterize the difference in **tone** and **ethos** (the relation the writer establishes with readers) between her article and theirs? Which approach do you think is more persuasive, for conservative readers and for liberal ones?

Chapter

# Chapter 4. Writing Argumentative Papers

There are many varieties of argumentative writing, and no single, simple formula for organization or style. Every writing assignment presents unique challenges in rhetorical strategies. The length of an assignment dictates much about its writing; a letter to the editor of 200 words; a paper or op-ed column of 1,000 words, or three or four printed, doublespaced pages; a term paper of 2,500-4,500 words, ten or fifteen pages; a senior thesis of thirty or forty pages; a report or book of one hundred or more pages—each of these calls for a different mode of development and degree of detail in summary, supporting evidence, rebuttal, and so on. Your writing for courses will obviously also vary according to each instructor's specifications in topics and form.

Try to forget whatever you may have heard from writing teachers who approach writing as a strictly formulaic process—the five-paragraph essay, the funnel-shaped essay, and so on. Those are formulas for dull writing, the kind that no one other than a teacher would want to read. In real life, people write arguments because they are compelled to express themselves and communicate their ideas about an issue they feel strongly about; the form of what they write is determined by rhetorical decisions about the most effective organization and tone for persuading others to agree with what they have to say. So you need first and foremost to design whatever you write to interest readers in the originality, intelligence, and energy of what you have to say, not to bore them with a paper that looks like you are just going through the motions of an assignment.

Argumentative essays usually take one of two broad forms: either making an argument of your own or summarizing, analyzing, and evaluating the arguments of sources. These two are not entirely distinct, of course, since in making your own arguments you often need to cite sources for support, while analyzing and evaluating others' arguments is apt to entail making your own judgments on the issues. The first form works best for topics that are well within your own realm of experience and prior knowledge. This book (and the kind of course it is keyed to) emphasizes the second form because it approaches argumentative writing as a means of analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information acquired from sources in college courses and from your independent reading, listening to, and viewing of communication media.

There is no fixed formula for argumentative writing, and there is a wide variety of topics and rhetoric strategies to challenge your ingenuity, but there *are* some general, step-by-step *procedures* that most proficient writers employ. Again, for the kinds of

papers that you will write in college courses, most of which are based on a designated topic, readings, or research assignment, something like the following is the process, in three broad stages: prewriting, writing, and postwriting.

## **Prewriting**

### **Reading and Research**

The prewriting stage begins with reading and research. Take lots of notes by highlighting passages and making marginal comments in books and articles and keying notes in your notebook to page references. At this stage, you also need to bring to bear on the subject your whole previous storehouse of cultural literacy, everything you remember or have books and notes on from previous studies, along with your own life experience.

### **Brainstorming, Freewriting, Small-Group Discussions**

You may have used these techniques for generating ideas in previous writing courses that emphasized personal expression and an open choice of topics. Brainstorming involves random jotting down of ideas and beginning to group them to develop an outline. Freewriting is spontaneous written expression of these ideas, before you start to edit, narrow down, or organize them; it is a good way to avoid getting stuck on where to begin writing. Discussions with groups of students, friends, or teachers are valuable for feedback at every stage of the writing process, particularly for getting viewpoints that differ from, or are opposed to, your own; this is the best way to become aware of how you need to modify your arguments to persuade someone who doesn't already agree with them.

Brainstorming and freewriting must take a different, more limited, form in argumentative writing based on responding to source readings on an assigned topic than in purely personal writing in which you have a free choice of subjects and what to say about them. In argumentative writing, you may find it useful to apply these techniques after you have done your initial reading, research, and note taking, or in response to "Rhetoric: A Checklist for Analyzing Your Own and Others' Arguments" in Chapter 2.

## **Writing**

### **Narrowing Down**

This is a crucial Part of every writing assignment. You need to calculate carefully how many topics and sources you can cover, and how much you can say about them, in the time and space available. You will rarely be able to use all the ideas, sources, and

notes you have generated in preparing for the paper, so avoid the temptation to toss in everything you've considered using, as that will make the paper seem too diffuse and shallow. In general, your rhetorical choice in writing papers is either to include a large number of sources and topics, which might result in broad but superficial coverage, or to cover a smaller number in more depth. *Usually* it is more effective to cover a smaller number in greater length and depth, without giving the impression that you have narrowed the range so much that you do not address central issues or exclude arguments and sources that might refute those you include.

Writers for publication are constantly subjected to brutal cutting of passages dear to their hearts by nasty editors. In fact most writing can benefit from rigorous cutting of repetitions, redundancies, and irrelevancies, and you should act as your own nasty editor. Always select what you judge to be the most important, interesting points and your own best rhetorical analyses; prune the rest to avoid being graded down for padding.

## Outlining

Some teachers and students of writing approach outlining as simply a formulaic, constricting grid arbitrarily imposed on a paper. In fact, however, outlining is a central, organic stage of the writing process, essential to work out the continuity and cohesion, or "flow," of ideas in nearly every form of writing from a love letter to a dissertation. When I ask students who turn in papers that seem to go off in every direction, with unrelated jumps from one section to another and illogically reasoned, non sequitur ideas, whether they outlined, they invariably answer no.

Organic outlining begins with gathering your notes first into a broad outline, then into increasingly more detailed and better organized outlines, trying out different sequences and different degrees of narrowing down topics and sources for the most effective economy and continuity within the number of pages assigned. Believe me, this is the hardest stage for all writers, including professional journalists and scholars—it's all downhill once you have the detailed outline to the point where you sense that the pieces fit together right. See the outline of opposing arguments on wealth and poverty in Chapter 23 for a sample "menu" of possible lines of argument, from which you might select a limited number; one of two of these topics could make a 1,000-word paper, four or five a 2,500-3,000-word term paper.

Here is a generic broad outline for the basic sections of the kind of argumentative paper emphasized here:

I. Introduction: Briefly identify the issues and opposing positions, along with your own previous viewpoint on them.

II. Main body

1. Summarize opposing viewpoints of sources and their lines of argument. (Note: it is vital when you are summarizing a source or line of argument that you do so objectively, without injecting your own approval or disapproval, either explicitly or

implicitly through tone [e.g., sarcasm] or snide comments. Rhetorically, you need to show the reader that you are capable of approaching the opposing arguments even-handedly and open-mindedly.)

2. Analyze and evaluate the reasoning and evidence on opposing sides. (Apply the rhetoric and semantic checklists here.) Bring in source authors' or your own rebuttals of fallacious arguments on one side or both and give possible counterrebuttals. In this section as in 1, you may summarize all of one side's arguments and then the other's, then follow this section with all of each side's rebuttals, or you may develop one argument and its counterargument or rebuttal at a time, then move on to the next. Use trial and error to see which approach works best for any particular paper.

3. Support your analyses and evaluations of lines of argument through citations of sources written by reputable scholars, journalists, or officials, possibly supplemented by primary research (interviews, surveys, experiments, etc.), as well as your own experiences, anecdotes, and reasoning.

III. Conclusion: Offer your balanced judgment on the strong and weak points on opposing sides and indicate which side you think makes the better case, and why.

## Drafting and Revising

The next stage is to create a first draft, then a second draft, a third, fourth, and so on, revising and polishing for clarity, conciseness, and continuity until you get it just right. (It has been truly said that every piece of writing is infinitely improvable.) There is, again, no formula here, only a process of trial and error, cutting and pasting, to test what "works" best. Word processing is a godsend to writers, since you can write and store any number of drafts to compare and merge. It's a good idea to get feedback from friends and teachers at any step in this process, to get a second opinion on what works and what doesn't.

## Attributing Opinions to Sources

The most frequent form of support in college argumentative papers is the citation of sources. In using citations it is essential to understand the principle of attribution and the value of using formulations like "according to" and "in X's opinion" (this is what journalists call "sourcing"). Looking ahead to a case study in Chapter 5, if you write, "Anita Hill was lying about Clarence Thomas," then you are making an assertion of fact that demands evidence in support of its factuality. (You could preface the assertion by saying "In my opinion, ," but if you present no evidence to support that opinion, it isn't going to persuade anybody.) On the other hand, if you write, "According to David Brock [or "In David Brock's opinion"], Anita Hill was lying," it *is* a fact that Brock says this, as you can verify by citing key passages from his book. A handy principle to learn, to avoid getting graded down for writing unsupported assertions, is to prune your own opinions from your papers and substitute a summary of the opinions of your

sources. Of course, the mere fact that a source asserts an opinion does not make it any more valid in itself than your own unsupported opinion. To be sure, the opinion of an expert on the subject carries more weight than that of a novice, but experts too need to support their opinions, and you need to evaluate their support.

Phrasing your arguments mainly as summaries of opposing sides' arguments also enables you to reach a conclusion that is adequately qualified but not completely wishywashy—for example, by phrasing it, not as your own opinion about whether Clarence Thomas or Anita Hill was telling the truth, but as your reasoned evaluation of the rhetorical strengths and weaknesses of the sources on opposing sides.

## Continuity, Transitions, Connections

The effective “flow” of a paper depends on continuity, the skill of leading readers smoothly from one sentence, paragraph, or section to the next, without leaving them puzzling over how you got from here to there. Transitional phrases, including conjunctive adverbs (those grammatically joining two ideas) are useful tools here: “as a result,” “for example,” “however,” “consequently,” “nevertheless.” Here is Part of the main body of a student paper summarizing the case that American economic policies in the late 1970s and 1980s increased the gap between the rich, the middle class, and the poor. The previous paragraph ended with data about the growing gap in individual income and wealth during this period. This paragraph, which begins with a transitional sentence, will develop the argument by showing some of the consequences for public policies and institutions:

More importantly than the growing gap in personal wealth, these policies had destructive consequences for institutions like public schools that serve the needs of the poor and middle class more than those of the rich, who can afford to send their children to private schools. For example, in California, the funding cuts resulting from the passage of Proposition 13, the 1978 initiative putting a lid on property taxes, led to the decline of the state to forty-third nationally in education spending; according to a column by Brent Staples in *The New York Times* in 1998, California now spends about \$30,000 less per classroom per year than the national average.

Another important element of continuity, which reflects a key critical thinking skill, is being able to connect two ideas, sets of data, or sources to support the same point. Elsewhere in the paper quoted above, the student connects two sources that make complementary points:

A letter to *The New York Times* criticizing high-priced “skyboxes” in a new, tax-subsidized sports stadium, argues, “New York’s taxpayers will be paying twice for those seats—once when they are constructed and a second time when they are occupied,” because they are frequently purchased for clients by businesses who then write off the entire evening from their taxes as a business deduction. How do such outrageous policies come about? An answer is suggested, concerning a host of similar subsidies for the rich



on the national level, by Donald Barlett and James Steele in their book *America: What Went Wrong?*: “For this, you can thank the people in Washington—a succession of Congress and presidents, administrators and regulators, Democrats and Republicans, who write the government rule book, the accumulation of laws and regulations that provide the framework for the country’s economy. As might be expected, some people profit handsomely from the rule books.”

## More about Introductions and Conclusions

Student writers often get stuck in starting to write a paper because they think that they have to have decided exactly what they are going to say from beginning to end. Here is a professional tip for overcoming writer’s block in introductions: there is no law saying that you have to write a paper in linear progression from introduction through main body to conclusion; no one but you will know what sequence led you to the final version. When you have gathered your notes and made a broad outline, there will probably be some points that you’re more ready to write about than others; simply start writing whatever section you’re most ready for, then work backward and forward from there adding others. In any case, don’t even try to write the introduction before you have completed the main body. Once you know what you will be saying, you can calibrate the introduction to lead most economically into the main body.

The exact nature of introductions and conclusions will vary according to the length of the paper. In a long paper, say, twenty pages or more, and especially in a book-length manuscript, it may be worthwhile to use the introduction to outline the points you will be making, and to use the conclusion to summarize them, helping the reader synthesize a complex, extended line of argument. In a paper of ten pages or less, this kind of summary may be redundant. Many students seem to have had English teachers who instructed them to preview in the introduction everything they are going to say, then to repeat it again in the conclusion. This is another recipe for dullness, as is the kind of vague, generalizing introduction that begins something like, “Throughout history, people have disagreed about the distribution of wealth in society” and the equally platitudinous kind of conclusion that goes, “Everybody has his own opinion about ”

If you have been taught to write this kind of introduction and conclusion, please try to forget it and instead keep these principles in mind: *never labor the obvious, and never repeat points except for needed clarification*. Do not tell your readers anything that they probably know and agree with already; do not make any generalizations beyond the level of the specific issues you are addressing. In the introduction to any paper of ten pages or less, lead readers as quickly and directly as possible to your specific topic and thesis, with only the minimum of background information to enable them to follow your argument. In your conclusion, do not repeat anything you have said previously, unless it needs special emphasis, but add something new by way of a judgment

on the ideas and sources you have presented, such as a balance of the strong and weak points you have found in the opposing sides. The many newspaper and magazine op-ed columns, running 700-900 words, throughout this book provide good models of introductions and conclusions that get in and out of the subject in a rapid, lively manner.

It often *is* a good idea, however, to grab the reader's interest at the beginning and to end on an original note in the conclusion by interjecting a personal touch, in an observation (possibly humorous if the subject warrants it), an anecdote, an experience, or a pertinent allusion to or quotation from a song, movie, fictional work, poem, TV show, or the like.

## Postwriting

### Proofreading and Polishing

If worrying about sentence and paragraph structure, spelling, punctuation, and grammar distracts you from the content of your writing, don't even think about them until you have finished a semifinal draft. Then tighten up your sentences, paragraphs, and transitions and proofread several times, very carefully, first sentence by sentence, then continuously through the entire paper to get a sense of it as a whole. Print out the paper and spread the pages out so you can see as many as possible at once; doing this will help you catch unnecessary repetitions, identify things you may have left out, and devise possible improvements in organization.

This is the time to use your dictionary and grammar book or whatever checklists your instructor has provided. Some students erroneously believe that the better a writer you are, the less you need to use the dictionary and other reference books. Just the opposite is true. Most professional journalists and other writers keep their reference books close at hand and check them several times every day, using the dictionary both for spelling and for meaning. Another error that recent students have fallen into is to believe that the computer's spelling and grammar checks provide a substitute for learning rules of spelling and grammar. Spelling and grammar form Part of the complex, organic system of a written language (as opposed to a spoken dialect, such as black English, whose rules, though internally consistent and functional, follow a different system from those of standard written English), and you need to learn them in order to develop a grasp of the system as a whole.

*Only after you have used your own knowledge and looked up every possible error you see in reference materials should you use your computer's spell check and grammar check to catch points you overlooked. Do not rely on computer checks, because they miss as much as they catch, and—lacking a human sense of variable contexts—will sometimes misadvise you.*

# Reading Aloud

Here is another pointer that can dramatically improve your writing. Get in the habit of reading aloud everything you write. Read it several times over, so that it sounds as much as possible like your natural speaking voice; read as you are composing each sentence, then read the entire paper as though you were presenting it before an audience. Doing this is guaranteed to improve your sentence rhythms and structure, to enable you to catch words accidentally left out or put in, and to help you spot gross misspellings, since spelling in general corresponds to the sound of spoken words.

Table 4.1. Levels of Education of Audiences and Credibility in Sources of Information That Might Be Used as Research Resources

Books	Periodicals	
High School	Best-sellers, checkout stands	Most mass circulation newspapers and magazines
College	Serious journalistic books, government documents	

Guides: *Books in Print*  
Library of Congress Catalog  
Online subject indexes | Journals of opinion:  
*NY Times, LA Times, Washington Post, Washington Times, WallStreetJournal*&  
their book reviews  
Guide: *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*;  
Infotrack |

Scholarly and Professional	University press books Government and research institute reports	Scholarly, professional journals Guides: indexes and Abstracts, <i>New York Review</i> ; <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i>	***LOCATING AND EVALUATING SOURCES
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Table 4.1 indicates three broad levels of possible sources of information for the kind of critical writing you will be doing for college courses. The levels refer to presumed levels of education in target audiences: high school graduate or below, college student or graduate, and scholarly and professional.

## High School Level

Most mass-circulation newspapers, magazines (tabloids, *Readers Digest*, *People*, and so on), and nonfiction books on current events, such as those you find at checkout stands, seek to maximize profits by appealing to the widest possible audience, which they calculate to be at a tenth-grade or lower level of reading ability and attention span; most commercial television and radio programs aim at an even lower level. Such media tend to be of dubious credibility because they operate under the pressure of speedy production, sensationalistic appeal, oversimplification of issues to fit abbreviated spaces or “sound bites,” and skimpy documentation, so they are not always scrupulous about checking the accuracy of what they print or broadcast. The history of these media over the past century in America includes moguls like William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and Henry Luce (founder of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*), who competed in irresponsible sensationalism and use of their media to advance their own political agendas (usually conservative) and business interests. Since the 1950s, many of these media have become more responsible, hiring professionally educated editors and writers and becoming somewhat more concerned with factuality— but the remnants of the earlier age are still widespread.

This is not to say that you should avoid these sources or should never cite them in college papers. They can be quite useful for suggesting topics for further study, lines of argument, and particular viewpoints (found especially in opinion sections). You just need to be wary of accepting their factual assertions without question and try to verify them through more reliable sources.

## College Level

The most frequent kind of sources for college papers is to be found in media at the next higher level of literacy and credibility—close to that of college students and graduates with a grounding in general education—in periodicals, the contemporary weekly newsmagazines *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News and World Report*, as well as newspapers that have national circulation and influence—most prominently the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and a few others in large metropolitan centers. These publications hire fact-checkers and are committed to factual accuracy, in principle though not always in practice.

These newspapers also publish daily book reviews and full Sunday book-review supplements on new fiction and nonfiction new books. Their reviews of books on current events, history, and other topics studied in general education courses should be regular reading for college students and graduates. Most serious readers read a lot more reviews than actual books, and reading reviews is an excellent way to build your general store of knowledge; a review also can tell you at a glance whether the book is likely to be

useful for your current studies, and you might want to cite reviewers' comments and passages they quote or paraphrase from the book itself.

In magazines, the comparable level—a step above that of the newsweeklies—is what are termed “journals of opinion,” several of which are included in Chapter 15, appendix 1; these are weeklies, biweeklies, monthlies, or quarterlies that generally express, more openly than do most newspapers and newsmagazines, the viewpoint of owners, editors, and their target audiences, who usually are highly educated, and of writers. The writers are generally at a higher level of professionalism than in the mass media and are expected to base their stories on verifiable research; scholars often also write for these journals, adapting their academic studies for a broader readership. Most of the journals operate at a loss, having little and low-revenue advertising and small circulation (they are subsidized by wealthy individual owners and by subscribers and donors), but some of them exert a great deal of influence because they are read by wellinformed insiders in politics, the professions, and the intellectual and artistic world. Their “back of the book” sections contain authoritative reviews of current books, films, and other arts, and these reviews can be very influential in the reception of these works. The major journals of opinion can be found at better newsstands and bookstores or are available at reasonable cost by subscription; many of them now have Web sites that contain the full text or synopses of recent issues. Most are indexed by subject and title of articles in *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* and comparable electronic versions like FirstSearch and CARL.

The comparable level of books includes those by responsible journalists who scrupulously research and document their reports on current events and who are less concerned with writing sensational best sellers than with the honest pursuit of truth; prepublication excerpts from their books are regularly published in the newsweeklies or journals of opinion. Documentation in such books falls somewhere between that in mass-circulation books and that in scholarly books; they contain varying degrees of “light” or “heavy” footnoting or other means of citing sources. The counterparts at this level in TV and radio are the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), National Public Radio (NPR), Pacifica Radio, and other noncommercial media, along with some commercial “magazine” programs based on investigative reporting like *Sixty Minutes* and *Nightline*.

Although sources at this level are generally more trustworthy than those in mass commercial media, they cannot be assumed always to be accurate. There are often lapses, and several scandals have occurred in recent years involving writers' faking or bungling their research.

## Scholarly and Professional Level

This is the level of books, reports, and periodicals that is essential to in-depth, advanced research papers in undergraduate or graduate courses and dissertations. Most books here are published by university presses, which (at

least until recent years, when the larger presses have become more commercial) are not operated as profit-making enterprises but are subsidized by universities for the propagation of research by faculties. They can be expected to contain the most thoroughly conducted and documented research, as can monographs (long articles published in pamphlet form) and book-length reports published by scholarly organizations, research institutes, or government agencies.

In periodicals here, there are many thousands of scholarly and professional journals, on every subject from feedlot management to gay and lesbian studies, which are usually available only in libraries or by subscription (although some are now accessible on the Internet). Articles in these journals are indexed in reference volumes, similar to *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, for each academic discipline and subjects within the discipline; in many cases, there are also companion volumes of abstracts—brief summaries of each article's contents, which can tell you whether the article might be useful to you.

Two periodicals aimed at a readership of professors, graduate students, and other intellectuals—the *New York Review of Books* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*—are not recommended as regular reading for most college students, but they do contain many articles that can provide excellent source material for college papers. The biweekly *New York Review* carries long reviews that typically survey several books, along with opinion articles and excerpts from forthcoming books on a wide range of current controversies, with solid documentation. It also carries long exchanges of letters to the editor that provide a lively model of intellectual polemics. The weekly *Chronicle* is the major newspaper of the academic world (on both scholarly and institutional matters), and its news reports, opinion columns, and letters are often good sources for student research and argumentative papers; see, for example, the columns by Gabriela Montell in Chapter 16 and Mildred K. Cho in Chapter 17.

The only broadcast media on this level, unfortunately, are some university-affiliated local FM radio and public TV stations and C-SPAN on national TV, which regularly broadcasts academic conferences and lectures that can be quite useful for students (it shows advance listings several times a day). Scholarly and professional experts do, however, turn up fairly often as “talking heads” on news and interview programs, especially on public radio and television.

## Political Viewpoints in Sources

One more important variable in sources is their explicit or implicit political viewpoint. Please refer to appendix 1, “Political Viewpoints in Sources,” in Chapter 15 for a survey of these viewpoints in book publishers, general-circulation periodicals, and research institutes or “think tanks.” Also see the lists of resources identified by viewpoint in Chapter 23.

# A Model of the Writing Process in a Student Paper

The approach outlined in this Chapter is illustrated in the following sequence coming out of an assignment to write a paper of about five pages, or 1,200-1,500 words, analyzing the opposing views in the chapters from Naomi Wolf's book *The Beauty Myth* and Christina Hoff Sommers's *Who Stole Feminism?* later in this chapter. (Reading those selections first will help you follow this sequence.)

## First Draft

Susan Brooks wrote the following first draft.

MAKE-UP VEILS

*Susan Brooks*

"I was in a land where men forced women to hide their facial features, and here in the West it's just the same but they're using make-up veils"

—*Andy Partridge, XTC*

Feminism is a controversial issue that women have faced in the twentieth century. How extreme is it? Who is to blame? Do women take the blame, or are the media and men to blame? These questions are broad and diverse, and have been addressed by many individuals. It is difficult to determine which author's opinions are to be believed on this subject.

Naomi Wolf, author of *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Women Are Used Against Women*, believes that as women shifted from the primary roles of wife, mother and housekeeper, the advertising giants needed to shift their focus from "housework guilt" to "beauty guilt" to sustain their profits. Thus the Beauty Myth was born.

Wolf says that advertising revenues diminished once women joined the workforce. So the media and advertisers figured they had to convince women to spend more money to look beautiful. The advertising giants have created a problem that was non-existent before. Their focus had shifted from maintaining a perfect household to maintaining beauty and youth. "Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that they will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever failing, hungry and sexually insecure state of being aspiring 'beauties'" (66). Fortunately, younger women are acknowledging the manipulation by the media and are questioning women's responses to such advertising.

Christina Hoff Sommers, author of *Who Stole Feminism?: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, does not agree that women are being manipulated by advertising or by themselves. She believes that there is much more to feminism than just appearances.

A common issue brought up on this subject is the influence advertisers and businesses have on women. It is believed that companies are constantly trying to create a new product desirable by women, which promises them they will be beautiful and fit the stereotype illustrated in the magazines. Millions of dollars are spent on hair styles, make-up, and clothing, and accessories, not to mention the eating disorders that are

a health risk. Money is spent on developing newer products or better hairstyles resulting in more consumer spending. Only one side in this scenario is smiling, and that is of the advertising industry. “Today, business wants even more desperately to seduce..... It wants to demolish

resistance” (Wolf 79).

Sommers’ Chapter “The Backlash Myth” refutes the theories of the Beauty Myth. She questions the validity of theories and research studies noted by Wolf and by Susan Faludi. She thinks that Wolf and Faludi are sensationalists with a radical-leftist agenda and an anti-male, anti-capitalist bias, who try to alarm us with exaggerated (and factually inaccurate) accounts of a backlash against women’s gains, and she charges that such radical feminists have gained a stranglehold on women’s studies programs in universities and elsewhere. Sommers contacted research sources and refutes Wolf’s claim that attractive women “compare themselves only to models, not to other women” (Sommers 233). Women possessing the need to be beautiful can’t be blamed on just the advertising agencies. “Peer beauty qualified as a more appropriate standard for social comparison than professional beauty” (Sommers 233).

Sommers also does not agree that women are being manipulated by advertising, or that they make themselves unhappy or sick trying to look like fashion models:

Much of the support Wolf brings for her beauty-myth theory consists of merely labeling an activity insidious rather than showing it to be so—exercising, dieting, and buying Lancome products at the cosmetics counter in Bloomingdale’s all come under attack. Characterizing Weight Watchers as a cult does not constitute evidence that it is one. In her zeal to construe every effort of American women to lose weight as a symptom of a male-induced anxiety, she overlooks the fact that many people—men as well as women—suffer from obesity and are threatened by diseases that do not affect people who are fit. Stressing the importance of diet and fitness can hardly be considered as an insidious attempt by the male establishment to disempower women. (234)

I definitely agree with Sommers here. What’s wrong with wanting to be healthy, well-toned, and attractive looking? And nobody forces me to wear make-up, starve myself, work out or shop til I drop. Although all the research Wolf cites may not support her theory, I do believe that many women in our society are obsessed with youth, beauty, and thinness. But women are not all naive and many recognize the subtle manipulation by the media that Wolf describes, and are not taken in.

## Peer Editing

Susan’s draft was then discussed in a peer editing session, in which two classmates, who had been studying the topics and terminology in this Chapter and the rest of *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy*, first read and wrote comments on her paper. One student’s notes are reproduced on pages 100-103. A transcript of the discussion follows.



Class Discussion

Lachelle: I think you make some really good points in your paper, Susan. I like the song you quote at the beginning, and the title. But your introductory paragraph is too vague to tell me where you're going in the rest of the paper, and then I have a hard time following your line of argument after that. It doesn't look like you worked from a clear outline.

Susan: You're right, I really wasn't very confident about where I was going, so was just winging it. I'll write an outline before revising it.

Lachelle: For example, you sort of assume the reader is familiar with both Wolf's and Sommers's books, so you make a lot of references to them that no one would understand without looking back over the texts.

Roberto: I agree with Lachelle about that. You jump into the middle of the authors' arguments without taking the audience along with you, and back and forth between the two books. Sometimes I can't figure out when you're expressing your own opinion and when you're attributing an opinion to Wolf or Sommers—and there are a couple spots where you seem to attribute something to Sommers when she's quoting somebody else.

Lachelle: Yeah. What I'd like to see is a fuller summary at the beginning of your paper of Wolf's main arguments and Sommers's rebuttals, then develop it from there.

You could also say something about where the two writers are coming from politically, where there's a pretty clear opposition between Wolf as a liberal and Sommers as a conservative. Don't you sort of need to explain where conservatives and liberals are opposed on feminism?

Susan: OK, I can add that from our class discussion about this.

the influence advertisers and businesses have on women. I-t. io believed that companies are constantly	trying to create a new product
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desirable by women,  
**Christina Hoff Sommers,**  
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She believes that  
there is much more to feminism  
than just  
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be beautiful and fit the magazines.  
on hair styles, make  
up, and clothing, and accessories, not to mention the eating disorders  
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'/☒ Only one side in this scenario is smiling, and that  
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I definitely agree with Sommers here. What's wrong with wanting to be healthy, well-toned, and attractive looking? And nobody forces me to wear make-up, starve myself, work out or shop til I drop. ^Although all the research Wolf cites may not support her theory, I do believe that many women in our society are obsessed with youth, beauty, and thinness. But women are not all naive and many

Roberto: Another point that I thought was unclear was your conclusion paragraph. I can't tell whether you're agreeing with Wolf or Sommers.

Lachelle: Right, your last sentence is sort of wishy-washy: "But women are not all naive and many recognize the subtle manipulation by the media that Wolf describes, and are not taken in." Is this just your opinion, or can you back it up with evidence? Maybe you could do a survey of women at our college. Even if you're right, though, this seems to take any blame away from the media, and Wolf's main aim is to criticize the media—and the corporations they advertise for—because they spend such a huge amount of money and energy *trying* to manipulate women. Sommers tries to take the corporations and media off the hook.

Susan: I *was* sort of faking it in the conclusion, cause I wasn't really clear on the disagreements between Wolf and Sommers, or where I stood, because I've never thought much about these arguments before.

Roberto: I think a really important point that you could say more about, is when Sommers says Wolf has this conspiracy theory that a bunch of men get together and plan how to hypnotize millions of women into buying beauty products, and then women internalize these images to make themselves miserable. Sommers says Wolf doesn't really have any evidence to prove that this conspiracy exists, and that it insults women's intelligence to imply that they've been turned into robotic "Stepford Wives"—which I agree with.

Susan: Right, I should say more about that, 'cause I agree with Sommers too.

Lachelle: Whoa, hold on a minute. I don't think Sommers presents a fair account of Wolf's case. What Wolf says is, there doesn't *have* to be a conspiracy, in the literal sense. All she says is that corporations always try to maximize their profits, and manufacturers, advertising agencies, and media have done a lot of market research that shows there's megaprofits to be made from keeping women in constant anxiety about their faces, their weight, their clothes, their hair, their age—through comparing themselves to those freakishly thin, gorgeous models that are on every magazine cover and in every commercial. Plus those models are nearly all Caucasian, because the ad-

vertisers figure that it's upscale white women who have the most money to spend on beauty products. It's really humiliating to women of color to always see white women set up as the norm. Can anyone deny all this? Or that guys are equally programmed to go after women who look like these ideal beauties? Wolf also says that feminists have opposed the beauty myth in favor of a better-rounded (and less expensive) self-image for women, and so the manufacturers and media have a bias against feminism because it threatens their profits. That's a sensible theory, isn't it? And Wolf supports the theory with research studies that manufacturers and the media themselves have conducted.

Roberto: Yeah, but Sommers nails Wolf with misrepresenting two studies—the one, I think it was at Old Dominion University, and the other one—which you don't talk about, but should—was on the number of women who die from anorexia, where her figures are way off. If Wolf is that sneaky about these cases, it makes you doubt her overall reliability.

Lachelle: OK, I concede that Sommers catches Wolf in getting those two studies wrong, and that really weakens her case. If there were a lot of other inaccuracies in her book, that would totally shoot down her credibility. But she presents a lot more evidence, on much more central issues, so I'd say these two errors could be honest slip-ups and an inadequate sampling of Wolf's credibility, which Sommers uses to evade Wolf's most solid arguments and evidence. It just seems to me from my own experience, and most of the other girls and women I know, that Wolf's basic argument makes sense, that the beauty industry does play on our insecurities because their profits depend on it, so it's a reasonable inference that they've intentionally calculated how to do this. As far as reliability of evidence is concerned, how do we know that *Sommers's* documentation is accurate? Wouldn't we need to check with the source of the Old Dominion study to make sure what she claims is accurate?

Susan: Good point. Maybe I'll say something like that in my revision. Getting back to what Roberto said, though, I agree that women aren't just helpless dupes of the media, with no mind or will of their own to resist the beauty myth if they choose. Nobody forces me to wear make-up or work out or buy brand-name fashions.

Lachelle: But this gets into the whole issue of cultural conditioning. If the media have been trying to program us, from the day we're born, into a certain set of attitudes—say, about looks, weight, or fashions—how can we say for sure that the choices we think we make freely haven't really been conditioned? Sommers never really addresses that argument. For example, look at the increase in eating disorders in girls and women that Wolf discusses. She may have her statistics wrong, but who *doesn't* know at least one girl or woman who is anorexic or bulimic? Isn't it pretty obvious that this was largely the result of conditioning by the media to worship thinness? Or look at the way students all wear brand-name clothes, with their logos prominently displayed—where does everyone get the idea to do that?

Roberto: Yeah, but it isn't just the media that causes us to conform. There's also peer pressure—which is what Sommers said that study at Old Dominion showed.

Lachelle: So what do you think causes the peer pressure? Doesn't it come mainly from the media? That's a perfect example of a vicious circle.

Roberto: Maybe so, but as Sommers says, the main reason people diet and work out is not that they're conforming, but that it makes them healthier. What's wrong with that, or with wanting to look your best? That's true of everyone, men as well as women.

Lachelle: I don't think Wolf disagrees with any of that. Sommers is just attacking a straw man—or straw feminist—if she puts those words in Wolf's mouth. Wolf's point is that these healthy impulses have been pushed to destructive extremes by the beauty industry, just because they have constantly increasing investments, billions of dollars, that depend on hyping the sales of these products. Sommers totally downplays that argument and evades this issue, and I think that may be partly because her own work is subsidized by conservative foundations funded by big corporations, which she says in her own acknowledgments at the beginning of her book.

Roberto: Isn't there pressure on men too to wear brand names, work out and diet so they'll look like Brad Pitt? And don't sports in the media present the same kinds of idols for men that fashion models do for women? Why doesn't Wolf criticize that?

Lachelle: Well, I think Wolf would agree that the media manipulate men as well as women, and she'd say two wrongs don't make a right. But do you really think there's as much emphasis on men's looks as women's in the media? Gimme a break! Look at TV commercials, or the magazine covers at any supermarket check-out stand, and compare the proportion of women's and men's pictures, and whether they're shown for their looks or their accomplishments.

Roberto: That would be a good topic for a research paper project, just to count the number of images of women and men on magazine covers and commercials, and how many are shown for looks versus accomplishments.

Susan: Wow, those are all pretty complicated questions to get into in a four or five page paper. Maybe I can just raise some of these points briefly at the end, to leave the conclusion sort of open-ended. Anyway, thanks to both of you for your suggestions. This has given me a lot more ideas for topics to talk about and how to pull the paper together. Now I feel like I have more ideas than I can even fit into a five page paper, so I'll have to cut instead of padding!

## **Susan's Outline for Revision**

I. Introduction: Difficulty of sorting out the truth in opposing sources, illustrated by Wolf vs. Sommers

II. Main Body

A. Summary of Wolf's arguments

1. Changes in marketing after World War II from housekeeping to beauty
2. Feminism in sixties posed a threat to beauty myth
3. In backlash against feminism, corporations intensified selling of beauty

4. Beauty myth handicaps women's equality with men

B. Sommers

1. Note political viewpoint of Sommers vs. Wolf: Wolf a liberal Democrat, Sommers says she's also a feminist and not a Republican, but associated with conservative foundations and publisher, and she thinks Wolf's and Susan Faludi's variety of feminism is sensationalistic and dogmatic.

2. Sommers' rebuttals of Wolf and Faludi

a. Inaccuracies in their research (S's strongest argument)

1. Old Dominion study showed women don't compare themselves to media images, as Wolf claims

2. Wolf confuses number of anorexia sufferers with number of deaths

b. Sommers says Wolf has conspiracy theory, but Wolf says there's no conspiracy, only a common drive for profits by corporations

c. Sommers says there's nothing wrong with wanting to be healthy and to look good.

1. I agree, but W's defenders would say she does too, and is only criticizing excesses, like anorexia

2. S downplays Wolf's criticisms of the beauty industry and its power to get inside our heads, even when we think we know they're trying to manipulate us. Are we really free to "take it or leave it" when we've been conditioned into the beauty myth every day of our lives?

III. Conclusion

A. It's a draw between W and S, who are both skillful writers and rhetoricians. More research is needed to judge between the two

B. Studying this subject has made me question the source of my own attitudes toward beauty, and made me more aware of how much everyone's attitudes are influenced by cultural conditioning and what side they're on politically

## Revised Draft

Make-Up Veils (Revision)

*Susan Brooks*

"I was in a land where men forced women to hide their facial features, and here in the West it's just the same but they're using make-up veils"—Andy Partridge, XTC In public controversies, it can be very difficult to know who you can believe amid a variety of viewpoints in sources that totally contradict each other. I found this out in reading the book *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*, by Naomi Wolf (published in 1991) and a rebuttal to it in another book, *Who Stole Feminism?: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, by Christina Hoff Sommers, published in 1994, which includes a Chapter titled "The Backlash Myth," aimed at Wolf and Susan Faludi, author of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*.

Wolf argues that in recent decades the “beauty industry” has tried to brainwash women into living up to totally unrealistic models of cosmetic glamour, thinness, and youth. Wolf’s thesis is that up to World War II, marketing, advertising, and media content for women manipulated insecurities about being a good housewife. As modern technology took a lot of the drudgery out of childrearing and housekeeping, manufacturers and the media shifted to beauty products. At the same time, in the sixties, a revival of feminism was fighting for women’s equality with men in education and jobs, and feminists rejected the excessive emphasis that the media were putting on beauty. Wolf claims that women’s economic equality and the rejection of the beauty myth posed a threat to men in power, while manufacturers, advertisers, and the media (also dominated by men) feared that they would lose billions of dollars in profits if the sales of beauty products declined. So Wolf says there has been a backlash against feminism, which has involved a campaign to convince women that they need to spend ever more money, time, and fretting to make themselves beautiful and thin—on top of working at jobs and being wives and mothers. “Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that they [women] will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry, and sexually insecure state of being aspiring ‘beauties’” (66). This drain on women’s time, money, and psyche creates a handicap for women against men, who are not judged as much on looks and so are able to devote more of their energy to professional achievement, instead of to making up, dressing up, doing their hair, shopping, and starving themselves.

I found all of Wolf’s arguments very persuasive—until I read Sommers’ refutation of them. There is an interesting political issue going on “between the lines” in Wolf vs. Sommers. Wolf, a free-lance journalist, is well-known as a feminist, a liberal, and a Democratic Party activist, who has been an advisor to Hillary Clinton (the feminists’ heroine!) and Al Gore. Sommers, a philosophy professor at Clark University, does not come out and say she is a conservative. She insists that she too is a feminist, and a member of the Democratic Party, which is more identified with feminist causes than the Republicans, who tend to support more traditional gender roles (128). Her position is more conservative than Wolf’s, though, in that she believes women have made great advances in American society, to the point where they are nearly equal to men. She believes some feminists like Wolf and Faludi are sensationalists with a radicalleftist agenda and an anti-male, anti-capitalist bias, who try to alarm us with exaggerated (and factually inaccurate) accounts of a backlash against women’s gains, and she charges that such radical feminists have gained tyrannical control over women’s studies in universities and elsewhere. Sommers does say in her book’s acknowledgments that her research was funded by the Lynne and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Carthage Foundation, and the John M. Olin Foundation, all conservative institutions allied with large corporations and the Republican Party (8)- so she might have a conflict of interest in defending corporations against Wolf’s charges- while Wolf’s acknowledgments do not indicate that she had any financial

sponsors. Sommers' book was published by Simon and Schuster, which does feature a lot of conservative books, while Wolf's was published by Doubleday and Anchor, which aren't identified with any political viewpoint.

Sommers' strongest arguments are the many examples she gives of gross inaccuracies in research by feminists, including Wolf and Faludi. Sommers checked the source of a research study at Old Dominion University, which Wolf claimed showed that women measure themselves more against images of beauty in the media than against their peers, but which Sommers says in fact showed just the opposite (233). Worse yet, according to Sommers, Wolf claimed that about 150,000 American women die of anorexia each year, but when Sommers traced this figure to its alleged source, the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association, she was informed that their figures showed that was the number of *sufferers*, not deaths, which number only somewhere between one hundred and four hundred per year. (Sommers does acknowledge, "The deaths of these young women are a tragedy, certainly".) Sommers says she wrote a letter about this error to Wolf, who promised to correct it in the second edition of her book (Sommers 276). (Wolf must have done this, since I couldn't find the figure in the second edition.) This point really illustrates how important it is for writers to get their facts right. Much of Wolf's documentation and reasoning concerning women's anxieties about their looks, and about eating disorders, seem to be pretty valid (even Sommers acknowledges some of Wolf's basic points), but a few errors like this cast doubt on her credibility and give her political opponents ammunition to discredit everything she says.

Sommers accuses Wolf of having a conspiracy theory that "somewhere in America a group of male 'elders' has sat down to plot ways to perpetuate the subjugation of women" (227). But what Wolf actually says is: "This is not a conspiracy theory; it doesn't have to be" (17). It's just about a common pursuit of profits by many of the world's largest corporations, whose effect is as powerful as a conspiracy.

Sommers further argues:

Much of the support Wolf brings for her beauty-myth theory consists of merely labeling an activity insidious rather than showing it to be so—exercising, dieting, and buying Lancome products at the cosmetics counter in Bloomingdale's all come under attack. Characterizing Weight Watchers as a cult does not constitute evidence that it is one. In her zeal to construe every effort of American women to lose weight as a symptom of a male-induced anxiety, she overlooks the fact that many people—men as well as women—suffer from obesity and are threatened by diseases that do not affect people who are fit. Stressing the importance of diet and fitness can hardly be considered as an insidious attempt by the male establishment to disempower women. (234)

I definitely agree with Sommers here. What's wrong with wanting to be healthy, well-toned, and attractive looking? And nobody forces me to wear make-up, starve myself, work out or shop til I drop. Of course, Wolf's defenders might reply that Sommers is attacking a "straw feminist," that Wolf isn't really criticizing a healthy



lifestyle or attention to weight and appearance *to a point*, but just criticizing pushing it to an extreme where women who are perfectly healthy and ok-looking are made to feel miserable because they don't match up to Julia Roberts. Don't these media images have a lot to do with the incredible increase in anorexia and bulimia? And Sommers evasively downplays Wolf's sensible theory that manufacturers and the media do have a big investment in constantly selling more beauty products, diet food, gyms and workout equipment, etc.

Wolf's defenders might also question how much we are all really free to "take it or leave it" concerning the images that the media bombard us with. How can I say for sure that the choices I think I make freely haven't been influenced by the media I've been conditioned by every day of my life, or the peer pressures the media create?

I'd call the debate between Wolf and Sommers a draw: both are very skillful writers and rhetoricians, although both let their political partisanship draw them into some fallacious arguments. I'd need to think about and study these arguments a lot more to decide which is right on balance. I do know, though, that studying the pros and cons of this subject has made me question the reasons for my own attitudes about appearance and made me more aware of how much *everyone's* attitudes may be biased by their cultural conditioning and what side they're on politically.

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### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Here are the chapters from Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* and Christina Hoff Sommers's *Who Stole Feminism?* that Susan wrote her paper on. Carry on the debate among yourselves and generate your own papers out of it.

*From The Beauty Myth: How Images]] of Beauty Are Used Against Women*

*Naomi Wolf*

Anchor Books, 1992

## Preface

gry debate about the issues I raised. Before

It's been a wild year since *The Beauty Myth* you enter into your own dialogue with the was first published in hardcover—a year of book, I'd like to lay to rest three fallacies that sharp, exhilarated, and sometimes very anoften got in the way of its actual message.

The first fallacy is that this book is antibeauty. If I could write *The Beauty Myth* again, I'd put the clear conclusion of the argument—that we need to embrace pleasure, choice in adornment, our own real beauty and sexuality, *and* call ourselves feminists—in the first paragraph. There is not a single sentence on a single page in this book that condemns women for the choices that we make about beauty, or suggests that we should not wear makeup if we want to, dress up, or show our bodies. On the contrary: I argue that we deserve the choice to do whatever we want with our faces and bodies without being punished by an ideology that is using attitudes, economic pressure, and even legal judgments regarding women's appearance to undermine us psychologically and politically.

Many such critics—Marcelle Clements in the *New York Times*, for instance, who charged that “My life is complicated and my vision of myself is made up as I go along and it sometimes translates into buying a lipstick or a pair of cowboy boots. Why are you making me feel bad? Give me a break!”; or Betty Friedan, who wrote that “If feminism really meant a war against men—a repudiation of love and beauty and home and children—most women wouldn't want to win it”—seem not to have read it. For I conclude that the enemy is not lipstick, but guilt itself; that we deserve lipstick, if we want it, *and* free speech; we deserve to be sexual *and* serious— or whatever we please; we are entitled to wear cowboy boots to our own revolution. The terrible irony of this frequent misreading of my message is that one damaging aspect of “the beauty myth” as I define it is not makeup—but the disempowering, backlash propaganda that suggests that feminism makes women ugly, or forces women to choose between beauty and liberation. Critics who made this mistake fell victim to the very dynamic of the backlash that I criticize: an antifeminist impulse that invariably seeks—as many TV shows did as well—to pit “The Feminist” against “The Beauty Queen.”

A related fallacy is that *The Beauty Myth* objects categorically to images of glamour and beauty in mass culture. Absolutely not. The harm of these images is not that they exist, but that they proliferate at the expense of most other images and stories of female heroines, role models, villains, eccentrics, buffoons, visionaries, sex goddesses, and pranksters. If the icon of the anorexic fashion model were one flat image out of a full spectrum in which young girls could find a thousand wild and tantalizing visions of possible futures, that icon would not have the power to hurt them; fashion and beauty scenarios would be yet another source of the infinite pleasures and intrigues of life in the female body.

The real issue, if we understand this, is one of censorship and free speech. Beauty advertisers pressure mass culture to populate itself almost entirely with images of the icon; this effectively censors vast pools of American talent. Aspiring actresses, rock singers, writers and TV journalists, comedienues, athletes, and politicians, who might not fit the narrow confines of the icon, are returned to ground by this screening process. American culture is the loser. And we as consumers of mass culture lose out too, as ad pressure forces women's magazines to center readers' anxieties on the scale and the mirror, at the expense of real coverage of the wide world of women.

This double standard for free speech in women's media versus men's is compounded by the double standard for consumer rights. Women deserve real information if we are to make real choices about beauty; but the unspoken loyalty oath advertisers have demanded of editors over the decade of the beauty backlash has brought disastrous consequences.

The charge I made—that mass media aimed at women was not telling the whole truth about the beauty industry because they could not—brought frenzied and hostile denials from editors of magazines on national television. But the evidence keeps growing: The NIH issued a report debunking the dieting industry, the FDA cracked down on cosmetic surgeons for silicone injections, Dow Corning has been accused of concealing evidence of serious medical problems associated with breast implants, and a House Subcommittee is investigating the dangerously unregulated nature of the beauty surgery industry. Women who believed the products and procedures were safe are asking, dismayed, "Why weren't we told?" Again and again, women editors and TV journalists would attack this position and deny ad pressure on the air; but when the lights went down, they would say, "Of course you're right. But I can't say that on camera and keep my job." Women paid the price for this orchestration of silence.

The third fallacy in the debate is that I am constructing a conspiracy theory. As I write in the first chapter: "This is not a conspiracy theory; it doesn't have to be." A backlash against women's advancement does not originate in a smoke-filled room; it is often unconscious and reflexive, like racism. A backlash against feminism that uses an ideology about beauty to keep women down is not an organized conspiracy with maps and pins, but a generalized atmosphere in which men's fears and women's guilt are addressed and elaborated through the culture's images of women, and its messages to women about the relationship between their value and their bodies.

We know that ideals of femininity have sought to control women before: The suffragists of the nineteenth century were faced with the glamorized invalid, and women were driven out of the work force in the 1950s by the glamorized full-time housewife. The beauty myth's backlash image of women does not suddenly appear everywhere in the media as a result of a conspiracy, but as a result of how audience response and mass media interact. Research shows that people will react to those ads, films, and videos that strike their deepest feelings, regardless of whether the images soothe anxiety or provoke it.

Ours is a time when gender roles are contested as never before. At a moment when many women have guilt feelings and uncertainties about their entry into public life, and many men have fears about women's empowerment made all the stronger by the doubled competition during a recession, those images or articles that show women being put, or putting themselves, *back under control* are most likely to get a strong audience reaction. The savvy editor or marketer knows that a story on the breast implant trend is "sexier" in such a Zeitgeist than a story on the La Leche League; that a series on semistarvation diets is "sexier" than a series on women's health.

A magazine sensitive to the backlash mood does what the *New York Times* did, according to *Working Woman*: For the cover of the Sunday Magazine that profiled Karen Valenstein, one of the first female traders on Wall Street, it chose—out of contact sheets of smiling, pretty shots of this slim blond woman—the one unattractive, unsmiling portrait. This selection was not a conscious effort to portray powerful women in a negative light; but by stirring up women’s insecurities while soothing men’s fears, this choice simply sold more copies.

The beauty backlash against feminism is no conspiracy, but a million million separate individual reflexes such as that one that coalesce into a national mood weighing women down; the backlash is all the more oppressive because the source of the suffocation is so diffuse as to be almost invisible. The beauty myth is an employer saying to a woman engineer, We can’t hire you because you’re so pretty you’ll keep the men from doing their work. It’s a judge ruling that Christine Craft doesn’t deserve her job back. It’s a journalists’ organization ranking Roseanne Barr above Saddam Hussein in a poll for its “Sitting Duck” Awards. It’s *Playboy* recruiting from women in the military, women in the Ivy League, women in the Police Department. It’s Barbara Walters saying angrily on “20/20” that the charge that there is a double standard for appearance in her profession is “a crock.” It’s a *People* magazine “health” feature in which a young actress says that she knows it’s time to eat when she passes out on the set. It’s a male student telling a female classmate that she got a scholarship only because of her looks. It’s an anchorwoman losing her job when her laughlines start to show. It’s the phrase, “You’re too pretty to be a feminist.” It’s an Alabama judge ruling that he didn’t believe

Karen Smith had been sexually harassed by her boss because in his opinion the boss’s wife was prettier. It’s the caption under a newspaper cartoon of Patricia Bowman, the alleged victim in the William Kennedy Smith rape trial: ‘I liked her better behind the blob.’ It’s congressmen, beaten again this year by a professional women’s basketball team, saying, “They’re faster. They’re younger. And they’re prettier.” Instead of simply: “They won.”

Because I wrote this book as a tribute to women’s beauty and power, one of the most difficult parts of the debate was the often angry denial of the problem from women. For a decade, women have had drilled into us the belief that we bear individual responsibility for the social problem of sexism. In such a climate, an analysis that points out just what the pressures on us really are can be upsetting to listen to—precisely because most of us intuit the situation so well.

Those initial impulses of denial are understandable: People most need the mechanism of denial when an intolerable situation has been pointed out to them—but the means for change does not yet exist. Slowly, though, alternatives are becoming imaginable; and as that happens, the response to the message grows steadily warmer. The deep freeze of feminism within the beauty backlash has finally begun to crack and thaw.

The past year not only saw the FDA confront Dow Corning; it also saw Continental service representative Theresa Fischette, fired because she did not wear makeup, fight

on national television for her job—and win. American Airlines flight attendants fought discriminatory weight tables—and won. On a hotline staffed by 9 to 5, the working women's organization, looks discrimination surfaced as one of the top three forms of sex discrimination on the job. The Clarence Thomas hearings exposed as a myth the "postfeminist" pretense of a level playing field, and membership in women's organizations jumped. Susan Faludi's *Backlash* added new dimensions as well as validation to my charge that we live in a backlash against women's liberation. *Elle* offered "The shapely, well-fed body of the '90's." A *Glamour* readers' poll showed that women no longer ranked losing weight over success in work or love. And two California cities made appearance discrimination illegal—establishing that women "don't have to be thin and blonde to do their jobs well."

New evidence came out, adding details to my basic argument: Fashion magazine editors acknowledged at last the existence of the Scitex machine—a computer graphics machine that alters almost every fashion or glamour image we see. Research has found that young women's self-esteem scored measurably lower after they were shown fashion and beauty images than before. And the final piece of the puzzle fell into place: researchers at Wayne State University found that anorexia and bulimia were triggered, in women who had a biochemical predisposition to it, by simple dieting; caloric restriction resulted in biochemical changes in the brain, which addicted women physiologically to anorexia and bulimia.

When asked, What should be done? I've said that it is readers themselves who will write the final Chapter of *The Beauty Myth*. And women did so, each one inventing solutions within her own life. Teachers across the country devised anti-anorexia programs for their preadolescent students. College women organized consciousness-raising groups, finding a new introduction to feminism in the discovery that, even if you have reproductive rights, you don't control your body if you cannot eat. Many took up the challenge to dismantle the beauty myth through culture: they made art projects that reimagined the female body and its beauty; they created videos and rap songs, performance art, photography exhibits, and street theater.

For all the controversy surrounding this book, there is one development of the last year that is so heartening that it is like a gift of energy. At the points in *The Beauty Myth* where I addressed my own generation's problematic relationship to feminism, I did so in real darkness. Where were they? Why were they so quiet? A year later, I can say with certainty that I've seen the Third Wave on college campuses and young women's organizations across America, its numbers and commitment swelling every day. A college senior writes in *The Village Voice* about her generation's "Third Wave Feminism"; another student writes in *Ms.* that "I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the Third Wave." A national organization of "Third Wave feminists"—updating the feminist agenda for today's young women—has recently been formed. Even William F. Buckley has referred to the Third Wave in the *National Review*.

Finally, in response to the criticism that the beauty myth is not the biggest problem women face today, of course that is true. But the beauty backlash arose specifically to

hypnotize women into political paralysis. Therefore, by knowing how to break its spell, we liberate those occupied territories of our minds and energize ourselves to take up the real fight for women's equality.

As my feminist foremothers taught me, naming a problem has power. Many young women tell me that the connections they were able to make between the beauty myth with its stereotype of "the ugly feminist," and their own fears about calling themselves feminists, allowed them to speak up at last on their own behalf as women. The turbulence of the past year is worth it a thousand times over, when I see it in the light of that gift.

## The Beauty Myth

At last, after a long silence, women took to the streets. In the two decades of radical action that followed the rebirth of feminism in the early 1970s, Western women gained legal and reproductive rights, pursued higher education, entered the trades and the professions, and overturned ancient and revered beliefs about their social role. A generation on, do women feel free?

The affluent, educated, liberated women of the First World, who can enjoy freedoms unavailable to any women ever before, do not feel as free as they want to. And they can no longer restrict to the subconscious their sense that this lack of freedom has something to do with—with apparently frivolous issues, things that really should not matter. Many are ashamed to admit that such trivial concerns—to do with physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair, clothes—matter so much. But in spite of shame, guilt, and denial, more and more women are wondering if it isn't that they are entirely neurotic and alone but rather that something important is indeed at stake that has to do with the relationship between female liberation and female beauty.

The more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us. Many women sense that women's collective progress has stalled; compared with the heady momentum of earlier days, there is a dispiriting climate of confusion, division, cynicism, and above all, exhaustion. After years of much struggle and little recognition, many older women feel burned out; after years of taking its light for granted, many younger women show little interest in touching new fire to the torch.

During the past decade, women breached the power structure; meanwhile, eating disorders rose exponentially and cosmetic surgery became the fastest-growing medical specialty. During the past five years, consumer spending doubled, pornography became the main media category, ahead of legitimate films and records combined, and thirty-three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal. More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves *physically*, we may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers. Recent research consistently shows that inside the majority of the

West's controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret "underlife" poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control.

It is no accident that so many potentially powerful women feel this way. We are in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth. It is the modern version of a social reflex that has been in force since the Industrial Revolution. As women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it wanted to carry on its work of social control.

The contemporary backlash is so violent because the ideology of beauty is the last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control those women whom second wave feminism would have otherwise made relatively uncontrollable: It has grown stronger to take over the work of social coercion that myths about motherhood, domesticity, chastity, and passivity, no longer can manage. It is seeking right now to undo psychologically and covertly all the good things that feminism did for women materially and overtly.

This counterforce is operating to checkmate the inheritance of feminism on every level in the lives of Western women. Feminism gave us laws against job discrimination based on gender; immediately case law evolved in Britain and the United States that institutionalized job discrimination based on women's appearances. Patriarchal religion declined; new religious dogma, using some of the mind-altering techniques of older cults and sects, arose around age and weight to functionally supplant traditional ritual. Feminists, inspired by Friedan, broke the stranglehold on the women's popular press of advertisers for household products, who were promoting the feminine mystique; at once, the diet and skin care industries became the new cultural censors of women's intellectual space, and because of their pressure, the gaunt, youthful model supplanted the happy housewife as the arbiter of successful womanhood. The sexual revolution promoted the discovery of female sexuality; "beauty pornography," which for the first time in women's history artificially links a commodified "beauty" directly and explicitly to sexuality—invaded the mainstream to undermine women's new and vulnerable sense of sexual self-worth. Reproductive rights gave Western women control over our own bodies; the weight of fashion models plummeted to 23 percent below that of ordinary women, eating disorders rose exponentially, and a mass neurosis was promoted that used food and weight to strip women of that sense of control. Women insisted on politicizing health; new technologies of invasive, potentially deadly "cosmetic" surgeries developed space to re-exert old forms of medical control of women.

Every generation since about 1830 has had to fight its version of the beauty myth. "It is very little to me," said the suffragist Lucy Stone in 1855, "to have the right to vote, to own property, etcetera, if I may not keep my body, and its uses, in my absolute right." Eighty years later, after women had won the vote, and the first wave of the organized women's movement had subsided, Virginia Woolf wrote that it would still be decades

before women could tell the truth about their bodies. In 1962, Betty Friedan quoted a young woman trapped in the Feminine Mystique: "Lately, I look in the mirror, and I'm so afraid I'm going to look like my mother." Eight years after that, heralding the cataclysmic second wave of feminism, Germaine Greer described "the Stereotype": "To her belongs all that is beautiful, even the very word beauty itself . . . she is a doll . . . I'm sick of the masquerade." In spite of the great revolution of the second wave, we are not exempt. Now we can look out over ruined barricades: A revolution has come upon us and changed everything in its path, enough time has passed since then for babies to have grown into women, but there still remains a final right not fully claimed.

The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called "beauty" objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women's beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless.

None of this is true. "Beauty" is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves.

"Beauty" is not universal or changeless, though the West pretends that all ideals of female beauty stem from one Platonic Ideal Woman; the Maori admire a fat vulva, and the Padung, droopy breasts. Nor is "beauty" a function of evolution: Its ideals change at a pace far more rapid than that of the evolution of species, and Charles Darwin was himself unconvinced by his own explanation that "beauty" resulted from a "sexual selection" that deviated from the role of natural selection; for women to compete with women through "beauty" is a reversal of the way in which natural selection affects all other mammals. Anthropology has overturned the notion that females must be "beautiful" to be selected to mate: Evelyn Reed, Elaine Morgan, and others have dismissed sociobiological assertions on innate male polygamy and female monogamy. Female higher primates are the sexual initiators; not only do they seek out and enjoy sex with many partners, but "every nonpregnant female takes her turn at being the most desirable of all her troop. And that cycle keeps turning as long as she lives." The inflamed pink sexual organs of primates are often cited by male sociobiologists as analogous to human arrangements relating to female "beauty," when in fact that is a universal, nonhierarchical female primate characteristic.

Nor has the beauty myth always been this way. Though the pairing of the older rich men with young, "beautiful" women is taken to be somehow inevitable, in the matriarchal Goddess religions that dominated the Mediterranean from about 25,000 B.C.E. to about 700 B.C.E., the situation was reversed: "In every culture, the Goddess



has many lovers . . . The clear pattern is of an older woman with a beautiful but expandable youth—Ishtar and Tammuz, Venus and Adonis, Cybele and Attis, Isis and Osiris . . . Their only function the service of the divine ‘womb.’” Nor is it something only women do and only men watch: Among the Nigerian Wodaabes, the women hold economic power and the tribe is obsessed with male beauty; Wodaabe men spend hours together in elaborate makeup sessions, and compete—provocatively painted and dressed, with swaying hips and seductive expressions—in beauty contests judged by women. There is no legitimate historical or biological justification for the beauty myth; what it is doing to women today is a result of nothing more exalted than the need of today’s power structure, economy, and culture to mount a counteroffensive against women.

If the beauty myth is not based on evolution, sex, gender, aesthetics, or God, on what is it based? It claims to be about intimacy and sex and life, a celebration of women. It is actually composed of emotional distance, politics, finance, and sexual repression. The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men’s institutions and institutional power.

The qualities that a given period calls beautiful in women are merely symbols of the female behavior that that period considers desirable: *The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behavior and not appearance.* Competition between women has been made Part of the myth so that women will be divided from one another. Youth and (until recently) virginity have been “beautiful” in women since they stand for experiential and sexual ignorance. Aging in women is “unbeautiful” since women grow more powerful with time, and since the links between generations of women must always be newly broken: Older women fear young ones, young women fear old, and the beauty myth truncates for all the female life span. Most urgently, women’s identity must be premised upon our “beauty” so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval, carrying the vital sensitive organ of self-esteem exposed to the air.

Though there has, of course, been a beauty myth in some form for as long as there has been patriarchy, the beauty myth in its modern form is a fairly recent invention. The myth flourishes when material constraints on women are dangerously loosened. Before the Industrial Revolution, the average woman could not have had the same feelings about “beauty” that modern women do who experience the myth as continual comparison to a mass disseminated physical ideal. Before the development of technologies of mass production—daguerreotypes, photographs, etc.—an ordinary woman was exposed to few such images outside the Church. Since the family was a productive unit and women’s work complemented men’s, the value of women who were not aristocrats or prostitutes lay in their work skills, economic shrewdness, physical strength, and fertility. Physical attraction, obviously, played its part; but “beauty” as we understand it was not, for ordinary women, a serious issue in the marriage marketplace. The beauty myth in its modern form gained ground after the upheavals of industrialization, as the work unit of the family was destroyed, and urbanization and the emerging factory system demanded what social engineers of the time termed the “separate sphere” of

domesticity, which supported the new labor category of the “breadwinner” who left home for the workplace during the day. The middle class expanded, the standards of living and literacy rose, the size of families shrank; a new class of literature, idle women developed, on whose submission to enforced domesticity the evolving system of industrial capitalism depended. Most of our assumptions about the way women have always thought about “beauty” date from no earlier than the 1830s, when the cult of domesticity was first consolidated and the beauty index invented.

For the first time new technologies could reproduce—in fashion plates, daguerreotypes, tintypes, and rotogravures—images of how women should look. In the 1840s the first nude photographs of prostitutes were taken; advertisements using images of “beautiful” women first appeared in mid-century. Copies of classical artworks, postcards of society beauties and royal mistresses, Currier and Ives prints, and porcelain figurines flooded the separate sphere to which middleclass women were confined.

Since the Industrial Revolution, middleclass Western women have been controlled by ideals and stereotypes as much as by material constraints. This situation, unique to this group, means that analyses that trace “cultural conspiracies” are uniquely plausible in relation to them. The rise of the beauty myth was just one of several emerging social fictions that masqueraded as natural components of the feminine sphere, the better to enclose those women inside it. Other such fictions arose contemporaneously: a version of childhood that required continual material supervision; a concept of female biology that required middle-class women to act out the roles of hysterics and hypochondriacs; a conviction that respectable women were sexually anesthetic; and a definition of women’s work that occupied them with repetitive, time-consuming, and painstaking tasks such as needlepoint and lacemaking. All such Victorian inventions as these served a double function—that is, though they were encouraged as a means to expend female energy and intelligence in harmless ways, women often used them to express genuine creativity and passion.

But in spite of middle-class women’s creativity with fashion and embroidery and child rearing, and, a century later, with the role of the suburban housewife that devolved from these social fictions, the fictions’ main purpose was served: During a century and a half of unprecedented feminist agitation, they effectively counteracted middle-class women’s dangerous new leisure, literacy, and relative freedom from material constraints.

Though these timeand mind-consuming fictions about women’s natural role adapted themselves to resurface in the postwar Feminine Mystique, when the second wave of the women’s movement took a Part what women’s magazines had portrayed as the “romance,” “science,” and “adventure” of homemaking and suburban family life, they temporarily failed. The cloying domestic fiction of “togetherness” lost its meaning and middle-class women walked out of their front doors in masses.

So the fictions simply transformed themselves once more: Since the women’s movement had successfully taken a Part most other necessary fictions of femininity, all the work of social control once spread out over the whole network of these fictions had

to be reassigned to the only strand left intact, which action consequently strengthened it a hundredfold. This reimposed onto liberated women's faces and bodies all the limitations, taboos, and punishments of the repressive laws, religious injunctions, and reproductive enslavement that no longer carried sufficient force. Inexhaustible but ephemeral beauty work took over from inexhaustible but ephemeral housework. As the economy, law, religion, sexual mores, education, and culture were forcibly opened up to include women more fairly, a private reality colonized female consciousness. By using ideas about "beauty," it reconstructed an alternative female world with its own laws, economy, religion, sexuality, education, and culture, each element as repressive as any that had gone before.

Since middle-class Western women can best be weakened psychologically now that we are stronger materially, the beauty myth, as it has resurfaced in the last generation, has had to draw on more technological sophistication and reactionary fervor than ever before. The modern arsenal of the myth is a dissemination of millions of images of the current ideal; although this barrage is generally seen as a collective sexual fantasy, there is in fact little that is sexual about it. It is summoned out of political fear on the Part of male-dominated institutions threatened by women's freedom, and it exploits female guilt and apprehension about our own liberation—latent fears that we might be going too far. This frantic aggregation of imagery is a collective reactionary hallucination willed into being by both men and women stunned and disoriented by the rapidity with which gender relations have been transformed: a bulwark of reassurance against the blood of change. The mass depiction of the modern woman as a "beauty" is a contradiction: Where modern women are growing, moving, and expressing their individuality, as the myth has it, "beauty" is by definition inert, timeless, and generic. That this hallucination is necessary and deliberate is evident in the way "beauty" so directly contradicts women's real situation.

And the unconscious hallucination grows ever more influential and pervasive because of what is now conscious market manipulation: powerful industries—the \$33-billion-a-year diet industry, the \$20-billion cosmetics industry, the \$300-million cosmetic surgery industry, and the \$7-billion pornography industry—have arisen from the capital made out of unconscious anxieties, and are in turn able, through their influence on mass culture, to use, stimulate, and reinforce the hallucination in a rising economic spiral.

This is not a conspiracy theory; it doesn't have to be. Societies tell themselves necessary fictions in the same way that individuals and families do. Henrik Ibsen called them "vital lies," and psychologist Daniel Goleman describes them working the same way on the social level that they do within families: "The collusion is maintained by directing attention away from the fearsome fact, or by repackaging its meaning in an acceptable format." The costs of these social blind spots, he writes, are destructive communal illusions. Possibilities for women have become so open-ended that they threaten to destabilize the institutions on which a male-dominated culture has depended, and a collective panic reaction on the Part of both sexes has forced a demand for counter-images.

The resulting hallucination materializes, for women, as something all too real. No longer just an idea, it becomes three-dimensional, incorporating within itself how women live and how they do not live: It becomes the Iron Maiden. The original Iron Maiden was a medieval German instrument of torture, a body-shaped casket painted with the limbs and features of a lovely smiling young woman. The unlucky victim was slowly enclosed inside her; the lid fell shut to immobilize the victim, who died either of starvation or, less cruelly, of the metal spikes embedded in her interior. The modern hallucination in which women are trapped or trap themselves is similarly rigid, cruel, and euphemistically painted. Contemporary culture directs attention to imagery of the Iron Maiden, while censoring real women's faces and bodies.

Why does the social order feel the need to defend itself by evading the fact of real women, our faces and voices and bodies, and reducing the meaning of women to these formulaic and endlessly reproduced "beautiful" images? Though unconscious personal anxieties can be a powerful force in the creation of a vital lie, economic necessity practically guarantees it. An economy that depends on slavery needs to promote images of slaves that "justify" the institution of slavery. Western economies are absolutely dependent now on the continued underpayment of women. An ideology that makes women feel "worth less" was urgently needed to counteract the way feminism had begun to make us feel worth more. This does not require a conspiracy; merely an atmosphere. The contemporary economy depends right now on the representation of women within the beauty myth. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith offers an economic explanation for "the persistence of the view of homemaking as a 'higher-calling'": the concept of women as naturally trapped within the Feminine Mystique, he feels, "has been forced on us by popular sociology, by magazines, and by fiction to disguise the fact that woman in her role of consumer has been essential to the development of our industrial society....."

Behavior that is essential for economic reasons is transformed into a social virtue." As soon as a woman's primary social value could no longer be defined as the attainment of virtuous domesticity, the beauty myth redefined it as the attainment of virtuous beauty. It did so to substitute both a new consumer imperative and a new justification for economic unfairness in the workplace where the old ones had lost their hold over newly liberated women.

Another hallucination arose to accompany that of the Iron Maiden: The caricature of the Ugly Feminist was resurrected to dog the steps of the women's movement. The caricature is unoriginal; it was coined to ridicule the feminists of the nineteenth century. Lucy Stone herself, whom supporters saw as "a prototype of womanly grace . . . fresh and fair as the morning," was derided by detractors with "the usual report" about Victorian feminists: "a big masculine woman, wearing boots, smoking a cigar, swearing like a trooper." As Betty Friedan put it presciently in 1960, even before the savage revamping of that old caricature: "The unpleasant image of feminists today resembles less the feminists themselves than the image fostered by the interests who so bitterly

opposed the vote for women in state after state.” Thirty years on, her conclusion is more true than ever: That resurrected caricature, which sought to punish women for their public acts by going after their private sense of self, became the paradigm for new limits placed on aspiring women everywhere. After the success of the women’s movement’s second wave, the beauty myth was perfected to checkmate power at every level in individual women’s lives. The modern neuroses of life in the female body spread to woman after woman at epidemic rates. The myth is undermining— slowly, imperceptibly, without our being aware of the real forces of erosion—the ground women have gained through long, hard, honorable struggle.

The beauty myth of the present is more insidious than any mystique of femininity yet: A century ago, Nora slammed the door of the doll’s house; a generation ago, women turned their backs on the consumer heaven of the isolated multiapplianced home; but where women are trapped today, there is no door to slam. The contemporary ravages of the beauty backlash are destroying women physically and depleting us psychologically. If we are to free ourselves from the dead weight that has once again been made out of femaleness, it is not ballots or lobbyists or placards that women will need first; it is a new way to see.

## The Backlash Myth

*By Christina Hoff Sommers*

From *Who Stole Feminism?*

Simon and Schuster, 1994. Original footnotes have been deleted in this reading.

When regard for truth has been broken down or even slightly weaned, all things will remain doubtful.—ST. AUGUSTINE

A couple of years ago, American publishing was enlivened by the release of Susan Faludi’s *Backlash* and Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*, two impassioned feminist creeds uncovering and denouncing the schemes that have prevented women from enjoying the fruits of the women’s movement. For our purposes, what these books have in common is more interesting and important than what distinguishes them. Both reported a widespread conspiracy against women. In both, the putative conspiracy has the same goal: to prevent today’s women from making use of their hard-won freedoms—to punish them, in other words, for liberating themselves. As Ms. Wolf informs us: “After the success of the women’s movement’s second wave, the beauty myth was perfected to checkmate power at every level in individual women’s lives.”

Conspiracy theories are always popular, but in this case the authors, writing primarily for middle-class readers, faced a tricky problem. No reasonable person in this day and age could be expected to believe that somewhere in America a group of male “elders” has sat down to plot ways to perpetuate the subjugation of women. How, then,

could they persuade anyone of the existence of a widespread effort to control women for the good of men?

The solution that they hit upon made it possible for them to have their conspiracy while disavowing it. Faludi and Wolf argued that the conspiracy against women is being carried out by malevolent but invisible backlash forces or beauty-myth forces that act in purposeful ways. The forces in question are subtle, powerful, and insidiously efficient, and women are largely unconscious of them. What is more, the primary enforcers of the conspiracy are not a group of sequestered males plotting and planning their next backlash maneuvers: it is women themselves who “internalize” the aims of the backlash, who, unwittingly, do its bidding. In other words, the backlash is Us. Or, as Wolf puts it, “many women internalize Big Brother’s eye.”

Faludi’s scope is wider than Wolf’s; she argues that the media and the political system have been co-opted by the backlash, as well:

The backlash is not a conspiracy, with a council dispatching agents from some central control room, nor are the people who serve its ends often aware of their role; some even consider themselves feminists. For the most part, its workings are encoded and internalized, diffuse and chameleonic . . . generated by a culture machine that is always scrounging for a “fresh” angle. Taken as a whole, however, these codes and cajolings, these whispers and threats and myths, move overwhelmingly in one direction: they try to push women back into their “acceptable” roles.

Wolf focuses more narrowly on the “beauty backlash,” which pressures women to diet, dress up, make up, and work out in ways that are “destroying women physically and depleting us psychologically”. “The beauty backlash against feminism is no conspiracy, but a million separate individual reflexes . . . that coalesce into a national mood weighing women down; the backlash is all the more oppressive because the source of the suffocation is so diffuse as to be almost invisible.”

Having thus skirted a claim of outright conspiracy, Faludi and Wolf nevertheless freely use the *language* of subterfuge to arouse anger and bitterness. In their systems, the backlash and the beauty myth become malevolent personified forces behind plot after plot against women.

They incite unscrupulous stooges in the media to write articles that make “single and childless women feel like circus freaks.” Cosmetics saleswomen are backlash agents, “trained,” Wolf says, “with techniques akin to those used by professional cult converters and hypnotists.” She calls Weight Watchers a “cult” and compares its disciplines to those of the Unification Church, Scientology, est, and Lifespring. In aerobics classes, “robotic” women do the “same bouncing dance . . . practiced by the Hare Krishnas for the same effect.”

What the backlash “wants” is clear to both Faludi and Wolf. By the seventies, women had been granted a great deal of equality. The primary aim of the backlash is to retake lost ground, to put women to rout. The subtitle of Faludi’s book is *The Undeclared War Against American Women*. *Backlash* itself may be regarded as a feminist counterattack in this supposed war. As Patricia Schroeder noted in a review of the book, women are

not “riled up enough,” and Faludi “may be able to do what political activists have tried to do for years.” Indeed, she and Wolf together succeeded in moving countless women to anger and dismay.

Where did Faludi and Wolf get the idea that masses of seemingly free women were being mysteriously manipulated from within? A look at their source of inspiration illustrates the workings of a law of intellectual fashion that the journalist Paul Berman calls “Parisian determinism”—that is, whatever is the rage in Paris will be fashionable in America fifteen years later.

Michel Foucault, a professor of philosophy at the distinguished College de France and an irreverent social thinker who felt deeply alienated from the society in which he lives, introduced his theory of interior disciplines in 1975. His book *Discipline and Punish*, with its novel explanation of how large groups of people could be controlled without the need of exterior controllers, took intellectual Paris by storm. Foucault had little love for the modern democratic state. Like Marx, he was interested in the forces that keep citizens of democracies law-abiding and obedient.

According to Foucault, the individual subjects of contemporary democracies are not free at all. Instead, democratic societies turn out to be even more rigidly authoritarian than the tyrannies they replaced. Modern citizens find themselves subject to the rules (he calls them “disciplines” of modern bureaucratic institutions: schools, factories, hospitals, the military, the prisons. In premodern societies, where power was overtly authoritarian, enforcement was inconsistent, haphazard, and inefficient, the king’s minions could not be everywhere all the time. In contemporary societies, control is pervasive and unceasing: the modern citizen, having internalized the disciplines of the institutions, polices himself. This results in a “disciplinary society” of “docile” subjects who keep themselves in line with what is expected. According to the philosopher Richard Rorty, Foucault believed he was exposing “a vast organization of repression and injustice.” He regarded the multitude of selfdisciplined individuals as constituting a “microfascism” that is even more efficiently constraining than the macrofascism of totalitarian states.

How seriously can one take Foucault’s theory? Not very, says Princeton political philosopher Michael Walzer, who characterizes Foucault’s politics as “infantile leftism.” Foucault was aware that he was equating modern democracies with repressively brutal systems like the Soviet prison camps in the Gulag. In a 1977 interview, he showed some concern about how his ideas might be interpreted: “I am indeed worried by a certain use . . . which consists in saying, ‘Everyone has their own Gulag, the Gulag is here at our door, in our cities, our hospitals, our prisons, it’s here in our heads.’” But, as Walzer points out, so long as Foucault rejected the possibility of individual freedom, which is the moral basis for liberal democracy, it was unclear how he could sustain the distinction between the real Gulag and the one inside the heads of bourgeois citizens.

Foucault’s theory has few adherents among social philosophers, but it is nonetheless highly popular among gender feminist theorists, who find his critique of liberal

democracy useful for their purposes. Foucault has given them an all-purpose weapon to be used against traditional-minded feminists.

Equity feminists believe that American women have made great progress and that our system of government allows them to expect more. They do not believe that women are “socially subordinate.” By contrast, the gender feminists believe that modern women are still in thrall to patriarchy, and Foucault helps them to make their case. When equity feminists point to the gains made by women in recent decades, gender feminists consider them naive. Applying Foucault, they insist that male power *remains* all-pervasive, only now it has become “interiorized” and therefore even more efficient; force is no longer necessary. In effect, they have adopted Foucault’s “discourses” to argue that “femininity” itself is really a discipline that continues to degrade and oppress women, even those in the so-called free democracies. As Sandra Lee Bartky puts it:

No one is marched off for electrolysis at the end of a rifle . . . Nevertheless . . . the disciplinary practices of femininity . . . must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers.

For Bartky, contemporary American women live in a kind of sexual prison, subject to disciplines that ordain much of their daily lives:

The woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate [under constant surveillance], a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance. *This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy* [my emphasis].

Catharine MacKinnon presents her own sexier version of how contemporary women have “interiorized” a self-destructive, self-sustaining, despairing, craven identity that serves men very well and continues to humiliate women:

Sexual desire in women, at least in this culture, is socially constructed as that by which we come to want our own self-annihilation; that is, our subordination is eroticized, . . . we get off on it, to a degree. This is our stake in this system that is not in our interest, our stake in this system that is killing us. I’m saying that femininity as we know it is how we come to want male dominance, which most emphatically is not in our interest.

MacKinnon rejects “femininity as we know it” because it has come to mean accepting and even desiring male domination. Her militant, gynocentric feminism would teach women to see how deeply, craftily, and deceptively the male culture has socialized them to compliance: “Male dominance is perhaps the most pervasive and tenacious system of power in history. Its force is exercised as

consent, its authority as participation.”

It would be a mistake to think that the idea of a tenacious internalized power that is keeping women subjugated is on the fringe of the New Feminism and not at its center.



To most feminist leaders, the backlash is very real. It was the theme of a 1992 conference I attended at Radcliffe College called “In the Eye of the Storm: Feminist Research and Action in the 90’s.” One of the purposes of the conference was to “explore the backlash—against the women’s movement, against women’s research, women’s studies . . . and against public policy equity agendas.” The conference was sponsored by the prestigious National Council for Research on Women—an umbrella organization that represents more than seventy women’s groups, including the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and the American Association of University Women. Expenses were covered by the Ford Foundation. Though the conference featured extremists like Charlotte Bunch (who referred to Dan Quayle as a Klansman), it also had Nannerl Keohane, now president of Duke University, who seemed not to be disturbed by all the backlash rhetoric.

The assumption that women must defend themselves against an enemy who is waging an undeclared war against them has by now achieved the status of conventional feminist wisdom. In large part, this has happened because seemingly reasonable and highly placed feminists like Ms. Keohane have not seen fit to challenge it. Whether they have been silent because they agree or because they have found it politic to refrain from criticism, I do not know.

Foucault promulgated his doctrine of self-surveillance in the midseventies. By the mideighties, it had turned up in the books of feminist theorists; by the nineties, it had become thematic in feminist best-sellers. Wolf mentions Foucault in her bibliography. Faludi offers him no acknowledgment, but the characterization of the backlash bespeaks his influence:

The lack of orchestration, the absence of a single string-puller, only makes it harder to see—and perhaps more effective. A backlash against women’s rights succeeds to the degree that it appears *not* to be political, that it appears not to be a struggle at all. It is most powerful when it goes private, when it lodges inside a woman’s mind and turns her vision inward, until she imagines the pressure is all in her head, until she begins to enforce the backlash too—on herself.

Wolf and Faludi tend to portray the “disciplined” and docile women in the grip of the backlash as Stepford wives—helpless, possessed, and robotic. Wolf sometimes speaks of women as victims of “mass hypnosis.” “This is not a conspiracy theory,” she reminds us. “It doesn’t have to be.” Faludi explains how the backlash managed to “infiltrate the thoughts of women, broadcasting on these private channels its soundwaves of shame and reproach.”

In addition to Foucauldian theory, Faludi and Wolf have appropriated masses of statistics and studies that “consistently show” the workings of the backlash and the beauty myth and their effects on American women. But although their books are massively footnoted, reliable statistical evidence for the backlash hypothesis is in terribly short supply. According to Wolf, “Recent research consistently shows that inside the majority of the West’s controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret ‘underlife’ poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark

vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control.” The research she cites was done in 1983 at Old Dominion University. She claims that the researchers found that attractive women “compare themselves only to models, not to other women,” and feel unattractive. This kind of claim is central to Wolf’s contention that images of beautiful, willowy women in fashion magazines demoralize real women. In fact, the study she cited suggested the opposite. The Old Dominion researchers compared the self-reports of three groups of college-age women: one group evaluated themselves after looking at photos of fashion models, another group after looking at pictures of unattractive peers, and a third group after looking at pictures of very attractive peers. The researchers were careful not to exaggerate the significance of this small experiment, but they (tentatively) concluded that although reactions to attractive *peers* negatively influenced women’s self-evaluation, exposure to the models had no such effect:

Perhaps in the eyes of most of our subjects, peer beauty qualified as a more appropriate standard for social comparison than professional beauty.....  
Viewed in a

practical sense, our results further suggest that thumbing through popular magazines filled with beautiful models may have little immediate effect on the self-images of most women.

I called the principal author of the study, Thomas Cash, a psychologist at Old Dominion, and asked him what he thought about Ms. Wolf’s use of his research. “It had nothing to do with what we found. It made no sense. What I reported was just the opposite of what Wolf claimed She grabbed it, ran

with it, and got it backward.” We have already discussed her sensational disclosure that the beauty backlash is wreaking havoc with young women by leading them into a lethal epidemic of anorexia with annual fatalities of 150,000. The actual fatalities may be as low as 100 per year.

Much of the support Wolf brings for her beauty-myth theory consists of merely labeling an activity insidious rather than showing it to be so—exercising, dieting, and buying Lancome products at the cosmetics counter in Bloomingdale’s all come under attack. Characterizing Weight Watchers as a cult does not constitute evidence that it is one. In her zeal to construe every effort of American women to lose weight as a symptom of a male-induced anxiety, she overlooks the fact that many people—men as well as women—suffer from obesity and are threatened by diseases that do not affect people who are fit. Stressing the importance of diet and fitness can hardly be considered as an insidious attempt by the male establishment to disempower women. The desire to achieve greater fitness is perhaps the main motive inspiring both men and women to exercise and to monitor their diets.

Wolf recycled results from every alarmist-advocacy study she could get her hands on. Mary Koss’s results on date rape are duly reported: “One in four women respondents had an experience that met the American legal definition of rape or attempted rape.” She does not mention that Koss’s definition of rape was controversial. She does not

tell us that almost half the women Koss classified as victims dated their “rapists” again. Wolf does sometimes point to real problems, such as the overwhelming fear of being “unfeminine,” the excessive rate of cosmetic surgery, and the high incidence of domestic violence. But she errs in systematically ascribing them to the same misogynist cause. Good social theorists are painfully aware of the complexity of the phenomena they seek to explain, and honest researchers tend to be suspicious of single-factor explanations, no matter how beguiling.

## **Part 2: Attaining an Open Mind:Critical Thinking and**

*Argumentative Rhetoric*

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Chapter

# Chapter 5. Viewpoint, Bias, and Fairness: From Cocksure Ignorance to Thoughtful Uncertainty

Education is the process of moving from cocksure ignorance to thoughtful uncertainty.

—*Proverb*

The trouble ain't that people are ignorant; it's that they "know" so much that ain't so.

—*Josh Billings (nineteenth-century American humorist)*

Chapter 1 made a case that "[a]ny writer or reader addressing controversial issues will almost inevitably have a subjective, **partisan viewpoint** (that is, a viewpoint siding with a particular party or ideology) Our aims should simply be to learn to identify and understand what the viewpoint of any given source is, so that we can weigh its rhetorical quality against opposing viewpoints." Is every viewpoint, then, a "biased" one? Yes and no. The word *bias* is an ambiguous one; it is usually, but not necessarily, used with a negative **connotation**. Bias can simply mean a particular subjective viewpoint, which is to say, once again, that all of us inevitably have our own biases resulting from the **ethnocentric** limitations of our experience and temperament, as much as we may try to attain objectivity.

This notion of bias derives from the long philosophical tradition of **skepticism**. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines *skepticism* as "the philosophical doctrine that absolute knowledge is impossible and that inquiry must be a process of doubting in order to acquire approximate or relative certainty." Skepticism does not necessarily deny that there are objective, external truths but asserts that these truths are often too obscure or complex for any one human being to know *with absolute certainty*, so that our *perceptions* of objective reality are inevitably biased to a large extent by our subjective viewpoint. **Primary certitude** is a psychological term for the mind set of people who are fixed in absolute beliefs so dogmatically, without recognizing their own bias, that they cannot bear to have their beliefs questioned or doubted. Much of the rest of this book develops possible ways to overcome primary certitude and the multiple forces in all of our lives that block objectivity.

A key **paradox** discovered in the course of higher education (or of wide reading and personal experience) is that the more you study subjects of controversy, the less

certain you are apt to become that you know the truth about them. A large Part of higher education consists of finding out how much you don't know that you previously thought you did, or of "moving from cocksure ignorance to thoughtful uncertainty." The reason for this is that you are constantly seeing more complexities and complications, more differing viewpoints on any given issue. People with less education are likely to be exposed to a narrower range of information and viewpoints, so it is easier for them to feel sure they know the truth and remain fixed in primary certitude. (To be sure, highly educated people can lurch to the **equal and opposite extreme** in being limited to intellectual sources to the exclusion of the realms of hard experience and experiential common sense in which the less educated may be more sophisticated.)

A classic site of skepticism is Plato's dialogues about his teacher Socrates, particularly "The Apology," written in Greece in the fourth century BC. Explaining at his trial the reasons he has antagonized the citizens of Athens to the point of their sentencing him to death, Socrates says that the oracle of Delphi once declared that there is no one wiser than Socrates. Socrates muses:

From *The Apology*

Plato

Translated by B. Jowett, Clarendon Press, 1875

I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, 'Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest.' Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and wiser still by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is,—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. (353)

Albert Camus, a twentieth-century exponent of skepticism, writes about this passage in Plato, "Socrates, threatened by the death penalty, granted himself no superiority other than this: he did not presume to know what he did not know. The most exemplary life and thought of these centuries ends with a proud acknowledgment of ignorance" (*Lyrical and Critical Essays* 149-50). To be sure,

neither Plato, Socrates, nor Camus was a total skeptic; on the contrary, the philosophy of “Platonic idealism” is based on the belief that there *is* a transcendent world of true, logical ideas that can be approximated through painstaking philosophical inquiry, although most humans live in a world of distorted shadows of those ideas and deceive themselves into mistaking the shadows for the reality, as Plato dramatizes in his allegory of the cave in *The Republic*. Socrates’ skepticism, then, is directed at those who are locked into primary certitude by their faulty perception of truth. Again, the aim of skepticism is not to cynically belittle all beliefs and values but to rationally distinguish those that are legitimate from those that are false. Elsewhere in “The Apology,” Socrates says, “I tell you that no greater good can happen to a man than to discuss human excellence every day and the other matters about which you have heard me arguing and examining myself and others, and that an unexamined life is not worth living” (371). Likewise, an unexamined idea is not worth holding on to.

A contemporary echo of this passage from Plato can be heard in a June 27, 2004, *Los Angeles Times* op-ed column by conservative political scientist Francis Fukuyama. Criticizing the Department of Defense’s inadequate understanding of the problems that would face American forces in Iraq after their overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Fukuyama writes, “The Pentagon, we learned only later, didn’t have the capacity to organize things and didn’t know what it didn’t know.”

## Relativism and Commitment

The issues discussed here have been a center of controversy in the American “culture wars” in the past few decades, dividing liberals and conservatives. Conservatives like William J. Bennett and Lynne V. Cheney (respectively secretary of education in the administration of Ronald Reagan and chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities in the administrations of Reagan and George H. W. Bush) have attacked liberal academics for allegedly substituting “moral relativism” for any belief in objective truth or universal values. (Remember Bennett’s op-ed “A Preview Case: September 11, 2001” in Chapter 1.) In her 1995 book *Telling the Truth: Why Our Culture and Our Country Have Stopped Making Sense—and What We Can Do about It*, Cheney writes:

In the view of a growing number of academics, the truth was not merely irrelevant, it no longer existed. They had moved far beyond the ideas that have shaped modern scholarship—that we should think of the truth we hold today as tentative and partial, recognizing that it may require rethinking tomorrow in light of new information and insight—to the view that there is no truth. They had leaped beyond the commonsense observation that people’s descriptions of reality differ to the conclusion that there is no independent reality and thus no basis for making judgments about truth—or falsity (15-16)



Whether Cheney's account of what this "growing number of academics" believe is accurate or is a **straw man** misrepresentation is disputable and beyond our concerns here. The particular viewpoint that I am presenting is not the extreme position she criticizes but is closer to what she accepts as "the ideas that have shaped modern scholarship" and "commonsense," as well as the ideas associated with skepticism throughout the history of Western humanistic education. (Cheney defends this history against what she sees as its rejection by advocates of multicultural canon revision, but to my mind this is a **false dilemma**, since the two are not mutually exclusive, as shown throughout this book in the emphasis on continuity between classics of the past and multicultural contemporary views.) To reiterate, I agree with Cheney that objectivity is a worthy goal to strive for, though we can rarely attain it completely. **Paradoxically**, becoming aware of our subjective viewpoint and biases is an essential step toward objectivity. (It is necessary to clarify one's position on such loaded issues beyond any possible misunderstanding, because in culture-war **polemics**, it is common for those on one side to distort the ideas of their opponents to imply **guilt by association** with extreme positions, particularly through the fallacy of **quotation out of context**, pulling a few, extreme-sounding words out of their qualifying context. You might also want to check Cheney's text to make sure I have not quoted *her* out of context!)

A valuable perspective on relativism and skeptical questioning has been provided by psychological researchers such as William Perry and Lawrence Kohlberg, who have studied development in cognition (acquisition of knowledge and learning and reasoning skills) and moral reasoning in college students over the period of a four-year liberal arts education. In Perry's terms, students entering college tend to think in terms of black-and-white *absolutism*. As they are exposed to a diversity of perspectives, they are apt to lurch to the opposite, skeptical extreme of unqualified *relativism*, the attitude that "Everyone has his or her own opinion, and who's to say which one is right?" The ultimate stage in development is *committed relativism*, in which students have learned that, in spite of the complexity and uncertainty of many truths, judgments of truth and falsity, right and wrong, and moral commitments still need to be made, on the basis of the most complete, diverse knowledge presently available to us. (Kohlberg's and Perry's ideas have been questioned on the grounds of gender bias and somewhat modified by Carol Gilligan, their colleague in the Harvard psychology department, in her book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* and in another book by followers of Gilligan, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, by Mary Field Belenky and others, a portion of which is included in Chapter 6.)

# Biased and Unbiased Viewpoints:

## The Esbyods Principle

The concept of the term “bias” that equates it with a subjective, relative viewpoint is more benign than that which equates it with deliberate slanting and propaganda—often a legitimate equation, to be sure, as we will see throughout this book, especially in relation to the rhetoric of politics, mass media, and scholarship. For now, however, let us only consider how difficult it is to recognize the biases in ourselves and sources of information that support any group we identify with—in contrast to how easy it is for us to recognize biases in other individuals and supporters of other groups.

An inelegant but wise old folk saying goes, “Everyone defecates, but your own doesn’t stink.” (This, of course, is a euphemized version of the original, but we have a social **taboo** against using the “s” word in media like college textbooks or classrooms, even though it is far from an unfamiliar or shocking term to most college students; I will incorporate the uneuphemized version in an acronym of the first letters of each phrase: the ESBYODS principle.) Here is a test of the ESBYODS principle: Can you remember any instance in which you thought a statement by a politician, a news reporter or commentator, a teacher or textbook was biased when that statement supported *your* side? A large step in the direction of objectivity, then, is learning to avoid applying a double standard toward biases favoring our own side versus those favoring the other. If each of us is captive, in differing degrees, to many subjective biases, the same truth applies to the sources of information from which we derive our beliefs. It is a totem of our society for government officials, journalists, teachers, and scholars to insist on their commitment to the objective pursuit and transmission of truth in the arguments they put forth. This goal may be a worthy one in principle, but in practice those who pay lip service to it often deceive themselves, if not the public, about the extent to which their views are colored by the biases of partisan ideology, gender, race, social class, age, and so on. A large body of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences since the 1960s has documented countless instances in which such claims to objectivity or disinterestedness have been belied in the practice of government, journalism, and education.

The point here, once again, is not to breed cynical rejection of everything you read and hear but simply to alert you as a critical reader and listener to be somewhat skeptical about excessive claims to objectivity in your sources of information and to suggest that such sources of information are in fact more credible when they are out front in admitting to their own subjective viewpoint, possible biases, and inclination to **special pleading** (see Chapter 18). By doing so, writers and speakers can replace the pretense of total objectivity with the more realistic principle of presenting a viewpoint that they acknowledge as subjective and perhaps biased, and that consequently takes extra

care to be *fair-minded* in presentation of viewpoints differing from, or opposed to, their own. That is to say, conscientious writers and speakers will bend over backward to present views they themselves do not endorse in a manner acceptable to their advocates—fully, accurately, and sympathetically. Even though the writer or speaker might then go on to voice disagreements or **refutations** of those views, they will be more credible because they have demonstrated that they are responding to an accurate version of an opposing position, not a straw-man account of it. Even in heatedly polemical arguments, it is possible to present opponents' positions fairly; guidelines for doing so will be outlined in "Ground Rules for Polemicists" in Chapter 11. Your written and spoken arguments will be far more effective if as a student you make the same efforts to acknowledge your own subjective viewpoint and possible biases and to summarize arguments with which you might disagree in a full, accurate, and sympathetic manner, prior to attempting to refute them.

In other words, every writer or speaker has subjective opinions and viewpoints, but not all opinions or viewpoints are equally biased, in the negative sense of *prejudiced*. Your aim as a critical thinker and writer should not be to avoid expressing opinions but to express opinions that will impress your readers as educated, unprejudiced, and fair, by the criteria surveyed in Chapter 2.

*To clarify an essential point for this entire book: There is no reason to suppose that all sides have equally strong arguments on every issue. On any given issue, members of one camp might have overwhelming reasoning and evidence on their side, and members of the other might be lying through their teeth. Neither open-mindedness, fairness, nor objectivity obliges you to give a side with few strong arguments and many weak ones more credit than it deserves or "equal time" with one that has many strong arguments and few weak ones. (In fact, a predictable rhetorical tactic of those with lame arguments on their side is to complain that their position has not been accorded equal time or respect, that it is the victim of "prejudice.")*

In the student paper in Chapter 4, the author concluded that there was about an equal balance of strong and weak points in the opposing arguments by Naomi Wolf and Christina Hoff Sommers. In that particular case, this conclusion was warranted by the preceding analysis, but you should not necessarily take it as a model for every paper you write. In general, you should avoid the generic, wishy-washy, evasive conclusion, "Everybody has his or her own viewpoint, and who is to judge which is right and which is wrong?" *You* are to judge! If you judge one side's arguments to be weak, you are simply obliged to *summarize* them objectively, without either distorting or commenting negatively about them, but then you are also obliged to point out their weaknesses. The judgment about which are the stronger or weaker arguments is, of course, to some extent a subjective one; the point is for you to provide adequate support for that judgment—support that, in your mind and in that of your readers or listeners, gives a fair account of arguments in the process of pointing out their weaknesses.

## Acknowledge Your Own and Opposing Viewpoints

In acknowledging your own subjective biases, in college papers and discussions you should not be expected to reveal details of your personal life or beliefs that you consider private; still, you should be able to indicate your background in terms broad enough that you don't consider them intrusive. For example, a student might begin a paper on affirmative action:

As an African-American woman who has seen many beneficial effects of affirmative action for minorities and women from disadvantaged backgrounds, I am of course inclined to spring to the defense when affirmative action is attacked. This being my bias, I will now try to summarize the argument against affirmative action the way its opponents see it.

Or another might write:

I am a middle-class white male, so I guess I'm against affirmative action mainly because I see it discriminating against me and those I identify most closely with. Nevertheless, I will make my best effort to make the case in favor of affirmative action, and then will look at how well my objections to it hold up against that case.

The principles developed here about learning to recognize your own subjective biases and those of sources you write about can be extended to one of the most important keys to effective argumentative writing and speaking: *Always acknowledge, and speak to as sympathetically as fairness requires, the position opposed to yours.* You will never persuade anyone who doesn't already agree with you if you **stack the deck** by presenting only arguments in support of your own position, while ignoring or distorting arguments on the other side. *Imagine a reader or listener who not only disagrees with your position but whose ethnocentric mind-set is quite different from your own, then calculate everything you say to win that person over to your position, through showing that you understand her position, anticipating her arguments, and respectfully explaining to her why yours are more reasonable.*

## Rogerian Argument, Believers and Doubters

Scholars of composition have come up with various techniques to generate argumentative writing that stretches students' minds beyond their own customary viewpoint. One of the most popular is called **Rogerian argument**, based on the ideas of Carl Rogers, a psychologist affiliated with the International Society for General Semantics. Rogerian argument grew out of a technique that Rogers used both in personal psychotherapy for couples and for organizational or group psychology. The idea was that conflict is frequently based on semantic or psychological misunderstandings and inability to empathize with someone else's viewpoint when it clashes with your own. (The Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget expressed a similar notion in theorizing that the healthiest development of reasoning in children consists of a progression from

*egocentrism* and *ethnocentrism* [or, in Piaget's term, *sociocentrism*] to *reciprocity*, or empathy.) In Rogers's technique patients are asked to address those with whom they are in conflict in a manner that assures them that the speaker fully understands and empathizes with their viewpoint; in other words, one person must present the other's position in a way that the latter accepts as accurate. The speaker next acknowledges points on the other side that he or she finds valid and then tries respectfully to explain where and why he or she differs. This method thus avoids an antagonistic atmosphere in arguments, as well as straw-man misrepresentation of an opponent's ideas.

Rogerian argument works better in face-to-face arguments than written ones, but it is an excellent way to air opposing positions on assigned writing topics in class discussion prior to writing. When writing the paper, you can then translate the classroom dialogue into the section summarizing the opposing positions, thereby assuring that you are presenting both sides fairly.

Believers and Doubters is a similar method devised by composition theorist Peter Elbow in his 1973 book *Writing without Teachers*; it is most helpful in the prewriting stage. The technique consists of your first reading a source on one side of an issue and writing an account of it in the most sympathetic way you can, thinking of additional arguments and evidence in support of the author's position-and then switching to write an account that disagrees with it, using whatever arguments and evidence you can find in rebuttal. You can then draw from both accounts in balancing the source's strengths and weaknesses in your final version.

You can use either Rogerian argument or Believers and Doubters to generate the sections in your paper fair-mindedly summarizing and evaluating the strong and weak points of opposing sources. Do not, however, use either of them to get you off the hook of making the final judgment that one side's arguments are much stronger than the other's, if that is the case!

## A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric

This is a guide that you can apply in writing papers about sources, with respect both to those sources' biases and to your own as a writer.

1. What is the author's vantage point, in terms of social class, wealth, occupation, gender, ethnic group, political ideology, educational level, age, and so on? Is that vantage point apt to color her/his attitudes on the issue under discussion? Does she/he have anything personally to gain from the position she/he is arguing for, any **conflicts of interest** or other reasons for special pleading? (See Chapter 17.)

2. What organized financial, political, ethnic, or other interests are backing the advocated position? What groups or **special interests** stand to profit financially, politically, or otherwise from it? In the Latin phrase, *cui bono*, "Who benefits?" (See Chapter 17.)

3. Once you have determined the author's vantage point and/or the special interests being favored, look for signs of ethnocentrism, **rationalization or wishful thinking, sentimentality, one-sidedness, selective vision, or a double standard.** (See Chapter 8.)

4. Look for the following forms of **setting the agenda** and stacking the deck reflecting the biases in number 3:

a. **Playing up**

- (1) arguments favorable to one's own side
- (2) arguments unfavorable to the other side
- (3) the other side's power, wealth, extremism, misdeeds ("a widespread pattern of abuses"), or unity ("a vast conspiracy," "a tightly coordinated machine")

b. **Downplaying** (or suppressing altogether)

- (1) arguments unfavorable to one's own side
- (2) arguments favorable to the other side
- (3) one's own side's power, wealth, extremism, misdeeds ("a small number of isolated instances," "a few rotten apples"), or unity ("an uncoordinated collection of diverse, grassroots groups")

c. Applying "clean" words (ones with positive connotations) to one's own side, without support

Applying "dirty" words (ones with negative connotations) to the other side, without support

d. Assuming that the representatives of one's own side are trustworthy, truthful, and have no selfish motives, while assuming the opposite of the other side's representatives

e. Giving credit to one's own side for positive events

f. Blaming the other side for negative events

This calculator can be usefully applied to all of the opposed readings from conservative versus liberal or leftist sources in this book, as well as to all your daily intake of information in the public sphere. It is an application of the ESBYODS principle, indicating the ways in which we all are inclined, intentionally or unintentionally, to react—often with anger and exaggeration—to our opponents' perceived faults and exercises of power, while not seeing (or smelling) our own side's comparable ones. Of course, emphasizing our side's "good" and the other side's "bad" is a perfectly legitimate Part of argumentation, so long as it is done honestly, accurately, with sufficient support, and with a sense of proportion. But good-faith efforts at doing so need to be distinguished from the bad-faith ones of propagandists who stack the deck by deliberately, dishonestly using these techniques to present a simplistic opposition between "good guys" and "bad guys," or the efforts of sincere but closed-minded **ideologues** who resort to the techniques in a knee-jerk conditioned reaction to every public event. In any given case, differential semantic descriptions might serve to make an accurate, supportable judgment on the relative merits of opposing camps—or they might not; it's for you to judge.

If you don't find blatant signs of the above biases, and if you judge that the emotional language is supported by adequate evidence, that's a good indication that the writer is a credible one. If there *are* many such signs, that's an indication that the writer is not a credible source. However, finding signs of the above biases does not in itself prove that the writer's arguments are fallacious. Don't fall into the **ad hominem** ("to the man") fallacy—evading the issue by attacking the character or motives of the writer or speaker without refuting the substance of the argument itself. What the writer says may or may not be factual, regardless of the semantic biases. The point is not to let yourself be swayed by emotive words alone, especially when you are inclined to wishful thinking on one side of the subject yourself. When you find these biases in other writers, *or in yourself*, that is a sign that you need to be extra careful to check the facts with a variety of other sources and to find out what the arguments are on the other side of the issue.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Discuss the form of skepticism that "does not deny that there are objective, external truths, but asserts that these truths are often too obscure or complex for any one human being to know with absolute certainty, so that our perceptions of objective reality are inevitably colored to a large extent by our subjective viewpoint. Objectivity is a worthy goal to strive for, though we can rarely attain

it completely. Paradoxically, becoming aware of our subjective viewpoint and biases is an essential step toward objectivity." What examples or evidence can you present in support of this position, and what ones against it? Which people whom you know or know of might disagree with it, and why? For a test case here, see the account below of opposing viewpoints on the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill dispute.

"Primary certitude is a psychological term for the mind-set of people who are fixed in absolute beliefs so dogmatically that they cannot bear to have those beliefs questioned or doubted." Write a description of someone you know who is captive to primary certitude on some particular subject.

"Can you remember any instance in which you thought a statement by a politician, a news reporter or commentator, a teacher or textbook was biased when that statement supported your side?" Can you? The next time you hear or read such a statement, try to think of ways in which it might in fact be biased.

Find examples of the ESBYODS principle in (a) your own personal relationships and those of others you know, and (b) current public arguments.

Apply Rogerian argument or Doubters and Believers, in class discussion or individual writing, to any of the opposed sources in the readings for this book, such as those on September 11, 2001, in Chapter 1 or on the beauty myth in Chapter 4.

Write or role-play in class discussion an imagined version of a Rogerian argument between leading Republicans and Democrats, or between the opponents on Crossfire-style TV talk programs.

## Case Study: Anita Hill Versus Clarence Thomas

As a concrete example of **relativity of viewpoint**, bias in rhetoric, and the ESBY-ODS principle, let us consider one of the most controversial episodes in recent American history, the nationally televised Senate confirmation hearings for the appointment of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court in October 1991. Thomas, a conservative black judge opposed to affirmative action and much other civil rights legislation, had been nominated by Republican president George H. W. Bush to replace retiring Justice Thurgood Marshall, a liberal black who had been appointed by Democratic president Lyndon Johnson after serving as counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. From the outset, opinions toward Thomas divided predictably along party and ideological lines.

Late in the hearings, when Thomas's nomination seemed certain, Anita Hill, a law professor at the University of Oklahoma and, like Thomas, a Yale Law School graduate, testified that he had sexually harassed her when she worked for him when he was head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the agency in charge of implementing laws against sexual harassment) in 1983. Although Hill's own party and ideological identity remains a matter of dispute, this development further polarized public opinion along liberal versus conservative lines because sexual harassment is generally a liberal issue.

There indisputably was an objective reality in this case: Hill's allegations probably were either true or false (although it is also possible that to some extent Hill and Thomas had differing subjective impressions of the events in question). However, neither the Senate hearings nor subsequent scholarly and journalistic investigations have substantiated the truth of either side's story beyond dispute. All we have, up to this writing, is a large collection of opposing opinions and interpretations about the facts of the case.

The following two articles, presenting diametrically opposed views on the case, appeared in Rush Limbaugh's 1992 book *The Way Things Ought to Be* and in the left-of-liberal journal of opinion the *Progressive* (December 1991), for which the late June Jordan was a regular columnist. Limbaugh cites as his main source a 1992 article by David Brock in the conservative journal of opinion *American Spectator*, the basis for Brock's later book *The Real Anita Hill*.

### The Effort to Destroy Clarence Thomas

*Rush Limbaugh*

From *The Way Things Ought to Be* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993)

1. The rumor-mongering against Judge Thomas was an eleventh-hour attempt to ruin his life, and I have never witnessed anything so despicable. Irrespective of



the truth of the allegations that Clarence Thomas sexually harassed a female employee, his reputation and career have been incurably degraded and his life has been dramatically affected.

2. These allegations were lodged by people who stopped at nothing to defeat his nomination, including destroying his character with unsubstantiated innuendo. To them the end justified the means. Certain people feared Thomas's confirmation because it threatened their very political existence. In order for them to survive as a minority with preferred treatment, they believed it necessary to thwart his bid by whatever means necessary.
3. The civil rights coalition in this country has had its way with the Democratic party since 1957. That was the last time the coalition, as a liberal constituency, was defeated. The coalition includes the ACLU and the leaders of such civil rights organizations as People for the American Way and the National Association for the Advancement of (Liberal) Colored People.
4. How have the leaders of these civil rights organizations become so empowered? They do not have normal jobs. Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP, for example, raises money and keeps a percentage of it for himself as head of the organization. The same is true for the head of People for the American Way. They do not have real jobs, yet they have power. They derive that power by utilizing the tools of class envy and hatred.
5. These people enjoy power for only one reason. Their sole source of strength is their monolithic constituency—which determines the number of liberal votes they can deliver to Democrats on election day. This monolithic constituency delivers up to 90 percent of the minority vote to the Democratic candidate for president every presidential election year. The ability of all these civil rights groups to deliver the vote for Democrats has invested them with power. This vote, in turn, has invested the Democrats with power. It's a win-win situation.
6. Then along comes Clarence Thomas, who, by contrast, has held many fine jobs. He works and earns money for a living. He does not head an organization that begs people to contribute money to it. He is a man who has escaped the bonds of poverty by methods other than those prescribed by these civil rights organizations. He has succeeded by relying on himself, rather than prostituting himself into the dependency cycle. As a result of eschewing their prescription, he has risen to levels far above what would have been possible for him had he relied on the black leadership's formula for achievement.
7. The elevation of Judge Thomas to the Supreme Court represents the greatest threat to the civil rights constituency since 1957. Clarence Thomas, a man of conservative moral values, as an associate justice of the highest court of the land,

will set an example for members of the minority community in America who will want to follow his successful lead. The message is that there is another way for blacks to achieve vertical mobility. As a result, blacks inevitably will be drawn away from the traditional civil rights leaders.

8. Once that happens, a certain percentage of minority votes will likely abandon the Democratic party. Such a scenario threatens the careers of the civil rights leaders, because [[their only ticket to power is their guaranteed delivery of minority votes to the Democratic ticket. With this probable exodus, the power of the civil rights leadership would be permanently eroded. In addition ,the Democrats' lock on Congress would be jeopardized.
9. It is neither farfetched nor unfair to draw an analogy between the civil rights leadership and the Soviet Communist leadership, insofar as exploitation of their people is concerned. The leaders of both enjoy the privileges of class at the expense of the masses, who do all the work and whom the leaders purport to serve. They may consider themselves hard workers by virtue of the amount of time they spend on the phone asking people for money or playing politics, but they certainly do not subscribe to the basic work ethic common to this country. Their efforts produce no goods or services to be contributed to the economy, but in fact have just the opposite effect. They discourage achievement by merit, which is tantamount to discouraging the production of wealth.
10. Clarence Thomas will no doubt siphon much of the civil rights rank and file away from this monolithic constituency. There was only one way to avoid that—to undermine and destroy him—thereby saving the civil rights leadership and perhaps the Democratic majority in Congress. Hours before the Senate confirmation vote, senators were receiving anonymous telephone calls urging them not to confirm Thomas. These calls were phony and orchestrated by those desperate to defeat Thomas in order to preserve their own thrones of exploitation. Unfortunately, many senators were unnerved because the calls were coming from their own constituencies.
11. The objective of Thomas's opponents was, and still is, to ruin him as a man and as a judge.
12. This was one of the most heinous, malevolent attempts at character assassination that has occurred in decades. Judge Thomas has categorically denied the allegations leveled against him. But it does not matter. The allegations succeeded in surfacing and will never be forgotten. No matter how great and decent a man Clarence Thomas is, a Part of his life will be forever ruined.

## The Unraveling of Anita Hill

13. Emma Jordan, one of Anita Hill's attorneys, went ballistic on how offended she was by Senator Alan Simpson's threat to reveal the contents of letters and faxes on Anita Hill's character which arrived unsolicited from all over the country. Those were unsubstantiated allegations, hearsay evidence, she complained.

14. Well, excuse me. Isn't that precisely what the angelic and virtuous Anita Hill was doing? Tossing around unsubstantiated allegations? Ten-year-old allegations at that. She made her first claim of sexual harassment against someone when she was working at a Washington law firm in the spring of 1981. That was before she had even met Clarence Thomas. It was only later that she changed her testimony to say that the sexual harassment occurred in the fall of 1981.

15. Oh, sure, she had four "corroborating" witnesses. Three of them said she spoke of being harassed by an unnamed "supervisor," a curious term for someone who is chairman of a large federal agency. The fourth, Judge Susan Hoerchner, said Anita Hill told her about the harassment in the early spring of 1981. But, again: Anita Hill did not go to work for Clarence Thomas, did not even meet him, until September 1981! This timely bit of information, and a lot more, can be found in the yeoman research effort by Washington investigative reporter David Brock in a cover story in the March 1992 issue of *The American Spectator*.

16. Clarence Thomas denied all of Anita Hill's allegations. But now that she was on the national stage she not only did not back down, but began adding details that she had never before mentioned, even to the FBI agents who took her affidavit.

17. The left screams about Senator Simpson's efforts on behalf of Clarence Thomas because they were defeated by someone using their own tactics. Senator Simpson and Clarence Thomas's other defenders on that committee shouldn't apologize. They should be applauded for resisting an orchestrated effort not to seek the truth but to destroy Clarence Thomas's life.

### Can I Get a Witness?

*June Jordan*

From the *Progressive*, December 1991

1. I wanted to write a letter to Anita Hill. I wanted to say thanks. I wanted to convey the sorrow and the bitterness I feel on her behalf. I wanted to explode the history that twisted itself around the innocence of her fate. I wanted to assail the brutal ironies, the cruel consistencies that left her—at the moment of her utmost vulnerability and public power—*isolated, betrayed, abused*, and not nearly as powerful as those who sought and who seek to besmirch, ridicule, and condemn the truth of her important and perishable human being. I wanted to reassure her of her rights, her sanity, and the African beauty

of her earnest commitment to do right and to be a good woman: a good black woman in this America.

2. But tonight I am still too furious. I am still too hurt, I am still too astounded and nauseated by the enemies of Anita Hill. Tonight my heart pounds with shame.

3. Is there no way to interdict and terminate the traditional, abusive loneliness of black women in this savage country?

4. From those slavery times when African men could not dare to defend their sisters, their mothers, their sweethearts, their wives, and their daughters—except at the risk of their lives—from those times until today: Has nothing changed?

5. How is it possible that only John Carr—a young black corporate lawyer who maintained a friendship with Anita Hill ten years ago (“It didn’t go but so far,” he testified, with an engaging handsome trace of a smile)—how is it possible that he, alone among black men, stood tall and strong and righteous as a witness for her defense?

6. What about spokesmen for the NAACP for the National Urban League?

7. What about spokesmen for the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus?

8. All of the organizational and elected black men who spoke aloud against a wrong black man, Clarence Thomas, for the sake of principles resting upon decency and concerns for fair play, equal protection, and affirmative action—where did they go when, suddenly, a good black woman arose among us, trying to tell the truth?

9. Where did they go? And why?

10. Is it conceivable that a young white woman could be tricked into appearing before twelve black men of the U.S. Senate? Is it conceivable that a young white woman could be tricked into appearing before a lineup of incredibly powerful and hypocritical and sneering and hellbent black men freely insinuating and freely hypothesizing whatever lurid scenario came into their heads?

11. Is it conceivable that such a young woman—such a flower of white womanhood—would, by herself, have to withstand the calumny and unabashed, unlawful bullying that was heaped upon Anita Hill?

12. Is it conceivable that this flower would not be swiftly surrounded by white knights rallying—with ropes, or guns, or whatever—to defend her honor and the honor, the legal and civilized rights, of white people, *per se*?

13. Anita Hill was tricked. She was set up. She had been minding her business at the University of Oklahoma Law School when the Senators asked her to describe her relationship with Clarence Thomas. Anita Hill’s dutiful answers disclosed that Thomas had violated the trust of his office as head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Sitting in that office of ultimate recourse for women suffering from sexual harassment, Thomas himself harassed Anita Hill, repeatedly, with unwanted sexual advances and remarks.

14. Although Anita Hill had not volunteered this information and only supplied it in response to direct, specific inquiries from the FBI,

15. And although Anita Hill was promised the protection of confidentiality as regards her sworn statement of allegations,

16. And despite the fact that four witnesses—two men and two women, two black and two white distinguished Americans, including a Federal judge and a professor of law—testified, under oath, that Anita Hill had told each of them about these sordid carryings on by Thomas at the time of their occurrence or in the years that followed,

17. And despite the fact that Anita Hill sustained a remarkably fastidious display of exact recall and never alleged, for example, that Thomas actually touched her,

18. And despite the unpardonable decision by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee to prohibit expert testimony on sexual harassment,

19. Anita Hill, a young black woman born and raised within a black farm family of thirteen children, a graduate of an Oklahoma public high school who later earned honors and graduated from Yale Law School, a political conservative and, now, a professor of law,

20. Anita Hill, a young black woman who suffered sexual harassment once in ten years and, therefore, never reported sexual harassment to any of her friends except for that once in ten years,

21. Anita Hill, whose public calm and dispassionate sincerity refreshed America's eyes and ears with her persuasive example of what somebody looks like and sounds like when she's simply trying to tell the truth,

22. Anita Hill was subpoenaed by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee of fourteen white men and made to testify and to tolerate interrogation on national television.

23. 1. Why didn't she "do something" when Thomas allegedly harassed her?

24. The Senators didn't seem to notice or to care that Thomas occupied the office of last recourse for victims of sexual harassment. And had the Committee allowed any expert on the subject to testify, we would have learned that it is absolutely typical for victims to keep silent.

25. Wasn't it the case that she had had fantasies and is delusional?

26. Remarkably, not a single psychiatrist or licensed psychologist was allowed to testify. These slanderous suppositions about the psychic functionings of Anita Hill were never more than malevolent speculation invited by one or another of the fourteen white Senators as they sat above an assortment of character witnesses hand picked by White House staffers eager to protect the President's nominee.

27. One loathsomely memorable item: John Doggett, a self-infatuated black attorney and a friend of Clarence Thomas, declared that Thomas would not have jeopardized his career for Anita Hill because Doggett, a black man, explained to the Senate Committee of fourteen white men, "She is not worth it."

28. 3. Why was she "lying"?

29. It should be noted that Anita Hill readily agreed to a lie-detector test and that according to the test, she was telling the truth. It should also be noted that Clarence Thomas refused even to consider such a test and that, furthermore, he has already established himself as a liar when earlier in the Senate hearings, he insisted that he

had never discussed *Roe v. Wade* and didn't know much about this paramount legal dispute.

30. Meanwhile, Clarence Thomas—who has nodded and grinned his way to glory and power by denying systemic American realities of racism, on the one hand, and by publicly castigating and lying about his own sister, a poor black woman, on the other—this Thomas, this Uncle Tom calamity of mediocre abilities at best, this bootstrap miracle of egomaniacal myth and self-pity, this choice of the very same President who has vetoed two civil-rights bills and boasted about that, how did he respond to the testimony of Anita Hill?

31. Clarence Thomas thundered and he shook. Clarence Thomas glowered and he growled. “God is my judge!” he cried, at one especially disgusting low point in the Senate proceedings. “God is my judge, Senator. And not you!” This candidate for the Supreme Court evidently believes himself exempt from the judgments of mere men.

32. This Clarence Thomas—about whom an African-American young man in my freshman composition class exclaimed, “He’s an Uncle Tom. He’s a hypocritical Uncle Tom. And I don’t care what happens to his punk ass”—this Thomas vilified the hearings as a “high-tech lynching.”

33. When he got into hot water for the first time (on public record, at any rate), he attempted to identify himself as a regular black man. What a peculiar reaction to the charge of sexual harassment!

34. And where was the laughter that should have embarrassed him out of that chamber?

35. And where were the tears?

36. When and where was there ever a black man lynched because he was bothering a black woman?

37. When and where was there ever a white man jailed or tarred and feathered because he was bothering a black woman?

38. When a black woman is raped or beaten or mutilated by a black man or a white man, what happens?

39. To be a black woman in this savage country: Is that to be nothing and no one beautiful and precious and exquisitely compelling?

40. To be a black woman in this savage country: Is that to be nothing and no one revered and defended and given our help and our gratitude?

41. The only powerful man to utter and to level the appropriate word of revulsion as a charge against his peers—the word was “SHAME”—that man was U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, a white man whose ongoing, successful career illuminates the unequal privileges of male gender, white race, and millionaire-class identity.

42. But Ted Kennedy was not on trial. He has never been on trial.

43. Clarence Thomas was supposed to be on trial but he was not: He is more powerful than Anita Hill. And his bedfellows, from Senator Strom Thurmond to President George Bush, persist—way more powerful than Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill combined.

44. And so, at the last, it was she, Anita Hill, who stood alone trying to tell the truth in an arena of snakes and hyenas and dinosaurs and power-mad dogs. And with this televised victimization of Anita Hill, the American war of violence against women moved from the streets, moved from hip hop, moved from multimillion-dollar movies into the highest chambers of the U.S. Government.

45. And what is anybody going to do about it?

46. I, for one, I am going to write a letter to Anita Hill. I am going to tell her that, thank God, she is a black woman who is somebody and something beautiful and precious and exquisitely compelling.

47. And I am going to say that if this Government will not protect and defend her, and all black women, and all women, period, in this savage country—if this Government will not defend us from poverty and violence and contempt—then we will change the Government. We have the numbers to deliver on this warning.

48. And, as for those brothers who disappeared when a black woman rose up to tell the truth, listen: It's getting to be payback time. I have been speaking on behalf of a good black woman. Can you hear me? Can I get a witness?

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Apply the “Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric” in this Chapter to these two articles.

Try to imagine, as unlikely as it may seem, a Rogerian argument between Limbaugh and Jordan.

To what extent was your reaction to the two articles conditioned by whether you were previously sympathetic to Thomas or Hill? Did any arguments on either side cause you to change your mind at all?

Go through both Limbaugh's and Jordan's articles sentence by sentence, noting which sentences (or parts of sentences) are worded as statements of fact and which as statements of opinion. With statements of both fact and opinion, what supporting evidence, reasoning, and sources does each author provide? Both authors use a lot of emotional appeal. How persuasive is this, and how well is it supported by reasoned arguments?

What similar lines of argument do Jordan and Limbaugh use on their opposing sides? Do you find one or the other line more effective, and on specific points of fact where they contradict one another, which (if either) do you think makes a better case? Explain why.

Notice how much of both Limbaugh's and Jordan's arguments proceeds from the underlying assumption or hidden premise that Hill or Thomas, respectively, was lying. What evidence do the two present in support of their premise, and do you find either's evidence sufficient to establish the premise's truth? How substantial are the rest of their arguments—speculating about motives and methods for the lies, and so on—without that premise having been convincingly established?

In paragraph 14, Jordan asserts, “Anita Hill was tricked. She was set up. She had been minding her business.” What is the implication about who set Hill up and why? It is generally acknowledged that Hill either decided herself to testify or was persuaded by Democratic Senate staff members who considered her story damaging to Thomas. Does Jordan’s subsequent account in paragraphs 14-19 adequately reconcile these facts with her claim that Hill was set up? If so, outline the sequence of argument.

How valid do you find Jordan’s analogies in paragraphs 10-11?

How effective do you consider Jordan’s refutation in paragraph 37 of Clarence Thomas’s characterization of the hearing as “a high-tech lynching”? How relevant are paragraph 38-45 to the central issues in the case?

In paragraph 1, Limbaugh says, “Irrespective of the truth of the allegations . . . , his reputation and career have been incurably degraded.” Is Limbaugh implying that Thomas’s reputation and career ought not to have been degraded if the allegations were true? Or do you think he meant to say, “Irrespective of the falsehood of the allegations,” as the context of the following passages suggests?

In paragraph 2, Limbaugh writes, “These allegations were lodged by people who stopped at nothing to defeat his nomination.” According to this and subsequent paragraphs, who were these “certain people”? The antecedent of “these allegations” in paragraph 1 is “the allegations that Clarence Thomas sexually harassed a female employee.” To your knowledge, who lodged these allegations? If your answer is Anita Hill, then what is Limbaugh implying about the relation of Hill to those “certain people,” particularly “the civil rights coalition”? What evidence does he present to support this implication? Jordan implies in paragraphs 6-7 that the civil rights organizations did not support Hill, while other writers have asserted that the NAACP and some other civil rights organizations themselves have a record of discrimination against women. See what you can find on this subject in David Brock’s book *The Real Anita Hill* and Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson’s *Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas* or other sources, looking up references in the books’ indexes.

If no link has been established between Anita Hill and “the civil rights coalition,” how relevant to the issue at hand—Hill’s charges of sexual harassment by Thomas—is the rest of Limbaugh’s extended attack on civil rights organizations in paragraphs 3-12? Do you find any comparable possible non sequiturs in Jordan’s article?

Evaluate Limbaugh’s level of generalization in his accusations against “the leaders of these civil rights organizations” since 1957. Do you think he would include in these accusations Martin Luther King Jr., who was a leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference after 1957, and Medgar Evers, head of the Mississippi NAACP who was shot in the back by a white racist in 1964? Do you have any idea why he dates this change to 1957? Do you think most of Limbaugh’s listeners or readers did? Do some research on the civil rights movement to look for an answer, or write or e-mail Limbaugh to see if he can provide an answer.

In 1994 Justice Clarence Thomas officiated at Rush Limbaugh’s wedding, which took place in Thomas’s house. Consider arguments pro and con about whether and



how this fact might be relevant to Limbaugh's strong support for Thomas two years earlier. Do research to find out whether Limbaugh was previously friends with Thomas; if so, would this constitute a conflict of interest in his writing on the case? As another research project, see if you can find out whether June Jordan was personally friendly with Anita Hill or had any other possible conflicts of interest. Aside from personal relations, what might either author have had to gain from supporting Hill or Thomas?

In paragraph 3, Limbaugh says civil rights leaders do not have "normal jobs" or "real jobs." What do you think his definition of such a job might be? Is it suggested in paragraph 9: efforts that produce "goods or services to be contributed to the economy"? Can you think of any jobs that you consider real or normal, yet do not directly contribute goods or services to the economy? In what sense is Rush Limbaugh's a "real job"?

In paragraph 6, Limbaugh says Thomas "has held many fine jobs. He works and earns money for a living." Research the jobs Thomas has held throughout his career. Do you suppose Limbaugh would include among the "fine jobs" those Thomas held as a lawyer and federal government official—two categories of employment generally not well regarded by Limbaugh and other conservatives, who generally do not define such jobs as contributing goods or services to the economy?

In paragraph 8, Limbaugh makes an analogy between "the civil rights leadership and the Soviet Communist leadership." What evidence does he present in support of this analogy, and how persuasive do you find that evidence? To your knowledge, are there more significant similarities or differences between the two groups?

## Thomas Versus Hill: Postscript 1, 2001

Several reporters spent the year or more following the Hill-Thomas hearings doing extensive research in an attempt to get at the truth. One of them, David Brock, published his results in a 1993 book, *The Real Anita Hill*, which concluded that Hill was lying and Thomas telling the truth. Two others, Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, published their results in *Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas* (1994)—coming to the exact opposite conclusion. Both books were heavily documented with footnoted citations. However, reviewers of the two books from liberal and conservative camps predictably denounced the one supporting the other camp. Deirdre English, writing in the leftist journal of opinion the *Nation* ("Untelling the Story," June 28, 1993), charged, "Brock's book is a sham and a scandal, marking a journalistic standard so low that no reputable publishing house should have touched it" (911). English alleged that the book is filled with factual errors, footnotes that claim to support points they don't, logical self-contradictions, interviews of dubious credibility, quotes out of context, and an overall conservative bias that belies Brock's claim that he approached the case with an open mind. Brock in turn wrote a review in *American Spectator* of Mayer and Abramson's book, making virtually the same charges against *it*, for example, "In

addition to relying on fake evidence, doctored quotes, and unsupported hearsay, the book is brimming with anonymous and discreditable sources” (31).

So whom are we to believe, Hill or Thomas, Brock or Mayer and Abramson, English in her review or Brock in his? Frankly, *I* do not know. Unless some dramatic new evidence emerges after the time of this writing, one must come to the skeptical conclusion that we simply cannot be sure which side is right. And yet, when the Hill-Thomas case first comes up for discussion in my classes, many students express absolute certainty that they know the truth, on one side or the other. After being exposed to a strong dose of these opposing sources, however, they admit that their attitude has changed from cocksure ignorance to thoughtful uncertainty.

Does this mean we have to throw up our hands and cynically conclude that there is no objective truth in the Hill-Thomas case or any other? By no means. Each student can, and must, plow through all the arguments and evidence on both sides, try to discern which side makes the more persuasive case for its account of the facts, and make a *tentative* judgment on which side is to be believed.

## Thomas Versus Hill: Postscript 2, 2004

The preceding postscript was written before the publication in 2002 of David Brock’s *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative*. In that book, Brock confesses that in his articles and *The Real Anita Hill*, he was posing as an objective reporter in search of the facts but that he was really less intent on fact-finding than on writing propagandistic **invective** bending the facts to exonerate Thomas and smear Hill (although at the time he believed Thomas’s side). He admits that he dredged up every negative allegation he could find about Hill and her corroborating witnesses and presented these allegations as facts without any attempt at verification, and that his review of Mayer and Abramson’s book defending Hill was an unscrupulous “hatchet job,” a **red herring** to distract attention from their accurate refutations of Brock’s reporting. In the following Chapter he tells how he ultimately came to believe that “Hill’s testimony was more truthful than Thomas’s flat denials after all. My version of the Thomas-Hill controversy was wrong, my belief in it as truth was a delusion.” Rush Limbaugh had based his defense of Thomas on “the yeoman research effort by Washington investigative reporter David Brock.” In *Blinded*, Brock says of Limbaugh in general, “Under the guise of facts and evidence and logic he was really putting out disinformation to his hungry fans The self-described ‘most danger

ous man in America’ was an old-fashioned demagogue, staking a claim of moral superiority for those on ‘the right side,’ as he interpreted even the smallest developments in the news as a rigid evil/liberal versus good/conservative context” (56).

## Strange Lies

*David Brock*

From *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Crown Books, 2002)

The publication of Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson's book *Strange Justice* a few weeks before the November 1994 elections was the final battle in the war over the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill case. Though the case had receded from the headlines, the book was hotly anticipated by partisans on both sides of the historic cataclysm as the answer to *The Real Anita Hill*. Now, we would see the fruits of Mayer and Abramson's three years of research—whether they had any goods. My own reputation, which had been sullied by the two authors in the *New Yorker*, to say nothing of Clarence Thomas's, and that of the political cause he represented, hung in the balance.

My telephone rang shortly after dawn on the morning that *Strange Justice* was excerpted across the front page of the second section of the *Wall Street Journal*, where Mayer and Abramson then worked as reporters. (Only the *Journal's* editorial pages, not the news department, leaned to the right.) I had examined the excerpt carefully before answering the phone that October morning. While interest in pornography is no scandal in itself, Thomas's history with pornography was central to Hill's charge of sexual harassment. Through interviews with the owner and patrons of a Washington video rental store that stocked X-rated films, the authors corroborated Hill's story by revealing that Thomas was an avid consumer of the type of pornography Hill described in her testimony. They also produced a new witness who attested to Thomas's obsessive interest in porn during the years that he supervised Hill. Yet so far as I was concerned, the case was already settled. Since we had the truth on our side, new facts to the contrary had to be lies. Part of the relentless campaign by the left to strip Thomas of his legitimacy as a justice and advance the liberal agenda.

When I lifted the handset off the console, Ricky Silberman was on the other end of the line. The vice chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Thomas and a close friend of his, Silberman had been one of my most trusted sources, going back to the time I first paid her a visit while researching my *Spectator* article three years before. Ricky's confident testament to Thomas's character, her absolute certainty that Thomas was incapable of doing anything like what Hill accused him of, had shaped my early thinking about the case. Her husband, Larry, who sat with Thomas on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, had fortified these impressions. I would have expected Ricky, of all people, to share my opinion that Mayer and Abramson hadn't put a dent in Thomas's armor. If belief in Thomas's innocence was a leap of faith for me, for Ricky it was a matter of experience. She knew him, I didn't. "Have you read it?" Ricky roared into the phone, referring to the *Journal* excerpt. "He did it, didn't he?"

*"He did it, didn't he?"* The words burned through my being with the force of a blowtorch. Surely the excerpt, sensational though it was, could not have shaken the stalwart Ricky. What was going on? Was this the same woman who had assured me that Hill's charges were impossible? Who had marched on the Senate chambers as founder of Women for Judge Thomas? Who had testified under oath to his impeccable character? Did Ricky know something I didn't? Stunned, I couldn't find it within myself to confront her—though I wanted to say, "What the hell are you talking about, 'He did it?'" Instead, I anxiously sought to calm her down and persuade her that the excerpt was no cause for alarm; it was a predictable left-wing hit job. In an odd reversal of roles, I was trying to talk one of my key sources into her own position. As I worked to convince Ricky, I was trying to convince myself, too, trying to hold on to the convictions that I thought we had shared.

Ricky's primal reaction stood in the way. It spoke volumes: Even Thomas's closest friends didn't believe him, maybe never had. In the face of this knowledge, how could I maintain my position as a true believer in the Thomas cause? Was my book a Big Lie? I felt used by Ricky, on whom I had relied to tell me the unvarnished truth.

Yet as if our telephone conversation had never occurred, as though we were in denial about a dark family secret, Ricky and I sprang into action to discredit the Mayer and Abramson book. At mid-morning, we met at the Capitol Hill offices of Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation, the most powerful right-wing lobby behind the Thomas nomination. Weyrich's operation was housed in a modern complex, including an impressive television studio, that took up much of a city block near the northeast side of the Capitol. Ricky was joined by Barbara Ledeen, a neo-conservative operative who was the executive director of the Independent Women's Forum, the antifeminist group Ricky had formed, in Part with [Richard Mellon] Scaife money, from Women for Judge Thomas. Ledeen was married to Michael Ledeen, a shadowy intriguer who was involved in Iranian arms deals during the Iran-contra scandal. Referring to herself as an "ex-hippie," she displayed the same zealotry of 1960's left-wing extremism, now from the other side. Like many neocons I knew, Barbara had remained in the same emotional state of all-out war for the past thirty years. If only for the hell of it, Barbara was boiling mad.

I was angrier and more disappointed with Ricky than with Mayer and Abramson. I could hardly see straight. Yet I was able to displace my rage. Like the Hiss-Chambers case, the Thomas-Hill case lent itself to endless hairsplitting over the true meaning of obscure factoids. I knew the ins and outs of the case better than anyone on our side, and I knew how to twist and turn them to our advantage. I had done this previously, in my book, in the service of a sincerely held belief. Now, I wasn't sure why I was doing it. I was just doing it. As Barbara Ledeen took notes on a legal pad, I played the role I was expected to play. Donning my defense lawyer hat, I dissected the Mayer and Abramson excerpt, methodically turning back each new damaging allegation they raised and patching up the sizable holes they had shot in Thomas's defense.

The three of us then collaborated on a radio script for Rush Limbaugh's show at noon. Many on the right believed that Mayer and Abramson had published their book just before the election to boost the prospects of the Democrats, in a replay of 1992's "Anita Hill effect." We would use Rush to crush Mayer and Abramson, defend Justice Thomas, and protect Republican prospects in the impending election that would bring Newt Gingrich to power. We faxed off the script. Tuning in to his show, I listened as Limbaugh read from the fax virtually verbatim. The war was on! Hearing Rush blast those feminazis gave me a jolt of adrenaline. I was back on message. Forget that hysterical Ricky Silberman, I told myself. I'd show her, too, by going out and proving that Mayer and Abramson were frauds and liars. Consumed by a kind of mania, as if my entire worldview and indeed my self-conception depended on the outcome, I was now on a mission to sink *Strange Justice*.

Working harder than I ever had, I set about re-reporting the book for a review for the *Spectator*. By the time I finished, I must have covered the 360-page book in several hundred yellow Post-it notes, I did find a few factual errors of the type that all nonfiction contains, and patches of the reporting relied on arguable interpretations of events. That was not enough for me. With my faith in Thomas's innocence now shaken—and with it, my faith in the entire political enterprise of the right—I felt it necessary to eviscerate every piece of evidence, every allegation, every question that the authors raised in making their case. This was the only hope of regaining my ideological and personal bearings.

Whether I was following the ugly dictates of partisan politics, the personal vanity and careerism of a professional writer in a literary cat fight, or the ability I had to wind myself up for battle while cutting my emotions dead, I reacted by denying what was happening, and taking things up another notch. I defended my position, my work, my cause, with more vigor and more ingenuity than before. When that proved inadequate, I quite consciously became what my critics believed I was all along: a witting cog in the Republican sleaze machine.

The biggest problem raised by the *Strange Justice* authors for the Thomas camp was the testimony of yet another woman, Kaye Savage, who had not been heard from during the first round of hearings. Savage made the claim, billboarded by the authors as a prized piece of evidence missed by the Senate committee, that she had seen *Playboy* pinups papered along the walls of Thomas's apartment in the early 1980's when she and Thomas had been friends and Anita Hill was working for Thomas. Though the presence of *Playboy* centerfolds in Thomas's bachelor apartment did not in itself prove misconduct toward Hill, I felt compelled to smash the highly publicized anecdote anyway. Appearing on the ABC newsmagazine *Turning Point* in connection with the publication of *Strange Justice*, Savage spoke of having seen *one* pinup from *Playboy* in Thomas's kitchen. She didn't mention the rest of the apartment being plastered with pinups, as she had described it to Mayer and Abramson. I seized on this apparent discrepancy, and prepared to confront Savage about it, hoping to discredit her account.

Shortly after the *Turning Point* broadcast, I reported for work at mid-morning to the *Spectator*, where I was hard at work on my review. I called Mark Paoletta at his Washington law office and discussed the Savage matter with him. Mark had been helping me on all other aspects of the review, and we developed a plan for dealing with Savage. I needed to find out quickly who she was and what negative information might exist about her before confronting her and trying to force her into backing off the story she had told the *Strange Justice* authors. I was intent on doing to Savage what had been done to Anita Hill and Angela Wright during the Thomas hearings. Mark said he would call Clarence Thomas and see what he could find out. I was thrilled. This was the first time I would have access to Thomas, whom I had met for the first time at a christening of one of Mark's children at Mark's home just the prior month.

Within an hour or so that morning, Mark phoned me back. He said he had posed my question about how to discredit Savage to Thomas, who knew I was at work on a review of the Mayer and Abramson book. Mark told me that Thomas had, in fact, some derogatory information on his former friend Savage; he passed it along to Mark so that Mark could give it to me. Quoting Thomas directly, Mark told me of unverified, embarrassing personal information about Savage that Thomas claimed had been raised against her in a sealed court record of a divorce and child custody battle more than a decade ago. Thomas also told Mark where Savage worked after Mark related that I was eager to hunt her down as soon as possible. Surely skirting the bounds of judicial propriety to intimidate and smear yet another witness against him, Thomas was playing dirty, and so was I.

I hung up the phone with Mark, called Savage, and immediately got through. I identified myself, told Savage I was investigating her statements against Thomas, and told her I knew of something bad in her past. Pushed and prodded by me, she seemed to hedge on her quotations in *Strange Justice*. Though this was not unusual behavior for a skittish source who has supplied a reporter with sensitive material and is suddenly thrust into the headlines, I moved in for the kill, pressuring her to meet with me, and she nervously agreed.

I was now determined to take advantage of the uncertainty and fear Savage had shown on the telephone by getting Savage to retract her statements in *Strange Justice*. As we sat in the bar of the Marriott Hotel in downtown Washington, I grilled Savage, a mild-mannered, middle-aged African American civil servant, with the menacing threat of personal exposure hanging in the background. I then told her that she could either cooperate with me and give me what I needed to discredit *Strange Justice*, or I would have to discredit her as a witness by disclosing whatever personal information I had about her, just as I had blackened the reputations of all the other women who had come forward with damaging information about Thomas. In the face of this threat, Savage refused to recant her accusations. I continued to press for anything I could get her to say to blunt the impact of her accusation. We agreed that Savage would give me a written statement in which she would say the *Strange Justice* authors had distorted and sensationalized her quotes. When I got back to my office at the *Spectator*,

Savage faxed me a statement, but it was too weak to be of any use: the *Strange Justice* account would still stand. I called Savage at her office and insisted on some changes that would allow me to cast at least some doubt on the way Mayer and Abramson had quoted her. After a struggle on the phone in which I renewed my threats, Savage made some handwritten changes to the document and faxed it to me again. I ran through the creaky hallways of the *Spectator* brandishing the statement triumphantly. I knew Savage had given me enough to work with so that I could use the statement in my review to make it appear as though she had recanted the story, when in fact she had not.

While one could argue that as a journalist I was entitled to ask Savage about the personal information covertly passed along by Thomas in order to assess her credibility as a source for Mayer and Abramson, I was dishonest in using the material to strong-arm Savage, an unsteady and vulnerable woman, into saying what I wanted her to say. Threatening a woman who had come forward to talk to two journalists in the context of a sexual harassment case was the conduct of a scorched-earth defense attorney, not a journalist, even one with a political agenda. Up to this point in my career, even when I fell short, I had always believed I was pursuing accurate information. Now, I let go of my own standards. I wanted Savage's allegation to go away, truth be damned.

I next set out to blow away the Mayer and Abramson story that Thomas had been a frequent customer of an X-rated video store near Dupont Circle, called Graffiti, where in the early 1980s he was alleged to have rented X-rated videos of the type that Hill claimed he had discussed with her in graphic terms. In the hearings, Thomas had pointedly refused to answer questions about his personal use of pornography, other than to categorically deny that he had ever talked about porn with Hill. The Graffiti story was another theretofore unknown piece of evidence for Hill's case, and it was a powerful counterpoint to the prudish image of Thomas presented by supporters like Armstrong Williams and repeated by me in *The Real Anita Hill*. Now that Mark had opened up a channel directly to Thomas, I asked him to find out for me whether Thomas had owned the video equipment needed to view movies at home in the early 1980s. Such equipment was not then as commonly used as it was in the mid-1990s, and I figured if I could assert in the review that Thomas had no way of watching the movies, the matter would be settled definitively.

Mark came back with a straightforward answer: Thomas not only had the video equipment in his apartment, but he also habitually rented pornographic movies from Graffiti during the years that Anita Hill worked for him, just as Mayer and Abramson reported. Here was the proof that Senate investigators and reporters had been searching for during the hearings. Mark, of course, was still a true believer in Thomas's innocence. He couldn't see the porn rentals as at all significant. To Mark, Hill was still a liar despite suggestions to the contrary. But I had some distance from Thomas and I was troubled by the damaging report. It made Hill's entire story much more plausible.

In the heat of the moment, I then mounted a cover-up to protect Thomas. As I drafted the lengthy review on deadline back in Washington, I met Mark and Lee

Liberman, the Federalist Society founder who had orchestrated Thomas's appointment as Boyden Gray's deputy in the Bush White House. We convened at Mark's small but charming cottage in the Virginia suburbs, which was filled with the joyful sounds of two adorable young children, and two frisky

Siberian huskies. In a team effort, Mark and Lee also had been combing through the book looking for ways to undermine it while salvaging Thomas's reputation. We were all hyped up for battle. A brilliant lawyer and former clerk to Antonin Scalia, Lee was the ideological commissar of the operation. This was no time to be thinking for myself. Lee had a few typewritten notes that I snatched from her hands and plugged into my draft.

As I sat in Mark's cozy blue-and-white living room, I had a flashback to a conversation I once had with Lee while I was researching *The Real Anita Hill*. In an awkward aside, Lee told me to "stay away" from the subject of Thomas and porn. I hadn't paid the warning any heed at the time, but now I understood what Lee must have been telling me. The Bush White House must have known all along about Thomas's vulnerability on the subject and done a good job of covering it up. Lee must have been giving me a comradely heads-up not to go out on a limb to defend Thomas on allegations she knew could be proven true.

Now that I had the damning report, I could have done what Lee originally suggested, avoiding the subject of Thomas and pornography altogether, and letting the Graffiti allegation stand. I had plenty of other material to work with for my review. But I wouldn't let it go. I remained in a dependent condition; I had to win one more for the movement, and I crossed a line I had never crossed before. I shredded Mayer and Abramson's porn story as full of misquotation and unreliable secondhand sourcing. There was no evidence, I concluded in the *Spectator*, "that Thomas had rented even one pornographic video. let alone that he was a 'habitual' consumer of pornography." When I wrote those words, I knew they were false. I put a lie in print.

The publication of my *Spectator* review, under the Orwellian headline "Strange Lies," set in motion another literary and political contretemps between Mayer and Abramson and me. The authors, I charged, had perpetrated "one of the most outrageous journalistic hoaxes in recent memory." The controversy was covered in several major newspapers, and a slew of conservative commentators and editorial pages cited my review in denouncing the book as a sham. The conservative counterattack spilled onto the airwaves, where conservative writer Fred Barnes, appearing on CNN, called the review "devastating." The review also helped vindicate Thomas in some high-level liberal circles. I was told by Judge Silberman that Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, a Clinton appointee, had let it be known around the court that the review settled the case for him in Thomas's favor.

Writing in Mayer and Abramson's defense was *Times* columnist Frank Rich, who interviewed a lawyer consulted by Kaye Savage after my intimidating encounter with her. In a column headlined "Brock's Strange Journalism," Rich wrote, "This time Mr. Brock's partisan desperation has led him to a tactic that is beyond the pale of even



tabloid journalism and that would make any citizen think twice before talking freely again to any journalist: He tried to bully a source in *Strange Justice*, a onetime Hill and Thomas associate named Kaye Savage, to get her to sign a statement denying her own contribution to the book.” As he had in his column accusing me of misogyny, Rich once again stung me by exposing the truth about my work. And once again, I moved swiftly to try to spin my way out of an embarrassing and humiliating situation with cleverly worded denials. My coauthor in this denial was not Adam Bellow, but Mark Paoletta and another top Federalist Society legal gun, Michael Carvin, a battlescarred veteran of the Reagan Justice Department. I was so chagrined and angry at Rich for exposing my scheme in print that I felt I needed to make a dramatic move, suing him for libel for accusing me of blackmail. Mark was all whipped up as well, and he took me to a meeting in Carvin’s office, where we went over the facts of what had transpired, though I don’t think we told Carvin that I had gotten the Savage smear story from Thomas. Carvin soon talked me down from initiating any legal action: He could see that I was actually quite vulnerable to the charge Rich had made and pointed out that Savage could do far more damage to my reputation in litigation than Rich had already done. The three of us agreed that I would write a letter to the *Times*, which they helped me draft, denying that I had done anything dishonest—one lie piled on top of another.

Mark and I had fallen into the habit of exchanging Christmas gifts. After the review appeared, I told Mark all I wanted for Christmas was a signed photograph of Clarence Thomas, who had surely read my review and seen how I lied for him on the porn issue and tried to discredit Savage’s truthful account. The photo arrived, Thomas in his black judicial robes, with the inscription “To David, With admiration and affection, Clarence.”

I had weathered the storms over *The Real Anita Hill*, Troopergate, and even over my own sexuality, keeping myself and my mission intact. But the storm over the *Strange Justice* review was one I could not weather. Gone was the confidence I had in the moral stature of the pro-Thomas camp and the broader political movement that backed him. I was being forced to give up the hubristic illusion that defending Clarence Thomas and all he stood for was right and good; it had all been just another power game in the service of a hard-right ideology that I never shared.

Worst of all, I had seen myself as a truth teller; after reviewing *Strange Justice*, I knew I was a liar and a fraud in a dubious cause. My foundations were irrevocably shaken. I could see that my reportorial method in *The Real Anita Hill* was shoddy, not only in the sources I had trusted, but in the obvious fact that I had missed significant evidence that showed that Hill’s testimony was more truthful than Thomas’s flat denials after all. My version of the Thomas-Hill controversy was wrong, my belief in it as truth was a delusion. Perhaps the errors of *The Real Anita Hill* could be attributed to journalistic carelessness, ideological bias, and my misdirected quest for acceptance from a political movement. In the review of *Strange Justice*, however, to protect myself and my tribe from the truth and consequences of our own hypocrisy, smears, falsehoods, and cover-

ups, I consciously and actively chose an unethical path. I continued to malign Anita Hill and her liberal supporters as liars. I trashed the professional reputations of two journalists for reporting something I knew was correct. I coerced an unsteady source, I knowingly published a lie, and I falsified the historical record.

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Reread the Limbaugh-Jordan exchange and the questions following it to see whether Brock's later account changes your perspective on them.

What significant revelations does Brock provide about organizations and individuals, particularly representing special interests, who operate secretly, behind the scenes of public discourse, to "spin" political events and media coverage, and about their ethics and rhetorical strategies?

Does Brock's personal relationship with Clarence Thomas and his close associates, in his account, create a conflict of interest?

When Brock's book was published, some of the conservative sources that he cites here denied making the statements to him or others that he claims they did. Where does that leave us in terms of making a final judgment on the Hill-Thomas case?

Some conservative critics reacted to Brock's book by saying that he was a liar before, so why should anything he says now be believed? Where does this leave those of them who accepted the truth of his earlier accusations against Hill and President Clinton, which Brock now retracts? See if you can find conservative reviews of the book or Rush Limbaugh's response to it, and read the book itself to judge its credibility.

# Chapter 6. Questioning Culturally Conditioned Assumptions and Ethnocentrism

BLOOM COUNTY by Berke Breathed

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In his textbook *Clear Thinking for Composition*, Ray Kytle introduces this subject in better words than I could devise:

We are, to a large degree, creatures of our particular age. We grow up in a certain “climate of opinion.” And this climate of opinion determines the form of many of our *attitudes* and *values*. . . . Because we live in a particular country, in a particular Part of the world, in a particular age, because we were raised in a particular class and educated in a particular educational system by teachers who were also in many ways the product of their culture, *we possess a large collection of attitudes and values whose accuracy, truth, or merit we have probably never questioned.*

These attitudes and values can be called *assumptions* because we *assume* them to be accurate.

We don’t question them; we probably don’t even see them as open to question. (47-49)

Kytle’s list of factors in our cultural conditioning—“a particular country . . . [historical] age . . . class . . . educational system”—can be expanded to include our particular family, peers and age group, race, gender, geographical region, religion, political ideology and party, and so on. Each of these factors and others tend to impose their own filters on our perception of the world.

## Totems and Taboos

We go through life taking for granted any number of beliefs, customs, norms, habits, routines, and tastes as the way things are, always have been, and ought to be, in both small matters and large ones, local matters and global ones. Some of these may be perfectly reasonable and practical, but others may be wholly arbitrary—that is, they don’t have any logical reason for being but are conformed to, blindly worshiped as **totems** or shunned as **taboos**. A cartoon by Dedini in the *New Yorker* shows a large group of middle-aged men sitting, fully dressed, in armchairs on a beach. A young boy

has asked a question to one of them, his father, who replies, “Generations of our people have sat by the sea, my son. When you are older and have sat by the sea, you will understand.” The point humorously made in the cartoon is that people often follow the same customs generation after generation for no other reason than circular reasoning—this is the way we’ve always done it. Some arbitrary customs last for centuries and cross different cultures; others are specific to one locality or subculture and may change drastically over time, even in our own lifetime, and yet as long as they remain in force (even in the short life span of fashions and fads), they can exact conformity as rigidly as if they were eternal commandments.

The human tendency to conform without question to established traditions, right or wrong, and to the present status quo is a strong force for social and political conservatism. To be sure, there is often wisdom in the instinct, as Shakespeare’s Hamlet says, to “rather bear those ills we have/Than fly to others that we know not of” 3.1.56). However, it is a prime test of the critical thinking ability of **drawing the line** to judge when to be critically wary of uncertain changes and when to be willing to question past conventions and the present powers that be. The terms **Appeal to the Past or Tradition** or **Resistance to Change** might be defined as the logical fallacy of arguing for a policy only because it has been followed in the past, is a tradition in one’s culture, or has been established as the status quo, regardless of its possible outdatedness. This line was used to justify slavery in the South for centuries before its abolition and segregation of blacks for another century afterwards, and used similarly to oppose women’s and gay rights because they transgressed traditional roles. A similar line argues that because in the past there has been a large degree of opportunity to get ahead economically and socially in the United States; this is still true and always will be—in disregard of possible changes in economic realities over recent decades.

A ruling by a San Francisco judge that the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance were unconstitutional provoked a storm of outrage by politicians of both parties from President George W. Bush on down. Many people’s angry reaction seemed to assume that these words were embedded in the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence, but several commentators pointed out that they dated only from 1954 and were motivated by Cold War competition with “godless Communism.” A further historical **irony** was that the original pledge, without reference to God, was written in 1892 by a minister who believed Jesus was a socialist. Critics also argued that phrases like “under God” and “In God We Trust” are only expressions of **religiosity**, a public pose of devout religious belief without any substantial commitment to practice that belief. In other words, it is a totem for all American politicians to pay **lip service** to religious belief—even though many of them fail to practice what they preach in their public or personal life, and some of them probably do not even believe in God—and it is taboo for any of them to express **skepticism** about religious belief or the dubious constitutionality of these references to God, vague and politically motivated as they may be.

Think about the arbitrariness of many of our culture's other customs. Our mass media reproduce habits that would seem quite bizarre in other times and places, such as artificially engineered laugh tracks on situation comedies; do viewers at home really laugh when they are electronically coached to? Or the custom of everyone in advertisements constantly wearing a big smile, whether they are selling workout equipment, tires, or laxatives (in addition, of course, to their all being young, slender, and beautiful, as though these envied qualities will carry over to the product by association). Even the custom of smiling in photographs or painted portraits is a mid-twentieth-century innovation; previously, a rather serious, dignified expression was the norm. Then there is the assumption that used to dominate radio and TV newscasts or commentary that a deep, reassuring—and usually male—tone of voice carries more authority than a higher-pitched male or female one would (this is a form of the fallacy of **argument to authority**). Broadcast reporter Cokie Roberts says, in defense of affirmative action, that when she was starting out, “I was told, ‘We will not hire women to deliver the news. Their voices are not authoritative. We won’t hire women as writers. Men would have to work for them and we can’t have that’” (Richard Reeves, “The Best and Worst in the National Heart,” *San Francisco Examiner*, May 10, 1995, A26). Now, however, the cultural conditioning has shifted so that on cable news networks news is broadcast not by professional journalists but by anchors of both sexes who are young, chirpy, and look like fashion models, and there is little apparent concern for their journalistic credentials.

Another bizarre cultural convention perpetuated by mass media is that our lives should constantly be filled with music or noise. Music through the ages until the twentieth century, with some occasional exceptions, had two uses: to be listened to with all one's attention, or to be danced to. Only recently, with the advanced development of radio and recordings, has the concept of purely “background music,” to be absorbed while we are doing something else, been conceivable. But what exactly is the point of background music not of our choosing—especially when we are forced to listen to it while shopping, eating, riding an elevator, or on telephone “hold”—except as a kind of chewing gum for the ears? It is often used in parties, bars, or restaurants, as a presumed accompaniment to conversation, but then why is it played so loudly that any conversation has to be shouted over it? In bars, it is common for two or more television sets to be showing different sports events, at top volume, at the same time recorded music is blaring. The assumption seems to be that people desire to be bombarded constantly with noise and visual stimuli. Is this true of you or anyone you know?

Gender roles are one of the most powerful fields of cultural conditioning. But these roles have been challenged by feminists in recent years with criticisms, for example, of boys being socialized into aggression through GI Joe, toy guns, and muscle building, while girls are socialized into concern with looks and grooming with Barbie dolls and nurturing through playing nurse. How different might adult roles be if these modes of childhood conditioning were changed, and how much have they been changing in your lifetime? Gender conditioning

continues in adult roles and identities. Consider that men typically wear pants with pockets in which they carry keys, coins, and billfolds with identification cards and paper money. Social psychologists might observe that these are symbols of power and that the proximity in which they are worn to the physical symbols of masculinity serves to reinforce the sense of male empowerment. Most women's clothes, however, do not have pockets, mainly because the fashion industry has decreed that they are "unfeminine." So women are bodily separated from their symbols of identity, which must be carried in a purse that can easily be lost or stolen and whose cavernous depths must constantly be searched for keys, money, and ID.

Or consider dress codes. In the 1950s, short hair was the norm for American males; late in that decade and into the sixties, long hair became a **symbol** of nonconformity, and long hair could get you killed in some parts of the country. Little by little, the custom changed, and today long hair has become, if not the norm, at least acceptable in most parts of the country and walks of life. If you are a male college student interviewing for a job, you are probably expected to wear a suit and tie to the interview. (If you are a woman, you are expected to wear a more "dressy" dress or slacks than you would ordinarily wear.) Nowadays, once you get the job, you might never need to wear a jacket and tie to work; still, you must go through the ritual, as must those who are interviewing you. The reasons are obscure—having partly to do with vestiges of earlier decades when dress was more formal and even college students were required to wear a tie to school. Historically, ties originated as an item of sartorial, individually tailored elegance in the upper classes, but by the early twentieth century mass-produced ties had become more a uniform of the middle class, a symbol of "white-collar" status as opposed to "blue-collar," manual workers. Although many men find ties and shirts buttoned at the neck uncomfortable, and they have become far less common with the relaxation of cultural formalities, especially since the 1960s, it is still generally the rule that the higher a man's professional status is, the more likely he is to wear a tie.

Women are even more captive to culturally conditioned styles in clothing and physical appearance than men—beginning with the greater expectations of beauty in women than in men. In most periods before the mid-twentieth century, the norm of female beauty in Western culture was plump by today's standards, yet today women undergo enormous selfdeprivation and social pressure to become unnaturally slender. A boyish figure with small breasts was fashionable in the 1920s, and today's idealized combination of large, but upright, breasts on an otherwise slender torso is both a historical novelty and a physical rarity. Likewise, before the twentieth century, pale skin was considered the norm of beauty, as it was associated with the sheltered upper classes; suntan was associated with peasants, and hence was shunned by the fashionable. Suntan became a mark of beauty and prestige in our time as outdoor life and sports became fashionable. Ironically, in spite of the history of doctrines of white supremacy in America, whites go to great lengths to make their skin look like that of darker races.

Now that excessive exposure to sun has become recognized as a cause of skin cancer, suntanning is declining in fashionability again.

In dress codes, throughout history women have suffered everything from bound feet in China to high-heeled shoes, which damage feet and restrict the ability to walk or run, to corsets, girdles, bustles, and multiple layers of petticoats in the West. And think about how arbitrary the custom of women disguising their natural appearance with makeup is, even though it has been accepted as the norm for centuries in Western and other societies. In some past periods, such as the European Renaissance, men (at least in the fashionable classes) wore makeup too. The deceptiveness of women's makeup was a favorite topic in Renaissance rhetorical exercises; the poet John Donne (1573-1631) wrote a tongue-in-cheek argumentative essay titled "That Women Ought to Paint," and Shakespeare's Hamlet railed against the custom in venting his grievances against women to Ophelia: "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another" (3.1.141-43) Of course, this might be considered a typical case of **blaming the victim**, since women have generally worn makeup because it pleases men.

Maureen Dowd's op-ed "Rescue Me, Please," later in this chapter, suggests semihumorously that American women have now rejected the feminist reforms championed by Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* and have voluntarily reverted to more traditional cultural conditioning.

## Ethnocentrism

**Ethnocentrism** is the mentality of "Ours is best" or "We're number one," or in my inelegant acronym, "ESBYODS." The term refers literally to seeing life solely from the perspective of one ethnic group, but it extends to many other factors in socialization discussed throughout this book. Painful as it is for us to admit it, those beliefs are sometimes misinformed, mistaken, or prejudiced, even though they may have been passed down from generation to generation as what is termed *received* or *conventional wisdom*. Because we are dependent on our family and immediate peers throughout childhood for nurturing and learning, we need to accept as the truth most of what they tell us. In later childhood and adolescence, however, most of us little by little become aware of the limitations in their knowledge and wisdom, and we develop the ability to think independently. This process often accelerates dramatically when we go away to college, leading typically to quarrels between students questioning their parents' authority and parents reacting defensively against that questioning. These quarrels can be very traumatic, but they are a necessary Part of growing up for the children and of letting go for the parents. After all, there is no logical reason to suppose that our parents are especially well informed and wise about every issue *simply because they are our parents*. We all want to think the best about our families and friends, and

it is hard to admit that Aunt Edith is an alcoholic or that Cousin George's business practices are crooked.

#### BABY'S FIRST WOR®

Even Hitler's mother probably would have **rationalized**, "All those things they say about Adolf can't be true. He was always a good boy—he wouldn't hurt a fly."

Of course, ethnocentrism serves a positive role in enabling us to take justifiable pride in ourselves and whatever groups we belong to, and many of its forms are quite worthwhile. But ethnocentrism throughout history has also been a major cause of wars and social divisiveness; think of the perpetual conflicts among the Bosnians, Serbs, and other ethnic groups comprising the former Yugoslavia. Propagandists, office seekers, advertisers, and other self-serving rhetoricians specialize in manipulating appeals to varieties of ethnocentrism like jingoism (blind patriotism in support of war), religious dogmatism, boosterism (contrived business-community or school "spirit"), and racial, class, or sexual prejudice. The nouns **demagogue** and **demagogy** (or **dema-goguery**) refer precisely to a politician or other public figure who makes **emotional appeals** to such forms of ethnocentrism for self-advancing aims, while pretending to be a **populist**—a member or true representative of the common people. **The plain folks fallacy** consists of exactly this false pretense by a member of the **elite** to be a spokesperson for populism, or concern for the well-being of "the little guy."

Two words synonymous with ethnocentrism are *parochialism* and *provincialism*. *Parochialism* derives from *parish*, a small church district; so a parochial-minded or provincial person is one who literally never ventures outside a small, isolated area or who, by **metaphoric** extension, goes through life with a narrow-minded perspective. Liberal education is essentially the process of growing out of our provincial narrow-mindedness, multiplying the different perspectives from which we can view issues. In her 1938 essay "Three Guineas," English writer Virginia Woolf described being asked what kind of freedom would advance the fight against fascism and its allies racism, colonialism, and sexism. She replied: "Freedom from unreal loyalties You must rid yourself of pride of nationality in the first place;

also of religious pride, college pride, family pride, sex pride and those unreal loyalties that spring from them" (quoted in Margo Jefferson, "Unreal Loyalties," *New York Times Book Review*, April 13, 2003, p. 31). This is not to say that education obliges us to disown our native culture; we can maintain our loyalty and reaffirm what is valuable in it, while becoming able to evaluate it in a broader perspective and to "switch codes," as linguists say, from our own culture to others and back.

Gaining perspective on our own ethnocentrism enables us to view with amusement some of the **hyperboles** of parochialism. A little nightclub in San Luis Obispo, California, advertises itself as "The World Famous Dark Room." "The World Series" includes a rather small portion of the actual world and is ignored in most other countries—though many countries are equally fanatic about soccer championships. Every high school in every small town in America vaunts its sports teams as "number one." In Illinois, the Big Game is Illinois versus Northwestern, but in New England everyone



knows it's Harvard versus Yale, in Northern California it's Stanford versus Berkeley, in Southern California it's UCLA versus USC, in the Southeast it's Tennessee versus Alabama, and so on.

In politics and religion, members of every sect or party tend to cluster together and confirm one another's ethnocentric certainties. In Orange County, California, conservatives gather in bars to proclaim, "Rush is right—isn't it awful about those welfare swindlers and the bleeding-heart liberals who coddle them—along with those feminazis and commie intellectuals and environmental wackos," while everyone chants, "Right! Right!" Meanwhile, five hundred miles to the north, leftists are gathered in Berkeley cafes reading the *Nation* and lamenting, "Isn't it awful about those corporate crooks and racist cops and fascist talk show hosts," while everyone chants, "Right! Right!" Both groups are like planets in separate galaxies, circling endlessly in their own orbits without ever having their assumptions challenged by communicating with anyone who thinks differently. Learning to "decenter" from our need to believe our group is best or right is a lifelong, painful struggle, but an essential one in intellectual and emotional growth.

Likewise, in personal relations each of us is compelled to believe that he or she is right and the other person wrong in any conflict—think about the amazingly different accounts you've heard from the opposing parties after a marriage or love affair has broken up. As the nineteenth-century Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote, "Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us/To see oursels as ithers see us!"

In normal child development, aided by education and other experiences like travel, we grow beyond ethnocentrism to a greater or lesser degree, toward what child psychologist Jean Piaget termed "reciprocity," becoming able to recognize the possible validity of others' viewpoints. This is not to **imply** that your previous beliefs, or those of your family or community, are necessarily wrong. The point is that as an educated person you should not just go through life maintaining any belief automatically, never holding it up to critical examination. If a belief is valid, it should stand up under that critical examination; you should be able to defend it rationally against opposing beliefs, and if you can do so, then it will be a far more secure belief than one that is held blindly and irrationally. By the same token, if that belief does not hold up against opposing ones, then you should be willing to change your mind about it. If you approach your studies with the attitude of "My mind's made up; don't try to change it with the facts," you're wasting your own and your teachers' time in college.

## American Ethnocentrism

The following article, titled "Battle over Patriotism Curriculum," by Larry Rohter, appeared in the *New York Times* on May 15, 1994:

Like other generations who went through the public schools in this small town an hour's drive north of Orlando, students at Tavres Middle School are taught to

take pride in American citizenship and heritage. The school's athletic teams are even nicknamed the Patriots, and the school colors are red, white and blue.

But the fundamentalist Christians who dominate the Lake County school board say that is not enough. As Part of a policy approved this week by a vote of 3 to 2, teachers will be required to teach the county's 22,526 students that American culture, values and political institutions are inherently "superior to other foreign or historic cultures."

Members of the local teachers union and citizens groups are protesting the measure, which they say is jingoistic and probably illegal. They have filed an appeal to the state Department of Education, and a court challenge appears likely.

'Sort of Laughingstock'

"People don't understand the purpose and the point of this," said Keith Mullins, chairman of People for Mainstream Values, a local political action committee formed in response to the religious right's rise to power here. "We are already teaching our children to love and honor our country, so why spend all this time and money talking about something we are already doing? We've become sort of a laughingstock."

The new policy, conceived as a response to the state's multicultural education policy, is the handiwork of the board's chairman, Pat Hart, who describes herself as a patriot, a Christian and a Republican. She said it was fine that students learn about other nations, as required by the state's multicultural education curriculum, so long as they were also taught that the United States was "unquestionably superior" to any other society in all of human history.

Mrs. Hart said she drafted the policy statement, which also requires teachers to promote "strong family values" and "an appreciation of our American heritage and culture," to insure that students never forget that "we are the best of the best."

Mrs. Hart, whose own children are enrolled in private religious schools, acknowledges that she has never set foot outside the United States, speaks no foreign languages and has no academic training in comparative culture, religion or government.

"I don't need to visit other countries to know that America is the best country in the world," she said. "Thousands of people risk life and limb every day to come to America because they know this is the land of the free."

The controversy over multicultural education in this central Florida county, a blend of 160,000 people living in Orlando bedroom suburbs, small towns, retiree trailer parks and farms, follows nearly two years of acrimony over issues like sex education and government aid.

Mrs. Hart was elected four years ago in a contest that attracted few voters. She was joined in 1992 by two other religious conservatives who, like her, espouse the views of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. With their support, she became board chairman.

One board member, Judy Pearson, said, "We need to reinforce that we should be teaching America first." Otherwise, she said, young people, "if they felt our land was inferior or equal to others, would have no motivation to go to war and defend our country."

Ms. Pearson, who is a member of both the Christian Coalition and the equally conservative Citizens for Excellence in Education, said she thought it was evident that “our form of government is superior to other nations because it has survived when others have fallen.”

Phyllis Patten, one of two board members who voted against the measure, said such views were simplistic and undemocratic. “These are people with no experience and no education,” she said of her fundamentalist colleagues. “You’ve got three people sitting on that board with high school educations who want to wrap the Bible and the flag around themselves, who don’t believe in public education and are trying to undermine the system.”

Mrs. Hart, whose seat is up for election this year, originally ran on a tax-efficiency platform, emphasizing her religious agenda only after narrowly winning election.

In one early action that stirred controversy here, the revamped board rejected Federal money intended for Head Start programs for disadvantaged children. Mrs. Hart or her allies have also sought to severely limit sex education, to mandate creationism in the science curriculum and to limit some reading material in schools, primarily children’s books by Shel Silverstein.

The state government, which has the authority to suspend state aid or take the issue to court, has so far taken no action against the school board. But the Education Commissioner, Doug Jamerson, quickly condemned the new policy, which he and other officials said was clearly at odds with state requirements.

“American culture is made up of many different cultures from around the world,” Mr. Jamerson said. “To say American culture is superior to all others calls into question the rich history and significant contributions of all other nations and cultures whose influence helped shape this country.”

Mrs. Hart dismissed the importance of the controversy, saying “everything is being blown out of proportion by a radical teacher’s union.” And Mrs. Pearson said, “If we are already teaching these things, then there should be no opposition to this, and no problem, should there?”

Steven Farrell, one of the social studies teachers who will be required to teach the new curriculum, said they were not quite sure what the board wanted them to do. “We need clearer definitions,” said Mr. Farrell, who teaches American history. “We regard American culture as very diverse, and we’re not sure what values they see as American culture.”

The story goes that an American lands for the first time in a European country, and upon seeing a sign saying *Foreigners This Way*, exclaims, “But *you’re* the foreigners.” Nationalistic ethnocentrism is common to most countries. (Piaget studied the attitudes of children in Switzerland—a tiny country surrounded by France, Italy, and Germany—toward their own and neighboring countries, finding that the younger ones consistently believed “Switzerland is best.” As they got older, they tended to outgrow this “sociocentrism” and recognize that “everyone thinks his own is best.”) However, ethnocentrism is a distinctive problem in the United States, for several reasons. We

have always been more insulated than most major countries geographically and culturally. Because of the conditions of our country's founding and development, it has been regarded throughout the world as a unique land of democracy, opportunity, and even virtue. Over the course of the twentieth century, the United States became the largest economic and military power in the world. During nearly half a century of Cold War with the Soviet Union and its Communist allies, when it appeared necessary for Americans to side with one or another of the two world superpowers, there was little question that the United States represented the superior alternative. However, this hard choice resulted in a certain amount of **oversimplification**, and valid criticisms of this country were often stifled because they were perceived to give aid and comfort to the enemy, giving rise to **either-or fallacies** like "America: Love It or Leave It" and "If you don't like it here, why don't you go to Russia"—as though there were no other democratic countries in the world. Even the common use of the word *America* as a synonym for the United States reflects our ethnocentric exclusion of Canada, Mexico, and Central and South America.

The danger implicit in our country's fortunate situation is an inclination toward smugness if not arrogance, toward **defense mechanisms** against admitting that we have social problems or that we are not necessarily and always number one in every way, and that we might have something to learn from other democratic countries' different ways of doing things. In the preceding article, "Battle over Patriotism Curriculum," a Florida school board head is quoted as insisting that children be taught "that the United States was 'unquestionably superior' to any other society in human history." She then is quoted as saying that refugees come to America "because they know this is the land of the free." This might be viewed as an example of **compartmentalization** if we consider that one of the central American freedoms is that of speech and thought—including the freedom to question America's "unquestionable" superiority!

In response to reports in 2004 about the sadistic abuse of prisoners by American military personnel at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, President George W. Bush declared, "Their treatment does not reflect the nature of the American people. That's not the way we do things in America I also want to remind people that those few people who did do that

do not reflect the nature of men and women we've sent overseas" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 1, 2004, p. 1). Think about the level of **generalization** and **semantic abstraction** (see chapters 7 and 9) in these ethnocentric appeals, which represent an extreme form of what is sometimes called "American exceptionalism," the belief that the United States has been historically exempt from the faults that have plagued every other country through history. Can anyone accurately make such sweeping statements about the "nature" of everyone in a country or its armed forces? Minimal knowledge of our history confirms that Americans, while relatively more civilized than many peoples through history, have been far from free of sadistic violence against Native Americans, African Americans (both during and for a hundred years after slavery), women, immigrants, labor organizers, homosexuals, and other victimized groups. Violent "frontier

justice” dominated the settling of the West, and our modern rates of crime and imprisonment are among the highest in the world. Is there a town anywhere in the United States—like anywhere else—that doesn’t have its hoodlums, bullies, bigots, and corrupt officials? Our officials **sentimentalize** the nature of war and military service, which in America, as everywhere, sometimes attracts those whose violent inclinations might make them criminals in civilian life. Soldiers are necessarily indoctrinated to kill and to dehumanize the enemy. It is arguable that the occurrence of atrocity killings, torture, rape, and pillaging by American forces in wars is not vastly less frequent or vicious than what has always taken place in wars everywhere—e.g., the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the village of My Lai and elsewhere in the Vietnam War, and similar numbers of peasants and church workers in Central America massacred in the 1980s by militias supported by the U.S. government. (In fact, among the rationalizations used to excuse such events, including those in Iraq, was that they are **common practice**, the kind of thing that happens in every war, or that there are always “a few bad apples,” or that they weren’t so different from athletes’ roughhousing or fraternity hazing, practices that have in fact often gotten out of hand and resulted in deaths.

No country has ever remained the leading world power for more than a few centuries, and America’s lease on prosperity and power is not necessarily granted in perpetuity. A sobering perspective on contemporary America is provided in Andrew Shapiro’s book *We’re Number One: Where America Stands-and Falls-in the New World Order*, a two-hundredpage catalog of the many areas in which we rank number one in the *least* desirable traits compared to other industrial democracies. We have, for example, the highest ratings in crime and violence, extremes of wealth and poverty, the gap between employers and workers, cost of college education, and environmental destruction and the lowest ratings in health and health care, status of women, participation in elections, and aspects of education such as funding of public schools, teacher salaries, amount of homework and days in school, and proficiency in math and science, geography, and foreign languages. Likewise, according to Steve Brouwer’s *Sharing the Pie: A Citizen’s Guide to Wealth and Power in America*, excerpted in Chapter 15, the United States ranks far behind most contemporary industrial democracies in unionization of workers, minimum wage levels, length of work week, and vacation time,

Many Americans have a strong tendency toward rationalization, **denial**, and other defense mechanisms in reacting against critiques like Shapiro’s by dismissing them as motivated by “anti-American prejudice.” Such critiques might be motivated simply by the desire to see our country face its problems realistically, and we need to look at such commentaries with a cool head, evaluating them as objectively and open-mindedly as possible, solely on the grounds of the evidence supporting them, not on whether or not they make us feel good about our country. Remember, Adolf Hitler did a wonderful job

of making Germans feel good about their country too—to the point of fostering illusions about “Deutschland uber Alles” (Germany Over All) that led to their destruction.

## Questioning Capitalism

The American economy is primarily based on capitalism, or free enterprise. There is a classic semantic problem of **denotation** and **connotation** here: *capitalism* has a negative **connotation** in many people’s minds, though not everyone’s; *free enterprise* is a somewhat **euphemistic** substitute preferred by advocates because of the positive connotation associated with *freedom*. Both words, however, denote an economic system in which most businesses and industries are owned by private corporations and run on the principle of investment for profit. Our culturally conditioned assumptions perpetuate the premises of that system, frequently without consciousness or questioning. One of those premises, which is in fact disputable, is that a free enterprise economy is synonymous with *political* freedom and democracy; for the contrary opinion held by leftists, see “Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, Libertarians” in Chapter 15.

The current equation of corporate capitalism with political democracy did not prevail in earlier American history. Contemporary defenders of corporate society often invoke the eighteenth-century “founding fathers” as sources for the belief that free enterprise, industrial capitalism, and private property are intrinsic to “the American way of life.” However, such invocations commit the logical fallacy of **equivocation**, a shift in definition of words away from the one appropriate to the context in question. When writers like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur praised free enterprise, they meant individual farms or trades, not the modern usage of corporate enterprise free from government regulation. When they lauded “industry,” they meant individual industriousness, not corporate industries. Crevecoeur emphasized in “What Is An American,” “Here there are . . . no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury..... We

are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself” (40-41). And by private property, they meant ownership of one’s own house, farm, or trade, not private ownership, through stocks, of large corporations, as in contemporary usage.

In fact, Jefferson wrote in 1816, “I hope we shall crush in its infancy the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country.” (Quoted in Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Movement* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1978] , frontispiece.) Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer write in the *Hightower Newsletter* (April 2003):

From the start, the corporate structure was the exact opposite of democracy, and its singleminded pursuit of private gain was at odds with the public good. The founders knew that this anti-democracy bomb had to be tightly controlled, so the state char-

ters authorizing each corporation to exist served as rigorous watchdogs for the public interest. To get a charter, a corporation:

- Had to have a public purpose, from building canals to providing education (Harvard University, for example, was the first U.S. corporation). If it failed to perform its public purpose, the corporation was dissolved.
- Was limited in what business it could pursue, was not allowed to buy other corporations, and could amass only a certain level of capital.
- Faced term limits, with its charter usually expiring after 15 or 20 years, requiring it to seek renewal.
- Had to treat farmers, small businesses, and other suppliers fairly and responsibly.
- Was strictly prohibited from engaging in lobbying or political campaigns.

Jefferson, James Madison, and others actually wanted an eleventh amendment in the Bill of Rights. As described by Thom Hartmann in his book about the rise of corporate dominance, *Unequal Protection*: “Jefferson kept pushing for a law, written into the Constitution as an amendment, that would prevent companies from growing so large that they could dominate entire industries or have the power to influence the people’s government.” Referring to “artificial aristocracies,” Jefferson pushed for a formal declaration of “freedom of commerce against monopolies.” The chief reason that this was not included in our constitutional protections is that other founders felt it was simply unnecessary, since corporate power was so universally condemned at the time and was considered to be held in check by the vigilant state-chartering process.

If only they had heeded Jefferson’s warnings that the corporation is an incorrigible beast that will not—cannot—restrain itself, and perpetually seeks to expand its reach, wealth, and power beyond whatever limits society draws! While the people continued to favor strict restraints, by the time of the Civil War, corporate fiefdoms were growing with industrialization, and the war itself fueled these new empires with rich government war contracts. This rise did not go unnoticed..... Abraham Lincoln was appalled by the brazenness of corporate war

profiteers. J. P. Morgan, for example (hailed today as an icon of corporate meritocracy), bought 5,000 defective rifles for \$3.50 each from a U.S. Army arsenal, then resold them to a Union field general for \$22 each and skipped off with his war profits, while the rifles exploded in the hands of the soldiers who carried them. In an 1864 letter to his friend Col. William Elkins, Lincoln wrote: “I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.”

Like all social systems, then, ours has its irrational or unjust aspects, arguably contrary to political freedom and democracy, to which our conditioning tends to blind us. Nor is this conditioning wholly accidental or impersonal. Those who have benefited the most from free enterprise, large corporations and wealthy individuals, quite naturally have a personal stake (or **interest**, in the sense of “self-interest” or “a special-interest group”) in selling the public on the virtues of this economic system, and they spend billions of dollars every year in the effort to do so, and to influence political policies in their own favor (see the readings in Part 4). The additional facts that news, entertainment, and other communications media—such as computer hardware, software, and Internet providers—are among the industries mostly owned by corporations and operated for profit in America and that they also serve as media for corporate advertising and public relations mean that those media form Part of the whole system of what can be termed—without a negative connotation—capitalistic propaganda, in the sense of that word meaning “the propagation of a particular ideology.” (Defenders of capitalistic ownership of media, of course, deny that those media are dominated by capitalist ideology; see Chapter 16.)

Of even more immediate concern to you as a student, if you plan eventually to work for a corporation, is the fact that employers have the power to hire and fire. Employees (or students as future employees) have a strong tendency to rationalize their necessary compliance with this power by tailoring their beliefs to match those of corporations—one of the most widespread forms of **authoritarianism**.

One of the premises of this book is that courses in critical thinking have a responsibility to examine the assumptions of free enterprise, as a counterbalance to corporate cultural conditioning, propaganda, and power; thus, many of the readings address the pros and cons of these assumptions. To the extent that corporate interests can be identified as *conservative*, then many if not most teachers and scholars, especially in higher education, can be identified as *liberal* in raising views that critically examine free enterprise. (See Chapter 15 for further refinement of these definitions.) It would be a false inference and an **either-or fallacy**, however, to deduce that teachers who criticize free enterprise therefore must advocate socialism or other leftist alternatives. They may or may not, but they see their primary mission simply to be enabling students to get beyond the ethnocentric assumptions of our culture that restrict critical thinking.

On the other hand, in a case of the **equal and opposite extreme**, conservatives often accuse college teachers of having a liberal, leftist, socialist, or even Communist bias and of imposing that bias propagandistically through attitudes recently labeled political correctness. Another line of argument that conservatives take is that teachers themselves form Part of a “new class” of public employees, professionals, and intellectuals with its own, opposing set of culturally conditioned assumptions; because members of this class themselves as rivals to capitalists, their criticisms of free enterprise may be propaganda for themselves as a **special interest** group (see Chapter 17, and David



Horowitz's article "The Intellectual Class War" in Chapter 15). Whatever the truth may be in this particular opposition of **viewpoints**, the approach of this book is simply to alert you to the predictable patterns of rhetoric that you should learn to look for in opposing sides on public controversies. Once you understand whose ideological viewpoint you are getting and what their argumentative moves are likely to be, you can then judge whether they are presenting their viewpoint in a biased or unbiased way.

Arguments on the pros and cons of capitalism and corporations are emphasized throughout this book, but for now a few examples will serve to indicate some of the self-contradictory aspects of free enterprise that we normally accept as rational. (Again, this is not to imply an "anti-free-enterprise" or, worse yet, "anti-American" viewpoint; any alternative system, real or hypothetical, is likely to have comparable self-contradictions, and these arguments simply need to be weighed in proportion to the positive aspects of free enterprise that you are likely to have heard more about.) If and when you are in a position to invest some money (or even put some in a checking or savings account), it is natural, under the logic of the capitalist system, for you to want to gain the maximum return on your capital; indeed the entire system is predicated on the competition of corporations and banks to return maximum profits to investors. But this very aspect of the system sometimes dictates corporate policies that are harmful to the public good, so that every investor develops a possible special interest, or a stake, in policies that they might personally oppose or that might harm them.

If you have money invested in energy stocks, you profit from high gas prices and reduction of environmental regulation, even though as a driver you may scream about the price at the pump or about air pollution from auto emissions. Higher profits for your corporate employer might be attained at the cost of lower wages for you, or even the loss of your job if the company downsizes or relocates to Third World countries where workers can be paid slave wages. Relocation also permits products like sports shoes to be sold at a lower price than if they were made in the United States, so what you save as a consumer buying sweatshop-produced goods may cost you as a worker. (See "The Campus Anti-Sweatshop Movement" in the readings here for a report on students currently challenging assumptions about the value of the global economy.) Maximizing profits can lead to cutting corners on environmental protection or on the safety and healthfulness of products or workplaces and may also foster racial and gender discrimination. The tobacco industry and the manufacture and sale of handguns, assault weapons, and war armaments in this country and internationally (where they have frequently been turned against Americans) are examples of industries where many investors' profits depend on the sale of products that much of the public has recognized as socially harmful. (See "Confessions of a Tobacco Lobbyist" in Chapter 18.) It is true that a growing number of companies have pledged to subordinate maximizing profits to socially responsible policies. Isn't it also true, however, that many investors have little or no awareness of the policies of companies in which they invest and perhaps

would rather not know about irresponsible policies, as long as the profits are rolling in?

American society's norms of, and emphasis on, female beauty are largely taken for granted. However, in the reading in Chapter 4 from Naomi Wolf's book *The Beauty Myth*, Wolf argues that these norms have been engineered and maintained mainly for the purposes of maximizing profits for "the \$33-billion-a-year diet industry, the \$20-billion cosmetics industry, the \$300-million cosmetic surgery industry, and the \$7-billion pornography industry" (17). Manufacturers of beauty and diet products conduct psychological depth research on what insecurities in women can be manipulated and then use the results to saturate print, broadcast, and film media with images and ads playing on these insecurities:

Why is it never said that the really crucial function that women serve as aspiring beauties is *to buy more things for the body*? Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that they will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry, and sexually insecure state of being aspiring 'beauties.' (67)

In a final example of the more irrational aspects of capitalism, a headline in the *New York Times* (July 6, 1996) reads, "Signs of Unexpected Growth Send Markets Tumbling." The story, by Floyd Norris, reports that Wall Street "reacted with alarm to the disclosure that a lot more Americans were working than had been anticipated. The report renews concern that the Federal Reserve would soon tighten credit," thereby causing inflation (Y17). In a satirical column titled "Those Vital Paupers," in the *New York Times*, Russell Baker used verbal **irony** to comment humorously on this self-contradiction in relation to the Clinton administration's cutbacks in welfare benefits and attempts to move welfare recipients into jobs. "There is probably no solution to the welfare problem. It is the inescapable product of an economic system with which the powers that be are quite content. Attacking the

problem at its root would mean admitting that it is rooted in the structure of American capitalism." Baker explained, "The health of the American economy obviously depends on keeping a percentage of the workforce unemployed. The Federal Reserve System sees to this by constantly raising interest rates to prevent the economy from 'overheating.'" In addition, full employment and a surplus of available jobs would mean that workers can command higher wages. So a degree of unemployment—"Something around 5 percent seems to be just about right"—is desirable both to enable employers to pay lower wages and to prevent the inflation resulting from workers having more money to spend, thus causing consumer

prices to rise. Thus Baker concludes that unemployed welfare recipients are beneficial to the economy, so that we should be grateful to them rather than despising them or pretending to oblige them to find nonexistent jobs.

The headline of an op-ed in the *New York Times* (June 30, 2002, online edition) by Kurt Eichenwald asks, "Could Capitalists Actually Bring Down Capitalism?" In the wake of recent corporate scandals, Eichenwald asks, "Could the short-time, self-rewarding mentality of a handful of capitalists truly destroy capitalism? Bring on

hundreds of bankruptcies, force banks under, end the giving of loans? Destroy America as we know it?" These are the kinds of questions traditionally raised by Marxists and other socialists who believe that capitalism sows the seeds of its own destruction. Eichenwald's answer, though, reveals that he is a liberal capitalist, not a socialist (see the distinction in Chapter 15): "Not very likely. The system has a built-in corrective factor, which kicks in when abuses go too far. Harm to investor confidence harms the market, which harms the ability of corporations to raise the capital they need to grow and be profitable. Eventually, the capitalists' desire to get investor confidence back wins the day."

## Phallocentrism

Some feminist theorists have identified male "phallocentrism" or "patriarchy" (paternal rule) as a source of many of the world's evils and have advocated counterbalancing or replacing it with "gynocentrism," ways of being, doing, and communicating that are more cooperative and collective than competitive and individualistic, more nurturing and intuitive than autonomous and pragmatic. Two influential recent books along these lines are psychologist Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, and *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, by Mary Field Belenky, Blythe

McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule. Gilligan and Belenky et al. modify and supplement the paradigms of cognitive development in the work of Piaget, William Perry, and Lawrence Kohlberg with the hypothesis that young women's cognitive development differs in important aspects from that of the young men studied exclusively by Perry and Kohlberg. A key section from *Women's Ways of Knowing* follows this chapter.

Some applications of feminist psychological theory have gone to the **equal and opposite extreme** in setting up an absolute opposition between male and female psychology, in favoring the latter unconditionally, and in throwing out the entire notion of stages of cognitive development for its alleged male bias. The most profound contribution that feminist approaches like Gilligan's and Belenky's have had, however, is in their more moderate versions, by simply pointing out the many ways in which biases in favor of men's assumed superiority and blind spots toward women's sensibility in society and in scholarship have resulted in neglect of the "feminine" side in each of us and in social values. See the excerpt from Virginia Woolf's book *A Room of One's Own* later in this Chapter for Woolf's powerful description of the psychology behind the **culturally conditioned assumption** of male superiority throughout the ages.

## Other-centrisms

Other kinds of “-centrism” have been the subject of heated debate in the “culture wars” of recent years. As surveyed in Diane Ravitch’s “Multiculturalism” in Chapter 3, multiculturalists have challenged the dominance of “Eurocentrism” in American and other Western cultures. Some African-American scholars have developed an entire competing philosophy of “Afrocentrism,” emphasizing the centrality of contributions to civilization by black peoples over the ages, and in a few cases going to the equal and opposite extreme by inverting the claims of white supremacists to assert the biological superiority of the black race.

A little-known humorous essay by Benjamin Franklin, “Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America,” written in 1784, which is included in this chapter, skeptically satirizes the ethnocentrism of white Christians’ sense of moral and religious superiority over Native Americans during the colonial period. Franklin’s piece, though tongue-in-cheek, indicates that the belief in what William J. Bennett scorns as “moral relativism” (see his “Faced With Evil” in Chapter 1) in recognizing the worthiness of other cultures in comparison to our own was not the invention of twentieth-century academics but derives from a tradition dating back at least to the eighteenth-century secular intellectual movement called the Enlightenment, of which Franklin, Jefferson, and other “founders” were prominent advocates.

Many writers in the skeptical tradition have satirized not only the follies of ethnocentrism but also those of the human race as a whole, in its often excessive pretensions to superiority over the rest of nature and our “anthropocentric” (or, more commonly, “anthropomorphic”) tendency to view animals, the earth, and the universe through human lenses. Reversal of our anthropomorphic perspective is the most common theme in Gary Larson’s “Far Side” cartoons, which look at humans from the viewpoint of animals or extraterrestrials. Satirists in earlier centuries have taken similar views. In book 4 of *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, the hero finds himself in the land of the Houyhnhnms, horselike creatures whose intelligence and virtues far exceed those of humans, while their slaves—filthy, malicious, monkeylike creatures called Yahoos—are gradually revealed to symbolize the human race.

Mark Twain’s essay “The Lowest Animal,” written around 1905, applies Twain’s inimitable humorous style to a devastatingly “decentering” reversal of the conventional belief that the “moral sense” elevates humans above the animals. Twain puns on Charles Darwin’s

**THE FAR SIOE” By GARY’ (ARSON**

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”That was incredible. No fur, claws, horns, antlers, or nothin’... just soft and pink.”

theory that humans are descended through evolution from animals, in describing the results of his studies, which contradict Darwin’s account of the ascent of humans from “the lower animals’ (so called).” Twain writes: “It now seems plain to me that

that theory ought to be vacated in favor of a new and truer one, this new and truer one to be named the *Descent of Man from the Higher Animals*.”

The higher animals engage in individual fights, but never in organized masses. Man is the only animal that deals in that atrocity of atrocities, War. He is the only one that gathers his brethren about him and goes forth in cold blood and with calm pulse to exterminate his kind. He is the only animal that for sordid wages will march out, as the Hessians did in our Revolution, and as the boyish Prince Napoleon did in the Zulu war, and help to slaughter strangers of his own species who have done him no harm and with whom he has no quarrel.....

Man is the only Patriot. He sets himself a Part in his own country, under his own flag, and sneers at the other nations, and keeps multitudinous uniformed assassins on hand at heavy expense to grab slices of other people’s countries, and to keep *them* from grabbing slices of *his*. And in the intervals between campaigns he washes the blood off his hands and works for “the universal brotherhood of man”—with his mouth.

Man is the Religious Animal. He is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion—several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself, and cuts his throat if his theology isn’t straight. He has made a graveyard of the globe in trying his honest best to smooth his brother’s path to happiness and heaven. (225-27)

## From A Room of One’s Own

*Virginia Woolf*

Harcourt, 1929

Life for both sexes . . . is arduous, difficult, perpetual struggle. It calls for gigantic courage and strength. More than anything, perhaps, creatures of illusion as we are, it calls for confidence in oneself. Without self-confidence we are as babes in the cradle. And how can we generate this imponderable quality, which is yet so invaluable, most quickly? By thinking that other people are inferior to oneself. By feeling that one has some innate superiority—it may be wealth, or rank, a straight nose, or the portrait of a grandfather by Romney—for there is no end to the pathetic devices of the human imagination— over other people. Hence the enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, half the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself..... Women

have served all these centuries as lookingglasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size That serves to explain in

Part the necessity that women so often are to men. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism; how impossible it is for her to say to them this book is bad, this picture is feeble, or whatever it may be, without giving far more pain and rousing far more anger than a man would do who gave the same criticism. For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life

is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgements, civilizing natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and dinner at least twice the size he really is? (34-36)

## Rescue Me, Please!

*Maureen Dowd*

From the *New York Times*, June 7, 2000

The modern history of women can be summed up in three sentences:

Women demand equality.

Girls just want to have fun.

Ladies long to loll about.

Hillary Rodham Clinton remains a go-getter, clambering up the ladder, seeking gender equity, trying to shed the title she scorns, first lady.

But others are celebrating lady chic, indulging in the old-fashioned dress and languid behavior that predated hard-charging feminism.

Women want to be rescued.

Women want to flirt.

Women want to shop till they drop.

Women want to get married and stay home and be taken care of.

Women want to carry little ladylike purses and wear acres of floral chiffon and chandelier earrings. With the lady look, matching bags and shoes are hot again. So are gloves and hats. And coming from Prada this fall—the Eisenhower jacket!

The new female role models celebrated in women's magazines are socialites and debutantes, Palm Beach matrons and Park Avenue princesses.

Thirty-five years of striving have tuckered women out. "You go girl!" has downshifted to "You go lie down, girl."

Ms. magazine expects too much. Much better to curl up with the new Conde Nast shopping magazine, Lucky, featuring "Shoes You Need! Shoes You'd Kill For! And Then Even Still More Shoes!" and a centerfold of row upon row of "dreampuffs"—cosmetic sponges, makeup wedges and faux alpaca powder puffs.

What an arc: from powder puffs to empowerment to powder puffs.

The June Cosmopolitan reports on "the New Housewife Wanna-bes"—twentysomethings who dream of quitting the daily grind.

After just a few months on the fast track at her investment banking firm, Erica, 23, had a new goal: "Marry that cute associate two cubicles down and embark on a fulltime stint as his housefrau."

Cosmo quotes a survey by Youth Intelligence, a market research firm in New York, that finds that 68 percent of 3,000 married and single young women said "they'd ditch work if they could afford to. And a Cosmo poll of 800 women revealed the same startling

statistic: two out of three respondents would rather kick back *a casa* than climb the corporate ladder.”

”So why has ordering sheets and stirring sauces taken on more allure than making vice president by age 30?” Cosmo wonders. “Probably because so few career women do land an awesome title quickly. Work is, well, work—it’s just not as glam as we’re led to believe.”

Women who used to abhor the Mommy Track now pray for it.

If twentysomethings are tired, think how fortysomethings are dragging.

Maybe women have not evolved to the point where they want to work as long as men. Or maybe they don’t want to become company women on an institutional track; maybe they’d rather work for themselves than keep grasping for that elusive managing director title. Or maybe they just value time spent with friends and family more than time spent on office warfare.

Five years ago, you would often hear high-powered women fantasize that they would love a Wife, somebody to do the shopping, cooking, carpooling, so they could focus on work.

Now the fantasy is more retro: They just want to be that Wife.

Many women I know, who once disdained their mothers’ lifestyles, no longer see those lives as boring and indulgent. Now, they look back with a tad of longing. Wouldn’t it be pleasant to while away time playing bridge and tennis and lunching with girlfriends and eating shrimp cocktails and napping and taking the kids up to the beach house all summer and chilling the cocktail shaker when hubby’s on his way home?

In the season debut of HBO’s “Sex and the City,” the four girlfriends discuss the appeal of firemen.

”It’s because women really just want to be rescued,” the ladylike Charlotte says. “I’m sorry, but I’ve been dating since I was 15. I’m exhausted. Where *is* he?”

Sarah Jessica Parker, as narrator, intones: “There it was. The sentence independent single women in their 30’s are never supposed to think, let alone speak.”

In the Washington Post Style section yesterday, Roxanne Roberts began her article: “Here’s a proposition for you: Bring back flirting.”

So, ladies, there you have it: Shop. Eat shrimp cocktail. Flirt. Get rescued. The new definition of Having It All.

## Objectivity in Connected Teaching

*By Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule*

*From Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*  
Basic Books, 1986

Connected teachers try to discern the truth inside the students. It is essential that the search be disinterested. A fifty-four-year-old mother of six in her second term at an adult program said,

I keep discovering things inside myself. I see myself for the first time through the eyes of others. In the past, whenever I've seen myself through the eyes of others it's been another that I cared a great deal about, who had the power to destroy me, and usually did. Now I see myself through the eyes of others who matter, but not that closely. I'm not entwined with them emotionally. I feel that it's a truer thing that I'm getting back from these people.

Several women spontaneously remarked that in this adult program they were able for the first time since childhood to initiate a conversation, because they knew that they would be listened to in their own terms. "Everyone wants what's best for me," said one.

Connected teachers welcome diversity of opinion in class discussion. Many of the women we interviewed spoke with appreciation of teachers who refrained from "inflicting" (a common term) their own opinions on the students. Elizabeth remembered a Bible course as "just great."

We had Baptists and we had Jews in there and we had atheists in there. We had people with just absolute disregard for humanity in there. And all of us could contribute and learn something and gain something because he could tolerate so many different views. I think that's a mark of excellence, the ability to accept dissent from your own opinion.

Objectivity in connected teaching, as in connected knowing, means seeing the other, the student, in the student's own terms. Noddings contrasts separate and connected (in her terms, "caring") approaches to teaching.

Suppose, for example, that I am a teacher who loves mathematics. I encounter a student who is doing poorly, and I decide to have a talk with him. He tells me that he hates mathematics. I do not begin with dazzling performances designed to intrigue him or to change his attitude.

I begin, as nearly as I can, with the view from his eyes: Mathematics is bleak, jumbled, scary, boring, boring, boring. From that point on, we struggle together with it (1984, pp. 15-16)

In traditional separate education, the student tries to look at the material through the teacher's eyes. In contrast, the caring teacher "receives and accepts the student's feeling toward the subject matter; she looks at it and listens to it through his eyes and ears." She acts "as if for herself," but in the interests of the student's projects, realizing that the student is "independent, a subject" (Noddings 1984, p. 177). In the developmental story Perry tells, the student becomes an independent thinker through executing the teacher's projects in the teacher's own terms. Connected education follows a straighter path: The student is treated from the start not as subordinate or as object but as "independent, a subject."



Teaching can be simultaneously objective and personal. There is no inherent contradiction, so long as objectivity is not defined as self-extrication. Connected teachers use a technique similar to the “participant observation” method anthropologists use. Participant-observers maintain “a dynamic tension” between the separate stance of an observer and the connected, “subjective” stance of a participant, being “neither one entirely” (Wilson 1977, p. 250). Reinharz (1984) found the participant-observation method uncomfortable for precisely this reason; investigating friendships among patients in a mental hospital she felt herself to be in an anomalous position, neither truly attached nor truly detached from her subjects, a stranger in their midst. In a subsequent field project in an Israeli town she and her colleagues on the research team coined the phrase “temporary affiliation” to describe their modification of the participant-observation method. This term, Reinharz thinks, better captures the “human mutuality” that should characterize the relationship between researchers and their informants. The researchers act as “short-term partners” who give the informants a chance to be heard and provide feedback to them. For a brief period, researcher and subject meet on common turf, each “truly being with the other.”

Noddings describes the relation between caring teachers and their students in similar terms. “I do not need to establish a lasting, time-consuming personal relationship with every student. What I must do is to be totally and nonselectively present to the student—to each student—as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total” (p. 180).

## Portrait of a Connected Teacher

Candace remembered an English professor at the women’s college who could serve as an ideal prototype of a connected teacher. Candace was “moved” by this woman’s “rigorous” approach to teaching. “You had to assume that there was a purpose to everything the writer did. And if something seemed odd, you couldn’t overlook it or ignore it or throw it out.” This teacher was thoroughly “objective” in treating the students’ responses as real and independent of her own.

She was intensely, genuinely interested in everybody’s feelings about things. She asked a question and wanted to know what your response was. She wanted to know because she wanted to see what sort of effect this writing was having. She wasn’t using us as a sounding board for her own feelings about things. She really wanted to know.

She was careful not to use the students to “develop her own argument.”

Candace recalled with special vividness an occasion when the teacher became embroiled in a real argument with a student and stubbornly refused to hear the student’s point.

And she came in the next day and said, “You know, my response to this student was being governed by my own biases.” And she learned from that, she said, how she really did feel about something, and then she related it actually to the work we were

studying. And it was just so wonderful, so amazing that somebody would really—in this theater of the classroom—that she was fully engaged in what was going on.

This teacher managed not only to present herself as a person while retaining her objectivity but to present objectivity as a personal issue. By her actions as well as her words she made it clear that to overlook or ignore or throw out a piece of data or another person's words was a violation of her own person. And the violation itself became another piece of data not to be overlooked or ignored or thrown out. Instead, it had to be acknowledged in full view of the class, understood, and even used to illuminate the material the class was studying. The personal became the professional; the professional became the personal. And subjectivity and objectivity became one. The anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson, attempting to define the method of participant-observation, writes,

These resonances between the personal and the professional are the source of both insight and error. You avoid mistakes and distortions not so much by trying to build a wall between the observer and the observed as by observing the observer—observing yourself—as well, and bringing the personal issues into consciousness (1984, p. 161)

Investigators who use this sort of method, whether they label it “participant-observation” as Bateson does or “experiential analysis” as Reinharz (1984) does, practice a sophisticated form of connected knowing, a “technique of *disciplined* subjectivity” (Erikson 1964) requiring that they “systematically empathize with the participants” (Wilson 1977, p. 259.). They participate in the enterprise they are studying in order to undergo experiences similar to those of the other participants, placing themselves in a better position to understand the experiences of the other participants. They use their own reactions to formulate hypotheses about the other participants' reactions.

Candace's English teacher behaved in a similar way. She did not treat her own experience of the material under study as primary, and she did not assume that her students experienced the material as she did; this would be undisciplined subjectivity or, in Albow's words, “projection in the bad sense” (1973, p. 171). She really wanted to know how the students were experiencing the material. As a teacher, she believed she had to trust each student's experience, although as a person or a critic she might not agree with it. To trust means not just to tolerate a variety of viewpoints, acting as an impartial referee, assuring equal air time to all. It means to try to *connect*, to enter into each student's perspective.

But, again, subjectivity is disciplined. Like the participant-observer, the connected teacher is careful not to “abandon” herself to these perspectives (Wilson 1977, p. 259). A connected teacher is not just another student; the role carries special responsibilities. It does not entail power over the students; however, it does carry authority, an authority based not on subordination but on cooperation.

## Belief, Doubt, and Development

Connected teachers are believers. They trust their students' thinking and encourage them to expand it. But in the psychological literature concerning the factors promoting cognitive development, doubt has played a more prominent role than belief. People are said to be precipitated into states of cognitive conflict when, for example, some external event challenges their ideas and the effort to resolve the conflict leads to cognitive growth. We do not deny that cognitive conflict can act as an impetus to growth; all of us can attest to such experiences in our own lives. But in our interviews only a handful of women described a powerful and positive learning experience in which a teacher aggressively challenged their notions. The midwife model was much more prominent.

This could be interpreted to mean that the midwife model was more prominent than the conflict model in the institutions we sampled, but we do not think so. Women did tell of occasions when teachers challenged their ideas—and we have retold some in this book—but they did not describe them as occasions for cognitive growth. On the whole, women found the experience of being doubted debilitating rather than energizing. Several women said that they and their friends left school as soon as they legally could, married, and got pregnant (not necessarily in that order) “so that we wouldn't have to put up with being put down every day.”

Because so many women are already consumed with self-doubt, doubts imposed from outside seem at best redundant and at worst confirming the women's own sense of themselves as inadequate knowers. The doubting model, then, may be peculiarly inappropriate for women, although we are not convinced that it is appropriate for men, either.

Both the authoritarian banking model and the adversarial doubting model of education are, we believe, wrong for women. Freire says that if we abandon the banking model in favor of the problem-posing model, we will “undermine the power of oppression” (1971, p. 62). If we replace the separate with the connected model, we can spare women the “alienation, repression, and division” their schooling currently confers upon them (Jacobus 1979, p. 10). Education conducted on the connected model would help women toward community, power, and integrity. Such an education could facilitate the development of women's minds and spirits rather than, as in so many cases reported in this book, retarding, arresting, or even reversing their growth.

## Women's Development as the Aim of Education

Some years ago, in a now classic paper called “Development as the Aim of Education,” Kohlberg and Mayer suggested that the proper purpose of education was to assist students in moving toward more mature stages of intellectual, epistemological, and ethical development. They argued that this sort of education did not entail indoctrination,

because it merely stimulated children in the “natural directions” of development (1972, p. 475).

We found this argument compelling at the time, and we still believe in development as the aim of education; but parts of the Kohlberg-Mayer argument now make us uneasy. It turns out, of course, that those “natural directions” in which all human beings supposedly head are toward principled moral judgment and an epistemology based on standard (and separate) “principles of scientific method” serving “as the basis of rational reflection” (p. 475).

Along with many of our colleagues, we believed at the time that psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg had established through empirical investigation that these were the universal and natural trajectories in human development. And we believed that they had discovered effective strategies for “moving” students to more advanced levels, such as instigating moral arguments among students at varying stages (the adversarial model) and exposing students to real or fictional people making statements at a slightly more sophisticated stage (“plus-one-model”). Most of the research on these matters had, of course, been done by and “on” males.

Since the publication of Kohlberg’s paper, research by, with, and for women has increased. (We like to think less work is being done “on” women.) This research suggests that the directions then assumed to be natural do not come naturally to many women. Gilligan (1982) and Lyons (1983) have demonstrated that an ethic of responsibility may be more “natural” to most women than an ethic of rights. We believe that connected knowing comes more easily to many women than does separate knowing.

We have argued in this book that educators can help women develop their own authentic voices if they emphasize connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate; if they accord respect to and allow time for the knowledge that emerges from firsthand experience; if instead of imposing their own expectations and arbitrary requirements, they encourage students to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are pursuing. These are the lessons we have learned in listening to women’s voices.

*The Campus Anti-Sweatshop Movement]]*

*By Richard Appelbaum and Peter Dreier*

From *The American Prospect* September-October 1999

Each year of the past five, the annual survey of national freshman attitudes conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles has hit a new record low with students who say it is important to keep up with political affairs. At 26 percent this year, it was down from 58 percent when the survey was first done in 1966.

—Boston Globe, *February 15, 1999*

From: Arne David Ekstrom <ekstrom@NSMA.Arizona.EDU>

To: usas@listbot.com [United Students Against Sweatshops listserve]

Date: Thursday, April 29, 1999

Subject: U of Arizona STUDENTS AGAINST SWEATSHOPS SIT-IN CONTINUES

For those of you who are wondering, the University of Arizona sit-in is STILL GOING ON! We have reached a USAS record of 200 hours and still counting. Negotiations are still going slowly although progress is being made. We could still most definitely use your support in the form of emails, phone calls, and letters. Morale tends to go up and down but support ALWAYS keeps it high!

our cell phone: (520) 400-1066 (somewhat unreliable)

our email: akolers@u.arizona.edu (avery), lsnow@u.arizona.edu (laura) our President's email: President Likins at plikins@lan.admin.arizona.edu

our President's phone: (520) 621-5511

If University of Arizona activist Arne Ekstrom was aware of today's widely reported student apathy, he certainly was not deterred when he helped lead his campus anti-sweatshop sit-in. Nor, for that matter, were any of the other thousands of students across the United States who participated in anti-sweatshop activities during the past academic year, coordinating their activities on the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) listserv (a listserv is an online mailing list for the purpose of group discussion) and Web site.

Last year's student anti-sweatshop movement gained momentum as it swept westward, eventually encompassing more than 100 campuses across the country. Sparked by a sit-in at Duke University, students organized teach-ins, led demonstrations, and occupied buildings—first at Georgetown, then northeast to the Ivy League, then west to the Big Ten. After militant actions at Notre Dame, Wisconsin, and Michigan made the *New York Times*, *Business Week*, *Time*, National Public Radio, and almost every major daily newspaper, the growing student movement reached California, where schools from tiny Occidental College to the giant ten-campus University of California system agreed to limit the use of their names and logos to sweatshop-free apparel. Now the practical challenge is to devise a regime of monitoring and compliance.

The anti-sweatshop movement is the largest wave of student activism to hit campuses since students rallied to free Nelson Mandela by calling for a halt to university investments in South Africa more than a decade ago. This time around, the movement is electronically connected. Student activists bring their laptops and cell phones with them when they occupy administration buildings, sharing ideas and strategies with fellow activists from Boston to Berkeley. On the USAS listserv, victorious students from Wisconsin counsel neophytes from Arizona and Kentucky, and professors at Berkeley and Harvard explain how to calculate a living wage and guarantee independent monitoring in Honduras.

The target of this renewed activism is the \$2.5 billion collegiate licensing industry—led by major companies like Nike, Gear, Champion, and Fruit of the Loom—which pays colleges and universities sizable royalties in exchange for the right to use the campus logo on caps, sweatshirts, jackets, and other items. Students are demanding that the workers who made these goods be paid a living wage, no matter where in the world industry operates. Students are also calling for an end to discrimination against

women workers, public disclosure of the names and addresses of all factories involved in production, and independent monitoring in order to verify compliance.

These demands are opposed by the apparel industry, the White House, and most universities. Yet so far students have made significant progress in putting the industry on the defensive. A growing number of colleges and clothing companies have adopted “codes of conduct”—something unthinkable a decade ago—although student activists consider many of these standards inadequate.

In a world economy increasingly dominated by giant retailers and manufacturers who control global networks of independently owned factories, organizing consumers may prove to be a precondition for organizing production workers. And students are a potent group of consumers. If students next year succeed in building on this year’s momentum, the collegiate licensing industry will be forced to change the way it does business. These changes, in turn, could affect the organization of the world’s most globalized and exploitative industry—apparel manufacturing—along with the growing number of industries that, like apparel, outsource production in order to lower labor costs and blunt worker organizing.

## **The Global Sweatshop**

In the apparel industry, so-called manufacturers—in reality, design and marketing firms—outsource the fabrication of clothing to independent contractors around the world. In this labor intensive industry where capital requirements are minimal, it is relatively easy to open a clothing factory. This has contributed to a global race to the bottom, in which there is always someplace, somewhere, where clothing can be made still more cheaply. Low wages reflect not low productivity, but low bargaining power. A recent analysis in *Business Week* found that although Mexican apparel workers are 70 percent as productive as U.S. workers, they earn only 11 percent as much as their U.S. counterparts; Indonesian workers, who are 50 percent as productive, earn less than 2 percent as much.

The explosion of imports has proven devastating to once well-paid, unionized U.S. garment workers. The number of American garment workers has declined from peak levels of 1.4 million in the early 1970s to 800,000 today. The one exception to these trends is the expansion of garment employment, largely among immigrant and undocumented workers, in Los Angeles, which has more than 160,000 sweatshop workers. Recent U.S. Department of Labor surveys found that more than nine out of ten such firms violate legal health and safety standards, with more than half troubled by serious violations that could lead to severe injuries or death. Working conditions in New York City, the other major domestic garment center, are similar.

The very word “sweatshop” comes from the apparel industry, where profits were “sweated” out of workers by forcing them to work longer and faster at their sewing machines. Although significant advances have been made in such aspects of production as computer-assisted design, computerized marking, and computerized cutting, the

industry still remains low-tech in its core production process, the sewing of garments. The basic unit of production continues to be a worker, usually a woman, sitting or standing at a sewing machine and sewing together pieces of limp cloth.

The structure of the garment industry fosters sweatshop production. During the past decade, retailing in the United States has become increasingly concentrated. Today, the four largest U.S. retailers—Wal-Mart, Kmart, Sears, and Dayton Hudson (owner of Target and Mervyns)—account for nearly two-thirds of U.S. retail sales. Retailers squeeze manufacturers, who in turn squeeze the contractors who actually make their products. Retailers and manufacturers preserve the fiction of being completely separate from contractors because they do not want to be held legally responsible for workplace violations of labor, health, and safety laws. Retailers and manufacturers alike insist that what happens in contractor factories is not their responsibility—even though their production managers and quality control officers are constantly checking up on the sewing shops that make their clothing.

The contracting system also allows retailers and manufacturers to eliminate much uncertainty and risk. When business is slow, the contract is simply not renewed; manufacturers need not worry about paying unemployment benefits or dealing with idle workers who might go on strike or otherwise make trouble. If a particular contractor becomes a problem, there are countless others to be found who will be only too happy to get their business. Workers, however, experience the flip side of the enormous flexibility enjoyed by retailers and manufacturers. They become contingent labor, employed and paid only when their work is needed.

Since profits are taken out at each level of the supply chain, labor costs are reduced to a tiny fraction of the retail price. Consider the economics of a dress that is sewn in Los Angeles and retails for \$100. Half goes to the department store and half to the manufacturer, who keeps \$12.50 to cover expenses and profit, spends \$22.50 on textiles, and pays \$15 to the contractor. The contractor keeps \$9 to cover expenses and profits. That leaves just \$6 of the \$100 retail price for the workers who actually make the dress. Even if the cost of direct production labor were to increase by half, the dress would still only cost \$103—a small increment that would make a world of difference to the seamstress in Los Angeles, whose \$7,000 to \$8,000 in annual wages are roughly two-thirds of the poverty level. A garment worker in Mexico would be lucky to earn \$1,000 during a year of 48 to 60 hour workweeks; in China, \$500.

At the other end of the apparel production chain, the heads of the 60 publicly traded U.S. apparel retailers earn an average \$1.5 million a year. The heads of the 35 publicly traded apparel manufacturers average \$2 million. In 1997, according to the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, five of the six highest-paid apparel executives in Los Angeles all came from a single firm: Guess?, Inc. They took home nearly \$12.6 million—enough to double the yearly wages of 1,700 L.A. apparel workers.

Organizing workers at the point of production, the century-old strategy that built the power of labor in Europe and North America, is best suited to production processes where most of the work goes on in-house. In industries whose production can easily

be shifted almost anywhere on the planet, organizing is extremely difficult. Someday, perhaps, a truly international labor movement will confront global manufacturers. But in the meantime, organized consumers may well be labor's best ally. Consumers, after all, are not as readily moved as factories. And among American consumers, college students represent an especially potent force.

## **Kathie Lee and Robert Reich**

During the early 1990s, American human rights and labor groups protested the proliferation of sweatshops at home and abroad— with major campaigns focusing on Nike and Gap. These efforts largely fizzled. But then two exposes of sweatshop conditions captured public attention. In August 1995, state and federal officials raided a garment factory in El Monte, California—a Los Angeles suburb—where 71 Thai immigrants had been held for several years in virtual slavery in an apartment complex ringed with barbed wire and spiked fences. They worked an average of 84 hours a week for \$1.60 an hour, living eight to ten persons in a room. The garments they sewed ended up in major retail chains, including Macy's, Filene's and RobinsonsMay, and for brand-name labels like B.U.M., Tomato, and High Sierra. Major daily papers and TV networks picked up on the story, leading to a flood of outraged editorials and columns calling for a clamp-down on domestic sweatshops. Then in April 1996, TV celebrity Kathie Lee Gifford tearfully acknowledged on national television that the Wal-Mart line of clothing that bore her name was made by children in Honduran sweatshops, even though tags on the garments promised that Part of the profits would go to help children. Embarrassed by the publicity, Gifford soon became a crusader against sweatshop abuses.

For several years, then-Labor Secretary Robert Reich (now the *Prospect's* senior editor) had been trying to inject the sweatshop issue onto the nation's agenda. The mounting publicity surrounding the El Monte and Kathie Lee scandals gave Reich new leverage. After all, what the apparel industry primarily sells is image, and the image of some of its major labels was getting a drubbing. He began pressing apparel executives, threatening to issue a report card on firms' behavior unless they agreed to help establish industry-wide standards.

In August 1996, the Clinton administration brought together representatives from the garment industry, labor unions, and consumer and human rights groups to grapple with sweatshops. The members of what they called the White House Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP) included apparel firms (Liz Claiborne, Reebok, L.L. Bean, Nike, Patagonia, PhillipsVan Heusen, Wal-Mart's Kathie Lee Gifford brand, and Nicole Miller), several nonprofit organizations (including the National Consumers League, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, International Labor Rights Fund, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, and Business for Social Responsibility), as well as the Union of Needletrades, Industrial



and Textile Employees (UNITE), the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union, and the AFL-CIO.

After intense negotiations, the Department of Labor issued an interim AIP report in April 1997 and the White House released the final 40-page report in November 1998, which included a proposed workplace code of conduct and a set of monitoring guidelines. By then, Reich had left the Clinton administration, replaced by Alexis Herman. The two labor representatives on the AIP, as well as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, quit the group to protest the feeble recommendations, which had been crafted primarily by the garment industry delegates and which called, essentially, for the industry to police itself. This maneuvering would not have generated much attention except that a new factor—college activism—had been added to the equation.

## **A “Sweat-Free” Campus**

The campus movement began in the fall of 1997 at Duke when a group called Students Against Sweatshops persuaded the university to require manufacturers of items with the Duke label to sign a pledge that they would not use sweatshop labor. Duke has 700 licenses (including Nike and other major labels) that make apparel at hundreds of plants in the U.S. and in more than 10 other countries, generating almost \$25 million annually in sales. Following months of negotiations, in March 1998 Duke President Nannerl Keohane and the student activists jointly announced a detailed “code of conduct” that bars Duke licensees from using child labor, requires them to maintain safe workplaces, to pay the minimum wage, to recognize the right of workers to unionize, to disclose the locations of all factories making products with Duke’s name, and to allow visits by independent monitors to inspect the factories.

The Duke victory quickly inspired students on other campuses. The level of activity on campuses accelerated, with students finding creative ways to dramatize the issue. At Yale, student activists staged a “knit-in” to draw attention to sweatshop abuses. At Holy Cross and the University of California at Santa Barbara, students sponsored mock fashion shows where they discussed the working conditions under which the garments were manufactured. Duke students published a coloring book explaining how (and where) the campus mascot, the Blue Devil, is stitched onto clothing by workers in sweatshops. Activists at the University of Wisconsin infiltrated a homecoming parade and, dressed like sweatshop workers in Indonesia, carried a giant Reebok shoe. They also held a press conference in front of the chancellor’s office and presented him with an oversized check for 16 cents—the hourly wage paid to workers in China making Nike athletic shoes. At Georgetown, Wisconsin, Michigan, Arizona, and Duke, students occupied administration buildings to pressure their institutions to adopt (or, in Duke’s case, strengthen) anti-sweatshop codes.

In the summer of 1998, disparate campus groups formed United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS). The USAS has weekly conference calls to discuss their negoti-

ations with Nike, the Department of Labor, and others. It has sponsored training sessions for student leaders and conferences at several campuses where the sweatshop issue is only Part of an agenda that also includes helping to build the labor movement, NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, women's rights, and other issues.

## The Labor Connection

At the core of the movement is a strong bond with organized labor. The movement is an important byproduct of the labor movement's recent efforts, under President John Sweeney, to repair the rift between students and unions that dates to the Vietnam War. Since 1996, the AFL-CIO's Union Summer has placed almost 2,000 college students in internships with local unions around the country, most of whom work on grassroots organizing campaigns with low-wage workers in hotels, agriculture, food processing, janitorial service, and other industries. The program has its own staff, mostly young organizers only a few years out of college themselves, who actively recruit on campuses, looking for the next generation of union organizers and researchers, particularly minorities, immigrants, and women. Union summer graduates are among the key leadership of the campus anti-sweatshop movement.

Unions and several liberal foundations have provided modest funding for student anti-sweatshop groups. Until this summer USAS had no staff, nor did any of its local campus affiliates. In contrast, corporate-sponsored conservative foundations have over the past two decades, funded dozens of conservative student publications, subsidized student organizations and conferences, and recruited conservative students for internships and jobs in right-wing think tanks and publications as well as positions in the Reagan and Bush administrations and Congress seeking to groom the next generation of conservative activists. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, the leading right-wing campus umbrella group has an annual budget over \$5 million. In comparison, the Center for Campus Organizing, a Boston-based group that works closely with anti-sweatshop groups and other progressive campus organizations, operates on a budget under \$200,000.

This student movement even has some sympathizers among university administrators. "Thank God students are getting passionate about something other than basketball and bonfires," John Burness, Duke administrator who helped negotiate the end of the 31-hour sit-in, told the *Boston Globe*. "But the tone is definitely different. In the old days, we used to have to scramble to cut off phone lines when they took over the president's office, but we didn't have to worry about that here. They just bring their laptops and they do work."

At every university where students organized a sit-in (Duke, Georgetown, Arizona, Michigan, and Wisconsin) they have wrested agreements to require licensees to disclose the specific location of their factory sites, which is necessary for independent monitoring. Students elsewhere (including Harvard, Illinois, Brown, the University of California, Princeton, Middlebury, and Occidental) won a public disclosure require-

ment without resorting to civil disobedience. A few institutions have agreed to require manufacturers to pay their employees a “living wage.” Wisconsin agreed to organize an academic conference this fall to discuss how to calculate living-wage formulas for countries with widely disparate costs of living, and then to implement its own policy recommendations. [See Richard Rothstein, “The Global Hiring Hall: Why We Need Worldwide Labor Standards,” TAP, Spring 1994.]

## **The Industry’s New Clothes**

Last November, the White House-initiated Apparel Industry Partnership created a monitoring arm, the Fair Labor Association (FLA), and a few months later invited universities to join. Colleges, however, have just one seat on FLA’s 14-member board. Under the group’s bylaws the garment firms control the board’s decisionmaking. The bylaws require a “supermajority” to approve all key questions, thus any three companies can veto a proposal they don’t like.

At this writing, FLA member companies agree to ban child and prison labor, to prohibit physical abuse by supervisors, and to allow workers the freedom to organize unions in their foreign factories, though independent enforcement has not yet been specified. FLA wants to assign this monitoring task to corporate accounting firms like PricewaterhouseCoopers and Ernst & Young, to allow companies to select which facilities will be inspected, and to keep factory locations and the monitoring reports secret. Student activists want human rights and labor groups to do the monitoring.

This is only a bare beginning, but it establishes the crucial moral precedent of companies taking responsibility for labor conditions beyond their shores. Seeing this foot in the door, several companies have bowed out because they consider these standards too tough. The FLA expects that by 2001, after its monitoring program has been in place for a year, participating firms will be able to use the FLA logo on their labels and advertising as evidence of their ethical corporate practices. [See Richard Rothstein, “The Starbucks Solution: Can Voluntary Codes Raise Global Living Standards?” TAP, July/August 1996.]

The original list of 17 FLA-affiliated universities grew to more than 100 by mid-summer of this year. And yet, some campus groups have dissuaded college administrations (including the Universities of Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Toronto, and California, as well as Oberlin, Bucknell, and Earlham Colleges) from joining FLA, while others have persuaded their institutions (including Brown, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Georgetown) to join only if the FLA adopts stronger standards. While FLA members are supposed to abide by each country’s minimum-wage standards, these are typically far below the poverty level. In fact, no company has made a commitment to pay a living wage.

The campus movement has succeeded in raising awareness (both on campus and among the general public) about sweatshops as well as the global economy. It has contributed to industry acceptance of extraterritorial labor standards, something hitherto

considered utopian. It has also given thousands of students experience in the nuts and bolts of social activism, many of whom are likely to carry their idealism and organizing experiences with them into jobs with unions, community and environmental groups, and other public interest crusades.

So far, however, the movement has had only minimal impact on the daily lives of sweatshop workers at home and abroad. Nike and Reebok, largely because of student protests, have raised wages and benefits in their Indonesian footwear factories—which employ more than 100,000 workers—to 43 percent above the minimum wage. But this translates to only 20 cents an hour in U.S. dollars, far below a “living wage” to raise a family and even below the 27 cents Nike paid before Indonesia’s currency devaluation. Last spring Nike announced its willingness to disclose the location of its overseas plants that produce clothing for universities. This created an important split in industry ranks, since industry leaders have argued that disclosure would undermine each firm’s competitive position. But Nike has opened itself up to the charge of having a double standard, since it still refuses to disclose the location of its non-university production sites.

Within a year, when FLA’s monitoring system is fully operational, students at several large schools with major licensing contracts—including Duke, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Carolina, and Georgetown—will have lists of factories in the U.S. and overseas that produce university clothing and equipment. This information will be very useful to civic and labor organizations at home and abroad, providing more opportunities to expose working conditions. Student activists at each university will be able to visit these sites—bringing media and public officials with them—to expose working conditions (and, if necessary, challenge the findings of the FLA’s own monitors) and support organizing efforts by local unions and women’s groups.

If the student activists can help force a small but visible “ethical” niche of the apparel industry to adopt higher standards, it will divide the industry and give unions and consumer groups more leverage to challenge the sweatshop practices of the rest of the industry. The campus anti-sweatshop crusade is Part of what might be called a “conscience constituency” among consumers who are willing to incorporate ethical principles into their buying habits, even if it means slightly higher prices. Environmentalists have done the same thing with the “buy green” campaign, as have various “socially responsible” investment firms.

## **Beyond Consumer Awareness**

In a global production system characterized by powerful retailers and invisible contractors, consumer action has an important role to play. But ultimately it must be combined with worker organizing and legislative and regulatory remedies. Unionizing the global apparel industry is an organizer’s nightmare. With globalization and the contracting system, any apparel factory with a union risks losing its business.

Domestically, UNITE represents fewer than 300,000 textile and garment industry workers, down from the 800,000 represented by its two predecessor unions in the late 1960s. In the low-income countries where most U.S. apparel is now made, the prospects for unionization are dimmer still. In Mexico, labor unions are controlled by the government. China outlaws independent unions, punishing organizers with prison terms. Building the capacity for unfettered union organizing must necessarily be a longterm strategy for union organizers throughout the world. Here, the student anti-sweatshop movement can help. The independent verification of anti-sweatshop standards that students want can also serve the goal of union organizing.

Public policy could also help. As Part of our trade policy, Congress could require public disclosure of manufacturing sites and independent monitoring of firms that sell goods in the American market. It could enact legislation that requires U.S. companies to follow U.S. health and safety standards globally and to bar the import of clothing made in sweatshops or made by workers who are denied the basic right to organize unions. In addition, legislation sponsored by Representative William Clay could make retailers and manufacturers]]legally liable for the working conditions behind the goods they design and sell, thereby ending the fiction that contractors are completely independent of the manufacturers and retailers that hire them. Last spring the California Assembly passed a state version of this legislation. Student and union activists hope that the Democrat-controlled state senate and Democratic Governor Gray Davis—whose lopsided victory last November was largely attributed to organized labor’s get-out-the-vote effort—will support the bill.

Thanks to the student movement, public opinion may be changing. And last spring, speaking both to the International Labor Organization in Geneva and at the commencement ceremonies at the University of Chicago (an institution founded by John D. Rockefeller and a stronghold of free market economics, but also a center of student antisweatshop activism), President Clinton called for an international campaign against child labor, including restrictions on government purchases of goods made by children.

A shift of much apparel production to developing countries may well be inevitable in a global economy. But when companies do move their production abroad, student activists are warning “you can run but you can’t hide,” demanding that they be held responsible for conditions in contractor factories no matter where they are. Students can’t accomplish this on their own, but in a very short period of time they have made many Americans aware that they don’t have to leave their consciences at home when they shop for clothes.

*The Case for Sweatshops]]*

*By David R. Henderson*

Advertisement for the Hoover Institution in *The Weekly Standard* February 7, 2002

Candida Rosa Lopez, an employee in a Nicaan hour. Interviewed recently by a Miami raguan garment factory, works long hours Herald reporter, Ms. Lopez has a

message for over a sewing machine at less than a dollar people in the United States and other wealthy

countries who are nervous about buying goods from “sweatshops”: “I wish more people would buy the clothes we make.”

Contrary to what you have heard, sweatshops in third-world countries are a good deal for the people who work in them. Why? Because work, other than slave labor, is an exchange. A worker chooses a particular job because she thinks herself better off in that job than at her next-best alternative. Most of us would regard a low-paying job in Nicaragua or Honduras as a lousy job. But we’re not being asked to take those jobs. Those jobs are the best options those workers have, or else they would quit and work elsewhere. You don’t make someone better off by taking away the best of a bunch of bad choices.

Many workers in third-world sweatshops have left even harder, lower-paying jobs in agriculture to move to garment factories. Moreover, sweatshops are a normal step in economic development. Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Hong Kong all had sweatshop jobs thirty years ago. They don’t now because workers in those countries have acquired skills and employers have accumulated capital. That’s what will happen in Honduras, Nicaragua, and other poor countries—if we only let it.

What happens when people persuade companies not to hire children to work long hours? Oxfam, the British charity reported that when factory owners in Bangladesh were pressured to fire child laborers, thousands of the children became prostitutes or starved.

Yet the National Labor Committee’s executive director, Charles Kernaghan, goes around the country attacking sweatshops and trying to put legal barriers in the way of people buying from sweatshops. Robert Reich, former U.S. labor secretary under President Clinton, pressured Reebok International and Sears Roebuck to get ShinWon, their South Korean subcontractor in Honduras, to lay off fifty teenage girls. He apparently did not ask, or care, what happened to them after they lost their jobs. Why are Kernaghan and Reich hurting the people they claim to care about? Simple. The people they really care about are unionized garment workers in the United States; the NLC is funded by U.S. unions. The garment workers lost on NAFTA and lost on GATT. This is their last-ditch effort to prevent foreign competition.

The next time you feel guilty for buying clothes made in a third-world sweatshop, remember this: you’re helping the workers who made that clothing. The people who should feel guilty are those who argue against, or use legislation to prevent us giving a boost up the economic ladder to members of the human race unlucky enough to have been born in a poor country. Someone who intentionally gets you fired is not your friend.

*Remarks Concerning the Savages of]] North America*

*By Benjamin Franklin*

Savages we call them, because their Manners differ from ours, which we think the Perfection of Civility; they think the same of theirs.

Perhaps, if we could examine the Manners of different Nations with Impartiality, we should find no People so rude, as to be without any Rules of Politeness; nor any so polite, as not to have some Remains of Rudeness.

The Indian Men, when young, are Hunters and Warriors; when old, Counselors; for all their Government is by Counsel of the Sages; there is no Force, there are no Prisons, no Officers to compel Obedience, or

inflict Punishment. Hence they generally study Oratory, the best Speaker having the most Influence. The Indian Women till the Ground, dress the Food, nurse and bring up the Children, and preserve and hand down to Posterity the Memory of public Transactions. These Employments of Men and Women are accounted natural and honorable. Having few artificial Wants, they have abundance of Leisure for Improvement by Conversation. Our laborious Manner of Life, compared with theirs, they esteem slavish and base; and the Learning, on which we value ourselves, they regard as frivolous and useless. An Instance of this occurred at the Treaty of Lancaster, In Pennsylvania, *anno* 1744, between the Government of Virginia and the Six Nations. After the principal Business was settled, the Commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians by a Speech, that there was at Williamsburg a College, with a Fund for Educating Indian youth; and that, if the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their young Lads to that College, the Government would take care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the Learning of the White People. It is one of the Indian Rules of Politeness not to answer a public Proposition the same day that it is made; they think it would be treating it as a light matter, and that they show it Respect by taking time to consider it, as a Matter Important. They therefore deferr'd their Answer till the Day following; when their Speaker began, by expressing their deep Sense of the kindness of the Virginia Government, in making them that Offer; "for we know," says he, "that you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in those Colleges, and that the Maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinc'd, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you, who are wise, must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some Experience of it; Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it,

if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take a great Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make *Men* of them."

Having frequent Occasions to hold public Councils, they have acquired great Order and Decency in conducting them. The old Men sit in the foremost Ranks, the Warriors in the next, and the Women and Children in the hindmost. The Business of the Women is to take exact Notice of what passes, imprint it in their Memories (for they have no Writing), and communicate it to their Children. They are the Records of the Council, and they preserve Traditions of the Stipulations in Treaties 100 Years back; which, when we compare with our Writings, we always find exact. He that would speak, rises. The rest observe a profound Silence. When he has finish'd and sits down, they leave him 5 to 6 Minutes to recollect, that, if he has omitted anything he intended to say, or has any thing to add, he may rise again and deliver it. To interrupt another, even in common Conversation, is reckon'd highly indecent. How different this is from the conduct of a polite British House of Commons, where scarce a day passes without some Confusion, that makes the Speaker hoarse in calling *to Order*; and how different from the Mode of Conversation in many polite Companies of Europe, where, if you do not deliver your Sentence with great Rapidity, you are cut off in the middle of it by the Impatient Loquacity of those you converse with, and never suffer'd to finish it!

The Politeness of these Savages in Conversation is indeed carried to Excess, since it does not permit them to contradict or deny the Truth of what is asserted in their Presence. By this means they indeed avoid Disputes; but then it becomes difficult to know their Minds, or what Impression you make upon them. The Missionaries who have attempted to convert them to Christianity, all complain of this as one of the great Difficulties of their Mission. The Indians hear with Patience the Truths of the Gospel explain'd to them, and give their usual Tokens of Assent and Approbation; you would think they were convinc'd. No such matter. It is mere Civility.

A Swedish Minister, having assembled the chiefs of the Susquehanah Indians, made a Sermon to them, acquainting them with the principal historical Facts on which our Religion is founded; such as the Fall of our first parents by eating an Apple, the coming of Christ to repair the Mischief, his Miracles and Suffering, &c. When he had finished, an Indian Orator stood up to thank him. "What you have told us," says he, "is all very good. It is indeed bad to eat Apples. It is better to make them all into Cyder. We are much oblig'd by your kindness in coming so far, to tell us these Things which you have heard from your Mothers. In return, I will tell you some of those we had heard from ours. In the Beginning, our Fathers had only the Flesh of Animals to subsist on; and if their Hunting was unsuccessful, they were starving. Two of our young Hunters, having kill'd a Deer, made a Fire in the Woods to broil some Part of it. When they were about to satisfy their Hunger, they beheld a beautiful young Woman descend from the Clouds, and seat herself on that Hill which you see yonder among the blue Mountains. They said to each other, it is a Spirit that has smelt our broiling Venison, and wishes to eat of it; let us offer some to her. They presented her with the Tongue; she was pleas'd with the Taste of it, and said, 'Your kindness shall be rewarded; come to this



Place after thirteen Moons, and you shall find something that will be of great Benefit in nourishing you and your Children to the latest Generations.' They did so, and, to their Surprise, found Plants they had never seen before; but which, from that ancient time, have been constantly cultivated among us, to our great Advantage. Where her right Hand had touched the Ground, they found Maize; where her left hand had touch'd it, they found KidneyBeans; and where her Backside had sat on it, they found Tobacco." The good Missionary, disgusted with this idle Tale, said, "What I delivered to you were sacred Truths; but what you tell me is mere Fable, Fiction, and Falsehood." The Indian, offended, reply'd "My brother, it seems your Friends have not done you Justice in your Education; they have not well instructed you in the Rules of common Civility. You saw that we, who understand and practice those Rules, believ'd all your stories; why do you refuse to believe ours?"

When any of them come into our Towns, our People are apt to crowd round them, gaze upon them, and incommode them, where they desire to be private; this they esteem great Rudeness, and the Effect of the Want of Instruction in the Rules of Civility and good Manners. "We have," say they, "as much Curiosity as you, and when you come into our Towns, we wish for Opportunities of looking at you; but for this purpose we hide ourselves behind Bushes, where you are to pass, and never intrude ourselves into your Company."

Their Manner of entering one another's village has likewise its Rules. It is reckon'd uncivil in travelling Strangers to enter a Village abruptly, without giving Notice of their Approach. Therefore, as soon as they arrive within hearing, they stop and hollow, remaining there till invited to enter. Two old Men usually come out to them, and lead them in. There is in every Village a vacant Dwelling, called *the Strangers' House*. Here they are plac'd, while the old Men go round from Hut to Hut, acquainting the Inhabitants, that Strangers are arriv'd, who are probably hungry and weary; and every one sends them what he can spare of Victuals, and Skins to repose on. When the Strangers are refresh'd, Pipes and Tobacco are brought; and then, but not before, Conversation begins, with Enquiries who they are, whither bound, what News, &c., and it usually ends with offers of Service, if the Strangers have occasion of Guides, or any Necessaries for continuing their Journey; and nothing is exacted for the Entertainment.

The same Hospitality, esteem'd among them as a principal Virtue, is practis'd by private Persons; of which Conrad Weiser, our Interpreter, gave me the following Instance. He had been naturaliz'd among the Six Nations, and spoke well the Mohock Language. In going thro' the Indian Country, to carry a message from our Governor to the Council at Onondaga, he call'd at the Habitation of Canassatego, an old Acquaintance, who embrac'd him, spread Furs for him to sit on, plac'd before him some boil'd Beans and Venison, and mix'd some Rum and Water for his Drink. When he was well refresh'd, and had lit his Pipe, Canassatego began to converse with him; ask'd how he had far'd the many Years since they had seen each other; whence he then came; what occasion'd the Journey, &c. Conrad

answered all his Questions; and when the Discourse began to flag, the Indian, to continue it, said, "Conrad, you have lived long among the white People, and know something of their Customs; I have been sometimes at Albany, and have observed, that once in Seven Days they shut up their shops, and assemble all in the great House; tell me what it is for? What do they do there?" "They meet there," says Conrad, "to hear and learn *Good Things*." "I do not doubt," says the Indian, "that they tell you so; they have told me the same; but I doubt the Truth of what they say, and I will tell you my Reasons. I went lately to Albany to sell my Skins and buy Blankets, Knives, Powder, Rum, &c. You know I us'd generally to deal with Hans Hanson; but I was a little inclin'd this time to try some other Merchant. However, I call'd first upon Hans, and asked him what he would give for Beaver, He said he could not give any more than four Shillings a Pound; 'but, says he, 'I cannot talk on Business now; this is the Day when we meet together to learn *Good Things*, and I am going to the Meeting.' So I thought to myself, 'Since we cannot do any Business today, I may as well go to the meeting too,' and I went with him. There stood up a Man in Black, and began to talk to the People very angrily. I did not understand what he said; but, perceiving that he look'd much at me and at Hanson, I imagin'd he was angry at seeing me there; so I went out, sat down near the House, struck Fire, and lit my Pipe, waiting till the Meeting should break up. I thought too, that the Man had mention'd something of Beaver, and I suspected it might be the Subject of their Meeting. So, when they came out, I accosted my Merchant. 'Well, Hans,' says I, 'I hope you have agreed to give more than four shillings a Pound.' 'No,' says he, 'I cannot give so much; I cannot give more than three shillings and sixpence.' I then spoke to several other Dealers, but they all sung the same song.—Three and sixpence,—Three and sixpence. This made it clear to me, that my Suspicion was right; and, that whatever they pretended of meeting to learn *Good Things*, the real purpose was to consult how to cheat Indians in the Price of Beaver. Consider but a little, Conrad, and you must be of my Opinion. If they met so often to learn *Good Things*, they would certainly have learnt some before this time. But they are still ignorant. You know our Practice. If a white Man, in travelling thro' our country, enters one of our Cabins, we all treat him as I treat you; we dry him if he is wet, we warm him if he is cold, we give him Meat and Drink, that he may allay his Thirst and Hunger; and we spread soft Furs for him to rest and sleep on; we demand nothing in return. But, if I go into a white Man's House at Albany, and ask for Victuals and Drink, they say, 'Where is your Money?' and if I have none, they say, 'Get out, you Indian Dog.' You see they have not yet learned those little *Good Things*, that we need no Meetings to be instructed in, because our Mothers taught them to us when we were Children; and therefore it

is impossible their Meetings should be, as they say, for any such purpose, or have any such Effect; they are only to contrive the Cheating of Indians in the Price of Beaver.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Discuss and write notes on some culturally conditioned assumptions, totems and taboos, that strike you as artificial and questionable.

Think of one example, from your own experience or knowledge, of a case in which ethnocentrism has served a socially beneficial function and one in which it has served a harmful one.

Think of a recent, specific example in America of a public figure indulging in what you consider demagoguery or the plain folks fallacy in appealing to the mass audience's ethnocentrism. Think of another example of someone authentically speaking as a populist. Support your judgments with evidence.

What do you think Mrs. Hart, the school board chair in Larry Rohter's "Battle over Patriotism Curriculum," would say in response to the unfavorable statistics about the United States in Shapiro's *We're Number One* and Brouwer's *Sharing the Pie*?

Maureen Dowd's "Rescue Me, Please" was written when Hillary Clinton was running for senator from New York. Is Dowd's **tone** serious or **ironic**? Contrast her image of culturally conditioned assumptions about women's consciousness today with Wolf's exhortations for women to resist "the beauty myth." How accurate do you think Dowd's account is (including her level of generalization), and what social forces might explain the alleged reversion to prefeminist attitudes?

"The Campus Anti-Sweatshop Movement" appeared in the *American Prospect*, a journal that speaks for the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, somewhat to the left of John Kerry, John Edwards, Bill Clinton, and Al Gore. This is followed by an advertisement sponsored by the Hoover Institution, a prominent conservative research institute at Stanford University, defending corporations' use of sweatshop labor, which appeared in the conservative journal the *Weekly Standard*. The author, David R. Henderson, is identified as an economics professor. Why do you think this was published as an ad rather than an article? Can you **draw the line** here between journalism and corporate public relations? Apply the tests in "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" to Henderson's and Applebaum and Dreier's pieces for significant arguments that one has **downplayed** or ignored and that might refute arguments that the other **plays up**. Evaluate the use of emotional appeal, especially **appeal to pity**, in the opposing accounts.

Stage a class debate between defenders of corporate capitalism as the traditional "American way of life" and the account of the founders' anticorporate views documented by Hightower and Frazer in the excerpts in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that in all Ages and Countries Hospitality has been allow'd as the Virtue of those whom the civiliz'd were pleas'd to call Barbarians. The Greeks celebrated the Scythians for it. The Saracens possess'd it eminently, and it is to this day the reigning Virtue of the wild Arabs. St. Paul, too, in the Relation of his Voyage and Shipwreck on the Island of Melita says the Barbarous People

How seriously do you think Russell Baker's humorous argument can be taken that welfare recipients are "vital paupers," serving to keep employment rates, wages, and inflation low? How defensible a **refutation** is this of conservatives' belief that people are unemployed or on welfare mainly because of lack of motivation or skills? It might similarly be argued that in a capitalist economy, a large number of low-wage workers are required to do necessary but undesirable jobs, so that people with relatively privileged jobs would not necessarily want everyone to have equal educational or employment opportunity because it would increase competition and raise prices. True or false?

How accurate in the contemporary United States is Woolf's portrait of the importance to the powerful male "who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, half the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself," and the corollary that "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size"?

Woolf asks, "How is he to go on . . . civilizing natives . . . unless he can see himself at breakfast and dinner at least twice the size he really is?" Woolf was a harsh critic of British colonialism. With that knowledge we can **infer** or **read between the lines** that she meant "civilizing natives" ironically. There is also an echo in this line of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in which Swift, two centuries before Woolf, discussed English and European conquest of distant lands "by Divine Right" (the belief that all actions of kings were approved by God):

Ships are sent with the first opportunity; the natives driven out or destroyed, their princes tortured to discover their gold; a free license given to all acts of inhumanity and lust; the earth reeking with the blood of its inhabitants; and this execrable crew of butchers employed in so pious an expedition is a *modern colony* sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbaric people. (237)

Who is Swift suggesting are the real "idolatrous and barbaric people" and who are the civilized ones? Compare his use of irony on this subject with Woolf's, as well as with Franklins in the title and text of "Remarks Concerning the Savages . . ." and Twain's in "The Lowest Animal."

In what ways does "Objectivity in Connected Teaching" contradict the principles of argumentative rhetoric and critical thinking on which *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* is based? What might Belenky et al. say about the women's ways of argument displayed by many female writers in this book? Conduct a debate (or a connected learning conversation!) on the value and limitations of these different approaches to teaching, learning, and argumentation, or possible ways in which they might be reconciled.

## Chapter

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shewed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present Rain, and because of the Cold.—[Franklin's note].

# Chapter 7. Overgeneralization, Stereotyping, and Prejudice

Inadequately qualified generalizations, or **overgeneralizations**, are probably the most common and often the most offensive variety of logical fallacy, especially in the forms of **stereotyping** and **prejudice**. Almost all oral or written communications, and particularly arguments, involve frequent generalizations. (The last two sentences just made some.) Generalizations are central elements of argumentation, then, and perfectly legitimate, when they are adequately qualified. Critical thinkers and writers must constantly **draw the line** about the degree to which they can accurately generalize without lapsing into overgeneralization; they must regularly decide what is the highest acceptable level of generalization, from the following ladders of adjectives and adverbs:

all  
almost all  
most  
many  
some  
a few  
almost no/none  
no/none  
always  
almost always usually  
often, frequently  
sometimes  
occasionally almost never  
never

Good axioms are “Never say never” or “Almost never say never,” and “Never say all/always” or “almost never say all/always.” Even when you say or write “most,” listeners or readers are apt to expect you to provide evidence. Both “Most welfare recipients cannot find a good-paying job no matter how hard they try” and “Most welfare recipients could find a good job if they tried” call for documentation through citing **empirical** studies, with statistics and percentage points verifying that the statement is true of a majority of those studied.

”Many” is not as likely to require evidence, and “some” is even safer—though in the preceding two sentences, the use of these safer adjectives is still likely to be met with

a demand for statistics. (Specific percentages in general are preferable to any of these degrees of generalization.) So always (there he goes again!) bring your generalizations down to the safest level, and be careful to use further qualifying phrases like “listeners or readers *are apt to* expect you to provide evidence,” and “Cautious writers *tend to* qualify their generalizations.”

Try to keep in mind, then, first, that not all generalizations are overgeneralizations or stereotypes and, second, that stereotypes are not always prejudiced and that some may be accurate to a degree. Indeed, some people do act in a stereotypical manner, unintentionally or even intentionally, in an effort to conform to a certain image. There are students, unfortunately, who do come across as computer nerds, dumb jocks, sorority queens, and so on, although it is a pleasant surprise when one shows that such a first impression is deceptive. African Americans derisively refer to “Uncle Toms,” blacks who act in just the stereotyped servile manner that pleases racist whites. Stereotyping can also be a two-edged sword, as when certain people, in stereotyping others unfairly, become a stereotype themselves, an Archie Bunker-like bundle of prejudices. Among the sources you read or listen to, criticize those that are guilty of stereotyping without adequate support, but praise those that provide supported criticisms of stereotyping in their opponents.

When you read an author or listen to a speaker, watch carefully for the qualifications and degrees in their generalizations and be fair-minded toward sources. Beware of a common form of false **inference** in which the reader or listener (often emotionally involved in the issue) assumes that the writer or speaker has overgeneralized when in fact she or he has not done so. A student wrote about Russell Mokhiber’s “Underworld USA,” included at the end of this chapter, “Mokhiber insinuates that all big businesses engage in criminal activities.” Read that article carefully to see if this is a sound inference.

## Prejudice

Prejudice is an extremely touchy subject to discuss today. Many people insist they aren’t prejudiced and get indignant at any suggestion that they might be. Even the most virtuous of us, however, are bound to have some prejudices, and the best we can do is acknowledge and do our best to overcome them. Throughout human history most cultures have been steeped in prejudices. In the United States, until a few decades ago, prejudices were blatantly displayed toward African Americans and many other ethnic and racial groups as well as women and homosexuals. Prejudices were not only accepted as **culturally conditioned assumptions** but as the basis for jokes, comedy routines, and face-to-face taunting, extending even to handicapped, obese, or homely people. Movements like those for civil rights and women’s and gay liberation put opposition to prejudice on the national agenda; consequently, the cultural norms have shifted

significantly, especially among younger people, and most Americans regard this shift as an advance toward a more humane society.

Nowadays, it is no longer as common to hear people express outright bigotry, to declare, “I hate —s,” or to make stereotypical overgeneralizations about all members of a group. This is not to say, however, that prejudice no longer exists. In the 1980s and 1990s, the United States and other countries saw a resurgence of prejudice in the growth of white supremacist and neoNazi groups, and even college campuses, ideally bastions of tolerance, became the sites of widespread incidents of racist and homophobic hate speech and occasional violence.

In many cases, however, people have simply learned to be more guarded in expressing their prejudices, to restrict them to special settings, such as white male enclaves like bars, clubs, and sports events. Golf is my game, and I am continually embarrassed in playing at public courses by “the guys” assuming everyone wants to listen to jokes based on the crudest ethnic and sexual stereotypes. Or people will speak in certain codes; they will say, for example, “I’m not prejudiced, but . . .”—and then go on to express highly prejudiced opinions. (This is a nice example of that form of **compartmentalization** I’ve termed **I won’t, but I will**.) Or they will denounce welfare recipients and high illegitimacy rates without explicitly associating them with African Americans, although it is implicit that they are the group being referred to, or they will complain about illegal immigration, when they are thinking specifically of Mexicans or Central Americans.

Moreover, prejudice doesn’t always consist of blatant bigotry but may take more subtle forms. It comes out in people’s readiness to jump to **hasty conclusions** or to overgeneralize about some groups. After the U.S. government building in Oklahoma City was bombed by Timothy McVeigh in 1995, many American mass media, politicians, and citizens immediately assumed that the perpetrators were Arabs or Muslims—groups stereotypically associated with terrorism. Similarly, prejudice comes out in considering every individual in one group as responsible for, or **guilty by association** with, its worst members. This kind of prejudice was evident in several violent acts against innocent American Muslims after the Oklahoma City bombing and again after September 11, 2001, when this kind of irrationality extended to hate acts against dark-skinned Americans or citizens from a variety of national origins and religions, including some East Indian Hindus. Prejudice comes out in an ethnocentric **double standard**—the ESBYODS principle—when we exact a higher degree of morality from some other group than from our own, in **selective vision** when we get angry at that group for something that doesn’t bother us in our own, in **playing up** or exaggerating that group’s wealth, power, or privileges while **downplaying** or understating our own in comparison.

For example, Jews are often negatively stereotyped as being “pushy” because their culture has a long tradition of encouraging industriousness and high profes-

sional achievement—qualities that are generally praised in the majority culture. Anti-Semitism similarly involves a faulty **causal analysis** attributing Jews' high achievement level in many professions to a conspiracy or favoritism by those in power toward their own—an explanation that is likely to be a resentful **rationalization** for the more plausible explanation, that the achievement level results mainly from the same tradition of socialization of children to be achievers, and that Jews probably favor their own no more and no less than any other group when given the opportunity.

## Class Prejudice

One of the most common and universal forms of prejudice is that toward people in social classes below one's own. Gordon Allport, a Harvard psychologist associated with the philosophy of general semantics, discusses this form in his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, first published in 1954:

Now young children early learn the facts of caste and class. In one experiment, both white and Negro children in kindergarten and in the first and second grades were given different types of doll clothing and houses, and asked to assign them to dolls representing Negro and white men and women. A great majority of the children of both races gave the white doll good clothes and housing, and the Negro doll poor clothes and housing. One little girl, five

years of age, cried when she saw the Negro family next door moving away. "Now," she wailed, "there is no one that we are better than."

At a somewhat older age, children are inclined to ascribe all sorts of virtues to upper-class individuals and all sorts of defects to members of the lower classes. An experiment with fifth-and-sixth-grade children, for example, asked them to give the names of schoolmates whom they considered "clean," "dirty," "good-looking," "not good-looking," "always having a good time," and the like. For every desirable quality the children of higher social classes in the school were given high ratings. Children from lower social classes were given lower ratings. It seems that the youngsters were not able to perceive their classmates as individuals, but only as representatives of class. To them children from the upper classes seem to be good-in-general; from the lower classes, bad-in-general. Since these fifth and sixth graders are "thinking ill without sufficient warrant" we conclude that they are manifesting class prejudice. (322)

As these experiments indicate, we seem much more inclined to be prejudiced against those below us on the socioeconomic scale, and over whom we have some power, than against those above us, who have power over us. This pattern is deeply rooted in the history of Western culture. The word *noble* took on a favorable **connotation** in the Middle Ages and Renaissance through association with the feudal upper class, *the nobility*. Think about all the fairy tales starring "the handsome prince" and "the beautiful princess," in which good looks and virtue are associated with the nobility. Many middle-class people literally and figuratively look up to the rich because they



would like to be rich themselves, or at least would like to be more secure financially than they are, while very few people would choose to be poorer than they are.

In her book *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*, Barbara Ehrenreich sees the fear of falling into poverty at the root of many middle-class people's loathing of the poor: we need to regard the latter as an alien *Other*, in a form of **denial** or **projection** that we could possibly end up in the same condition. (The very use of "we" in formulations like this reflects the culturally conditioned assumption that the kind of people who discuss these issues with each other are themselves middle class, in a whole different discourse community from "them.")

Another factor in prejudice against those below us on the socioeconomic ladder is fear that they are a threat to our physical security, as criminals, or our economic security, either through competition for jobs or through taxes paid to support them through welfare and other public services or affirmative action programs. All these attitudes are an important factor in the disagreements between conservatives and liberals over issues like welfare, homelessness, and illegitimacy among the poor: conservatives tend to view the poor as Other, as different from "us," and as being themselves to blame for their poverty through lack of the virtues we possess, while liberals tend to regard this view as **blaming the victims** for circumstances over which they often have little control.

The readings at the end of this Chapter from James Patterson and Peter Kim's "Beverly Hills vs. the South Bronx," Donald Barlett and James Steele's "Life on the Expense Account," Stephen Moore's "How to Slash Corporate Welfare," and Russell Mokhiber's "Corporations: Underworld USA" suggest that there may be as much crime and immorality among the rich as among the poor, but that people in the middle class tend to have a double standard in neglecting or **rationalizing** upper-class immorality and crime. An example is a student paper on the morality of the rich and poor. At one point, the student writes, "Many of those in poverty are perfectly able to work, yet still don't. I personally have seen people sitting on curbs with signs saying, 'Will work for food.' What makes me so mad is that right behind them there is a fast food restaurant with a sign in the window claiming that they were now hiring. You cannot tell me that these people have not lost their incentive to make something of themselves." And, a few pages later: "Conservatives feel that the rich have been unnecessarily stereotyped. Granted, there are the few who take advantage of their wealth through corporate crimes such as embezzlement, racketeering, income tax evasion, and insider trading. However, I feel that these crimes are a small minority of those in the highest tax bracket of wealth. Many wealthy people are a benefit to our society and should not be penalized by being stereotyped."

Note this student's quickness to generalize about the "many" unvirtuous poor, versus the "few" unvirtuous rich and the "many" who are a benefit to society—without any data indicating the relevant percentages in both groups or other support beyond "I feel" and the one example of the people with the "Will work for food" sign. Also note the selective vision in the student's complaint about the rich being stereotyped, with

no comparable recognition of stereotyping about the poor, in which the paper itself might be considered to indulge.

Conservatives argue that it is a **false analogy** to compare crimes by the lower class with those by the upper class, since the former are more likely to be physical and violent while the latter are mainly in the financial realm. Liberals respond with a **causal analysis** arguing that corporate crime that takes money from other classes and the public, political influence buying that blocks legislation aiding the poor, and social irresponsibility in failing to provide jobs in low-income areas are major causes of economic deprivation in the poor, leaving some of them little alternative but to turn to street crime in order to survive.

The diagram on page 188 presents a **hypothesis** for the patterns of blocks to critical thinking in middle-class attitudes toward the rich and poor. How valid do you find this hypothesis, from your experience, and at what level of generalization would it need to be qualified to prevent its being an overgeneralization or stereotype about those in the middle class?

## Reverse Prejudice

In recent years, many claims have been made, mainly by political conservatives, that liberals sincerely attempting to overcome prejudice have sometimes failed to **draw the line** and have thus produced reverse prejudice or discrimination (terms that have most often been used to describe affirmative action). This would be a case of the fallacy of the **equal and opposite extreme**. Certainly, some members of groups that have been the victims of prejudice in the past retaliate in an equally prejudiced way against all members of the group that has oppressed them, or against some other group; many Israeli Jews, for example, have rechanneled past prejudices against them into prejudice toward Palestinians. In the early 1960s, the leader of the Nation of Islam (or Black Muslims), Elijah Muhammad, preached that all white people are devils—an extreme position that led prominent African Americans like Malcolm X and James Baldwin to dissociate themselves from the Black Muslims. The leader of the Nation of Islam in the 1990s, Louis Farrakhan, also alienated many people with anti-Semitic statements. Some extreme advocates of Afrocentrism stereotype blacks as “sun people” and whites as “ice people,” or claim that all whites are genetically deficient in skin coloring. Likewise, some (though not most) feminists stereotype all men as rapists and abusers; others, overreacting against past negative stereotypes of women as emotional creatures incapable of reason, have uncritically celebrated emotionality and “women’s intuition,” rejecting rationality and reasoned argument altogether as mere male-centered biases—although with what might be considered compartmentalized thinking, they use reasoned argument to argue against rationality.

Another controversy since the nineties has involved “political correctness,” or “PC,” on college campuses and elsewhere. The claim was that groups that had previously

been discriminated against in American society and education, including minorities, women, homosexuals, and socialists, were now imposing their viewpoints on students and faculties in a prejudicial way. PC was to some extent a classic case of the invention by the media of a **semantic** label that grossly overgeneralized about and **oversimplified** a large diversity of issues and incidents. The controversy also, either at its origins or quickly thereafter, became a political football, with the charges of PC being launched mainly by conservatives and

Authoritarianism

Sentimentality

Positive stereotypes and generalizations

"Clean" words

Rationalizations excusing their privileges and misdeeds

Middle class ethnocentric attitudes

Prejudice

Negative stereotypes and generalizations

"Dirty" words

Rationalizations for dumping on them (blaming the victim)

supported by leaders of the Republican Party, and with leftists denying the accuracy of many alleged incidents and launching countercharges that conservatives had imposed *their* PC dogmas and used the anti-PC crusade as a strategy to silence liberals and leftists altogether. (Some liberals lined up with the conservatives, and some sided with the leftists.) As difficult as it was to evaluate which charges were accurate and which weren't, most responsible liberals and leftists agreed with conservatives that enough of these charges were accurate to conclude that PC in at least some cases was indeed another real form of reverse prejudice.

Reverse prejudice can also take place in class relations. As previously noted, in the United States and most other societies past and present, class prejudice has usually followed a pattern favorable toward the rich and unfavorable toward the poor and working class (although in socialist and Communist countries this pattern is reversed). In recent years, however, a body of research has been published, mostly originating in conservative think tanks, concluding that this pattern has now been reversed, resulting in prejudice in American mass media, entertainment, education, and other areas of culture *against* the rich and big business. A predictable line of political rhetoric is that whenever liberals argue that the growing gap between the rich and the middle class and poor should be slowed by higher taxes on the rich and by other policies aimed toward more equality of wealth, conservatives will accuse them of "waging class warfare." (Liberals reply that this is a trick of Orwellian **doublethink** [see Chapter 8] , since it is in fact the rich who are waging war against the middle class and poor, while liberals are only trying to redress the resulting imbalance.) To be sure, much of the research presenting the wealthy as victims has been financially supported, and in some cases commissioned, by wealthy individuals

and big businesses, raising a question of **special pleading**, but the research and arguments must still be evaluated on their own strengths. Some student writers do go to the equal and opposite extreme from the paper quoted earlier that overgeneralized about the poor, as in the following excerpt: “Rush Limbaugh makes it sound as if the upper class corporation owners are so much more hard-working than the poor, but really the upper class just rely on their employees to keep things going while they go out for a corporate lunch or take a weekend vacation.”

We have established a consensus, then, that reverse prejudice is a reality. The rhetorical dimensions of the issue are highly complex, however. Let’s say that you are an old-fashioned racist, but you see that it is no longer socially acceptable to speak or act accordingly. You hear all the talk about reverse discrimination, and from it you get the idea that if you are deprived of your “right” to discriminate against minorities or to benefit from social advantages solely on the basis of your class, race, or sex, that amounts to discrimination against *you*. This is the mind-set satirized in Joseph Heller’s novel *Catch-22* in the character of General Dreedle, who considers himself persecuted because he’s not allowed to have anyone under his command shot at his whim. It is a difficult moral, legal, and rhetorical issue of drawing the line to decide just how tolerant we should be of those who are *intolerant*. A student kicked out of a university for yelling drunken slurs against minorities and homosexuals may have a legitimate legal case in his defense, but should he be praised as a heroic, victimized defender of free speech? And are white males who consider themselves persecuted perhaps indulging in the same victimology they ridicule in minorities and feminists?

It is also likely that some people who really are prejudiced will rationalize that anyone who claims legitimately to be discriminated against is just “whining.” They will overgeneralize that most claims of discrimination are phony and will greet with “megadittos” every such charge by conservative authority figures like Rush Limbaugh—without thoughtfully weighing the facts in every particular case. And certainly anyone demonstrates a lack of proportion and a double standard who gets more angry at the relatively recent and lesser instances of reverse prejudice by minorities or women than they ever have or will at the more numerous and graver instances of prejudice against those groups. There is little dispute that such prejudice has been the historical rule and reverse prejudice a very recent exception to the rule—in causal terms a *reaction* to a prior *action*, or long series of actions. This is not to condone or rationalize reverse prejudice but only to recognize that one must judge it in proportion to that series of prior actions, without falling into the fallacies of **argument from the exception** or selective vision in judging the reaction in isolation from the action that provoked it. In terms of discrimination between whites and blacks or men and women, “Who started it?” is a legitimate rhetorical consideration, as is, of course, “Two wrongs don’t make a right.”

*Will Sex Stereotypes Never End?]]*

*By Becky Wildman-Tobriner*

From *The San Francisco Chronicle* February 16, 1996  
*Becky Wildman-Tobrer, 15, attends Lick-Wilmerding High School in San Francisco*

While the Super Bowl is long past, it's a good thing football. More than 750 million people time to think about what we really saw during the Super Bowl. They observed the end of the game, since we watched a lot more Steelers' fourth quarterback comeback

attempt and Larry Brown's two interceptions. But as John Carman, *The Chronicle* television columnist, said, "The real suspense was how much football (the network would) squeeze in between commercials. Not much as it turned out."

As I watched the game with friends, every time we got excited about something, a commercial would spoil the moment. Network commercialism is slowly strangling the joy out of television sports. One minute you may be watching an 80-yard interception, and the next—oops! McDonald's game break. The play actually stops for TV.

Having so many commercials is outrageous, but even more despicable is what these commercials imply to society.

Pepsi and Burger King commercials both featured men working for the competition but who were eager to consume the advertiser's product. A Coke man grabs a Pepsi from the shelf and all the Pepsis tumble onto the floor. The McDonald's employees grab a quick Burger King lunch. Both Burger King and Pepsi are advertising by putting their competition down. In order to prove they are any good, they make it a cruel competition.

Besides selling products, commercials are also models that people imitate, which inevitably will rub off on viewers.

Pepsi's and Burger King's commercials both starred male actors. Generally, all of the commercials aired during the Super Bowl starred male actors. What has happened to women? Is it that the Super Bowl is just for male bonding and male enjoyment? Why aren't any females in commercials? And if the advertisers stoop to include the females on their payroll, the women serve as sex objects or makeup models. The women who are on TV are only one type: disgustingly thin, gorgeous and mostly white. What does this show society? Society sees one type of person, so we come to the conclusion that there's only one type of female. But that's not true.

The only commercials I can remember with females in them were mothers. The only roles women seem to have is as pretty, skinny moms, cleaning kids' dirty clothes, describing how well Tide works. Men are seldom in detergent commercials. The picture of life in commercials suggests housework is for women only.

There are a few family commercials with women. In the McDonald's commercial, a family is coming a long distance for the two for two sale. Most families in commercials, TV shows and magazines fit the description heterosexual, white, middle class and happy, implying that this is the right way to be and if you're not like them, something is wrong. The McDonald's family didn't fit the "typical" description, but this family

was portrayed as exotic and different, yet trying to be like “everyone else.” TV images influence how viewers imagine reality and decide what is the norm.

As a young female in a growing generation, I think the media should show what the world is really like. If networks prefer commercials with women as housewives, and men selling cars, then at least balance it a little. The suggestiveness in commercials implies a lifestyle to the public along with selling merchandise, and change would be appreciated. Women deserve a chance and we aren’t going to get one until the media shapes up. And what’s a better time than now?

## **An Unexpected Education at St. Anthony’s**

*By Stephanie Salter*

From *The San Francisco Examiner*, January 18, 1994

Privileged children of the middle class, they Anthony’s Dining Room expecting the stewent into their two-week stint at St. reotypes: hostile and violent drug addicts,

filthy and shameless street people, able-bodied men and women who like being parasites on society.

Instead: “We’ve become realists, and it’s scary The reality is that those people (at St. Anthony’s) and the other thousands like them *are* like you and us. The overwhelming majority are people who have been beaten by some bad odds—family abuse, mental illness, alcoholism, catastrophic illness, old age or were just unemployed one month too many and had no one to help out.”

The above is from a copy of a letter written by six St. Ignatius College Prep students and their teacher. The original letter went to a columnist for another Bay Area newspaper in response to an essay about the unattractive “realities” of San Francisco’s homeless.

Too bad the other paper chose not to print the letter. These S.I. kids not only understand poverty and homelessness, their letter pointedly demonstrates what happens when the comfortable do as Mother Teresa suggests:

”Come and see.”

For the record, the students are Aram Bloom, Lisa Devitt, Beth Horan, Tom Fregoso, Jenjie Pineda and Anne Warren. Their teacher is Mary Ahlbach, a 40-year-old native San Franciscan who teaches English and theology.

Ahlbach is one of those Catholics who doesn’t just talk Christianity but tries to put its essence—love thy neighbor as thyself— into action in daily life. As Part of an S.I. peace and justice program called “Immersion,” which was created by history teacher Kathy Purcell, Ahlbach and her students spent two weeks this past summer working every day at St. Anthony’s in the Tenderloin.

No one emerged unchanged.

"You have to stand behind the counter and hand out 2,000 trays of food as fast as the kitchen can dish them out," wrote the students. "You have to walk up and down the jammed tables and bus the used trays of the handicapped and elderly. Try and stop to talk to a few of these individuals or families and hear their stories.

"It takes a while to see the shame they carry right beneath their survival-toughened surface . . . Stay a bit longer to talk to those who work there . . . the elderly who have volunteered for five or 10 years, the young, those who have experienced homelessness, and those, by luck, or fate or fortitude, who never will."

According to Ahlback, the students spent most of their first week at St. Anthony's in one of two, intense emotional states: anger or depression.

"They kept saying, "We can't *treat* people this way," she said.

Priorities were radically reordered. Perspectives were turned inside out. As the students put it in their letter.

"How many people would stop for a dog, hungry and sick, lying in the bottom of the emptied fountain in front of City Hall, as we witnessed a man, a human being, last Tuesday?"

Rather than scapegoat and blame the people they got to know, the St. Ignatius students know exactly where to place the blame.

"We, as a society that calls itself civilized, have rationalized so well and so convincingly this shame of denying human beings the dignity and self-worth of employment or the basic right to be cared for if they are ill or old," they wrote.

"We are madly rushing to circle the wagons and separate ourselves as far as possible from these people, not because their plight is a sham but because their plight is so utterly beyond our capacity or willingness to comprehend, let alone solve.

"Somewhere in the past 10 years, we've walked over that one-too-many person lying in the street, and we had to escape—intelligently arguing the obvious reasons we need to do this in order not to face the reality of our inhumane and unjust policies and attitudes toward the poor."

With the help of some of the veteran volunteers at St. Anthony's said Ahlback, the students learned a lesson that is necessary for anyone who wants to work for social change and survive: Anger must be channeled into action, and helplessness is fought by thinking and working small—with individuals, not the whole world.

Perhaps most important, by serving the poor, seeing their faces, hearing their stories—by recognizing their human value—the six S.I. students learned something that far too many adults have yet to understand.

Contrary to an increasingly popular tendency to blame the poor, criminalize the homeless and obsess on ferreting out "fraud" in a mean and despicable system of social welfare, the students learned:

"The bottom line has to be: We who have our lives, through whatever reasons, intact, need to help those who don't put theirs back together again. If a few take advantage of that, then so be it."

## Life on the Expense Account

*By Donald Barlett and James Steele*

*From America: What Went Wrong? Dismantling the Middle Class*

Andrews McNeely, 1992

Meet Thomas Spiegel. He is the former chairman and chief executive officer of Columbia Savings & Loan Association, a Beverly Hillsbased thrift that the *New York Times* described in February 1989 as an institution that “has been extremely successful investing in junk bonds and other ventures.” Spiegel is a major fund-raiser and financial supporter of political candidates, Democrats and Republicans alike. He and his family live in a six-bedroom Beverly Hills home—complete with swimming pool, tennis court and entertainment pavilion—that could be purchased for about \$10 million.

Spiegel thrived at Columbia during the 1980s, a time when the executive branch of the federal government loosened regulatory oversight of the savings and loan industry. Working with his friend and business associate Michael Milken, whose Drexel Burnham Lambert, Inc. office was just down the street in Beverly Hills, Spiegel used depositors’ federally insured savings to buy a portfolio of junk bonds, the high-risk debt instruments that promised to pay big dividends.

Columbia’s profits soared. Earnings jumped from \$44.1 million in 1984 to \$122.3 million in 1985 and \$193.5 million in 1986, before trailing off to \$119.3 million in 1987 and \$85 million in 1988.

Spiegel’s compensation for those years averaged slightly under \$100,000 a week. He spent \$2,000 for a French wine-tasting course, \$3,000 a night for hotel suites on the French Riviera, \$19,775 for cashmere throws and comforters, \$8,600 for towels and \$91,000 for a collection of guns—Uzis, Magnums, Sakos, Berettas, Sig Sauers.

Not unusual outlays, you might think, for someone who collected a multimilliondollar yearly salary. Only in this case, according to a much-belated federal audit, it was Columbia—the savings and loan—not Spiegel, that picked up the tab.

There is, to be sure, nothing new about lavish corporate expense accounts. The practice of converting personal living expenses to a deduction on a company or business tax return has been around as long as the income tax. It is a practice that Congress has been unable to curb. But in the 1980s, corporate tax write-offs for personal executive expenses as well as overall corporate excesses—from goldplated plumbing fixtures in the private office to family wedding receptions in Paris and London—reached epidemic proportions.

The reasons varied. Among them:

- The pace of corporate restructuring brought on by Wall Street created a climate in which once-unacceptable practices became acceptable, indeed, were even chronicled on radio and television, in newspapers and magazines.



- In a monumental change in the rules, Congress deregulated the savings and loan industry, in effect opening the doors to the vaults of the nation's savings institutions, while at the same time discouraging meaningful audits or crackdowns when irregularities were detected.
- The Internal Revenue Service lacks the staffing and time to conduct the intense audits of companies that would uncover such abuses. And even if the resources were available, an impenetrable tax code places too many other demands on the agency.

All this made possible a Tom Spiegel— and an army of other corporate executives who lived high on their expense accounts. Federal auditors eventually found that Spiegel used Columbia funds to pay for trips to Europe, to buy luxury condominiums in Columbia's name in the United States and to purchase expensive aircraft. From 1987 to 1989, for example, Spiegel made at least four trips to Europe at Columbia's expense, the auditors reported, staying at the best hotels and running up large bills.

They included, the report said "\$7,446 for a hotel and room service bill for three nights in the Berkeley Hotel in London . . . for Spiegel and his wife . . . in November 1988" and "\$6,066 for a hotel and room service bill for three nights in the Hotel Plaza Athenee in Paris . . . in July 1989."

The Spiegels' most expensive stay was in July 1989 at the Hotel du Cap on the French Riviera, where the family ran up a \$16,519 bill in five days. And when they weren't flying to Europe, the Spiegels spent time at luxury condominiums, acquired at a cost of \$1.9 million, at Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Indian Wells, California; and Park City, Utah.

To make all this travel easier, Spiegel arranged for Columbia, a savings and loan that had no offices outside of California, to buy corporate aircraft, including a Gulfstream IV equipped with a kitchen and lounge. Federal auditors now say that Columbia paid \$2.4 million "for use of corporate aircraft in commercial flights for the personal travel for Spiegel, his immediate family and other persons accompanying Spiegel." Columbia wrote off those expenses on its tax returns, thereby transferring the cost of the Spiegel lifestyle to you, the taxpayer.

The Federal Office of Thrift Supervision has filed a complaint against Spiegel, seeking to recover at least \$19 million in Columbia funds that it claims he misspent. Spiegel's lawyer, Dennis Perluss, said Spiegel is contesting the charges.

"All of the uses that are at issue in terms of the planes and the condominiums were for legitimate business purposes," Perluss said.

But you are paying for more than Spiegel's lifestyle. You are also going to be picking up the tab for his management of Columbia. After heady earnings in the mid-1980s, Columbia lost twice as much money in 1989 and 1990—a total of \$1.4 billion—as it had made in the previous twenty years added together. Federal regulators seized Columbia in January 1991. Taxpayers will pay for a bailout expected to cost more than \$1.5 billion.

That final figure depends, in part, on how much the government collects for the sale of the corporate headquarters on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. When construction started, it was expected to cost \$17 million. By the time work was finished, after Spiegel had made the last of his design changes— “the highest possible grade of limestone and marble, stainless steel floors and ceiling tiles, leather wall coverings”—the cost had soared to \$55 million.

It could have been even higher, except that one of Spiegel’s ambitious plans never was translated into bricks and mortar. According to federal auditors, he had wanted to include in the building “a large multilevel gymnasium and ‘survival chamber’ bathrooms with bulletproof glass and an independent air and food supply.”

Just who Spiegel thought might attack the bathrooms of a Beverly Hills savings and loan is unclear.

*Beverly Hills vs. the South Bronx:]] The Day They Told the Truth on Rodeo Drive  
By James Patterson and Peter Kim*

*From The Day America Told the Truth: What People Really Believe About Everything That Really Matters.* New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1991

*James Patterson is the chairman of J. Walther Thompson and one of the most highly respected writers in advertising. He is also the author of six novels, including an Edgar Award Winner, The Thomas Berryman Number. Peter Kim is senior vice-president and director of Research Services and Consumer Behavior for J. Walter Thompson and the youngest member of the agency’s U.S. board of directors. The authors live in New York.*

At two poles of American society lie Beverly Hills, California, and the South Bronx, a distressed neighborhood in New York City.

Is it possible for one community to be “above” morality, while another is “below” it? We thought it would be fascinating to find out.

We were able to find out through the use of a test specially designed for these two communities. We did a series of confidential, indepth interviews, then we tabulated the results: Beverly Hills vs. the South Bronx.

Beverly Hills is the coddled bedroom of the American dream factory. It’s a place where you see limousines standing on quiet streets before the manicured lawns of mansions. Almost everyone is white. The average annual family income exceeds \$100,000. Reported crimes against people in 1988 numbered 284, of which 3 were killings and 8 were rapes. The 14,805 residents have the services of 351 doctors, 121 dentists, and 536 legal firms.

The South Bronx is at the opposite end of the American spectrum. It is a place of littered streets lined by half-abandoned, gutted tenements,. The people are mostly Hispanic and black. Few are white. The average annual family income is less than \$10,000. The 2,014 reported crimes against people in 1988 included 25 murders and

47 rapes. At last count, there were 11 doctors, 13 dentists, and 2 law firms for 37,449 residents.

These are two extremes of the American experience.

We wanted to know in which area the residents are more prone to violence. Who uses illegal drugs more? Are the people of Beverly Hills morally superior to those in an American ghetto? But what we really wanted to find out was, how do the radical differences in their surroundings affect the sense of community of people in Beverly Hills and the South Bronx?

#### WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE CALLED THE POLICE FOR HELP

When we called the Beverly Hills police for the official crime statistics, a very polite, friendly officer told us that he'd immediately tap into their computer system and fax us the information that day. He did. When we called the 51st Police Precinct in the South Bronx, a gruff police officer told us to "go bother the Police Commissioner."

Among the hundreds of people we interviewed in the South Bronx were a clerk, a cashier, a cook, a nurse's aide, a building superintendent, a dental hygiene therapist, a professional thief, an elementary-school teacher, a cab driver, and a philosopher.

#### BEVERLY HILLS VS. THE SOUTH BRONX JAMES PATTERSON AND PETER KIM 195

Their counterparts in Beverly Hills included an oil company president, two film producers, an accountant, a physician, a pension fund administrator, and an engineer. Here's what our modern *Tale of Two Cities* revealed:

**Legitimacy of the legal order.** People in the South Bronx absolutely reject the system of social and legal order. A high percentage, 49 percent, believe that "most of the laws in society are unfair . . . and we should not be forced to obey them." Only 14 percent of people in Beverly Hills agree with that point of view.

**Official crime.** In 1988, there were ten times as many homicides, six times as many rapes, and five times as many robberies in the South Bronx as there were in Beverly Hills.

**The police.** Forty-five percent of people in the South Bronx give the local police a failing grade. In Beverly Hills that percentage is only 33 percent.

**Suicide.** Fifty-four percent of the people in Beverly Hills actually knew someone who committed suicide vs. 35 percent in the South Bronx. And in Beverly Hills, a third more people than in the South Bronx have considered suicide themselves.

**Child abuse.** Sadly, child abuse is very common in the South Bronx. However, child abuse is just as common in Beverly Hills. The figures on child abuse are almost identical for both communities!

**Infidelity.** People in Beverly Hills are much more likely to have an extramarital affair (or two or three) than are people living in the South Bronx ghetto.

**Drugs.** The people in Beverly Hills are twice as likely to use illegal drugs as are the residents of the South Bronx. Thirty-eight percent of residents in Beverly Hills use illegal drugs vs. 17 percent in the Bronx.

**Hidden crime.** When we looked at unreported crimes, Beverly Hills residents were twice as likely to have actually committed a crime themselves. Beverly Hills residents were also more likely to personally know someone who has gone to jail.

**Violence.** Violence is certainly a fact of life in the South Bronx. But the average resident of Beverly Hills is four times as likely to own a gun. Twice as many reported that they had actually shot someone. Beverly Hills residents are as prone as residents of the South Bronx are to resorting to fistfights or shouting matches, but they are more likely (13 percent vs. 9 percent) to have sent someone to the hospital.

**Charity.** The 46 percent of people in the South Bronx who give to charity make a far greater sacrifice than do the 70 percent of wealthier residents of Beverly Hills, because they give much more on a percentage basis.

**Not in my back yard.** The principle of “not in my back yard” is considerably stronger in Beverly Hills than it is in the South Bronx. We asked residents in both places whether they would vote “Yes” or “No” to a proposal to locate certain kinds of institutions on the streets where they live. Whether it was a drug rehabilitation center, a shelter for the homeless, a home for the retarded, or an AIDS hospice, the not-on-my-street vote was greater, often twice as high, in Beverly Hills.

**Capital crime and punishment.** Capital crime is far more common in the South Bronx. However, the people of Beverly Hills are more vocal (70 percent vs. 52 percent) in support of the death penalty. A sizable number of people in Beverly Hills reported very harsh opinions on imposing legal death as well:

- Forty-three percent would execute an insane person
- Twenty-seven percent have no objection to executing the mentally retarded
- Twenty-three percent would execute a ten-year-old criminal

In the South Bronx, less than half as many people agreed.

The South Bronx has been depicted (several times by Hollywood) as a burnt-out shell of a community. In *Fort Apache the Bronx* and *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, the people were stereotyped as villains and *mal hombres*.

But we found the majority of people there to be honest and hardworking, trying to do their best under nearly impossible circumstances.

## THE EXECUTIONERS

Among the women in Beverly Hills who would execute a ten-year-old criminal, we found a single college graduate in her early twenties, whose annual household income is more than \$100,000. She gives nothing to charity but does give to panhandlers; would keep an envelope containing \$100 that she found on the street; would not give half of

a \$20 million lottery hit to charity; and votes “No” on five of seven not-in-my-backyard questions. She rates her moral standing as “excellent” and her chances of heaven as “very good.”

Among the Beverly Hills men who would execute a ten-year-old, is a single college graduate in his early twenties, whose household income is \$75,000. He doesn’t give to charity or to panhandlers. He voted “Not in my backyard” all the way.

Beverly Hills has its share of very good people too, but there is an unusually high degree of law-breaking and a high incidence of child abuse.

What of the future? Well, 54 percent of the adults in the South Bronx firmly believe that their children are growing up with stronger moral values than they have. In Beverly Hills, the number is 27 percent.

From our study, there is certainly no evidence that living in Beverly hills results in being a better human being. On the contrary, on many counts, we had to score this one a moral victory for the people of the South Bronx.

## How to Slash Corporate Welfare

*By Stephen Moore*

From *The New York Times*, April 5, 1995

A new political catch phrase has entered the Washington lexicon: corporate welfare.

On the left, Labor Secretary Robert Reich and Representative Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a socialist, have called for an end to “aid to dependent corporations.” On the right, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas and John Kasich of Ohio, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, have pledged to eliminate billions of dollars in Federal loans and subsidies to selected industries. Congress may finally be getting serious about getting business off Government support.

Still, few in Washington fully appreciate the extent to which aid to corporate America permeates the Federal budget. The Cato Institute calculates that Congress finances more than 125 programs that subsidize private businesses at a net cost of about \$85 billion per year. Add tax breaks, and the price tag exceeds \$100 billion a year—or half the annual Federal deficit.

Following are eight of the most egregious examples of corporate welfare embedded in various agencies of the Federal budget.

- *Sematech*. The Pentagon provides nearly \$100 million a year to this consortium of semiconductor producers based in Austin, Tex. Of the more than 200 chip makers in the United States, only the 14 largest, including Intel and the National Semiconductor Corporation, receive aid from Sematech. Originally designed to help U.S. companies compete internationally, Sematech now mostly benefits the largest Silicon Valley producers at the expense of small domestic upstarts.

- *Sugar price supports.* Because Washington restricts sugar imports, the price for U.S. sugar is kept artificially high. The 33 largest American plantations each receive more than \$1 million apiece in higher sales prices, and the cost is largely passed on to the poor. According to a Commerce Department study: “Because sugar is an ingredient in many food items, the effect of the sugar program is similar to a regressive sales tax, which hits lower-income families harder than upper-income families.”
- *Subsidies to electric utilities.* Through the rural Electrification Administration and the Federal power marketing administrations, the Government gives some \$2 billion in subsidies each year to large and profitable electric utility cooperatives. Thus subsidies, in the form of low-interest loans, hold down the cost of running ski resorts in Aspen, Colo., and luxurious hotels in Hilton Head, S.C.
- *Timber industry subsidies.* Last year, the Forest Service spent \$140 million building roads in national forests, thus helping pay for the removal of timber by private firms. Over the past 20 years, the Forest Service has built 340,000 miles of roads—more than eight times the length of the interstate highway system—primarily for logging companies.
- *The Department of Agriculture’s market promotion program.* Through the department’s Foreign Agriculture Service, this program spends \$110 million a year advertising American products abroad. In 1991, taxpayers spent \$10 million promoting Sunkist oranges, \$2.9 million selling Pillsbury muffins and pies, \$1.2 million boosting the sales of American Legend mink coats and \$465,000 advertising McDonald’s Chicken McNuggets.
- *The advanced technology program.* The Administration’s high-tech version of the Small Business Administration, started in 1993, funneled \$400 million last year to such giants as Chevron, General electric, I.B.M., and Texaco. Federal Election Commission records indicate that all of these companies, along with many other techno-pork recipients, were substantial contributors to Bill Clinton’s Presidential campaign or to the Democratic National Committee.
- *Ethanol.* This corn-based gasoline substitute gets two special breaks: a tax credit for companies that make ethanol and an exemption from Federal excise taxes that together amount to at least \$500 million. Though proponents defend ethanol subsidies on the grounds that the fuel reduces both pollution and U.S. dependence on foreign oil, an often cited 1986 Department of Agriculture study concluded that “when all economic costs and benefits are tallied, an ethanol subsidy program is not cost effective.” Indeed, it takes more energy to produce a gallon of ethanol than is in a gallon of ethanol.

Archer-Daniels-Midland, a \$10 billion company based in Decatur, Ill., produces two-thirds of the ethanol used in this country. The company and its chief executive, Dwayne Andreas, have been among the nation's most generous campaign contributors; Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader, has received more than \$150,000 from them over the years.

- *The clean car initiative.* This year, the Administration is requesting \$333 million for this program, also known as the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles, with the aim of producing a more fuel-efficient car. The White House says the program will “insure the global competitiveness of the U.S. automobile industry”—that is, General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, whose combined profits last year came to a record \$13.9 billion.

Many people in and out of Government defend these programs by arguing that they strengthen strategic industries and thus protect high-paying U.S. jobs. But tens of thousands of businesses export products abroad; perhaps 1 percent receive Federal assistance. At most, half of 1 percent of the millions of small companies will ever receive a Small Business Administration loan, yet the 99.5 percent that don't will pay higher taxes to support those that do.

If the Government eliminated one-third of the corporate subsidies scattered throughout the budget, enough money would be saved to abolish the capital gains tax. That would create far more jobs and start-up businesses than 100 Sematechs.

In any case, should the Government even be in the business of picking corporate winners and losers? Business subsidies mainly create an uneven playing field, usually to the advantage of politically influential industry leaders and at the expense of their less wellconnected rivals. Nor is it very likely that bureaucrats will correctly identify America's next Microsoft, Intel or MCI. In fact, the Government has a poor record of picking winners. The delinquency rate on the Government's business loans is about 8 percent, compared to the approximately 3 percent among private banks.

Despite all the appealing arguments in Washington about the need to forge closer partnerships between the Government and industry, in practice golden handshakes tend to have a corrupting influence on both. Corporate welfare is anti-business as well as antitaxpayer.

## Corporations: Underworld, U.S.A.

*By Russell Mokhiber*

From *In These Times*, April 1, 1996

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Spurred by Patrick Buchanan's presidential campaign, American reporters and political leaders are suddenly abuzz with the formerly taboo subject of corporate power and its abuse. *Newsweek* ("Corporate Killers"), the *New York Times* ("Corporations Under Fire"), *Business Week* ("The Coming Backlash Against Business"), even Bob Dole, have all weighed in on the tragedy of escalating layoffs.

Yet all the talk of "corporate responsibility," unprecedented as it is, remains numbingly vague. No major political figure or publication has mustered the courage to address the country's current wave of corporate crime and violence. (*Newsweek's* headline writers didn't mean killing people; they meant the elimination of jobs.) But corporate crime and violence inflict far more damage on society than all street crime combined.

Nevertheless, inside-the-Beltway corporate liberals and conservatives alike insist that crime in America is committed primarily by the poor and blacks.

Richard Cohen, a *Washington Post* columnist and a corporate liberal, believes that "young black males commit most of the crimes in Washington, D.C." Charles Krauthammer, a *Post* columnist and a corporate conservative, has written that "crime is generally an occupation of the poor." And James Glassman, a straight-out corporatist and *Post* contributor, writes that the rich "don't commit the violent crimes that require billions to be spent on law enforcement."

These statements can be considered plausible only if we ignore—as Cohen, Krauthammer, Glassman and their colleagues in the mainstream media regularly ignore—the crimes and violence committed by powerful large American corporations and their primarily wealthy non-young-black-male executives.

How much damage these corporations inflict is known only by the criminals, their high-powered lobbyists and their attorneys, (Robert Bennett, one of the nation's premier white-collar crime defense lawyers, has said that "90 percent of what I work on never sees the public light of day—and that should be true of any good white-collar crime defense attorney.")

Every year, the FBI issues its Crimes in the United States report, which documents murder, robbery, assault, burglary and other street crimes. The report ignores corporate and white-collar crimes such as pollution, procurement fraud, financial fraud, public corruption and occupational homicide.

But some evidence indicates the magnitude of the problem. The FBI reports burglary and robbery combined cost the nation about \$4 billion in 1995. In contrast, white-collar fraud, generally committed by intelligent people of means—such as doctors, lawyers, accountants and businessmen—alone costs an estimated 50 times as much—\$200 billion a year, according to W. Steve Albrecht, a professor of accountancy at Brigham Young University.

The FBI puts the street homicide rate at about 24,000 a year. But the Labor Department reports that more than twice that number—56,000 Americans—die every year on the job or from occupational diseases such as black lung, brown lung, asbestosis and various occupationally induced cancers.



Even these figures, which scarcely meet with any serious public attention or debate, don't get at the full scale of the problem. Most corporate wrongdoing and violence goes unreported for one compelling reason—unlike all other criminal groups in the United States, major corporations have enough power to define the law under which they live.

The auto industry is a case in point. Today, the federal auto safety law carries no criminal sanctions, thanks to the auto industry lobby. For years, auto safety advocates have sought to add criminal sanctions to the law, and for years, the auto lobby has blocked their passage.

This might seem to many mainstream observers a harmless legislative perk. But consider that for more than 20 years, the auto industry also defeated efforts to enact a federal law that would require air bags as standard equipment on all U.S. cars.

It wasn't that the industry didn't know how to save lives. General Motors produced more than 11,000 Chevrolets, Buicks, Oldsmobiles and Cadillacs with full front air bags in the early 1970s. Numerous studies predicted what the auto companies and safety experts are now seeing on the road—air bags are saving lives and preventing serious injury.

However, the industry didn't want to live under a life-saving rule of law. So every time safety advocates brought the air bag law up in Congress, the crime lobby defeated it. It wasn't until 1991, after government-procured cars demonstrated the life-saving potential of air bags, that the industry gave in to growing public pressure.

Auto safety expert Byron Bloch, who owns an original production 1973 Chevy Impala with full front air bags, estimates that as many as 140,000 Americans—"almost three Vietnam wars worth of Americans"—have died in auto crashes since the early 1970s because the auto companies' legislative privilege effectively thwarted all efforts to develop and legally mandate the device in American cars.

Yet even if a genuine populist movement were to enact tough laws criminalizing the reckless conduct of corporations, there would still remain the problem of prosecution. And here, too, lurks a central, if unsurprising, obstacle to reining in corporate crime: Unlike most other criminal groups, corporations have enough power to influence prosecutors not to bring criminal charges.

According to former *New York Times* reporter David Burnham, each of the past halfdozen U.S. attorneys general have publicly committed the Justice Department to a war against white-collar crime. But as Burnham reports in his recent book, *Above the Law: Secret Deals, Political Fixes and Other Misadventures of the U.S. Department of Justice*, the Department doesn't walk the talk.

Burnham—who now co-directs the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, which collects data on the performance of the U.S. government—finds that less than one half of 1 percent (250) of the criminal indictments (51,253) brought by the Department in 1994 involved environmental crimes, occupational safety and health crimes, and crimes involving product and consumer safety issues. Burnham doubts whether this record reflects the true level of corporate crime in America.

"In August 1993, the *National Law Journal* did a survey of general counsels of major corporations," Burnham told *Corporate Crime Reporter*. "Sixty-six percent of the counsels said they believed that their companies had violated federal or state environmental laws in the last year. You have tens of thousands of major corporations. You have a substantial number of the general counsels of these companies saying they are committing crimes. That speaks for itself."

Burnham believes that corporate criminals often get away because of "unacknowledged class biases, outright political deals, poorly drafted laws and incompetent investigators" at the Justice Department. When it comes to prosecuting white-collar crime cases, Burnham argues, "the Justice Department itself could be convicted of fraud."

On-the-job homicides are some of the most heinous crimes corporations could be charged with. Yet corporate violence that results in worker deaths rarely provokes criminal prosecutions, either at the state or federal level. The National Safety Council estimates that since the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHAct) in 1970, 250,000 workers have died on the job.

Many of these deaths stemmed directly from recklessness on the part of corporate employers, but according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), only four people have done time for OSHAct violations.

Each year, OSHA refers only a handful of cases to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution. And Justice Department officials are reluctant to prosecute these cases, knowing that the federal workplace safety law allows for only six months in prison for a first offense.

This is a law enforcement obscenity. Harassing an animal gets you more time than criminal violations of the federal worker safety law. The maximum criminal penalty for harassing a wild burro on federal land is one year in jail, and seven people have been jailed for this crime.

Labor union activists have sought to strengthen the criminal provisions of the health and safety law over the years, but these efforts have been roundly defeated by big business interests in Congress. And the business-driven anti-law enforcement climate in Washington often leaves OSHA pulling its punches in cases of the most egregious corporate conduct.

Take the case of Patrick Hayes. In October 1993, Hayes was smothered to death under 60 tons of corn at a Showell Farms, Inc. chicken-processing facility in De Funiak Springs, Fla. It took rescue workers five and a half hours to recover his body.

OSHA investigator Linda Campbell found six willful violations of the federal worker safety law and recommended a \$530,000 fine against the company. Campbell also told Hayes' parents that she recommended a criminal prosecution of those responsible for Patrick's death.

But Campbell's superiors at OSHA overruled her original determination, reducing the fines to \$30,000 and downgrading the citations from "willful violations" to "serious." Because federal law requires a "willful violation" to prosecute a workplace death, this reversal blocked any possible federal criminal prosecution.

In cases like these, state officials should step into the breach and investigate the workplace death for a possible reckless homicide or manslaughter prosecution. When Ira Reiner was the Los Angeles County district attorney in the 1980s, he investigated every workplace death for a possible criminal prosecution—and took many of the cases to court.

Currently, one such prosecution is pending in Wisconsin. Last year, the district attorney in Jefferson County hit Ladish Malting Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Cargill, Inc., with reckless homicide charges in connection with the death of Vernon Langholff, an employee who had fallen 100 feet from a fire escape landing that broke a part from a grain elevator. State officials alleged that the unsafe condition of the fire escape had been reported to the company's safety committee three years earlier.

But in most such cases, district attorneys are under heavy pressure from big business interests not to bring such prosecutions. In the Hayes case, Patrick's father, Ron Hayes, approached the Florida state's attorney to look at the possibility of criminally prosecuting the company.

"[The state's attorney] told me and my wife and my attorney that he was scared by the company's attorney," Hayes says. "The company's attorney told the state's attorney that they would make this a political issue if the state tried to prosecute. The state's attorney said that he just did not want to get into a political battle. He was not going to try to help us politically with this case."

Even though corporate offenders regularly tilt the legal system to their advantage, some blatant acts of criminality do slip through the cracks and are prosecuted. Fortysix executives were convicted in the "Operation-Ill-Wind" defense procurement fraud enforcement action in the early 1990s. Thirteen major defense corporations—including Boeing, General Electric, United Technologies and Hughes—were convicted in that operation. In *When the Pentagon Was for Sale* (Scribner, 1995), Andy Pasztor, a *Wall Street Journal* correspondent who covered the Pentagon, tells the inside story of the country's biggest defense scandal. Multibillion-dollar contracts were secretly divvied up according to a "shopping list" devoid of any competition, one of the main conspirators recalled to Pasztor. The conspirators assembled their contracts "just the way you would make one out if you went to the supermarket. When you're in control, you can do anything you want, absolutely anything... And we did."

Meanwhile, Exxon, International Paper, United Technologies, Weyerhaeuser, Pillsbury, Ashland Oil, Texaco, Nabisco and Ralston Purina have all been convicted of environmental crimes in recent years. Currently, federal grand juries in Manhattan, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Brooklyn and Alexandria, Va., are investigating the tobacco industry for a whole range of wrongdoing, from lying to Congress to deceiving shareholders about the known addictive hazards of smoking. The first indictments are expected soon.

Recidivist corporations steal billions of dollars every year. They are often caught by company whistleblowers and by federal or state officials under the nation's toughest anticorporate wrongdoing civil law—the federal False Claims Act. The *qui tam* pro-

visions of the False Claims Act permit a private citizen to file suit on behalf of the federal government and collect a portion of the money if the government's action is successful. In 1994, a group of the nation's largest defense contractors worked the halls of Congress in an effort to weaken this law. (The bill later died in a Senate committee.)

In response, a public-interest group, the Project on Government Oversight, began to research the records of the companies seeking to weaken this popular anti-fraud law. The project studied the criminogenic histories of these companies and found that the companies had been engaged in adjudicated fraudulent activities (some criminal)—many of them three or more times.

The study found that General Electric has engaged in fraudulent activities 16 times since 1990. According to the study, a modified “three strikes and you’re out” rule would have disqualified an impressive roster of fraud-tainted losers from receiving government contracts, including Boeing (4), Grumman (5), Honeywell (3), Hughes Aircraft (9), Martin Marietta (5), McDonnell Douglas (4), Northrop (4), Raytheon (4), Rockwell (4), Teledyne (5), Texas Instruments (3) and United Technologies (3).

Meanwhile, corporatist politicians, not beholden to any notion of corporate justice, are shameless in their defense of corporate crime. Last year, a reporter asked Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich about his association with Southwire Co., a major Georgia company convicted of environmental crimes. The reporter pressed Gingrich to explain why he hadn't severed his ties to the family that controls the company and that had dumped more than \$100,000 into Gingrich's various campaigns and projects.

“You are talking about the largest employer in Carroll County [Gingrich's home base], which has over 3,000 people who work for it,” Gingrich said. “I hardly think that having been convicted of a violation turns one into a criminal company.” No politician could get away with an answer like this after taking contributions from convicted inner-city drug dealers who put to work thousands of their fellow citizens.

Gingrich was also asked last year about House Republican efforts to limit the criminal liability of doctors and other health care providers who rip off the health care system for an estimated \$100 billion a year. “For the moment, I'd rather lock up the murderers, the rapists and the drug dealers,” he replied. “Once we start getting some vacant jail space, I'd be glad to look at it.” Clearly, Gingrich and the rest of the corporatist Washington crowd fail to grasp a fundamental lesson of effective deterrence: enforce the law against the most powerful members of society first.

Ignore or downplay the crimes of the powerful, and like a fish, respect for legal authority rots—from the head down. Why should street criminals respect legal authority when corporatists like Gingrich give the flashing green light to doctors and hospital executives to plunder the health care system?

Gingrich has said we must “re-establish shame as means of enforcing proper behavior.” Who wouldn't agree? But let's start at the top, where the rot takes hold.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

In small groups with classmates, then in general class discussion, devise a survey of the attitudes of students at your college toward the morality of poor people versus rich ones, which might indicate individual students' opinions both about what social class they themselves belong to and the extent of generalizations and stereotypes they are inclined to make about the rich and poor. Refer to the above diagram "Middle-Class Ethnocentric Attitudes" as a guide to possible questions. Then implement the survey.

Stephanie Salter quotes the high school students working at St. Anthony's homeless shelter writing, "We, as a society that calls itself civilized, have rationalized so well and so convincingly this shame of denying human beings the dignity and self-worth of employment or the basic right to be cared for if they are ill or old." Debate this assertion in class. As a research and writing project, try to volunteer to work in a homeless facility in your locality and report on it.

Discuss a popular song, TV series, or movie that either indulges in stereotyping or challenges stereotypes.

Becky Wildman-Tobriner, author of the op-ed "Will Sex Stereotypes Never End?" is identified as a fifteen-year-old high school student. How do you think her writing and reasoning compare with those of the professional writers in this section of readings and elsewhere in this book? How persuasive do you find her arguments? Explain why.

"Beverly Hills vs. the South Bronx" is a Chapter in the book *The Day America Told the Truth: What People Really Believe about Everything That Really Matters*, by James Patterson and Peter Kim. Patterson and Kim are top executives at J. Walter Thompson, one of America's wealthiest corporate advertising agencies. What inferences might be drawn about their socioeconomic and political viewpoint? Are their findings what you would predict from that viewpoint? Does the fact that their findings are unfavorable to the class of their own clients give those findings more plausibility? How credible do you find their empirical study and its implications about common stereotypes of the rich and poor? Are there larger inferences that can reasonably be drawn from it, or is it an inadequate sampling from which to generalize?

Russell Mokhiber's "Corporations: Underworld, USA," "Life on the Expense Account" by Donald Barlett and James Steele (from their book *America: What Went Wrong?*), and Stephen Moore's "How to Slash Corporate Welfare" present collections of empirical evidence that contradict positive generalizations and stereotypes about the morality of the rich and large corporations. How well reasoned and supported are their arguments? How well qualified is their level of generalization? Can it be accurately inferred that they are generalizing about all corporations, most, many, or what? Evaluate the causal analysis and analogy in Mokhiber's last two paragraphs and his implicit charge that there is a double standard in conservatives' judgments on street criminals versus corporate ones: "Ignore or downplay the crimes of the powerful, and like a fish, disrespect for legal authority rots—from the head down. Why should street criminals respect legal authority when corporatists like Gingrich give the flashing green light to doctors and hospital executives to plunder the health care system?"

You might look at the rest of the Chapter excerpted from Barlett and Steele, and at their complete book, to get a clearer sense of the context. Their central argument is that the policies of the Reagan administration in the 1980s enacting large tax cuts, deregulating industries like savings and loans, and providing other benefits to the wealthy led to abuses on a large enough scale to discredit Reaganomics. How persuasive is this one example toward that larger argument? (Also see the arguments about Reaganomics in chapters 20 and 21.)

Stephen Moore is a prominent spokesperson for libertarianism (as defined in Chapter 15), having been associated with two leading libertarian organizations, the Cato Institute and the Club for Growth. Where in his article does he express the view that corporate welfare is inconsistent with, and detrimental to, the workings of a pure free market, which libertarians endorse? How would you surmise that his criticism of corporate welfare differs from that of those “on the left, Labor Secretary [under President Clinton] Robert Reich and Representative Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a socialist”?

# Chapter 8. Authoritarianism and Conformity, Rationalization and Compartmentalization

**Authoritarianism** is the mental trait of uncritically accepting or obeying anything that someone perceived to be in a position of authority says; it also describes the mentality of political rulers who impose that uncritical acceptance of their authority on those they rule, particularly through an undemocratic government, and it can be the name given to a society with that kind of government. Note that the words *authoritative* and *authoritarian* are not synonymous. To say that someone is authoritative means that he or she is an authority on a particular subject, speaking with authentic expertise on it, so this word has a positive **connotation**, in contrast to the negative connotation implied when a person or society is described as authoritarian. (We might, however, fall into a somewhat authoritarian mind-set if we uncritically assume that whatever an authority says is true simply because the individual is an authority, without our verifying his or her evidence and reasoning.)

Of course, in many cases people in positions of authority—government officials, business executives, religious leaders, military and police officers, professionals, educators, scholars and authors, as well as elder members of our own families and communities—deserve to be respected, and the **equal and opposite extreme** from authoritarianism is falling into knee-jerk, indiscriminating *disrespect* for anyone in authority. (In the ambivalent and paradoxical nature of human psychology, extreme antiauthoritarianism often is not really the opposite of authoritarianism but rather a twisted reflection of it. Thus people who try to assassinate public figures often turn out to be driven by conflicts within their own deepseated authoritarian mentality.) The golden mean is determining which authorities merit respect on the basis of exercising authority responsibly and which do not, and this is one of the important judgment calls that critical citizenship constantly entails.

If many people are inclined to submit blindly to political or social authorities, many also go through life conforming to the **ethnocentric** customs and attitudes of their families, friends, schoolmates, church, political party, associates at work, and other social groupings.

Conformity is an especially ticklish subject to discuss objectively because although most of us are conformists to a greater or lesser extent, few of us want to admit it.

Would you or anyone you know admit outright, “I am a conformist”? The subject is doubly ticklish in the United States, where there has long been a **compartmentalization** between our image as a society of rugged individualists and the tendencies toward regimentation that many critics such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau have noted since the mid-nineteenth century. Contrast Jefferson’s vision of a public education system that would “raise the mass of people to the high ground of moral respectability necessary to their own safety, and to orderly government” with Emerson’s contemptuous reference in “The American Scholar” some twenty-five years later: “Men in the world of to-day are bugs, are spawn, and are called ‘the mass’ and ‘the herd’” (106). In *Walden* (1854) Thoreau famously said, “The mass of men live lives of quiet desperation” (7) and “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer” (295). There is a social **taboo** today against even raising the subject of conformity, so it comes as rather a shock when a journalist like Jennifer Crichton, in an article from *Ms.* magazine, declares (albeit with **hyperbolic** humor), that “American high schools are as notoriously well-organized as totalitarian regimes, complete with secret police, punishment without trial, and banishment” (3).

Social psychologists trace what they term “the authoritarian personality” to childhood socialization in which parents, and especially the father, exert strict, often harsh and unreasonable, authority over their children. In this view, children’s unquestioning submission to paternal authority tends to be projected into their adult compliance with religious, social, and political authority. (Compare with George Lakoff’s description in Chapter 9 of “the strict father model” of society that characterizes conservative ideology.) The term *patriarchy* describes the concept, delineated by Virginia Woolf in the excerpt from *A Room With a View* in Chapter 6, that our whole social order is based on domination by paternalistic authority and more broadly by the power of men over women; thus the women’s liberation movement represented a challenge to the **culturally conditioned assumption** of male dominance. Sylvia Plath’s famous 1962 poem “Daddy” fantasized her domineering, German-American father as a Nazi:

Every woman adores a Fascist,  
The boot in the face, the brute  
Brute heart of a brute like you.

The poem ends:

There’s a stake in your fat black heart  
And the villagers never liked you. They are  
dancing and stamping on you. They always *knew* it was you.

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through.

This last stanza has been widely interpreted as a rejection, not only of Plath’s father, but of patriarchal domination of women in general.

Erich Fromm’s 1941 book *Escape from Freedom* is a classic study of the authoritarian social psychology that attracted so many Europeans to fascism—an ultraconservative ideology that combines fanatic nationalism with totalitarian government led by an all-powerful ruler—in the 1930s and that has been a strong tendency even in other modern democracies, including the United States. (See the definition of fascism in Chapter 15.) Fromm discusses many individuals’ fear of growing out of infantile dependency on their



parents, projected into a larger fear of thinking critically and exercising free will as an adult in society. He relates this personal and social fear of freedom to masochistic neurosis:

The annihilation of the individual self and the attempt to overcome thereby the unbearable feeling of powerlessness are only one side of the masochistic strivings. The other side is the attempt to become a Part of a bigger and more powerful whole outside of oneself, to submerge and participate in it. This power can be a person, an institution, God, the nation, conscience, or a psychic compulsion. By becoming Part of a power which is felt as unshakably strong, eternal, and glamorous, one participates in its strength and glory. One surrenders one's own self and renounces all strength and pride connected with it, one loses one's integrity as an individual and surrenders freedom; but one gains a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges. One gains also security against the torture of doubt. The masochistic person . . . is saved from making decisions, saved from the final responsibility for the fate of his self, and thereby saved from the doubt of what decision to make. These questions are answered by the relationship to the power to which he has

attached himself. The meaning of his life and identity of his self are determined by the greater whole into which the self has emerged. (155-56)

Thus, in Fromm's view, "If the individual finds cultural patterns that satisfy these masochistic strivings (like the submission under the 'leader' in Fascist ideology), he gains some security by finding himself united with millions of others who share these feelings" (153). We can see here a key to the recent attraction of various cults for many young Americans. We can also see a key to the tendency after an external threat to a nation like September 11, 2001, for many people to seek security in a president who is a "strict father" figure entrusted to take whatever measures he considers necessary to protect us from foreign and domestic threats. However, many people in this situation also tend not to understand the danger in giving up critical scrutiny of governmental or military authorities, who often in such circumstances historically have manipulated the people's fears to seize total power and crush democracy and civil liberties—Hitler in Germany being the most notorious example.

Fromm's title *Escape from Freedom* **alludes** to the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Chapter "The Grand Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). The Grand Inquisitor, Dostoyevsky's imaginary, sinister prototype of the twentieth-century totalitarian dictator, **rationalizes** his regime's antidemocratic social control as follows: "Man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find some one quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born" (302).

Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only

pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen..... They will tremble

impotently before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass to laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish song. Yes, we shall set them to work, but in their leisure hours we shall make their life like a child's game, with children's songs and innocent dance. (306-7)

Dostoyevsky's dark prophecy has been echoed by many writers opposing the social control exercised by both modern governments and corporations through mass cultural "children's songs and innocent dance," such as in Susan Sontag's description, cited in Chapter 1, of the Bush administration's post-9/11 statements as "a campaign to infantilize the public."

The ultimate modern literary depiction of authoritarianism and conformity is George Orwell's futuristic 1949 novel *1984*. The hero, Winston Smith, rebels throughout the novel against a totally regimented society dominated by a perhaps nonexistent ruler called Big Brother. Smith is ultimately captured, tortured, and brainwashed to correct his "deviation" from conformity. On the last page of the book, he finally submits to servitude before a huge televised picture of Big Brother, perceived here as all-wise father:

Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark mustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-soaked tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother. (197)

A more contemporary version of authoritarian society was presented by the American playwright Paddy Chayevsky in his 1972 screenplay for the film *Network*, which satirically suggests that by the late twentieth century, the major authority in the world has become not governments but multinational corporations. In the film's most famous sequence, a TV anchorman, Howard Beale, goes slightly berserk and starts urging all his audience members to rebel against monopolistic corporate control of television and American society in general, by sticking their heads out of their windows and yelling, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this any more!" Beale is called into the headquarters of the corporation that owns the network for which he works and is lectured by the CEO, Arthur Jensen, in the following scene updating "The Grand Inquisitor" and *1984*:

## Paddy Chayevsky

From *Network*

"You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, Mr. Beale, and I won't have it, is that clear? You think you have merely stopped a business deal—that is not the case! The Arabs have taken billions of dollars out of this country, and now they must put it back. It is ebb and flow, tidal gravity, it is ecological balance! You are an old

man who thinks in terms of nations and peoples. There are no nations! There are no peoples! There are no Russians. There are no Arabs! There are no third worlds! There is no West! There is only one holistic system of systems, one vast and immane, interwoven, interacting, multi-variate, multinational dominion of dollars! Petrodollars, electrodollars, multidollars, reichsmarks, rubles, Yin, pounds and shekels. It is the international system of currency that determines the totality of life on this planet! That is the natural order of things today! That is the atomic, subatomic and galactic structure of things today! And you have meddled with the primal forces of nature and you will atone! Am I getting through to you, Mr. Beale?"

In the darkness, Howard said, "Amen."

"You get up on your little twenty-one inch screen, Mr. Beale" Jensen resumed, "and howl about America and democracy. There is no America. There is no democracy. There is only IBM and ITT and AT&T and Du Pont, Dow, Union Carbide and Exxon. Those are the nations of the world now. What do you think the Russians talk about in their councils of state—Karl Marx? They pull out their linear programming charts, statistical decision theories and minimize solutions like the good little systems-analysts they are and compute the price-cost probabilities of their transactions and investments just like we do.

"We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies, Mr. Beale. The world is a college of corporations, inexorably determined by the immutable bylaws of business. The world is a business, Mr. Beale! It has been that way since man crawled out of the slime, and our children, Mr. Beale, will live to see that perfect world without war and famine, oppression and brutality—one vast and ecumenical holding company, for whom all men will work to serve a common profit, in which all men will hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused. And I have chosen you to preach this evangel, Mr. Beale."

"Why me?" Howard whispered humbly.

"Because you're on television dummy. Sixty million people watch you every night of the week, Monday through Friday."

Howard slowly rose from the blackness of his seat so that he was lit only by the ethereal diffusion of light shooting out of the rear of the room. He stared at Jensen, spotted on the podium, transfixed.

"I have seen the face of God!" Howard said.

Jensen considered this curious statement for a moment. "You just might be right, Mr.

Beale."

That evening, Howard Beale went on the air to preach the corporate cosmology of Arthur Jensen. He seemed sad, resigned, weary.

BEALE: Last night, I got up here and asked you people to stand up and fight for your heritage and you did and it was beautiful. Six million telegrams were received at the White House. The Arab takeover of CCA has been stopped. The people spoke, the people won. It was a radiant eruption of democracy. But I think that was it, fellers.

That sort of thing isn't likely to happen again. Because in the bottom of all our terrified souls, we all know that democracy is a dying giant, a sick, sick, dying, decaying political concept, writhing in its final pain. I don't mean the United States is finished as a world power. The United States is the most powerful, the richest, the most advanced country in the world, light-years ahead of any other country. And I don't mean the Communists are going to take over the world. The Communists are deader than we are. What's finished is the idea that this great country is dedicated to the freedom and flourishing of every individual in it. It's the individual that's finished. It's the single, solitary human being who's finished. Because this is no longer a nation of independent individuals. This is a nation of two hundred-odd million, transistorized, deodorized, whiter-than-white, steel-belted bodies, totally unnecessary as human beings and as replaceable as piston rods.....

What I'm talking about, of course, is dehumanization. That's a bad word, dehumanization, like imperialism, military-industrial complex, big-business. We're all supposed to resist dehumanization. Lord knows, I've been getting up on this program for eight months and that's all I've been yelling about—we must fight the dehumanization of the spirit. I kept yelling all the good words like justice and brotherhood, the dignity of man, compassion, decency and simple human kindness. Well, we all know that's a lot of shit. I mean, just look around you. So the time has come to say: is dehumanization such a bad word? Because good or bad, that's what is so. And we are moving inexorably towards more total dehumanization, drawn by gravitational forces far greater than anything we can comprehend. And not just us, the whole world.

We're just the most advanced country, so we're getting there first. The rest of the world—Russia, China, the undeveloped world—can't wait to catch up to us. It'll be easy for them. They're already dedicated to mass societies. The whole world then is becoming humanoid, creatures that look human but aren't. We are becoming mass-produced, programmed, wired—insensate things useful only to produce and consume other mass-produced things, all of them as unnecessary and useless as we are. Nevertheless, that is the cosmic state of affairs.

Once you've grasped that, once you've understood the total futility and purposelessness of human existence, then the whole universe becomes orderly and comprehensive. We are no longer an industrialized society; we aren't even a post-industrial or technological society. We are now a corporate society, a corporate world, a corporate universe. This world is a vast cosmology of small corporations orbiting around larger corporations who, in turn, revolve around giant corporations, and this whole endless, eternal, ultimate cosmology is expressly designed for the production and consumption of useless things... (130-135)

This sequence from *Network* is a good example of **dramatic irony**, through which an author creates a gap between what the characters know or say and the way the audience is expected to interpret it. Here, we are not expected to take Arthur Jensen's "corporate cosmology" as the benevolent model that he is "selling" but to reject it as an antidemocratic nightmare. Nor are we expected to give in to Howard Beale's pessimism

at the end but again to say, “We’re mad as hell, and we’re not going to take this any more!”

Likewise, if many writers, ancient and modern, have warned pessimistically of the dangers of authoritarianism and conformity, many have also depicted heroic models of critical nonconformity and rebellion against authority. In Plato’s dialogue *The Apology*, Socrates in his trial declares his willingness to die for defying social conformity: “There is no man who will preserve his life for very long, either in Athens or elsewhere, if he firmly opposes the multitude, and tries to prevent the commission of much injustice and illegality, in the state. . . . But I thought that I ought to face the danger, with law and justice on my side, rather than join with you in your unjust proposal, from fear of imprisonment or death” (364). Also in ancient Greece, Sophocles’ play *Antigone* dramatizes the defiance of a brave woman against the arbitrary authority of the emperor Creon. Shakespeare’s Hamlet stands up to the conformity of a court and society that rationalize the dictates of a corrupt, murderous king.

In American literature, some of the most powerful statements against conformity were made shortly before the Civil War by writers associated with the transcendentalist movement, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Frederick Douglass, denouncing the nation’s cowardice in refusing to abolish slavery. Thoreau’s 1849 essay “Civil Disobedience” (also sometimes titled “Resistance to Civil Government”) was written to protest the Mexican-American War, which was waged at least partially with the motive of bringing Texas, whose ruling Anglo slave owners wanted independence from Mexico after that country abolished slavery, into the union to strengthen the pro-slavery faction in the federal government. With specific reference to the Mexican-American War, Thoreau says:

A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, aye, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small moveable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? (637)

Thoreau refused to pay a poll tax used to finance the war and was sent to prison for one night, an episode he describes and justifies: “I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,—if ten *honest* men only—aye, if *one honest* man in this state of Massachusetts, *ceasing to hold slaves*, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once done well is done forever” (646). In a broader defense of nonconformity against government authority, Thoreau asks, “Why does it [government] not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommuni

cate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?” (644).

“Civil Disobedience” has been highly influential on subsequent leaders of rebellions like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Mario Savio. To be sure, the excesses by some elements of the protest movements in the later 1960s provoked a conservative backlash against this variety of nonconformity and a broader questioning of the validity of the whole tradition of antiauthoritarianism. “The sixties” and their “adversary culture” remain fighting words even today, invoked by both sides in the ongoing culture wars four decades later. The poet Adrienne Rich is a veteran of the sixties adversary culture who has remained an activist to the present, in pacifism as well as the women’s and gay rights movements. In her interview with the editor of the *Progressive* magazine, included in the readings for this chapter, she addresses the reduced hopes for social change and nonconformity today.

To summarize, your challenge as a critical citizen is to judge rationally for yourself in any given situation whether support of authority and majority opinion or criticism of and active opposition to it is warranted, rather than either conforming or rebelling simply because of cultural conditioning or peer pressure.

## Rationalization, Compartmentalized Thinking, and Double Standards

Psychological blocks like ethnocentrism and authoritarianism typically lead us toward a need to twist logic around to justify whatever actions and ideas support the authority or group we identify with. *Rationalization* is the word for this process of deceiving ourselves into believing what we want to believe or what benefits us personally, at the expense of what we would believe on rational grounds. (Definitions get confusing here because *rationalize* derives from *rational*, but *rationalization* means to convince ourselves that an irrational idea is rational; *to rationalize* is to reason in a way that justifies a predetermined or desired

conclusion.) Geoffrey Chaucer succinctly defined rationalization another way: “Making virtue of necessity.” Many people go through their whole lives confusing rationalization with reasoning, never understanding that what they firmly believe is rational is really rationalization of whatever serves their own or their group’s interests. One common form of rationalization is making excuses and blaming somebody or something else for our own failures: when a student gets a low grade, it’s the teacher’s fault; when a teacher gets poor student evaluations, it’s the students’ fault. Another form is “sour grapes,” saying we don’t really want what we can’t get. Still another common form is simple **denial** of unpleasant truths.

Rationalizations in turn lead us into unconscious inconsistencies and self-contradictions, or compartmentalized thinking. George Orwell’s *1984* captures

the essence of these mental traps in the concept of **doublethink**, the term devised by the all-powerful ruling party of the future state of Oceania to describe the mental process through which the masses are programmed into rationalizing all of the party's lies, deprivations of rights, and constant changes of policy or of foreign allies and enemies. Doublethink is brilliantly defined in the readings section of this Chapter through the thoughts of the central character, Winston Smith, a government bureaucrat whose job is rewriting history daily to reconcile it with the shifting party line (when historical records are destroyed, they go "down the memory hole," suggesting that the entire capacity for memory of the past can be destroyed). The slogans summing up the compartmentalized thinking of doublethink in 1984 are emblazoned on the facade of the Ministry of Truth (the agency in charge of producing lies, of course): "**War Is Peace. Freedom Is Slavery. Ignorance Is Strength**" (19).

In Oceania every military defeat is described in official broadcasts as a stunning victory, every reduction in the standard of living as a "glorious" increase. (At one point Winston learns that the chocolate ration is to be reduced to twenty grams, but the public announcement describes the change as an *increase*, and "there had even been demonstrations to thank Big Brother for raising the chocolate ration to twenty grams a week.") Yet the people "swallow it" because of a doublethink combination of authoritarian craving to believe that the leaders know best and rationalization of the fear that the government will "track down, denounce, and vaporize" anyone who questions its authority. The citizens are regularly stirred up in a collective "Two Minutes Hate" frenzy against whichever other country the government has identified as the enemy of the moment.

In reading 1984 we are apt to feel grateful that we are living in a free society and not in a totalitarian dictatorship like that of the Soviet Union, the immediate model for Orwell's nightmarish vision. But, in spite of the enormous differences between such dictatorships and American society, our reaction might contain an element of compartmentalized thinking and **projection** in our denial of the many ways in which we too conform to the power structure of our own society. Are the rationalizations of the shifting alliances in Orwell's world, for example, so different from our government's and media's changing attitudes toward China, Vietnam, and other Communist countries—demonizing them when they were economic rivals but establishing normal relations with them when they decided to do business with us? The United States was an ally of Saddam Hussein, selling him arms (which he used against his own people), when Iraq was at war with Iran in the 1980s. Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11* (which alludes directly to 1984 in exposing the alleged rewriting of history by the Bush administration) includes newsreel footage from that period showing Donald Rumsfeld, who would be the secretary of Defense directing the war against Iraq in 2003, cordially shaking hands with Saddam in Baghdad as an emissary to Iraq in the eighties. Later, in our two wars against Saddam, he was transformed by both Bush presidents and Rumsfeld into a Hitler-like monster (which he may well have been, but no less so in the eighties). We also supported the Taliban and leaders of Al Qaeda when they were resisting the Soviet

Union's control of Afghanistan in the eighties; President Ronald Reagan praised them as "freedom fighters"—before they turned the weapons that we provided them against us and became "terrorists."

At the time the Bush administration was persuading the public to support its war on Iraq in 2002-2003, a *Washington Post* poll indicated that 70 percent of Americans believed Iraq played a direct role in 9/11. Another poll found that 44 percent of respondents thought "most" or "some" of the 9/11 hijackers were Iraqi. None were; most were citizens of Saudi Arabia (as was Osama Bin Laden), a country that was a close American ally, with which the Bush family had long-standing ties in the oil business. Fifty-five percent polled believed Saddam Hussein directly supported Al Qaeda. A majority of Americans also believed that weapons of mass destruction had been located in Iraq and that Saddam was about to build a nuclear bomb. Among regular viewers of Fox News, these percentages were even higher (see Susan Gerhard's article "*Outfoxed* Tweaks Rupert Murdoch's Mayhem-isphere" in chapter 16). Several subsequent investigations by Congress and government commissions, however, concluded (at least at the time of this writing) that all of these beliefs were ungrounded. In some cases, the Bush administration denied ever having even made these claims, although critics cited many administration statements **implying** they were true. Was this perhaps a classic case of Orwellian rationalization, wishful thinking by masses of citizens, terrified by 9/11 and desperately wanting to believe that the war against Iraq was both justified and an effective retaliation against the perpetrators of 9/11? Considering the often hate-filled denunciations of the war's critics (including the Dixie Chicks) as unpatriotic or even treasonous and heightened government surveillance under the Patriot Act, mightn't some supporters also have been rationalizing their conformity and unwillingness to be tracked down, denounced, and vaporized?

The issue concerning the Iraq War was not what the facts about Saddam Hussein actually were (which at this writing were still open to dispute and new revelations) but whether people's conformity to the government line might have been yet another example of Orwell's depiction of these tendencies in all humans and all societies, particularly under the conditions of mass **propaganda** in modern democracies as well as dictatorships. Indeed, Orwell objected to the popular reception of *1984* in the West as simply an anti-Communist tract or as a warning against the totalitarian potential in English socialism ("Ingsoc"): "The name suggested in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is of course Ingsoc, but in practice a wide range of choices is open. In the USA the phrase 'Americanism' or 'hundred per cent Americanism' is suitable and the qualifying adjective is as totalitarian as one could wish" (quoted in Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, 566.)

Joseph Heller's 1961 novel *Catch-22* applies many of Orwell's concepts to a satire of American society. One character is a master of rationalization and compartmentalization:

He was a long-limbed farmer, a God-fearing, freedom-loving, law-abiding rugged individualist who held that federal aid to anyone but farmers was creeping socialism.



He advocated thrift and hard work and disapproved of loose women who turned him down. His specialty was alfalfa, and he made a good thing out of not growing any. The government paid him well for every bushel of alfalfa he did not grow. The more alfalfa he did not grow, the more money the government gave him, and he spent every penny he didn't earn on new land to increase the amount of alfalfa he did not produce. (86)

The **double standard** that Heller is satirizing here, of conservatives who stand up for free enterprise yet lobby for government subsidies for their business enterprises, continues to be timely today, as indicated in Stephen Moore's "How to Slash Corporate Welfare," in Chapter 7.

The famous title phrase of *Catch-22* refers to an imaginary rule used to force a squadron of American airmen in Europe during World War II to fly an unreasonable number of dangerous combat missions. When the novel's hero Yossarian asks the company doctor if there is any way his stressed friend Orr could get out of such missions, he is assured that the doctor is empowered to ground any flyer who is crazy. There is, however, a catch—"Catch22": "Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy..... Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions" (47). Over the course of the novel, however, *Catch-22* turns out to be an all-purpose gimmick; those in power invent a different version of it in any situation to rationalize their capricious exercise of authority over those beneath them in the hierarchy in exactly the same manner that Orwell's rulers use doublethink. Most of the characters—including the company chaplain—have learned to deceive themselves into justifications for conforming to the corruptions of the bureaucratic system in which they are caught: "The chaplain had mastered, in a moment of divine intuition, the handy technique of protective rationalization, and he was exhilarated by his discovery. It was miraculous. It was almost no trick at all, he saw, to turn vice into virtue and slander into truth, impotence into abstinence, arrogance into humility, plunder into philanthropy, thievery into honor, blasphemy into wisdom, brutality into patriotism, and sadism into justice. Anybody could do it; it required no brains at all. It merely required no character" (372).

In political disputes, opposing sides constantly resort to rationalization, compartmentalization, and their related fallacies to excuse their side's faults. When liberals side with a militant African American accused of shooting a policeman, they first claim it was a frameup; when evidence shows otherwise, they change their story to, "Oh Well, it was probably self-defense." "The Sandinistas in Nicaragua were not allied with Communist Russia or Cuba! They *were*? Oh well, they had to find support somewhere because they were being undermined by the United States." When conservatives are confronted with atrocities committed by American troops or their right-wing allies in Vietnam or Central America, they similarly deny the facts as long as they can, then when the evidence becomes irrefutable, their story too switches: "Oh well, that happens in every war." In the Iran-contra scandal, conservatives (including President Reagan) first denied that the United States had traded arms for hostages and diverted

the profits from the arms sales to Iran to provide illegal support for the contra rebels against the Sandinistas; then when that denial became untenable, they switched to, “Oh well, it was justified in the fight against Communism.” When stories first surfaced in 2004 about American abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, conservatives tended at first to say, “Oh well, it was just a few rotten apples among the rank-and-file troops.” But when information came out suggesting that approval for the abuse had come from high government officials, the story shifted to, “Oh well, when you’re dealing with terrorists, anything goes.” According to *Newsweek* (July 19, 2004, 41-42), many of those abused were petty criminals who had nothing to do with terrorism, and others were not guilty of any crime—so some new variety of rationalization was predictable.

## Double Standards and Selective Vision

One of the most common forms that compartmentalized thinking and rationalization take is a double standard or **selective vision**: applying a more demanding standard of morality to the other side than to our own, or blaming the other side for the same faults that we overlook or even praise as virtues on our own. (These are also varieties of **stacking the deck**, and they frequently involve projection of our own faults onto the other side.) It’s one of the hardest challenges of critical thinking to get beyond the ESBYODS principle and see the double standards and selective vision that blind us all to faults on our own side that we are so quick to see on the other side.

In virtually every day’s news, you can see Republicans and Democrats self-righteously denouncing the other party’s politicians for vices of which their own side is just as likely to be guilty. In scandals during Republican presidential administrations, like Watergate or Iran-contra, Democrats **play up** the gravity of every accusation, while Republicans go into a mode of denial, **downplaying** the importance of the alleged crimes (“It was just a thirdrate burglary”), claiming the charges are motivated by political partisanship, and invoking “national security” or “executive privilege” as excuses not to cooperate with the investigation. When Democrats are in office, as in President Bill Clinton’s Monica Lewinsky and Whitewater scandals, the roles and rhetoric switch diametrically. When House Republicans tried to impeach Clinton, they were highly self-righteous in their moral condemnation of Clinton’s adulterous affairs, yet after the impeachment effort failed, it became public knowledge that several Republicans leading that effort had also committed adultery—some at the very time of the impeachment trial.

On the positive side, pointing out double standards in your opponent’s arguments is one of the most effective lines of refutation—that is, if you do not fall into a double standard yourself in so doing! Pointing them out involves a form of argument by **analogy**, showing that “what’s sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.”

The quality of the argument, then, depends on the validity of the analogy in the claim that the two situations are indeed comparable in the way the author suggests. (See Chapter 11 on analogies.) At the end of this Chapter are two opinion columns using double-standard arguments and analogies, one by left-of-liberal Katha Pollitt criticizing conservative opponents of affirmative action and one by conservative Jeff Jacoby criticizing liberal environmentalists.

## Other Defense Mechanisms

Psychologists identify further varieties of blocks to open-mindedness stemming from **primary certitude** and rationalization. Two of the most common defense mechanisms are **denial** and **projection**.

When we are confronted with facts or views that threaten our primary certitude, we tend to react by “being in denial,” a state of angry, irrational defense of our own closedminded opinion and refusal to consider any evidence to the contrary. To be sure, not every denial fits the psychological profile of being in denial. There is a big difference between denying the validity of an opposing viewpoint through coolheaded reasoning (even though it may be passionately expressed) and a knee-jerk reaction that is purely emotional and unsupported with evidence and reason.

When we are at fault in relationship to other people but don’t want to admit it, a common form of denial is to convince ourselves that it is the others who are at fault and that they are committing the fault against us that we have committed against them, or at least that our bad behavior toward them is a justified reaction against their behavior toward us, that “they started it.” (This mentality feeds into the causal fallacy of **blaming the victim**.) Another form that projection often takes is intense anger toward someone who exhibits traits that we have suppressed within ourselves; thus men who are extremely homophobic and who might commit violence against homosexuals may be projecting self-hatred over their own suppressed homosexual tendencies onto an external target.

An excellent analysis of both denial and projection is found in James Baldwin’s 1963 book *The Fire Next Time* (excerpted in Chapter 10). Baldwin, expressing an African-American viewpoint on how white Americans’ illusions of racial superiority were threatened by the civil rights movement, suggested that whites were in constant denial about four centuries of crimes committed by whites against blacks—beginning with kidnapping and slavery, followed after abolition by unpunished lynching, rape, robbery, segregation, and denial of civil rights. Baldwin said about the truth of this history that many whites “do not know it, and do not want to know it” (15). They suppressed consciousness of reality by rationalizing that blacks preferred to be subordinate and segregated, or by projecting criminality into **stereotypes** of black men as rapists of white women, murderers, thieves, and loafers. To whatever extent these stereotypes had any basis in reality, that reality was judged causally as a sign of blacks’ innate

criminality, not as an effect of or reaction to centuries of crimes against them. Simultaneously, according to Baldwin, in the white psyche, blacks symbolized an uninhibited sexuality and day-to-day intensity of life that whites denied themselves, so that whites' attitudes were highly compartmentalized: they both looked down on blacks as morally inferior and envied their flamboyant sensuality:

The white man's unadmitted—and apparently, to him, unspeakable—private fears and longings are projected onto the Negro. The only way he can be released from the Negro's tyrannical power over him is to consent, in effect, to become black himself, to become a Part of that suffering and dancing country that he now watches wistfully from the heights of his lonely power and, armed with spiritual traveler's checks, visits surreptitiously [secretly] after dark. (129)

A more recent discussion of projection is found in David Brock's book *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative*, excerpted in Chapter 5. Brock confesses that as a highly successful conservative journalist in the 1990s, he was not really an objective reporter but a propagandist for the Republican Party, with little regard for truth. He says that he and other conservative propagandists rationalized their unscrupulousness by the assumption that liberals had a similarly powerful and unscrupulous machine, but he eventually came to realize this was a false assumption: "I unconsciously projected onto the liberals what I knew and saw and learned of the right wing's operations" (114).

*From 1984*

*By George Orwell*

New York: Harcourt, Brace 1949

For several months during his childhood there had been confused street fighting in London itself, some of which he remembered vividly. But to trace out the history of the whole period, to say who was fighting whom at any given moment, would have been utterly impossible, since no written record, and no spoken word, ever made mention of any other alignment than the existing one. At this moment, for example, in 1984 (if it was 1984), Oceania was at war with Eurasia and in alliance with Eastasia. In no public or private utterance was it ever admitted that the three powers had at any time been grouped along different lines. Actually, as Winston well knew, it was only four years since Oceania had been at war with Eastasia and in alliance with Eurasia. But that was merely a piece of furtive knowledge which he happened

to possess because his memory was not satisfactorily under control. Officially the change of partners had never happened, Oceania was at war with Eurasia: therefore Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia. The enemy of the moment always represented absolute evil, and it followed that any past or future agreement with him was impossible.

The frightening thing, he reflected for the ten thousandth time as he forced his shoulders painfully backward (with hands on hips, they were gyrating their bodies from the waist, an exercise that was supposed to be good for the back muscles)—the frightening thing was that it might all be true. If the Party could thrust its hand into

the past and say of this or that event, *it never happened*— that, surely, was more terrifying than mere torture and death.

The Party said that Oceania had never been in alliance with Eurasia. He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago. But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed—if all records told the same tale—then the lie passed into history and became truth. “Who controls the past,” ran the Party slogan, “controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. “*Reality control*” they called it; in Newspeak, “doublethink.”

Winston sank his arms to his sides and slowly refilled his lungs with air. His mind slipped away into the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that (the party) was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again, and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself—that was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the fact of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word “doublethink” involved the use of doublethink.

*From “An Interview with Adrienne Rich”]*

*Progressive*, January 1994, online edition

Q: Do you ever get totally depressed about the possibility of change in this country?

Rich: I find the conditions of life in this country often very, very depressing. The work that I choose to do is very much in Part to not get lost and paralyzed. The activism I choose to do, the kind of writing I choose to do has a lot to do with that, with going to the point where I feel there is some energy. And there is a lot of energy in this country—but it’s diffused, it’s scattered, it’s localized. And it’s not in the mainstream media; you can get totally zonked there. What is so notably absent from there is the very thing that poetry embodies, which is passion, which is desire, real desire—I’m not talking about sex and violence. And what I feel among my friends who are activists, who are making things happen, however locally and on however limited a scale—there is an energy there.

We’re in this for the long haul. That just cannot be said too often. I mean, there’s not going to be some miracle in the year 2001. It seems to me our thinking is much less naive than when I started out—about what it’s going to take to make real human possibility happen, to make a democracy that will really be for us all.

Q: You write in *What Is Found There*, “You’re tired of these lists; so am I”—these lists being sexism, racism, homophobia, etc. Do you ever get so tired that you just don’t want to do politics for a while?

Rich: No, I’m not tired of the issues; I’m tired of the lists—the litany. We’re forced to keep naming these abstractions, but the realities behind them are not abstract. The writer’s job is to keep the concreteness behind the abstractions visible and alive. How can I be tired of the issues? The issues are our lives.

## On the Merits

*By Katha Pollitt*  
From *Reasonable Creatures*  
Knopf, 1994

The other day my old classmate Allen and I were discussing who would we the next editor in chief of the influential magazine whose staff he had recently joined. I proposed Rosemary, the deputy editor: She had seniority, she was extremely able, she was practically doing the job already. Allen looked at me as if I had suggested sending out a spacecraft for the editor of *The Neptune Gazette*. Come on, he said, you know they’d never give it to a woman. So who do you think it will be? I asked innocently. Well, he replied with a modest blush, actually, me.

This exchange made me think again about one of the more insidious arguments being made in the current onslaught against affirmative action: Advancing women and minorities on the basis of sex and race damages their self-esteem. According to Clarence M. Pendleton, Jr., Reagan-appointed chair of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, those who benefit from social and legal pressures on their behalf know in their hearts that they are unworthy and suffer terribly because they fear, correctly, that they won’t measure up. Worse, the women and minorities who would have won the golden prizes anyway—the college acceptance, the job, the promotion—are guilty by association: Everyone thinks they’re tokens, even if they’re not.

It’s an ingenious argument, because it not only appears to demonstrate concern for the same constituency as affirmative action but also makes affirmative action seem by comparison both crude and condescending. What is money, after all, or a job title, compared with the priceless gift of psychological peace? Don’t we all need to think we are rewarded on our merits? Yes, indeed, which is why I’m very worried about my friend

Allen’s peace of mind. If his publisher promotes him over Rosemary because he is a man, won’t Allen spend a lot of sleepless nights wondering if the world is snickering at him behind his back?

Not on your life. Allen has been blithely ignoring such threats to his self-esteem for decades.

We both attended Harvard-Radcliffe, for example, at a time when the ratio of male to female students was fixed at five to one. Granted that the pool of female applicants

was smaller, the fact remains it was harder for girls to get in. Everyone knew this, but Allen and his friends never saw themselves as having been rounded up to fill an inflated male quota. Nor did they see as tarnished victories their acceptance into the many allmale clubs and activities that flourished in those benighted years—the Signet Society, for instance, where literary Harvard men were served lunch by literary Radcliffe women employed as waitresses—or scorn to go off to Europe on postgraduate fellowships closed to female classmates.

If the self-esteem argument were true, who would get a good night’s sleep? After all, we live in a society where all sorts of considerations besides merit are accepted as valid means of choosing candidates. Because elite schools want diversity, it’s easier for a student from Montana to get in than one from New York City. Because lawmakers want to reward military service, veterans get lifelong preference for a slew of state and federal jobs. Because political parties want votes, they craft ethnically and geographically balanced tickets.

Some of these nonmerit considerations are rather shady, to say the least. At the Ivy League college where I taught last year, a delicious scandal came to light when an alumnus wrote an outraged letter to the campus newspaper alleging that his son had been passed over for admission in the rush to accept women and blacks. It turned out that although the overall odds of acceptance were one in seven, for the children of alumni they were almost one in two. Many sheepish things were said in defense of this practice: For example, administrators cited the natural desire of the college to create a sense of continuity between the generations, translated by campus cynics as the natural desire of the college to receive large financial contributions from prosperous grads. But I’m still waiting for Mr. Pendleton to acknowledge the existence of alumni-child preferences, let alone express solicitude for the self-esteem of alumni children.

It’s a curious thing. As long as we’re talking about white men competing with each other, we tacitly acknowledge that we live in a realistic world of a Balzac novel, a world in which we know perfectly well that Harvard C’s beat A’s from Brooklyn College, in which family connections and a good tennis serve never hurt, and sycophancy, backstabbing and organizational inertia carry the undeserving into top jobs every day of the week. Add women and blacks into the picture, though, and suddenly the scene shifts. Now we’re in Plato’s Republic, where sternly impartial philosopher-kings award laurels to the deserving after nights of fasting and prayer. Or did, before affirmative action threw its spanner into the meritocratic works.

So how do the beneficiaries of social privilege avoid the dreaded inferiority complex? That’s where individual psychology and social myopia come in. On the personal level they live in both worlds at once: *I* slave away in Plato’s Republic, while *you* weasel your way down the boulevards of Balzac’s Paris. This collective delusion is so culturally approved that people who get the formula backward are considered to be victims of “the impostor syndrome” and in need of psychiatric help.

To transform America into a true meritocracy would be a fascinating experiment in social engineering, but it would make the minor adjustments required for affirmative

action look like piano tuning. We'd have to strip the credentials of all male doctors over the age of thirty-five, for instance, since they got into medical school back when a woman had to be Albert Schweitzer in skirts to win a place in the class. Ditto for lawyers, engineers, tenured professors, corporate executives and military officers. The children of the famous would have to change their names. Perhaps it would be too cruel to force the powerful to remain celibate in order to discourage nepotism. But we could certainly make it a criminal offense to marry the boss's daughter, or even to take her out for coffee.

Brave New World or simple justice? Whichever, I'm ready for it, whenever Mr. Pendleton gives the word; even though, as an alumni child, I'll have to turn in my college diploma. Because in the perfect meritocracy that would result, Rosemary would get that job. And Allen? Well, he'd have something even more precious. His self-esteem.

*Greens Dodge Links to Unabomber]]*

*By Jeff Jacoby*

From *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 24, 1996

*Jeff Jacoby is a Boston Globe columnist.*

That perfect silence you hear is the environcrimes of the Unabomber. It is President mental movement not being blamed for the Clinton not calling a press conference to

denounce the purveyors of hate and division on the ecological fringe. It is the Sunday-morning Beltway pundits not accusing environmental activists of inflaming an unstable creep like Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber suspect. It is editors in America's great newsrooms not assigning long takeouts on radical groups like Earth First, which blow up logging equipment and demand the blood of environmental "villains"—such as those the Unabomber killed.

There's environmentalism on the mind of the Unabomber. His own writings cite "anarchist and radical environmentalist journals" to justify attacks on the "the industrial-technological system," and he obviously drew his victims from the demonology of green extremists. Two examples:

- At a 1994 Earth First meeting in Missoula, Mont., the public-relations giant Burson-Marsteller was excoriated for supposedly having helped Exxon recover from the Valdez oil spill disaster. Kaczynski attended that meeting. One month later, Thomas Mosser, a former Burson-Marsteller executive, was killed by a bomb mailed to his home. In a letter to the New York Times, the Unabomber claimed credit. "Among other misdeeds," he wrote, "Burson-Marsteller (sic) helped Exxon clean up its public image after the Exxon Valdez incident."
- In a 1989 tract called "Live Wild or Die," a group of enviro-nihilists put out an "Eco-(expletive deleted) Hit List." No. 1 on the list was the Timber Association of California. Last year the Unabomber addressed an explosive to the association at its Sacramento headquarters, unaware that it had been renamed the California



Forestry Association. Gilbert Murray, the group's president and a father of three, opened the package. He died on the spot.

So isn't it odd that the nation's opinion makers aren't skewering environmentalists for the Unabomber's long trail of death and mayhem?

Isn't it curious that editorial writers and "Nightline" producers aren't hyping Kaczynski's connection to the eco-fanatics? Isn't it strange that we're not being reminded that deadly rhetoric can fuel deadly deeds—that when environmental advocates put timber executives on a "hit list," they are encouraging psychopaths to blow up timber executives?

Well, no, it isn't strange. It would be absurd to blame decent environmentalists for the Unabomber's murders. Just as it would have been absurd to blame decent conservatives for the horror in Oklahoma City. Whoops. Did somebody say ... "double standard?"

Twelve months ago, when Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols were arrested for the bombing in Oklahoma City, it was open season on anything right of center. President Clinton slammed conservative talk show hosts as "promoters of paranoia" who "leave the impression that ... violence is acceptable." Washington Post pundit David Broder observed, "The bombing shows how dangerous it really is to inflame twisted minds with statements that suggest political opponents are enemies." Even the Republican Party found itself charged with the terrorism in Oklahoma City.

He who says X must say Y. Either Al Gore, Earth First and Greenpeace had a hand in the Unabomber's killings—or Newt Gingrich, the NRA and Rush Limbaugh's radio show didn't cause the carnage in Oklahoma City. *Every* movement has its kooks and degenerates. To blame the left for the crimes of the Unabomber would be shameless. Even as it was shameless to blame the right for the crime in Oklahoma City.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

In the following cartoon, what generalization is implicit as a **hidden premise** about the man's connection between his father and the president? What exceptions to that generalization in recent history can you think of that would provide evidence that it is an **overgeneralization**?

*Cobb Weekly Editorial Cartoon 286*, Reprinted with permission, Sawyer Press, Los Angeles, California 90046 U.S.A.

A student writes: "From what we have read in this course, it appears like a small handful of corporations are in control of just about everything in America, and it's a good thing. The average one of the masses could hardly run his own life correctly if someone weren't looking after him, or so it seems. These huge corporations are responsible for the economic and social well-being of the nation. Hence it is logical to assume that they know what is best." What line of argument, and possible logical fallacy, is similar here to that in the cartoon in question 1.? Would you guess that the student considers herself or himself "the average one of the masses"? If not, do you think

she or he considers herself or himself one of those who will “look after” the others as an executive of one of that “small handful of corporations”? Is compartmentalized thinking perhaps evident here? What **evidence** can you think of that might be presented either in support of or in refutation of the unsupported assertions about the average one of the masses and about corporate responsibility?

Do you consider yourself a conformist or a nonconformist, or some mix of the two? Support.

Write an essay, based on your own high school memories, supporting or refuting Jennifer Crichton’s semihumorous description of American high schools as “totalitarian regimes.”

How applicable to contemporary America do you find the descriptions of an authoritarian society by Dostoyevsky, Fromm, Orwell, and Chayevsky? How plausible do you find the **hypothesis** that our childhood relations with our parents, and particularly our fathers, shape our adult attitudes toward social and political authority? And that many people want to “escape from freedom,” to go along with the crowd and submit passively to authority?

When Sylvia Plath says, “Every woman adores a fascist,” she is obviously using poetic hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration for dramatic or humorous effect), rather like Crichton. Do you think there is some truth, though, in the notion that repressive patriarchal cultural conditioning induces some females to seek out males who are domineering father figures? Read the rest of “Daddy” and some of Plath’s other poems in the collection *Ariel*. Debate whether you think Plath eloquently expresses the grievances of women against patriarchy, as her defenders say, or is just, as some critics charge, venting her personal neuroses.

Thoreau’s views on government, laws, and war in “Civil Disobedience” frequently provoke strong disagreement in contemporary readers. Debate Thoreau’s condemnation of the fact that soldiers give up their individual conscience and submit blindly to military and governmental authority. On the one hand, it can be argued that such submission is a justifiable part of the military chain of command and discipline needed to fight any war. On the other hand, it can be argued that ignorance of the situation one is in is never a good thing and that blind trust in commanders, by both soldiers and the public, has resulted throughout history in abuses of power and cover-ups of blunders or corruption. Thoreau was not a complete pacifist; indeed, as an abolitionist he strongly supported the Union in the Civil War. Read the complete text of the essay to see if he **draws the line** about when war is justified and when it isn’t, or if he was just **inconsistent**.

Review Thoreau’s sentences “I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men . . . it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once done well is done forever.” Do you think he is just using hyperbole here, or do you see a grain of truth in what he says? For example, Thoreau’s eloquent essay and his night in jail for not paying his taxes

were not immediate causes of the abolition of slavery, but they are remembered today as a significant Chapter in the eventual achievement of abolition.

The rhetoric and tactics of civil disobedience advocated by Thoreau and applied by Mario Savio and other leftists in the protest movements of the sixties have more recently been adapted by conservative movements such as militias and antiabortion activists. Write an essay or a dialogue in which you imagine whether or not Thoreau and Mario Savio would agree with the application of their principles to justification of pro-life groups or individuals preventing the normal operation of abortion clinics. Or write one on what you think Savio would say if conservative students shut down the Berkeley campus in protest against the accession of the administration to the demands of the Free Speech Movement.

In the interview with Adrienne Rich, what ideas does she express about the responsibility of writers that put her in the tradition of the writers discussed in the section “Writers as Dissidents” in Chapter 1 and of Camus’s and Orwell’s criticisms of semantic **abstraction**? Her causes are clearly liberal ones—opposition to “sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.” Why do you think creative writers, pre-eminently poets, tend to side with liberal causes like these? Can you find examples of poets and other creative writers who champion current conservative causes?

Evaluate the arguments in Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* and Stephen Moore’s “How to Slash Corporate Welfare” in Chapter 7 about the compartmentalized thinking, double standard, and rationalization of those who condemn welfare for the poor but approve of it for wealthy farmers and other corporate recipients of government subsidies. Is this a valid or a false analogy? Do some research on recent debates over farm subsidies.

Think of examples of rationalization, compartmentalized thinking, double standards, denial, or projection in current public life or in your own acquaintances. Look for examples in which Democrats and Republicans condemn members of the other party for misdeeds that their own party members have also committed.

How strong do you find Katha Pollitts and Jeff Jacoby’s lines of argument using analogies and allegations of double standards against opponents? Pollitt’s **tone** is semihumorous, but how serious and persuasive is her argument defending affirmative action?

Jacoby holds environmentalists accountable for the actions of the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, who murdered people he considered guilty of environmental destruction, and of other extreme environmentalist groups like Earth First. Is Jacoby committing the fallacy of **guilt by association**, or is his association a defensible one? Kaczynski was in fact a fan of Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience.” On the basis of the excerpt from that essay here, or of the full text, would you infer that Thoreau would endorse such extreme and violent forms of protest? Does he indicate where to draw the line in avoiding having his beliefs being pushed to such extremes?

Chapter

# Chapter 9. Semantics in Rhetoric and Critical Thinking

Semantics is the field of linguistic studies that deals with language as meaning and communication. The International Society for General Semantics (IGS), a scholarly organization that came to prominence in the 1940s, was devoted to a philosophy of semantics best known through a classic textbook, *Language in Thought and Action*, by S. I. Hayakawa. The IGS is still active, publishing a quarterly magazine, *Etc.* The principles of general semantics encompass the complex relationships diagrammed in figure 9.1, between the external world, human thought, language, and communication.

The common phrase “a semantic misunderstanding” refers to the breakdowns of understanding and expression that frequently occur at each stage of these relationships. Humans perceive the external world through sense impressions that, through a mysterious yet almost instinctive process, get translated into ideas and then into the vocabulary and syntax (order within and between sentences) of language. External reality, however, is infinitely complex, and the human mind and language are at best imperfect instruments, so there can never be a complete or precise correspondence between that reality and its transformation into the symbols of thought and language. Hence, one key slogan of general semantics is “The map is not the territory”—that is, maps and other symbols, visual or linguistic, can only be partial replicas of the original.

This first stage of breakdown is compounded at each further stage: putting ideas into language presents a constant struggle to say exactly what we mean, as does communicating our ideas to other people. Such communication is impeded by the cultural, physical, psychological, and semantic filters through which each of us receives messages from others. So virtually every idea, every act of speaking or writing, every communication should be thought of as provisional, subject to revision and further development, possibly to be followed by an “etc.”—hence the title of IGS’s magazine. The practical implication of these points for you as a student is to suggest a **tone** of “thoughtful uncertainty” in whatever you say or write in academic studies and life in general.

The imperfection of the pictures of reality we carry in our thoughts and language has been infinitely compounded in our age of mass communication by the proliferation of 222

*External world* ☒ *Thought* ☒ *Language* ☒ ☒ *Communication*

Figure 9.1. Semantics: A Summary

images of the world conveyed in print media, films, radio, and above all television. “Reality is Silly Putty” was a facetious slogan in the 1960s, and the lines between news, drama, advertising, and publicity have been increasingly blurred by all-devouring media and their recombinations of an increasingly plastic reality: infotainment, infomercials, and docudramas in the style of Oliver Stone’s *JFK* and *Nixon*, in which history is irresponsibly fictionalized to propagandize for the producer’s political line—in Stone’s case, a liberal one.

## Denotation and Connotation

Both the **denotation** and the **connotation** of words are key elements in argumentation and critical thinking. Denotation is close in meaning to *definition*; definition is what a word means in general, while its denotation is the particular object it refers to. A chair may be defined as “a piece of furniture, usually with four legs, designed for one person to sit on.” “This chair” denotes a particular embodiment of this definition. Some words, however, not only define or denote an object but also carry a connotation, an attitude or emotion toward the object. “Draft evader,” “draft dodger,” and “draft resister” all denote the same object, but “draft evader” is relatively neutral or denotative, while “draft dodger” has a negative connotation and “draft resister” has a positive connotation.

## Definition and Denotation in Argument

A central issue in the impeachment of President Bill Clinton involved Clinton’s denial of having had sex with Monica Lewinsky; he turned out to be hedging on the literal definition of “having sex.” In response to another question under oath, he responded, “That depends on what your definition of ‘is’ is.” As we see in many issues throughout this book, particularly the political issues surveyed in Chapter 15, the heart of disagreements is very often differing definitions of terms; if opponents are operating with a different understanding of disputed terms, if they have different “semantic filters,” they can reach no common ground. Describing someone as “proabortion” or “antiabortion” neutrally denotes a position on the issue. But “pro-choice” and “pro-life” denote the same positions in a way that defines abortion in **partisan** terms, either the terms of women’s control over their bodies or the terms of a fetus’s right to be born. *Homosexual* is a neutral term, *gay* a positive one, and numerous derogatory expressions denote homosexuality in negative terms. On an issue like legalizing homosexual marriage, its defenders try to define the issue as one of “equal rights,” while opponents try to define it as “special privileges.” Likewise with “affirmative action” versus “reverse discrimination.” In polls asking whether people favor “attempts to remedy discrimina-

tion against nonwhites,” the majority answer yes; but when the same people are asked whether they favor “racial preferences,” the majority say no.

A news report by Stanley Meisler in the *Los Angeles Times*, headlined “Women’s Conference Bogs Down in Semantics” (September 1, 1995, A25), describes a dispute at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, China, between liberal and conservative delegates over which word, *sex* or *gender*, should be used in conference reports:

Feminists argue the word *sex* differentiates men and women only by biological makeup; the word *gender*, they say, focuses on the differences between men and women that are set down by societies

Using the word *sex* instead of *gender*, according to the feminists, misses the point of why women have fewer rights than men in most societies.

But conservatives claim that feminists are using the word *gender* as a subterfuge to cover a host of activities that the right wing objects to, such as lesbianism or bisexuality.

The readings in “A Preview Case: September 11, 2001,” involved several disputes over definitions of words like *patriotism*, *courage*, *cowardice*, and *terrorism*. Another semantic issue related to these events was that the terrorist attacks included several targets, presenting the problem of finding a single phrase that could effectively label the events—in contrast, say, to “Pearl Harbor” or “the Gulf War.” It took weeks before a consensus developed in our public discourse to use the date as a label—“September 11” or “9/11,” which seem to have endured as years have gone by without explicit reference to 2001, although the year reference will probably be restored after several years pass. Soon after the attacks, the Bush administration labeled its response a “war on terrorism.” Throughout history, the enemy in a war has been the government of another country. Al Qaeda, however, was not a government but a terrorist organization with cells in many countries, and with support stemming in Part from the historical grievances of Arabs and Muslims internationally against the United States and Europe. These semantic complications made the waging of conventional war against Afghanistan and especially Iraq (whose support of Al Qaeda and links to 9/11 were disputed by many investigators) of questionable effectiveness.

The American war against Iraq in 2003 raised several more issues of semantic labeling. Was it a “liberation,” an “invasion,” or an “occupation”? The enemy in Iraq was presumably Saddam Hussein and his supporters. But after they were overthrown, a problem arose in how to label the different forces who then fought against the American presence, whose political and religious identity was diverse; thus they began to be termed vaguely “insurgents” or “militants.” A report by Richard T. Cooper in the *Los Angeles Times* (June 26, 2004, online edition, 1) headlined “Semantics Skirmish on 9/11 Report” discussed the Bush administration’s disagreement with the wording of the conclusion of a bipartisan commission investigating 9/11 asserting that Saddam Hussein’s contacts with Al Qaeda “do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship.” On the same point, Michael Isikoff remarked in *Newsweek* (July 5, 2004, 6),

perhaps with a wink to President Clinton's semantic evasions about Monica Lewinsky, "It all depends on what your definition of a relationship is." And a *New York Times* op-ed by Adam Hochschild titled "What's in a Word? Torture" (May 23, 2004, News of the Week, 11), which addressed the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, quoted Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld saying, "What has been charged so far is abuse, which I believe technically is different from torture..... I'm not going to address the 'torture' word."

All of these examples illustrate an important axiom: *Whoever defines the terms wins the argument, or at least gains the upper hand.* For two analyses of this point in terms of semantic "framing," see the readings by George Lakoff and Thomas Sowell at the end of this chapter.

## Connotation in Argument:

### "cleans" and "dirties"

Semanticists use various terms to describe the use of words with positive versus negative connotations: "God terms and Devil terms," "purr words and snarl words," and my favorites, "'cleans' and 'dirties.'" In argumentation, we constantly apply a semantic **double standard** to apply clean words to our side and dirty ones to the other. You need to become aware when others— or you yourself—are doing this, and verify whether they are justifying their positive and negative judgments or whether they are just emotive. (Keep "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" in Chapter 5 at hand as a guide here.) In a televised election debate, the Republican candidate referred to "labor bosses" but "the business community," while the Democrat referred to "business fat cats" but "labor leaders." Unfortunately, the moderator did not catch them in their double standards and press them to justify their loaded judgments of the two groups.

During the Gulf War in 1991, the United States employed a missile named the Patriot, while Iraq used one called (in English) the Scud. What is the difference between a Patriot and a Scud? Mainly semantic. "Patriot" might seem a curious **personification** (to use a literary term) of a weapon of destruction, if you think about it, but the name obviously was chosen for its positive, humanizing connotation, compounded by all the emotional appeal associated with patriotism. "Scud," on the other hand, has neither denotative or **metaphorical** meaning—it is an acronym of the four words of its technical name in English— but it ingeniously embodies several negative connotations by association, like "scum," "crud," "dud," "mud." It might be argued that the Patriot was a defensive weapon, hence it did serve the patriotic function of shooting down attacking missiles. This is a reasonable argument, but the United States also happened to have an offensive nuclear warhead missile called the Peacekeeper. The main point is that any country will predictably give its own weapons— whether de-

fensive or offensive—positive names and its opponents’ weapons negative ones. Most likely, the Iraqis’ names for the two missiles had the opposite connotations from ours. (For further analysis of **propaganda** in the Gulf War, see “How to Watch the Next War” in Chapter 18.) This manipulation of words by politicians and media in our society and most others is a powerful force in **cultural conditioning** into nationalistic **ethnocentrism**. Indeed, semantic ethnocentrism regarding patriotism runs so deep that it is hard to imagine that our “enemies” in any war are *also* patriots in their own eyes. Being able to make this kind of leap of imagination, however, marks an important step beyond the psychological block of ethnocentrism toward being an open-minded, critical thinker.

Connotative language is the most frequent form of **emotional appeal** in rhetoric, and it must be evaluated by the same criteria as other forms (see Chapter 14). That is, it can be quite legitimate if the passion and eloquence that emotion adds to an argument are supported by sound reasoning, evidence, and truth with respect to concrete realities. But an argument usually becomes weakened the further it moves away from denotative to connotative language, from concrete realities to **unconcretized abstractions**, and the more it depends on swaying the audience’s emotions with highly charged words alone. Much **demagogic** argumentation consists of connotative **slanting** and **stereotyping** labels—heavy use of cleans and dirties to create denotatively empty “good guys versus bad guys” **oversimplifications**, **false dichotomies**, and double standards: sentimentality toward our side, **namecalling**, and fear and loathing toward the other.

People are frequently swayed in their opinions simply by differing connotations in writers’ or speakers’ selection of words. An article titled “The Vocabulary of Votes” in the *New York Times Magazine* (March 26, 1995) describes how political consultant Frank Luntz tests public reactions to different word choices that denote the same reality:

While 62 percent favor sending the children of abusive welfare mothers to “orphanages,” 72 percent favor sending them to “foster homes.”. . . If you ask Americans whether they are “overregulated,” Luntz contends that a majority will say they are. But if you ask them whether Federal regulations are “excessive,” the number who agree drops off. And if you ask whether the regulations “hurt people,” the number falls even further. (46)

An editorial in the *San Francisco Examiner* titled “The Power of Words” (August 4, 1996) tells how “a judge in Sacramento was obliged to become a semanticist in a crucial dispute over how state voter pamphlets should describe Proposition 209,” the so-called California

Civil Rights Initiative, whose title, according to opponents, exploited the “clean” connotation of “civil rights” to fool voters into voting for a measure that repealed affirmative action policies guaranteeing civil rights to minorities and women. The immediate dispute was over the following wording:



"To prohibit state and local governments from discriminating against or providing preferential treatment in public contracting, employment and education on the basis of race, sex, ethnicity or national origin."

Misleading and unfair, said opponents. They cite polls that suggest the public is generally opposed to "preference" but likely to support "affirmative action" programs aimed at past patterns of discrimination in hiring, education, and contracts. (B10)

An explicit "how-to" manual for controlling connotation was found in the memo from Newt Gingrich to Republican candidates in 1995, via Gingrich's political action committee GOPAC, as reported in *Extra! Update*, a newsletter of the leftist Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting:

As you know, one of the key points in the GOPAC tapes is that "language matters." In the video "We Are a Majority," Language is listed as a key mechanism of control used by a majority party, along with Agenda, Rules, Attitude and Learning. As the tapes have been used in training sessions across the country and mailed to candidates, we have heard a plaintive plea: "I wish I could speak like Newt."

That takes years of practice. But we believe that you could have a significant impact on your campaign and the way you communicate if we help a little. That is why we have created this list of words and phrases.

This list is prepared so that you might have a directory of words to use in writing literature and mail, in preparing speeches, and in producing electronic media. The words and phrases are powerful. Read them. Memorize as many as possible. And remember that, like any tool, these words will not help if they are not used.....

### **CONTRASTING WORDS**

Often we search hard for words to help us define our opponents. Sometimes we are hesitant to use contrast. Remember that creating a difference helps you. These are powerful words that can create a clear and easily understood contrast. Apply these to the opponent, their record, proposals and their party.

decay... failure (fail)... collapse (ing)... deeper... crisis... urgent(cy)... destructive... destroy... sick... pathetic... lie... liberal... they/them... unionized bureaucracy... "compassion" is not enough... betray... consequences... limit(s)... shallow... traitors... sensationalists...

endanger... coercion... hypocrisy... radical... threaten... devour... waste... corruption... incompetent... permissive attitudes... destructive... impose... self-serving... greed... ideological... insecure... anti (issue): flag, family, child, jobs... pessimistic... excuses... intolerant...

stagnation... welfare... corrupt... selfish... insensitive... status quo... mandate(s)... taxes... spend(ing)... shame... disgrace... punish (poor...)... bizarre... cynicism... cheat... steal...

abuse of power... machine... bosses... obsolete... criminal rights... red tape... patronage

### **OPTIMISTIC POSITIVE GOVERNING WORDS**

Use the list below to help define your campaign and your vision of public service. These words can help give extra power to your message. In addition, these words help develop the positive side of the contrast you should create with your opponent, giving your community something to vote for!

share... change... opportunity... legacy... challenge... control... truth... moral... courage... reform... prosperity... crusade... movement... children... family... debate... compete... active(ly)... we/us/our... candid(ly)... humane... pristine... provide...

liberty... commitment... principle(d)... unique.. duty... precious... premise... care(ing)... tough... listen... learn... help... lead... vision... success... empower(ment)... citizen... activist... mobilize... conflict... light... dream... freedom...

peace... rights... pioneer... proud/pride... building... preserve... pro-(issue): flag, children, environment... reform... workfare... eliminate good-time in prison... strength... choice/choose... fair... protect... confident... incentive... hard work... initiative... common sense... passionate

A prominent application of Gingrich's semantic guidelines for GOPAC appeared in all the "clean" words in titles of provisions in the congressional Republicans' 1994 Contract with America. The Job Creation and Enhancement Act had nothing to do directly with creating or enhancing jobs; it reduced the capital gains tax. The Common Sense Legal Reforms Act, described by its sponsors as placing "reasonable limits on punitive damages and reform of product liability laws to stem the endless tide of litigation," reduced the possibility of successful legal action against corporations for securities frauds such as those in the savings-and-loan scandals, as well as for the manufacture and sale of defective parts or for hazardous workplace conditions and environmental destruction. The Personal Responsibility Act prohibited welfare to minor mothers, denied increased Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for additional children on welfare, enacted a two-years-and-out provision with work requirements, and in a provision "to help combat illiteracy" and "provide incentives to complete high school," enabled states to reduce AFDC payments to young mothers who have not completed high school; none of these clauses included provisions for creating jobs or job training to compensate for reduced welfare benefits.

One other provision in the Personal Responsibility Act, a proposal to cap spending in future years on the established free school lunch program for poor children, provoked a heated semantic controversy. Democrats charged that the proposal cut funding, while Republicans countered that it actually increased funding over the previous level. The facts were that it did indeed increase funding, but at a lower rate in future years than that mandated in the existing law, a rate that would lag behind school population growth, inflation, and so on. Critics said that the Republicans attempted to cover up the negative growth rate, so that their claim of an increase amounted to a **half-truth**. Thus the proposal could be defined as either a "cut"—a **dirty**—or an "increase"—a **clean**—according to whoever got to control the semantic agenda. Some commentators at the time pointed out **ironically** that when Democrats in earlier years had tried to slow the rate of military spending, they had similarly tried to **euphemize** what might

be an unpopular act by saying they were increasing spending, while the Republicans charged that it was a cut.

The Republicans won the 1994 congressional election largely on the glittering euphemistic appeal of the Contract with America, yet subsequent surveys showed that few voters were at all familiar with its specific provisions, and when they were informed of the details, most opposed them.

## Euphemism

Euphemism is the substitution of a “clean” word for a “dirty” reality. Many common euphemisms are harmless, if somewhat squeamish, conventions, such as “pass away” instead of “die,” or “restroom” instead of “toilet.” But euphemisms are also frequently used in public discourse to deceive or to obscure issues. Writing during the period of World War II in “Politics and the English Language” (1946), George Orwell said:

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. [The same euphemism was later used by the U.S. government in the Vietnam War.—]

A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outlines and covering up all the details. (256)

Similarly dehumanizing uses of euphemisms are constants in every society and age. About the trend of massive firings from corporations in the 1980s and 1990s, *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert wrote:

The euphemism of choice for the corporate chopping block is downsizing, but variations abound. John Thomas, a 59-year-old AT&T employee, was told on Tuesday that his job was “not going forward.” . . .

Other workers are discontinued, involuntarily severed, surplussed. There are men and women at AT&T who actually talk about living in a “surplus universe.”

There are special leaves, separations, rebalances, bumpings and, one of my favorites, cascade bumpings. (Jan. 19, 1996, A15.)

Euphemism is often resorted to in politics to conceal a destructive policy by giving it a “clean” name with positive associations. Everybody likes “reforms” and “relief,” but be sure to read the fine print when you hear a bill described as “welfare reform,” “tax reform,” or “tax relief” (see Lakoff’s “Framing the Issues”). Likewise be wary of the appeal of “free,” as in “the North American Free Trade Agreement” (NAFTA), and “fair,” as in “fair trade.” Among the nominations for the 1995 Doublespeak Award of the National

Council of Teachers of English were Attorney General Janet Reno and officials of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, who resorted to various euphemisms to **rationalize** their fatal attack on the Koresh compound in Waco, Texas,—for example, describing the assault by an army tank as a “dynamic entry.”

## Abstract and Concrete Language

Semanticists refer to a “ladder of abstraction,” or a scale of words from very concrete to very abstract. The most concrete are words that denote physical objects, like *the tree* or *a chair*. The most abstract are those describing ideas, beliefs, values, or moral judgments, like *justice*, *patriotic*, *liberty*, *honor*, *good*, *evil*, *family values*, “*American*” and “*un-American*,” and all the ideological -isms like *conservatism* and *liberalism*. Developmental psychologists have also identified what they term concrete and abstract modes of thinking or cognition. Children’s early speech and thought are almost solely concrete, being limited to their physical surroundings and sensations. But as their experience and learning expand, they come to understand concepts that are abstract or outside their immediate experience. Adults who have not fully developed the capacity to understand abstractions, and whose language or thought remains almost *solely* concrete, are restricted in their ability to conceptualize or empathize with people, events, and ideas outside their firsthand experience. Hence they tend to have an ethnocentric or parochial viewpoint that inclines them toward prejudice against both people and ideas that are foreign to them. Also remember Stanley Aronowitz’s speculation in Chapter 3 about the cognitive effects of TV and other mass media: “The problem of abstraction becomes a major barrier to analysis because students seem enslaved to the concrete... The critical project of learning involves understanding that things are often not

what they seem to be and that abstract concepts such as ‘society,’ ‘capitalism,’ ‘history,’ and other categories not available to the senses are nonetheless real. This whole critical project now seems in eclipse.”

That is not to say, however, that abstract thinking is always preferable to concrete in adults. At the **equal and opposite extreme** from people who have trouble grasping abstractions are those whose language and thought are so abstract that they are disconnected from concrete realities. Concrete thinking is conducive to clarity, immediacy, and sensuous and vivid **imagery**, as opposed to the danger in abstractions of impersonality, evasiveness, and (in Orwell’s words) “sheer, cloudy vagueness.” So the ideal mental state to strive for as a critical thinker is to have the ability to connect and move back and forth between the concrete and the abstract, between your own, firsthand experience and the experience of those whose viewpoints differ from yours, and between your personal perceptions and larger, distant realities.

## Unconcretized Abstractions

The denotation of abstract words like *freedom*, *patriotic*, *conservative* and *liberal* is not readily apparent if they are not explicitly defined; there is a great deal of disagreement over their definitions, so differing implicit definitions of them are frequently the cause of arguments. When you speak or write about abstract ideas, then, you should be able to ground them in concrete specifics, using phrases like “for example” or “for instance,” or employing description, narration, dialogue, or vivid images and figures of speech. Another danger in unconcretized abstractions is that, while they are often vague in denotative meaning, they are apt to be strongly loaded connotatively, evoking “clean” or “dirty” conditioned responses. Moreover, abstractions with “clean” connotations are often used euphemistically. In the same vein as Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language,” Albert Camus, addressing an audience of Catholic clergy shortly after World War II, in a talk titled “The Unbeliever and Christians,” appealed for believers and nonbelievers like himself to join together in opposing the euphemizing of mass murder by all the world powers in that new age of total war: “What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could rise in the heart of the simplest man. That they should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today” (*Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 71).

The single topic in which concrete realities are most often obscured by abstraction and euphemism is war. A section devoted to this topic appears in Chapter 14 in the context of the uses and abuses of emotional appeal.

## Literal and Figurative Language

The words *figurative* and *figure*, as in *figure of speech*, are synonymous with *symbolic*. This synonym is ambiguous, however, because semantically, all words merely **symbolize** the object they denote—“the map is not the territory.” We say that words like *Hollywood* and *Washington* literally designate those cities, or visualize an image of them, but of course, the names aren’t *literally* literal—they’re just collections of spoken sounds and written scrawls. We accept them as relatively literal symbols, though, compared to figures of speech—which *Hollywood* and *Washington* also happen to be when they symbolize the movie industry and the national government, respectively. These are examples of the figure known as **metonymy**, the symbolic substitution of a Part for a whole or of a location for what is located there. We can say that literal words are one symbolic step removed from the objects they denote, while figures are two steps removed. They work by an extension of the literal meaning to a symbolic one, in metonymies like these, or by an **analogy** symbolically substituting one object or image for another, as in metaphor (“You’re a turkey”), **simile** (“Like a rolling stone”)

or personification (“That golf course ate me up”). (*Image* refers to a picture evoked by a word; an image can be either literal or figurative.)

As forms of analogy, figures of speech in argumentation need to be evaluated by the same criteria (see Chapter 11): in a good analogy or figure, the two terms compared have more important similarities than differences; the reality described is made clearer and more concrete (rather than fuzzier and vaguer); and the emotions evoked connotatively are appropriate to the situation. The lead sentence in a *New York Times* report (national edition, June 23, 1996, A1) on a series of arson fires in black churches in 1996 uses a simile: “The flames rise into the sky like malignant ghosts from the South’s past, evoking some of the most racially charged images in the nation’s history.” The analogy between flames and malignant ghosts is both visually vivid and historically apt, evoking the history of lynch-mob burnings of southern blacks or their property.

An op-ed column about the Clinton administration Whitewater scandals by William Safire, also in the *New York Times* (June 24, 1996, A11), begins, “A cancer has been growing on the Clinton Presidency.” A later sentence extends the metaphor: “As the scandal metastasizes, we are beginning to get some idea of its scope and seriousness.” The metaphor is vivid and appropriate to the notion that a relatively minor misdoing in the White House might grow out of control, through attempts to obstruct justice by covering it up, to the point of destroying the presidency. Safire’s metaphor also acquires additional **levels of meaning** through its allusion to similar phrasing used by President Richard Nixon’s attorney John Dean in warning Nixon about the growing Watergate scandal in 1972, and through Safire’s assumption that his readers remember he was a speechwriter for Nixon at the time of Watergate and understand that he is taking relish, **between the lines**, in payback against a Democratic president. Coincidentally, the metaphor of cancer also appeared on the same date in a letter to the editor in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, concerning a convicted killer in California: “Should he receive the death sentence, it will be the same as a surgical removal of a cancerous growth.” Here, however, the metaphor is strong on evoking fear and hatred but weak in clarification. What is the logical point of comparison between a criminal and a cancer? To remove him from society and prevent him from committing further crimes? Life imprisonment without possibility of parole could do that. To remove an evil influence that might encourage other killers—that is, to deter others? Most criminological evidence fails to show that executions deter anyone. In short, the equation of a human being with a spreading disease introduces so many possible significant differences that it only produces logical confusion.

# Literal and Figurative Language

## In Literature

The use of figurative language for imaginative purposes, as opposed to argumentative ones, is a defining characteristic of creative literature, especially poetry, including song lyrics. (In many literary cases, though, the imaginative and argumentative functions work together, as in the section from Thoreau's *Walden* analyzed below.) Sometimes it serves for pure humor and the delight of an ingenious verbal association, as in a song sung by Uncle Dave Macon, a star of the Grand Ole Opry in the 1930s, describing a man with a long beard in the simile: "Look at that hair all around his mouth, / Like he swallowed a mule and left the tail a-hangin' out."

Let's illustrate how creative writers use figurative language to create multiple levels of meaning and complexity of thought and argument by examining one of the best-known passages in American literature, the climax of Henry David Thoreau's Chapter "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," in his book of essays *Walden, Or Life in the Woods* (1854), later in this chapter. (This passage is a perfect example of the sequence of cumulation and recursiveness in reading and writing discussed in Chapter 3.) Thoreau is explaining why he left the society of Concord, Massachusetts, to live by himself self-sufficiently in the woods near Walden Pond. He wanted to escape urban, industrial society's conformity, rush, and absorption in trivial busywork, so as to "spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails" (87). The thesis sentence in the passage is "By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit every where, which still is built on purely illusory foundations." The metaphors of sleeping and waking combine with another set of metaphors that begins with "I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things." "The surface of things" suggests the surface of water, which both distorts the reality beneath it through refraction and gives a false sense of fixity, or "illusory foundations," while it is in constant flux. This metaphor is developed by several comparisons of daily routine and conformity with "going with the flow," such as, "Why should we knock under and go with the stream?" (87). (The stream metaphor is presumably inspired by Thoreau's literal presence by a tributary of Walden Pond.) He further extends the stream metaphor to contrast the "mud and slush of opinion, prejudice, and tradition" to the "hard bottom" spiritual, intellectual, and poetic realities of life that Thoreau believed in as Part of the Platonic idealism underlying transcendentalist philosophy.

The development of these metaphors through several paragraphs culminates: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy

bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.” Here the literal stream becomes a metaphor for time, in the sense of the here-and-now and of surface illusions as opposed to eternal truths. Thoreau, who frequently turns puns into metaphors, does so here with “current,” connoting both shallow appearances in space and “current events” in time. Even the bottom of the stream is shallow and shifting, which is to say that the physical world and current events are ultimately an illusion. Thoreau then brilliantly turns the image of the stream’s pebbled, sandy bottom upside down and transforms it into an image of the sky, “pebbly with stars,” symbolizing Heaven or God, infinite space opposed to the finite measures of the physical world, and eternal time as opposed to the transitory stream of life on earth. All of these symbolic connections are created by the active exercise of Thoreau’s poetic imagination or intellect, expressed through his metaphors in the concluding paragraph, “the intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things,” and “my head is an organ for burrowing.” His mind has first visually associated the pebbles at the bottom of a stream with the stars in the sky, then translated these sense images into thought and words (literal, metaphorical, and symbolic), then transcribed those words on the written page, to be communicated to his readers. And all this poetic mental activity has developed his argumentative theme of opposition to social conformity and habitual “sleepwalking” through life.

This passage is one of the best illustrations of the aesthetic theory of the American transcendentalist writers like Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Margaret Fuller, for whom metaphor is the essence of poetry in its power to create connections between the physical world and the intellectual or spiritual world. Poets have a special calling as visionaries of these connections and translators of them into metaphorical language. A remarkably similar conception of poetry is expressed by the contemporary American writer Gloria Anzaldua in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), in which she views her marginal identity between Latino, Indian, and Anglo culture as a vital source of poetic connections. In a Chapter titled “Tlilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink,” she writes:

For the ancient Aztecs, *tlilli, tlapalli, la tinta negra y roja de sus codices* (the black and red ink painted on codices [pictographic sacred documents]) were the colors symbolizing *escritura y sabiduria* (writing and wisdom). They believed that through metaphor and symbol, by means of poetry and truth, communication with the Divine could be attained.

. . . An image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious. Picture language precedes thinking in words; the metaphorical mind precedes analytical consciousness. (33-34)



## A Semantic Analysis of Rush Limbaugh

Consider the following passages from Rush Limbaugh's book *The Way Things Ought to Be* (previously discussed in the context of the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas case in Chapter 5; see the fuller version of the quote in that chapter):

The civil rights coalition in this country has had its way with the Democratic Party since 1957. The leaders of these civil rights organizations . . . enjoy power for only one reason. This monolithic constituency delivers up to 90 percent of the minority vote to the

Democratic candidate for president every presidential election year..... This vote, in turn, has

invested them with power. It's a win-win situation..... They discourage achievement by

merit. (117-18)

And later:

[Bill Clinton] has had to revert to liberal, minority, and fringe pandering in order to distinguish himself from Perot, and to gain acceptance from the puppet masters calling his party's shots. (307)

Limbaugh identifies these puppet masters as "beggar-based constituencies" including "the feminist, environmental, so-called civil rights groups, and Naderites," and earlier says, "The Democrats love giving money to the poor because it makes them dependent upon the Democrats and helps to ensure their reelection" (41).

Note, first of all, how loaded these passages are with name-calling, "dirty" words like "beggar-based constituencies" and "puppet masters," sexually suggestive words like "pandering" and "has had its way with," and the insinuation that civil rights organizations and the Democrats collude in corruption with no sincere commitment to racial justice. But he provides little or no supporting evidence here or elsewhere in his book for these allegations; to do so, he would need to refute any and all accounts of positive achievements of civil rights organizations since 1957, such as the end of segregation and the attainment of blacks' constitutional rights in the South. What, exactly, *is* he referring to in these sentences, in denotation, not just connotation? Helping Limbaugh make his argument, through **concretizing** his vague **abstractions**, one might **infer** that his **hidden agenda** is criticism of policies supported by civil rights organizations like affirmative action, welfare, and increased funding of schools in poor, minority neighborhoods (issues on which Clarence Thomas and the civil rights organizations were at odds). If that were so, then wouldn't his case be stronger if he addressed those issues directly instead of just name-calling?

The careful reader who digs beneath all the name-calling might also perceive a **compartmentalization** in Limbaugh's **deductive logic**. Presuming that the Democrats want to win elections, why would they "pander" to the poor and other groups that Limbaugh on

Figure 9.2.

other occasions claims constitute a very small percentage of the American population, with (in the case of the poor and racial minorities) the lowest voting rates and the least money for campaign contributions? If a party is going to pander, wouldn't it be more rewarding to pander to rich and middle-class whites, nonfeminist women, and the wealthy corporations that environmentalists have criticized?

Another possible logical flaw here involves the fallacy of **argument from the converse**: Limbaugh says the “monolithic constituency” of civil rights organizations “delivers up to 90 percent of the minority vote to the Democratic candidate for president.” The last statement is generally acknowledged as true in itself, but a careless reader might also infer (1) that the 90 percent of minorities who vote constitute 90 percent of the entire minority population, which is untrue because a minority of the minority actually vote (for one example, in the 1994 congressional elections, only 37 percent of eligible blacks voted), or (2) that 90 percent of Democratic voters are minorities, or (3) that this bloc amounts to an electoral majority. But in fact African Americans constitute only 11-12 percent of all voters (Hispanics, the next largest minority, constitute 5 percent of voters), so 90 percent of the minorities who actually vote is hardly enough to swing presidential elections without a larger percentage of *whites* also voting Democratic, and many of those whites, incidentally, consider themselves conservatives (see Chapter 15). (Source: Ruy Teixeira, “The Real Electorate,” *American Prospect*, March-April 1998, 84.) Why, then, does Limbaugh single out leaders of a minority of a minority of Democrats as being power-hungry rather than leaders of the white majority in both parties? Furthermore, the historical fact is that when Limbaugh's book was published, before the 1992 election, Republicans had won five out of the eight presidential elections since 1960. Was this a “win-win situation” for Democrats? (These are examples of the kind of logical fallacy that has to do with quasi-algebraic sets and subsets or classes and subclasses, as visualized in the circle diagrams in figure 9.2.)

After unloading all the semantic slanting and logical fallacies in Limbaugh's arguments here, what do they boil down to? Here are some exercises calculated to explore this.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Rephrase Limbaugh's arguments in these two paragraphs to strip away all the connotative words and leave only denotative ones. That is, on what straight, neutral statements of fact would both sides agree about the relation between civil rights organizations and the Democratic Party, minus all the opinions Limbaugh is injecting about that relation?

Rephrase the two paragraphs, taking the basic facts in topic 1 about Democrats and minorities and rephrasing them in the manner of John Kerry or Bill Clinton, to put a highly positive “spin” on them.

A good way to test for a semantic double standard in Limbaugh or any other writer, including yourself or myself, is to substitute the writer's own side for the opposition in passages where the latter is being trashed, and see if the argument is just as plausible

that way (this is a variation on argument by analogy). Rewrite these two paragraphs, matching Limbaugh's name-calling point by point, but turned against Republicans, beginning something like this: "The conservative coalition has had its way with the Republican Party since 1968, the year Richard Nixon was elected using what was called 'the Southern strategy,' pandering to a backlash against the civil rights movement to win white racists away from the Democrats. The coalition includes. . . ," and so on to the end. As a discussion or short essay topic, you might argue about how valid this analogy by substitution is and what it reveals about Limbaugh's own rhetoric in the original.

As another analogy by substitution, list some conservative nonprofit organizations whose leaders presumably "raise money and keep a percentage of it for themselves"—for example, the Christian Coalition, the National Rifle Association, or right-to-life groups, which also have powerful influence in the Republican Party. Could Limbaugh's criticisms of the civil rights leaders' jobs and motives be just as plausibly applied to these groups? What do you think Limbaugh would say about this analogy? Do you think these leaders have "real jobs"? As a research project, find out (through tax returns that each organization must make available to the public on request) how much income the heads of these conservative nonprofits make per year, compared to executives in liberal counterparts like the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Bottom line: Don't let yourself be swayed only through emotionally charged language, devoid of logic and evidence!

## Summary: Applying Semantic Analysis

### A. Abstract versus concrete language

1. Criticize examples where the author fails to concretize abstractions.
2. Praise examples where the author concretizes abstractions or describes a situation effectively through concrete language that exposes the vagueness of abstract accounts.

### B. Criticize use of passive voice to evade responsibility ("Mistakes were made").

C. Point out examples where opposing sides use different definitions or interpretations of controversial words (e.g., *freedom*, *patriotism*).

D. Criticize examples where sources assume that a word (e.g., *patriotism*, *peace*, *America*) is absolutely and always admirable, without recognizing limitations.

### E. Connotative language

1. Criticize examples where sources arbitrarily use "clean" words to describe their own side, or "dirties" to describe the other, without support.
2. Criticize examples of the use of euphemism to gloss over an unpleasant reality.

### F. Figurative language

1. Praise effective figures of speech; explain why they are effective.
2. Criticize ineffective figures; explain why they are ineffective.

From *Where I Lived and What I Lived For*

*By Henry David Thoreau*

From *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, 1854

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is *fabulous*. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, *music and poetry* would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence,—that petty fears and petty pleasures are *but the shadow of the reality*. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations. Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure. I have read in a Hindoo book, that "there was a king's son, who, being expelled in infancy from his native city, was brought up by a forester, and, growing up to maturity in that state, imagined himself to belong to the barbarous race with which he lived. One of his father's ministers having discovered him, revealed to him what he was, and the misconception of his character was removed, and he knew himself to be a prince. So soul," continues the Hindoo philosopher, "from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be Brahmen." I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think

that that *is* which *appears* to be. If a man should walk through this town and see only the reality, where, think you, would be the "Mill-dam" go to? If he should give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. Look at a meeting-house, or a courthouse, or a jail, or a shop, or a dwellinghouse, and say what that thing really is before a true gaze, and they would all go to pieces in your account of them. Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality which surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conception; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it.

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently, and without perturbation; let company come and let company go,

let the bells ring and the children cry,—determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and

you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigor, sail by it looking another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses. If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pains. If the bell rings, why should we run? We will consider what kind of music they are like. Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake, and then begin, having a *point d'appui*, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might find a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a scimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you

through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

## When Words Cheapen Life

*By Mary Ann Glendon*

from *The New York Times*, Tuesday, January 10, 1995

After months of relative calm in the abortion debate, the shootings in Brookline, Mass., on Dec. 30 have unleashed yet another volley of bitter recriminations between

activists. A Planned Parenthood newspaper ad with the heading “Words Kill” blamed pro-life rhetoric for the deaths of two clinic receptionists.

This charge deserves to be taken seriously, for how we name things determines to a great extent how we think, feel and act regarding them. Words can kill, but it’s not so simple as

pro-choice leaders would have it. Words kill by creating a climate where life is cheap: they can stifle the inner voice that reminds us that evil can never be overcome by evil. From abortion rights to euthanasia to indifference to the plight of the poor, the road has been paved with soothing words chosen to harmonize conscience with convenience.

Consider how brutal regimes of chattel slavery and apartheid were legitimated by the notion that blacks weren’t fully human.

The Supreme Court endorsed that view in 1857 when Dred Scott came before the Court as a man, only to be dismissed as a piece of property.

In *Roe v. Wade*, the Court again made a fateful semantic choice. By refusing to acknowledge the developing fetus as either human or alive, it entered into complicity with advocates’ deceptive phrases like “clump of tissue” and “product of conception.” Even those who would distinguish between the born and the unborn should be nervous when the state dissembles about the definition of life.

In the two decades after it handed down its decision, the Court foreclosed most opportunities for influencing abortion law through legislative politics. Courts have also sanctioned the use of injunctions, buffer zones and organized crime statutes to keep pro-life demonstrators away from clinics. The danger of such measures was summed up last week by the pro-choice civil rights lawyer Harvey Silvergate, who said that if such techniques had been used against civil rights protesters in the 60’s “you can be assured there would have been a lot more violence.”

Now, Planned Parenthood seeks to silence even “verbal attacks” against abortion rights. What it really wants is to suppress the pro-life movement’s insistence—so hurtful to the clinic business—that abortion destroys developing life. To banish opponents of abortion and their deeply held beliefs from public life, however, would be unwise and undemocratic.

This is not to claim that the language of dehumanization alone has been responsible for increasing violence and waning compassion in these troubled United States. Or that Government approval of abortion has been the only factor promoting acceptance of brutal quick fixes for a range of social problems. But how can the pro-choice movement’s rhetoric fail to promote a coarsening of spirit, a deadening of conscience and a disregard for the humanity of one’s opponents—as well as for those who seem to us to be less than full-fledged “persons”?

That’s why the late Walker Percy, physician and novelist, deplored “the chronic misuse of words” to disguise what takes place during abortion. It is, an ominous sign, as artists are often the first to realize, when a society begins to manipulate the concept of humanity.

In the wake of the Brookline tragedies, are there any words of hope? Perhaps. The Massachusetts news media have begun to cover those services that make the pro-life movement more than just anti-abortion—financial aid to single mothers, shelters for mothers and children with AIDS, parenthood classes. This has put into focus the common task to which the overwhelmingly female rank-and-file of both movements have always been committed: building a culture that is respectful of women, supportive of childraising families and protective of the weak and vulnerable.

*Framing the Issues*]]: UC Berkeley Professor George Lakoff Tells How Conservatives Use Language to Dominate Politics

*University of California, Berkeley, News Center*

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BERKELEY—With Republicans controlling and enjoying a large margin of victory for Calithe Senate, the House, and the White House fornia Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger,

it's clear that the Democratic Party is in crisis. George Lakoff, a UC Berkeley professor of linguistics and cognitive science, thinks he knows why. Conservatives have spent decades defining their ideas, carefully choosing the language with which to present them, and building an infrastructure to communicate them. says Lakoff.

The work has paid off; by dictating the terms of national debate, conservatives have put progressives firmly on the defensive.

In 2000 Lakoff and seven other faculty members from Berkeley and UC Davis joined together to found the Rockridge Institute, one of the few progressive think tanks in existence in the U.S. The institute offers its expertise and research on a nonpartisan basis to help progressives understand how best to get their messages across. The Richard & Rhoda Goldman Distinguished Professor in the College of Letters & Science, Lakoff is the author of "Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think," first published in 1997 and reissued in 2002, as well as several other books on how language affects our lives.

In a long conversation over coffee at the Free Speech Movement Cafe, he told the NewsCenter's Bonnie Azab Powell why the Democrats "just don't get it," why Schwarzenegger won the recall election, and why conservatives will continue to define the issues up for debate for the foreseeable future.

**Why was the Rockridge Institute created, and how do you define its purpose?**

I got tired of cursing the newspaper every morning. I got tired of seeing what was going wrong and not being able to do anything about it.

The background for Rockridge is that conservatives, especially conservative think tanks, have framed virtually every issue from their perspective. They have put a huge amount of money into creating the language for their worldview and getting it out there. Progressives have done virtually nothing. Even the new Center for American Progress, the think tank that John Podesta [former chief of staff for the Clinton administration]

is setting up, is not dedicated to this at all. I asked Podesta who was going to do the Center's framing. He got a blank look, thought for a second and then said, "You!" Which meant they haven't thought about it at all. And that's the problem. Liberals don't get it. They don't understand what it is they have to be doing.

Rockridge's job is to reframe public debate, to create balance from a progressive perspective. It's one thing to analyze language and thought, it's another thing to create it. That's what we're about. It's a matter of asking 'What are the central ideas of progressive thought from a moral perspective?'

Language always comes with what is called "framing." Every word is defined relative to a conceptual framework. If you have something like "revolt," that implies a population that is being ruled unfairly, or assumes it is being ruled unfairly, and that they are throwing off their rulers, which would be considered a good thing. That's a frame.

If you then add the word "voter" in front of "revolt," you get a metaphorical meaning saying that the voters are the oppressed people, the governor is the oppressive ruler, that they have ousted him and this is a good thing and all things are good now. All of that comes up when you see a headline like "voter revolt"—something that most people read and never notice. But these things can be affected by reporters and very often, by the campaign people themselves.

Here's another example of how powerful framing is. In Arnold Schwarzenegger's acceptance speech, he said, "When the people win, politics as usual loses." What's that about? Well, he knows that he's going to face a Democratic legislature, so what he has done is frame himself and also Republican politicians as the people, while framing Democratic politicians as political as usual—in advance. The Democratic legislators won't know what hit them. They're automatically framed as enemies of the people.

### **Why do conservatives appear to be so much better at framing?**

Because they've put billions of dollars into it. Over the last 30 years their think tanks have made a heavy investment in ideas and in language. In 1970, [Supreme Court Justice] Lewis Powell wrote a fateful memo to the National Chamber of Commerce saying that all of our best students are becoming anti-business because of the Vietnam War, and that we needed to do something about it. Powell's agenda included getting wealthy conservatives to set up professorships, setting up institutes on and off campus where intellectuals would write books from a conservative business perspective, and setting up think tanks. He outlined the whole thing in 1970. They set up the Heritage Foundation in 1973, and the Manhattan Institute after that. [There are many others, including the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institute at Stanford, which date from the 1940s.]

And now, as the New York Times Magazine quoted Paul Weyrich, who started the Heritage Foundation, they have 1,500 conservative radio talk show hosts. They have a huge, very good operation, and they understand their own moral system. They understand what unites conservatives, and they understand how to talk about it, and they are constantly updating their research on how best to express their ideas.



### **Why haven't progressives done the same thing?**

There's a systematic reason for that. You can see it in the way that conservative foundations and progressive foundations work. Conservative foundations give large block grants year after year to their think tanks. They say, "Here's several million dollars, do what you need to do." And basically, they build infrastructure, they build TV studios, hire intellectuals, set aside money to buy a lot of books to get them on the best-seller lists, hire research assistants for their intellectuals so they do well on TV, and hire agents to put them on TV. They do all of that. Why? Because the conservative moral system, which I analyzed in "Moral Politics," has as its highest value preserving and defending the "strict father" system itself. And that means building infrastructure. As businessmen, they know how to do this very well.

Meanwhile, liberals' conceptual system of the "nurturant parent" has as its highest value helping individuals who need help.

The progressive foundations and donors give their money to a variety of grassroots organizations. They say, "We're giving you \$25,000, but don't waste a penny of it. Make sure it all goes to the cause, don't use it for administration, communication, infrastructure, or career development." So there's actually a structural reason built into the worldviews that explains why conservatives have done better.

### **Back up for a second and explain what you mean by the strict father and nurturant parent frameworks.**

Well, the progressive worldview is modeled on a nurturant parent family. Briefly, it assumes that the world is basically good and can be made better and that one must work toward that. Children are born good; parents can make them better. Nurturing involves empathy, and the responsibility to take care of oneself and others for whom we are responsible. On a larger scale, specific policies follow, such as governmental protection in the form of a social safety net and government regulation, universal education (to ensure competence, fairness), civil liberties and equal treatment (fairness and freedom), accountability (derived from trust), public service (from responsibility), open government (from open communication), and the promotion of an economy that benefits all and functions to promote these values, which are traditional progressive values in American politics.

The conservative worldview, the strict father model, assumes that the world is dangerous and difficult and that children are born bad and must be made good. The strict father is the moral authority who supports and defends the family, tells his wife what to do, and teaches his kids right from wrong. The only way to do that is through painful discipline—physical punishment that by adulthood will become internal discipline. The good people are the disciplined people. Once grown, the self-reliant, disciplined children are on their own. Those children who remain dependent (who were spoiled, overly willful, or recalcitrant) should be forced to undergo further discipline or be cut free with no support to face the discipline of the outside world.

So, project this onto the nation and you see that to the right wing, the good citizens are the disciplined ones—those who have already become wealthy or at least self-

reliant—and those who are on the way. Social programs, meanwhile, “spoil” people by giving them things they haven’t earned and keeping them dependent. The government is there only to protect the nation, maintain order, administer justice (punishment), and to provide for the promotion and orderly conduct of business. In this way, disciplined people become self-reliant. Wealth is a measure of discipline. Taxes beyond the minimum needed for such government take away from the good, disciplined people rewards that they have earned and spend it on those who have not earned it.

**From that framework, I can see why Schwarzenegger appealed to conservatives.**

Exactly. In the strict father model, the big thing is discipline and moral authority, and punishment for those who do something wrong. That comes out very clearly in the Bush administration’s foreign and domestic policy. With Schwarzenegger, it’s in his movies: most of the characters that he plays exemplify that moral system. He didn’t have to say a word! He just had to stand up there, and he represents Mr. Discipline. He knows what’s right and wrong, and he’s going to take it to the people. He’s not going to ask permission, or have a discussion, he’s going to do what needs to be done, using force and authority. His very persona represents what conservatives are about.

**You’ve written a lot about “tax relief” as a frame. How does it work?**

The phrase “Tax relief” began coming out of the White House starting on the very day of Bush’s inauguration. It got picked up by the newspapers as if it were a neutral term, which it is not. First, you have the frame for “relief.” For there to be relief, there has to be an affliction, an afflicted party, somebody who administers the relief, and an act in which you are relieved of the affliction. The reliever is the hero, and anybody who tries to stop them is the bad guy intent on keeping the affliction going. So, add “tax” to “relief” and you get a metaphor that taxation is an affliction, and anybody against relieving this affliction is a villain.

“Tax relief” has even been picked up by the Democrats. I was asked by the Democratic Caucus in their tax meetings to talk to them, and I told them about the problems of using tax relief. The candidates were on the road. Soon after, Joe Lieberman still used the phrase tax relief in a press conference. You see the Democrats shooting themselves in the foot.

**So what should they be calling it?**

It’s not just about what you call it, if it’s the same “it.” There’s actually a whole other way to think about it. Taxes are what you pay to be an American, to live in a civilized society that is democratic and offers opportunity, and where there’s an infrastructure that has been paid for by previous taxpayers. This is a huge infrastructure. The highway system, the Internet, the TV system, the public education system, the power grid, the system for training scientists—vast amounts of infrastructure that we all use, which has to be maintained and paid for. Taxes are your dues—you pay your dues to be an American. In addition, the wealthiest Americans use that infrastructure more than anyone else, and they use parts of it that other people don’t. The federal justice system, for example, is nine-tenths devoted to corporate law. The Securities and Exchange

Commission and all the apparatus of the Commerce Department are mainly used by the wealthy. And we're all paying for it.

**So taxes could be framed as an issue of patriotism.**

It is an issue of patriotism! Are you paying your dues, or are you trying to get something for free at the expense of your country? It's about being a member. People pay a membership fee to join a country club, for which they get to use the swimming pool and the golf course. But they didn't pay for them in their membership. They were built and paid for by other people and by this collectivity. It's the same thing with our country-the country as country club, being a member of a remarkable nation. But what would it take to make the discussion about that? Every Democratic senator and all of their aides and every candidate would have to learn how to talk about it that way. There would have to be a manual. Republicans have one. They have a guy named Frank Luntz, who puts out a 500-page manual every year that goes issue by issue on what the logic of the position is from the Republican side, what the other guys' logic is, how to attack it, and what language to use.

**What are some other examples of issues that progressives should try to reframe?**

There are too many examples, that's the problem. The so-called energy crisis in California should have been called Grand Theft. It was theft, it was the result of deregulation by Pete Wilson, and Davis should have said so from the beginning.

Or take gay marriage, which the right has made a rallying topic. Surveys have been done that say Americans are overwhelmingly against gay marriage. Well, the same surveys show that they also overwhelmingly object to discrimination against gays. These seem to be opposite facts, but they're not. "Marriage" is about sex. When you say "gay marriage," it becomes about gay sex, and approving of gay marriage becomes implicitly about approving of gay sex. And while a lot of Americans don't approve of gay sex, that doesn't mean they want to discriminate against gay people. Perfectly rational position. Framed in that way, the issue of gay marriage will get a lot of negative reaction. But what if you make the issue "freedom to marry," or even better, "the right to marry"?

That's a whole different story. Very few people would say they did not support the right to marry whom you choose. But the polls don't ask that question, because the right wing has framed that issue.

**Do any of the Democratic Presidential candidates grasp the importance of framing?**

None. They don't get it at all. But they're in a funny position. The framing changes that have to be made are long-term changes. The conservatives understood this in 1973. By 1980 they had a candidate, Ronald Reagan, who could take all this stuff and run with it. The progressives don't have a candidate now who understands these things and can talk about them. And in order for a candidate to be able to talk about them, the ideas have to be out there. You have to be able to reference them in a sound

bite. Other people have to put these ideas into the public domain, not politicians. The question is, How do you get these ideas out there? There are all kinds of ways, and one of the things the Rockridge Institute is looking at is talking to advocacy groups, which could do this very well. They have more of a budget, they're spread all over the place, and they have access to the media.

Right now the Democratic Party is into marketing. They pick a number of issues like prescription drugs and Social Security and ask which ones sell best across the spectrum, and they run on those issues. They have no moral perspective, no general values, no identity. People vote their identity, they don't just vote on the issues, and Democrats don't understand that. Look at Schwarzenegger, who says nothing about the issues. The Democrats ask, How could anyone vote for this guy? They did because he put forth an identity. Voters knew who he is.

## **Look Behind Statistics for Changing Definitions**

*By Thomas Sowell*

*From The Knoxville News-Sentinel, July 6, 2002*

One of the latest in the seemingly endless rounds of alarming statistics is that one out of 12 American children has some form of disability. With all the things that are supposedly getting worse, you have to wonder how our life expectancy keeps increasing.

A cynic might even wonder if the increasing availability of money from the government has anything to do with the increasing number of "problems" that need to be "solved" by government programs.

One way of telling whether a given statistic is a fact or an artifact is to ask whether the definition used fits the thing that is being defined. Buried in the news story about the children with disabilities is the fact that the definition of "disability" has been expanding over the years.

A child who is likely to be diagnosed as autistic today might not have been some years ago. yet that is seldom mentioned in alarming statistics about the escalating number of cases of autism. As the author of a couple of books about late-talking children, I hear regularly from parents who tell me that they are being asked to allow their children to be labeled autistic in order to get either the government or their insurance company to pay for speech therapy.

It is amazing that, with something as serious—indeed, catastrophic—as autism, statistics are thrown around without mentioning the variation in what is being diagnosed as autism. In something much less serious, such as sales receipts at Wal-Mart, a comparison of how much money was taken in this year compared to last year will almost certainly make a distinction between sales receipts at the same stores as last year vs. sales receipts that include new stores opened since last year.

In other words, they notify you of changing definitions behind the numbers. Otherwise, the statistics could mean almost anything. If it is important enough to do this for Wal-Mart sales, it certainly ought to be important enough to do it for autism.

Regardless of whether the old or the new criterion for autism is better, they are different criteria. Statistics should tell us whether or by how much autism has risen by any consistent standard. Moreover, those who diagnose autism range from highly trained specialists to people who never set foot in a medical school.

Another set of statistics whose definition is at least questionable are statistics about the incomes of high school dropouts vs. those who have more education. Since most high school dropouts resume their education at some later time, are these statistics really counting all—or even most—dropouts? Or just the minority of dropouts who never enter a classroom again?

Although I dropped out of high school more than half a century ago and still do not have a high school diploma, I do have a couple of postgraduate degrees. Is my income counted when they add up the incomes of dropouts? Not bloody likely.

This is not just a fine point. All sorts of efforts are being made to prevent kids from dropping out of high school, as if dropping out means the end of their education. Since it usually means only an interruption, leading eventually to a resumption of their education after some experience in the real world, the urgency of preventing them from encountering the real world is by no means obvious. They may be more serious students afterwards.

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One of the most brazen uses of statistics which do not fit the definition was in a muchpraised book that attempted to show that black students admitted to colleges under affirmative action do just fine. The book was titled “The Shape of the River,” written by William Bowen and Derek Bok, former presidents of Princeton and Harvard, respectively.

Although this book is crammed full of statistics, not one of those statistics is about black students admitted under affirmative action. Black students admitted under the same standards as white students are lumped

together with black students admitted under lower standards. Yet, from this the authors conclude that affirmative action is a good thing—to the applause of those who apparently wanted to see that conclusion more than they wanted to see meaningful statistics.

Advocates of campaign finance reform often speak of the corrupting influence of money. But they seldom include the corrupting influence of the government’s money on what statistical “facts” are fed to the public.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Apply “Applying Semantic Analysis” to a current speech by a government official, a talk-radio broadcast, TV commentary, or op-ed column.

Look for examples of good figures of speech in some of your favorite song lyrics and in a day’s conversations, courses, or media news and entertainment.

Glendon’s “When Words Cheapen Life” addresses an emotionally charged, highly partisan subject. Do you find her tone relatively evenhanded? Does she come down clearly on one side of the issue, or is she simply criticizing semantic excesses and double standards on both sides? Role-play a defender of abortion refuting her arguments by playing up the euphemisms and other dehumanizing language used by opponents to obscure the realities of pregnancy by rape, illegal abortions, and other justifications for legal abortion.

Lakoff in “Framing the Issues” talks about issues on which conservatives control the semantic framing of certain issues, while Sowell in “Look behind Statistics for Changing Definitions” does the same about liberal framing of other issues. Discuss the way in which each of them is himself framing a frame, or setting the agenda, for what issues are played up and downplayed in American public discourse. Do you find either more persuasive, or might they both be equally right?

# Chapter 10.

## Avoiding Oversimplification and Recognizing Complexity

Most logical fallacies, psychological blocks to critical thinking, and forms of bias—for example, stereotypes and prejudices, causal reductionism, and either-or thinking—are variants of one master fallacy: **oversimplification**. Oversimplification is the essence of election campaign oratory and ads, advertising, talk radio and TV programs, and propaganda in general. Aldous Huxley's futuristic novel *Brave New World* (1932) described a totally managed society in which the citizens are kept in blissful ignorance and pacified through bland oversimplifications. In Huxley's later book *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), a Chapter titled "Propaganda under a Dictatorship," reprinted in Chapter 18, described more sinister uses of oversimplification after Huxley's observation of Nazi and Communist totalitarianism and the simplistic propaganda on all sides in World War II, along with the proliferation of commercial propaganda in post-war democracies. After paraphrasing Adolf Hitler's theory that propaganda must be directed at the uneducated masses rather than intellectuals, Huxley comments:

Unlike the masses, intellectuals have a taste for rationality and an interest in facts. Their critical habit of mind makes them resistant to the kind of propaganda that works so well on the majority. Intellectuals are the kind of people who demand evidence and are shocked

by logical inconsistencies and fallacies. They regard over-simplification as the original sin of the mind and have no use for the slogans, the unqualified assertions and sweeping generalizations which are the propagandist's stock in trade. (35-36)

Unfortunately for his case, Huxley himself falls into oversimplified, black-and-white thinking in his absolute opposition between the thinking of intellectuals and that of "the masses." While historical evidence supports much of what Huxley says, there have also been numerous cases of intellectuals becoming ardent supporters of fascist and communist dictatorships as well as of other undemocratic regimes that offered them a taste of power. 244

And many members of the unintellectual masses have heroically resisted dictatorships throughout the world. Nevertheless, the case can be made that intellectuals who have been corrupted by power have betrayed the independent-mindedness that ought to be intrinsic to the intellectual mind.

Oversimplified rhetoric has unfortunately pervaded American public discourse as a characteristic of politics and mass media aimed at appealing to the lowest common denominator of critical thinking skills. A 1994 article by David Osborne in *Mother Jones* magazine about Congressman Newt Gingrich described a speech Gingrich gave to a group of Republican activists:

"The number one fact about the news media," he told them, "is they love fights." For months, he explained, he had been giving "organized, systematic, researched, one-hour lectures. Did CBS rush in and ask if they could tape one of my one-hour lectures? No. But the minute Tip O'Neill attacked me, he and I got 90 seconds at the close of all three network news shows. You have to give them confrontations." (24)

Another comment in *Mother Jones* about this speech by Gingrich, by historian Dan T. Carter, adds, "And they had to be confrontations in a bipolar political system of good and evil, right and wrong. The greatest hope for political victory was to replace the traditional give-and-take of American politics with a 'battlefield' between godly Republicans and the 'secular anti-religious view of the left' embodied in the Democrats" (24). An article by Alison Mitchell in the *New York Times* (March 31, 1996), titled "Now, It's the Rhetorical Presidency," described how President Bill Clinton's advisers discouraged him from making long speeches that were "too chock full of ideas for the age of sound bites" (E2).

## Recognizing Complexity

Just as most modes of fallacies are varieties of oversimplification, most modes of critical thinking are varieties of complex thought. "Higher-order thinking" necessitates developing beyond a literal-minded mentality that absorbs only what appears on the surface of things; it is related to an understanding of multiple **viewpoints**, **irony**, and the difference between **literal** and **figurative language** and other **levels of meaning**. (Review "Reading and Writing for Cumulation and Recursion" in Chapter 3.) The following commentary appeared in a 1995 opinion column in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, titled "Good Art Asks Tough Questions," by Beeb Salzer, a drama professor. Salzer is defending the social value of art, in the face of attempts to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts and other widespread criticisms of the arts.

Artists are almost always dissidents, which makes them an essential ingredient in a democracy that claims to tolerate difference. Artists' approach to life is the opposite of that of politicians. Politicians are required to provide answers; artists ask questions. Politicians must always appear to be certain; artists steep themselves in ambiguity, in the unknown. Herein lies the conflict between those in power and artists.

Certainty is always comforting, particularly in the midst of the current societal dislocations caused by the changing economy, demographics, and continuous technological advances. People search for the security of truths that can explain the jumble of disconnected forces governing their lives. Some of us seek simple answers to complex



problems, finding solace in believing in far-fetched conspiracy theories, extraterrestrial beings, cults, or bizarre religious philosophies. Such gullible people are the natural prey of mirror-faced politicians, whose only ideology is power

Brought up on half-hour sitcoms, students must be shown that complex problems rarely have simple answers. First, they must learn to use reason to examine their emotional and intuitive reactions. (Painters do this all the time. After a creative burst of energy, they stand back, look critically at what they have done, make corrections, and then repeat the process.) Then, students must learn how to recognize complexity and paradox as necessary, not only in the arts but in every other discipline as well.

Even in the sciences, which laymen think are awash in provable facts, scientists are constantly dealing with paradoxical events, complex systems, and the difficulty of explaining counterintuitive theories—to the public as well as to other scientists. It is not possible to adequately describe our existence without appreciating complexity and paradox. (B2)

"Complexity and paradox," along with multiple viewpoints and levels of meaning, were key characteristics of the movement of literary modernism in the twentieth century, especially in the novels of writers like Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner. One of the defining works of modernism was Proust's seven-volume novel *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927). In Chapter 3 we quoted Proust's statement "Only by art can we get outside ourselves, know what another sees of his universe, which is not the same as ours and the different views of which would otherwise have remained unknown to us as those there may be on the moon." Art enables us not only to perceive other people's views of the universe but also to perceive the shifts in our *own* viewpoints as time passes and we change locations in space and in our relations with other people. Proust's novel is like a massive dramatization of Emerson's comment "The world of any moment is the merest appearance." In the first volume, *Swann's Way*, the fictional narrator, largely modeled on Proust himself, remembers a significant experience from his childhood. He has been accustomed to seeing, from the stable viewpoint of his home, a particular configuration of three church spires in the distance. But one day, in a ride in a horse-drawn carriage around the countryside, "I caught sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, on which the setting sun was at play, while the movement of the carriage and the windings of the road seemed to keep them continually changing their positions; and then of a third steeple, that of Vieuxvicq, which although separated from them by a hill and a valley, and rising from rather higher ground in the distance, appeared none the less to be standing by their side" (258).

This passage presents a rich example of literary **symbolism** in its levels of implicit meaning, which further compound the already complex ideas about what psychologists call "cognitive mapping" prompted by the visual impressions that the narrator reflects on—the illusion that the steeples are moving rather than the carriage he is in. As we read further in *Remembrance of Things Past*, we gradually realize that the narrator's perception of his shifting points of view on the three spires through his movement in

space, and of the simultaneous changes in lighting on the spires in time as the sun sets, serves as a symbol for the instability of personal perceptions that is dramatized throughout the seven volumes. The narrator's viewpoint on his family members and other people he knows is constantly shifting (1) as he grows older and gains a different perspective on them, (2) as he gets other people's perspectives on his acquaintances that sharply differ from his own, and (3) as all the other people change with age and with shifts in social status. Like the equally symbolic passage from Thoreau's *Walden* studied in Chapter 9, this one illustrates the power of the human intellect and language to get outside our momentary impressions and immersion in the ceaseless flow of experience, to connect diffuse perceptions, and to **synthesize** them into an articulate, stable structure of meaning on the written page.

## Reading Between the Lines

In the passage cited at the beginning of this book, from J. Mitchell Morse's book *The Irrelevant English Teacher*, Morse says, "I believe in . . . a sensitivity to nuances and unstated implications, an ability to read between the lines and to hear undertones and overtones— both for the sake of political and social enlightenment and for the sake of our personal enlightenment and pleasure as individuals." This kind of sensitivity is essential to becoming a critical reader, writer, and thinker.

In personal relations, too, with growing experience we learn to "read between the lines," to send and receive coded messages, in every kind of situation. Consider the rituals of courtship. One student spots another, interesting-looking one in the college cafeteria and politely asks if the seat next to the other is free. Permission to sit is given, which also presents an opening for conversation (after an obligatory interlude in which each pretends to be engrossed in lunch). One of the first things each has done is check out the other's ring finger: no engagement or wedding ring signals possible singleness. Small talk begins, on the usual everyday topics, but gradually, by indirection, sounding out backgrounds, attitudes, tastes, and acquaintances in common. At any point, the two may discover a basic incompatibility, or one will drop in a reference to "my boyfriend" or "my fiancée," and one will find an excuse for an exit with a routine "Well, it's been nice meeting you." If all verbal signals are "go," however, and body language is favorable, the conversation leads to something like, "Are you involved with anybody?" If not, then it's, "Would you like to go out with me sometime?" Short of the hoped-for unconditional "Yes," a degree of reluctance may be signaled by a response like "I'm pretty busy evenings, but we could meet for coffee." (A dinner or other evening date symbolizes possible romantic consequences; a daytime date symbolizes unwillingness to consider those consequences, at least immediately.) And throughout this whole sequence, each has been dancing along a fine line, trying to come across as

friendly without seeming aggressive or desperate, as confident and wanting to make a good impression without seeming conceited, and so on.

Most of us learn then, simply through life experience, to “read” the subtexts in personal encounters like this. Decoding discourses outside of our personal experiences, however, comes less naturally. Coming to appreciate literature is one of the best routes toward developing the sensitivity to nuances Morse describes, because of the mental initiative good literature demands from the reader. The following passage from Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* takes place in a general store in the rural South early in the twentieth century. The narrator, Celie, a poor young black woman, is watching an exchange between another black woman and the white clerk.

He say, Girl you want that cloth or not? We got other customers sides you.

She say, yes sir. I want five yards, please sir.

He snatch the cloth and thump down the bolt. He don’t measure. When he think he got five yard he tare it off. That be a dollar and thirty cent, he say. You need thread?

She say, Naw suh.

He say, You can’t sew thout thread. He pick up a spool and hold it against the cloth. That look like it bout the right color. Don’t you think.

She say, Yessuh.

He start to whistle. Take two dollars. Give her a quarter back. He look at me. You want something gal?

I say, Naw Suh. (15)

No further comment is made on this exchange in the book, and the uncritical reader is likely to skim over it without registering anything more than the surface events. With a little **recursiveness**, though, much more comes into focus. The clerk has obviously shortchanged the customer, since the cloth costs \$1.30 but he only returns a quarter from \$2.00; the spool of thread probably would not have cost more than a few cents at that time. The error of some 40 cents would have meant a serious loss in the poorest Part of the country and at the preinflation value of a dollar. Celie’s expression apparently signals to the clerk that she has caught on, which is why he looks at her and silently dares her to say something. He probably thinks either that both she and the customer are too dumb to know the difference or that if they do, they will be too intimidated to complain, which is more likely the truth. So the episode dramatizes, in a small way, the helplessness of southern blacks, before the civil rights movement in the late 1950s, to protest against being cheated by whites—a common occurrence, as shown on a larger scale in other sequences of the novel, in which blacks who do protest are cruelly punished.

## IRONY

The very concept of irony is a complex one, defying simple definitions. Most argumentative uses of irony in writing or speaking involve drawing attention to a dis-

crepancy, disparity, or opposition: between appearance and reality, or between what certain people preach and what they practice, between what is expected or intended and what results, between what we want and what we get, between apparent opposites that converge or reverse roles, and so on. And irony is often used by skillful writers to criticize an internal inconsistency, **compartmentalization**, or **double standard** in an opponent's position. Irony as a technique of written or spoken **style**, then, is used to point out that what you see is often *not* what you get. In this sense irony is sometimes defined as a form of figurative language—in opposition to literal language and related to **metaphor**, **simile**, **hyperbole**, **understatement**, and so on—referring to a statement whose meaning is not a direct, single one but the expression of a duality of some kind that the reader or listener must work to decode.

In a broader sense, we speak of *an ironic sense of life*, referring to a mind-set that appreciates the ironies that pervade every kind of experience; that mind-set is essential to critical thinking, reading, and writing. Most children haven't developed a strong sense of irony because they lack the experience to understand that things aren't always what they seem or what we instinctively expect, or that what their elders say is not always true or consistent with their behavior. Even as adults, most of us have a natural tendency to accept what others say at face value and to believe that things will work out as we expect they will, but hard experiences teach us that such is not always the case, so we learn that some degree of **skepticism** is a realistic attitude, without going overboard into total cynicism or pessimism. As an example of life's ironies, you can work hard most of your life, scrimping and saving money for the day when you can enjoy the finer things like gourmet food, wine, and world travel; but then you find that by the time you're old enough to indulge in them, you have also developed ulcers or high blood pressure as a result of all the stress, forcing you to avoid the luxuries you can finally afford—if you are fortunate enough even to *live* that long. The lesson is not that you shouldn't work hard or economize, but only that you can't count for certain on things working out the way you plan, so that you need realistically to weigh the ironic risks in any course of life and to expect the unexpected.

Many of us even as adults remain overly credulous and literal-minded, at least in areas of belief in which we have a strong emotional investment; so **wishful thinking** and **authoritarianism** block us from developing the ironic mind-set needed to question the credibility of statements by authority figures or the validity of our **culturally conditioned assumptions**. In politics, liberals are prone to have a strong sense of irony toward conservative leaders and beliefs but a weak one toward their own, and vice versa for conservatives.

When in the passage quoted in Chapter 3 from Stanley Aronowitz's "Mass Culture and the Eclipse of Reason: The Implications for Pedagogy," the author refers to research showing "a correlation of television watching (and consumption of mass culture in general) to a tendency toward literalness in thought," one **implication** is that mass culture in the period researched, from the 1950s to the 1980s, deadened the capacity of audiences to understand irony.

The course of history itself being endlessly ironic, however, mass politics and culture since the 1980s have taken what seems to be the opposite turn, toward depiction of highly ironic attitudes and fostering of civic and audience attitudes that go beyond skepticism toward sheer cynicism. (This is an example of that form of irony in which apparent opposites converge or reverse roles.) Media critic Mark Crispin Miller has termed this turn “the hipness unto death” (a play on existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard’s book title *The Sickness unto Death*). Miller prefaces his Chapter of this title, in his book *Boxed In: The Culture of TV*, with a quotation from Bruce Willis: “‘How many times can I make this face, this smirk, before somebody says, ‘Let’s see what’s on the other channel?’” (3). The ultimate irony here, though, may be that this apparent twist toward an **equal and opposite extreme** may be misleading. Utter credulousness and utter cynicism can be regarded as compartmentalized yet noncontradictory mirror images, since both are equally simplistic and absolute, neither demanding the critical discrimination essential to thoughtful skepticism and irony, and neither seriously challenging the power of those who control the institutions of politics and media, since the cynical attitude simply accepts the faults of the status quo with a knowing smirk about their inevitability.

## Verbal Irony

The most familiar form of irony, verbal, is a technique of spoken or written style, signifying a particular **tone**, often verging on **sarcasm** and consisting of saying the opposite of what you mean, as in, “You’re really smart”—meaning, “You’re really dumb.” *Socratic irony* and *Socratic ignorance* are terms associated with the hero of Plato’s dialogues, who, as we have seen in *The Apology*, is always going to the “wise men” of his time claiming to be ignorant and humbly asking them to explain something he doesn’t understand, with the purpose of exposing their false pretensions.

All of us, even children, have learned to hear an ironic or sarcastic tone of voice in speaking, but it takes experience in critical reading to become attuned to catching it in print. So college teachers frequently tell anecdotes about students who, for example, read literally—and are horrified by—Jonathan Swift’s essay “A Modest Proposal,” in which Swift protests England’s imposition of starvation on the Irish in the early eighteenth century by proposing, with tongue in cheek, that Irish children be boiled for food.

Understanding verbal irony further requires reading between the lines, or **inference**, of unstated meaning, often assuming the reader’s familiarity with **allusions** to items of knowledge from **cultural literacy**. For example, President Ronald Reagan’s 1985 State of the Union address contained these sentences: “This administration will meet its responsibilities to help those in need. But policies that increase dependency,

break up families and destroy self-respect are not progressive; they're reactionary." To understand the meaning here, the listener or reader needed, first, to have the political vocabulary to understand that "progressive" is a synonym for "liberal" and "reactionary" a synonym for "ultraconservative" or impeding progress. Understanding these terms, then, one could read between the lines to infer the literal meaning: "Liberal Democrats claim that we conservative Republicans try to impede progress for the poor, but some liberal programs that are *intended* to help the poor have ironically *resulted* in harming them."

In another passage from the same speech, President Reagan stated, "During peacetime, our national defense is the 'military industrial complex,' but when it is needed, it becomes 'the arsenal of democracy.'" A literal paraphrase might go something like this: "Liberals are typically hostile toward military spending in peacetime, which they see as a wasteful product of collusion between government and the defense industry—but when we need to defend ourselves against military aggression, they quickly change their tune." In other words, liberals are guilty of compartmentalized thinking or **shifting ground**. Another level of meaning is added, through allusion, by the two phrases placed in quotation marks in the printed text of the speech. "The military-industrial complex" was coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, warning against the excessive power gained by the defense industry in the 1950s. "The arsenal of democracy" was coined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time of World War II. Reagan here was pointing out a case of semantic "cleans" and "dirties." A final, historical irony here is that conservatives are generally more favorable to military spending than liberals, yet Roosevelt is perceived as a liberal and Eisenhower a conservative. So in both these passages, Reagan was expecting a rather sophisticated level of critical thinking in his audience, especially from those who heard or viewed this speech without the advantage of a printed text and the possibility of recursive reading like that we have been doing here, and he was making good use of multiple ironies to compress a lot of meaning in a few words.

## Appearance versus Reality, Words versus Deeds

From this same sheet of paper on which he has just written the sentence against an adulterer, the judge steals a piece for a love letter to his colleague's wife..... This is the way men behave.  
We let laws

and precepts go their way, we keep to another..... Human wisdom

never yet came up to the duties that it had prescribed for itself, and if it had come up to them, it would prescribe itself others beyond which it would ever aspire and pretend, so hostile to consistency is our human condition.

—*Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), Essays (493-95)*

Things and people are not always what they appear to be. This is one of the most frequent themes in the literary classics. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1604), Hamlet discovers that his uncle Claudius has murdered his own brother, the king of Denmark and Hamlet's father, to gain the throne and marry Hamlet's mother; yet everyone grovels before Claudius in his court, where he presents a benevolent, smiling face. Hamlet cries in despair, "That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain" (1.5.109). In Leo Tolstoy's novella (short novel) *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1884) the title character is a prestigious, self-satisfied judge who lives surrounded by respectful colleagues, socially prominent friends, and a loving family. Yet when he contracts a fatal disease and is slowly dying, his colleagues think only of their ambition to replace him; his family thinks only of inheriting his wealth; his friends are grateful it is not them dying; and everyone shuns him because they can't stand the sight of a dying man. Only one person stands by and cares selflessly for him: a humble peasant servant who has the native wisdom to know that death creates a common bond between all humans, high and low. Ivan Ilych learns too late that he has lived amid false appearances and that humility and brotherly love are worth more than the worldly success most of us aspire to.

Religion is another realm in which some people's false pretenses have always been a source of irony in literature and life. "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites," Jesus Christ said of the priests who made a great show of preaching and praying in the temple but who did not practice what they preached (Matthew 23:13). The majority of religious leaders are undoubtedly sincere, but any ideal can be corrupted and exploited by hypocrites, and religion is especially vulnerable because so many believers are loath to recognize that an outward appearance of piety might be a fraud. Indeed, ostentatious display of piety tends toward a form of pride, and as the Bible says, pride goeth before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). Montaigne drily comments on "those venerable souls exalted by the ardor of devotion and religion to a constant and conscientious meditation on divine things, who . . . disdain to apply themselves to our beggarly, fleeting, and ambiguous comforts..... Between ourselves,

these are things that I have always seen to be in remarkable agreement: supercelestial thoughts and subterranean conduct" (601). Montaigne's three volumes of essays conclude, "So it is no use for us to mount on stilts, for on stilts we must still walk with our own legs. And on the loftiest throne in the world we are still sitting on our own behind" (602).

The title character of Moliere's comic play *Tartuffe, or The Hypocrite* (1668) makes a grand show of his piety, only to swindle his gullible patron and seduce the patron's wife. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1851), the seventeenth-century Puritan minister Arthur Dimmesdale is the most ardent denouncer of an illegitimate mother, Hester Prynne, and her anonymous seducer—who of course turns out to be himself (though in this case, he is remorseful over his hypocrisy, but too cowardly to avow his sin and his love for Hester). In real life, stories appear periodically about some ostensibly devout religious leader like Jimmy Swaggart, who was fatally attracted to

prostitutes, or Jim Bakker, who went to prison for swindling his televangelical congregation of millions to support his and his wife Tammy's luxurious lifestyle, or Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson, both of whom were adulterers. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the Catholic Church, which has always strongly condemned homosexuality, was shaken by revelations about many pedophile and homosexual priests.

Similarly, politicians who try to create a self-righteous public image often fall victim to Montaigne's axiom of "supercelestial thoughts and subterranean conduct." Two such cases among Democratic leaders were highlighted on the same day of the 1996 Democratic national convention. President Clinton's chief strategist, Dick Morris, who had been counseling the president to emphasize "family values" in his reelection campaign, was revealed to be having an adulterous relationship with a prostitute (this was shortly before revelations about Clinton's own affair with Monica Lewinsky). And Vice President Al Gore, after making a speech critical of the tobacco industry at the convention, heavy with comments about the death of his sister as a result of smoking cigarettes, was revealed to have continued to raise tobacco on his farm and take campaign contributions from the tobacco industry after her death.

If Democrats are susceptible to such lapses, Republicans are even more so, since theirs is the party that since the late 1960s has advertised itself as the exclusive guardian of religious, moral, and family values—as typified in the above account of Newt Gingrich's strategy of reducing American politics to a "battlefield" between godly Republicans and the "secular anti-religious view of the left" embodied in the Democrats." As vice president to Richard Nixon after 1968, Spiro Agnew made a speech accusing intellectual Democratic critics of the Nixon administration of being "the elite . . . the raised-eyebrow cynics, the pampered egotists who sneer at honesty, thrift, hard work, prudence, common decency, and self-denial" (quoted in Nobile, *Intellectual Skywriting* 5). In 1973 Agnew was indicted for taking bribes and evading income taxes as governor of Maryland and as vice president. He pleaded no contest and resigned. Nixon then appointed as Agnew's replacement Gerald Ford, who in turn pardoned Nixon when Ford became president after Nixon resigned under impeachment for the worst scandal in American history, involving abuse of constitutional powers, obstruction of justice, bribery and financial corruption, and common felonies.

William J. Bennett, two of whose articles appear in this book, has been one of the most prominent advocates for the Republican Party as the upholder of traditional moral values, but he admitted to being a compulsive gambler at casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City and having lost millions there. Rush Limbaugh, another self-righteous Republican moralist, especially strong on getting tough on drug addicts, admitted to being addicted to prescription painkillers and using legally marginal means of attaining them. In 2004, when Republicans sought to gain election-year advantage by pushing for a constitutional amendment banning homosexual marriage and for passage of a congressional "Sanctity of Marriage Act," the Internet organization SolidarityInfoServices published on March 21, 2004, the following article on recent Republicans' record on marriage:



## Defenders of the Sanctity of Marriage

Ronald Reagan divorced the mother of two of his children to marry Nancy Reagan, who bore him a daughter 7 months after the marriage.

Bob Dole divorced the mother of his child, who had nursed him through the long recovery from his war wounds. Newt Gingrich divorced his wife who was dying of cancer at the time.

Dick Armey, House Majority Leader, divorced. Senator Phil Gramm of Texas, divorced. Governor John Engler of Michigan, divorced. Governor Pete Wilson of California, divorced. George Will, divorced. Senator Lauch Faircloth, divorced.

Rush Limbaugh and his current wife, Marta, have six marriages and four divorces between them.

Senator Bob Barr of Georgia, not yet 50 years old, has been married three times. He had the audacity to author and push the “Defense of Marriage Act.” The current joke making the rounds on Capitol Hill is “Bob Barr—WHICH marriage are you defending?!?”

Senator Alfonse D’Amato of New York, divorced. Senator John Warner of Virginia, once married to Liz Taylor, divorced. Governor George Allen of Virginia, divorced. Representative Helen Chenoweth of Idaho, divorced. Senator John McCain of Arizona, divorced. Representative John Kasich of Ohio, divorced. Representative Susan Molinari of New York (Republican National Convention Keynote Speaker), divorced.

The bottom line: “Don’t let gays destroy marriage that’s the job of the Republicans.”

## Extremes Meet

Not only are things often not what they seem, they sometimes turn out to be the exact opposite. Conversely, things that appear to be polar opposites often on closer inspection are quite similar or at some point merge paths or reverse positions. Some movie stars and athletes who have been promoted as the ultimate in masculinity or femininity have turned out to be homosexual. Perhaps what this really means is that the media, with their characteristic **hype** or excess, tend to set up images or models that are such oversimplified, **stereotyped** exaggerations of qualities like masculinity and femininity that they are closer to their apparent opposites, and those cast in these roles are simply giving a performance that doesn’t correspond to reality. (Another explanation might be that stereotypes of heterosexuality and homosexuality are themselves to some extent artificially created polarities that distort the ambiguity of sexual identities.) Likewise, on several occasions it has been revealed that famous Hollywood hunks have frequented prostitutes, which causes bewilderment in people who suppose that stars would have no lack of access to free sex; the celebrities’ explanation has been that living up to their image as great lovers creates pressures no mere human could bear.

Ideological extremes also tend to converge or mirror their opposites. Extreme left-wing ideologies like communism and right-wing ones like fascism have more common-

alities than differences. (See the definitions of these terms in Chapter 15.) Likewise, in the American culture wars of recent decades, **polemicists** on the right and left often sound like they are mimicking exactly the rhetorical excesses they denounce in their opponents, as we have seen in the opposing sides in the case of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas. All this confirms the ancient Greek ideal of “nothing in excess” and the wisdom of aiming for the golden mean or the sensible limit, or **drawing the line**, without falling into the **fallacy** of the equal and opposite extreme.

## Intention versus Outcome

A flashback sequence in Francis Ford Coppola’s film *The Godfather, Part II*] (1976) cuts from a present-day scene in which the Mafia lord Michael Corleone is brooding over the way his criminal activities have destroyed his personal family to a sequence some forty years earlier in which his father, Vito, is a young immigrant living in New York’s Little Italy, struggling to support a wife and three children. He and his friends have turned to petty theft, a common recourse at that time and place, but are being bled dry by a crook who lives on extortion. In the midst of a noisy Italian street festival, Vito shoots the extortionist then returns to where his family is watching the *festa*, kisses his baby son, and says, “Your father loves you very much, Michael,” while another of his young sons—fated to die violently years later—waves an American flag. The sequence is a good example of **dramatic irony**, in which the audience knows what the characters don’t: in this case, that this was an unintentional “kiss of death” for Michael and his brothers, since that murder was the first step in a long sequence of events that would eventually destroy the family Vito tried to care for by resorting to crime. So the sequence powerfully encapsulates, through cinematic recursiveness, the central, ironic theme of all three *Godfather* films: the futility of the belief that the immoral “business” values of organized crime “families” (and symbolically of much modern American business and politics, with which the Mafia gradually merges throughout the three films) can be kept from corrupting the moral family life of their participants.

In public policies, social scientists speak of “the law of unintended consequences.” One of American conservatives’ most effective lines of argument uses this ironic principle, as President Reagan did in his address cited above, to suggest that liberal government welfare policies may inadvertently perpetuate poverty and dependency, or that affirmative action may intensify the racial or sexual divisiveness it is intended to overcome. Conservatives’ use of this line of argument is weakened, however, when they apply it with **selective vision**, failing to acknowledge instances when it also might apply to conservative policies. For example, critics of American conduct in the

Vietnam War argued that hard-line anti-Communist policies ended up driving masses of the South Vietnamese to support the Communists. One infamous statement was reputedly made by an American military officer who claimed, “We had to destroy this village to save it from Communism.”

At this writing, in mid-2004, one of the greatest controversies in recent years concerned whether President George W. Bush’s war on Iraq reduced the danger of terrorism, by attacking it at one of its alleged sources, or *increased* it, by placing Americans in direct range of Middle Eastern terrorists and by actually breeding more terrorists than before out of Muslims’ anger over the U.S. invasion and occupation of one of their countries and by abuses like the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. On a related issue, James Rosen, in the McClatchy Newspapers, wrote:

Before the war in Iraq, Bush and senior administration officials made controversial claims of ties between Saddam and al-Qaida. Some note the irony that the war itself has helped create that reality, as the Baathist regime teams up with foreign Islamic militants to attack Americans.

”Terrorism didn’t exist in Iraq before,” French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin told Le Monde newspaper. “Today, it is one of the world’s principal sources of world terrorism.” (*Knoxville News Sentinel*, March 23, 2004, A2)

In another realm of irony between intention and outcome, consider a central article of faith for many conservatives, that “getting tough on criminals” is the way to deter crime, and that capital punishment is the strongest deterrent. These beliefs are among many where our intuitive sense that something is true seems to be contradicted by **empirical evidence**. The belief in deterrence derives from our knowledge that we ourselves would be deterred from committing crimes by fear of punishment. To a certain point this is obviously true of most people, who may avoid speeding, for example, because they know it can lead to heavy penalties, loss of a driver’s license, or jail. Projecting from our own mind-set here to all crimes and criminals, though, may lead to two fallacies, one of **ethnocentrism** and one of failure to draw the line. These result in our not understanding the psychological differences between ourselves or other law-abiding citizens and hardened criminals, and how those differences affect deterrence of minor crimes or misdemeanors and major felony crimes. Criminological evidence indicates that those who commit major or repeated crimes are likely to be either career criminals for whom being caught and punished is a calculated risk, individuals who are pathologically sadistic or otherwise mentally ill, or those temporarily deranged by alcohol or drugs, hence incapable of thinking rationally enough to be deterred by fear of punishment. The irony here is that the people most likely to be deterred by tough laws are the least likely to commit major crimes, while those most likely to commit such crimes are the least likely to be deterred.

The ultimate ironic twist here is that much criminological evidence suggests that harsh punishment, especially capital punishment, sometimes has the *opposite* effect from deterring potential criminals, perhaps causing more crime than it deters. In his essay “Reflections on the Guillotine” (1957), a powerfully comprehensive argument

against capital punishment, Albert Camus puts it this way: “There is no proof that the death penalty ever made a single murderer recoil when he had made up his mind, whereas clearly it had no effect but one of fascination on thousands of criminals” (180). Camus goes on to explain this **paradox**:

If the instinct to live is fundamental, it is no more so than another instinct . . . : the death instinct, which at certain moments calls for the destruction of oneself and of others. It is probable that the desire to kill often coincides with the desire to die or to annihilate oneself.

. . . The latter is the only way to explain altogether the various perversions which, from alcoholism to drugs, lead an individual to his death while he knows full well what is happening. So it happens that the criminal wants not only the crime but the suffering that goes

with it, even (one might say, especially) if that suffering is exceptional. When that odd desire grows and becomes dominant, the prospect of being put to death not only fails to stop the criminal, but probably even adds to the vertigo in which he swoons. Thus, in a way, he kills in order to die. (191-92)

It would be a **false inference** and **either-or** thinking to assume that this line of argument against capital punishment implies exoneration of criminals from punishment altogether. Camus, for example, favors life imprisonment at hard labor without chance of parole for first-degree murderers, mainly in order to protect society from further crimes by them. Nor does this line in itself **refute** arguments in favor of capital punishment on other grounds, such as revenge or retribution or religious justifications—though Camus also does **rebut** those arguments in turn.

This issue of getting tough on criminals, then, is a clear illustration of the need to develop an ironic sense of life in order to be a critical thinker. To be sure, the above arguments against capital punishment and other criminal deterrence are not the last word on this thorny subject, but they need to be given serious consideration and rationally refuted, rather than simply ignored, as is the tendency of politicians, talk radio hosts, editorialists, and others who manipulate the emotional appeal and apparent common sense of the “get tough on crime” line to sway citizens who are inflexibly literal-minded in the belief that capital punishment and other harsh policies do deter crime.

## Historical Irony

The course of history is filled with endless examples of all the above varieties of irony. This should caution us, as artists like Emerson, Thoreau, Proust, and Woolf did, that truths that appear certain and constant at the moment may quickly become anything but. In the 1960s, American leftists were protesting the Vietnam War, misuse of government power over minorities and dissidents, and the excessive authority of the military and police, while conservatives staunchly defended governmental and military authority. By the 1990s, the rhetorical po-

sitions had reversed, as conservatives denounced affirmative action as a sign of government tyranny and railed against agencies like the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms as fascistic “jackbooted thugs.” Also in the 1960s, the Vietnam War, which killed hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and tens of thousands of Americans, tore this country apart, and angry arguments between conservatives and liberals persist to this day over American involvement there. Conservative defenders of the war argued that if South Vietnam fell to Communism, the rest of Southeast Asia would soon follow, and then much of the rest of the world. And yet, less than twenty years after Communists did in fact conquer South Vietnam and establish a brutal dictatorship there, while Communism itself was collapsing worldwide, conservative American presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush, with the approval of conservatives in Congress, established friendly diplomatic and trade relations with the same Vietnamese Communists, who are now allowing sweatshop labor for Western corporations.

The history of the Soviet Union and the Cold War were fraught with ironies. The Russian Revolution was undertaken in 1917 in the name of establishing unprecedented equality, democracy, economic prosperity, and efficiency through socialism, but it produced some seventy years of bloody tyranny, bureaucratic hierarchies, abject poverty, and economic ineptitude. Once that tyrannical system became entrenched, American hard-line Cold Warriors insisted with **primary certitude** that it and its international satellites could never be changed through internal forces and could only be contained by constantly increasing American military force and covert actions. Yet, within an astonishingly few years, the system did collapse, probably through a combination of internal chaos and Western military power. In the most recent, ironic turn of the screw, the anarchy resulting from attempts to establish democracy and capitalism has caused some Russians to become nostalgic for “the good old days” under Communism!

As emphasized earlier, it can be an effective use of irony in argument to point out that your opponents do not practice what they preach; an equally effective use is to point out a compartmentalization between something your opponents said or did in the past and something they now say or do. Democrats had a great opportunity to do this in the corporate and accounting scandals in the administration of George W. Bush involving Enron, World Crossing, and other large companies. When President Bush condemned some of the current practices causing these scandals, he and Vice President Dick Cheney were confronted with allegations of their own earlier, similar practices as oil executives. Liberals also played up Republicans’ double standard in their zealousness to investigate Bill and Hillary Clinton’s financially suspect White-water dealings years before Clinton’s election, while Republicans **rationalized** Bush’s and Cheney’s similar earlier dealings as “tired old news.”

## Paradox

A paradox is yet another variety of irony, a statement that seems to be self-contradictory yet has a rational explanation, in the manner of a riddle. The paradoxical nature of life and social problems is reflected in creative writers' frequent use of paradox as a stylistic technique or figure of speech. One of the most influential pieces of argumentative and literary writing in our time, James Baldwin's book-length essay *The Fire Next Time* (1963), is a study of the multiple paradoxes (or "conundrums," to use Baldwin's term) in the relations between whites and blacks throughout American history and culture. Baldwin's book was published at the height of the civil rights movement and came out of the late 1950s when legal segregation in the South, de facto segregation in the North, and denial of African Americans' legal rights were still generally accepted. (Indeed, the book was among the forces that contributed to the advances in racial attitudes to this point—an important fact to be aware of in placing the section in this Chapter in historical perspective.) Whites at that time were accustomed to viewing blacks from the white **viewpoint**, but Baldwin turned the camera around to show whites what they looked like in blacks' eyes, with all of their collective delusions of moral and biological superiority, their failure to recognize that "the Negro problem" is really "the White problem."

"My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation" is a preface to the main body of *The Fire Next Time*. Part of the historical background here was the debates at the time among African Americans about whether they should press for integration into white society or for separatism, as advocated by the Black Muslims and other militants. Baldwin's thesis is announced in the second paragraph: "They have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it." At the end of that paragraph, he describes in paradoxical form whites' willful ignorance of the historical and present truths of white crimes against blacks: "It is the innocence that constitutes the crime." After sarcastically reiterating, in paragraphs 3-5, whites' "innocence" as a **euphemism** for their ignorance, he uses an ironic reversal in dispelling liberal whites' notion that blacks merely want to be "accepted" by whites and "integrated" into white society—in its contemporary state of delusions. Instead, he poses another paradox to his young nephew: "You must accept them and accept them with love." Why must blacks accept whites, and with love? And in what sense, in paragraph 6, must whites be freed before blacks can be? The answer to these conundrums is that whites are slaves to their own ignorance and illusions. "And if the word *integration* means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, will force our brothers to see themselves as they are and to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it." In other words, he was not saying that blacks should have meekly accepted the segregationist status quo, or that they should have only sought integration under the terms of whites' continuing illusions of superiority, but that true integration could only occur once whites were forced to recognize blacks' full equality and to redress past injustice.

*My Dungeon Shook]]: Letter to My Nephew on the Hundredth Birthday of the Emancipation*

*By James Baldwin*

From *The Fire Next Time*, Dial Press, 1963; Vintage Books, 1992

Dear James:

I have begun this letter five times and torn it up five times. I keep seeing your face, which is also the face of your father and my brother. Like him, you are tough, dark, vulnerable, moody—with a very definite tendency to sound truculent because you want no one to think you are soft. You may be like your grandfather in this, I don't know, but certainly both you and your father resemble him very much physically. Well, he is dead, he never saw you, and he had a terrible life; he was defeated long before he died because, at the bottom of his heart, he really believed what white people said about him. This is one of the reasons that he became so holy. I am sure that your father has told you something about all that. Neither you nor your father exhibit any tendency towards holiness: you really *are* of another era, Part of what happened when the Negro left the land and came into what the late E. Franklin Frazier called "the cities of destruction." You can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a *nigger*. I tell you this because I love you, and please don't you ever forget it.

I have known both of you all your lives, have carried your Daddy in my arms and on my shoulders, kissed and spanked him and watched him learn to walk. I don't know if you've known anybody from that far back; if you've loved anybody that long, first as an infant, then as a child, then as a man, you gain a strange perspective on time and human pain and effort. Other people cannot see what I see whenever I look into your father's face, for behind your father's face as it is today are all those other faces which were his. Let him laugh and I see a cellar your father does not remember and a house he does not remember and I hear in his present laughter his laughter as a child. Let him curse and I remember him falling down the cellar steps, and howling, and I remember, with pain, his tears, which my hand or your grandmother's so easily wiped away. But no one's hand can wipe away those tears he sheds invisibly today, which one hears in his laughter and in his speech and in his songs. I know what the world has done to my brother and how narrowly he has survived it. And I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it. One can be, indeed one must strive to become, tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of man. (But remember: *most* of mankind is not *all* of mankind.) But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.

Now, my dear namesake, these innocent and well-meaning people, your countrymen, have caused you to be born under conditions not very far removed from those described for us by Charles Dickens in the London of more than a hundred years ago. (I hear the chorus of the innocents screaming, “No! This is not true! How *bitter* you are!”— but I am writing this letter to *you*, to try to tell you something about how to handle *them*, for most of them do not yet really know that you exist. I *know* the conditions under which you were born, for I was there. Your countrymen were *not* there, and haven’t made it yet. Your grandmother was also there, and no one has ever accused her of being bitter. I suggest that the innocents check with her. She isn’t hard to find. Your countrymen don’t know that *she* exists, either, though she has been working for them all their lives.)

Well, you were born, here you came, something like fourteen years ago; and though your father and mother and grandmother, looking about the streets through which they were carrying you, staring at the walls into which they brought you, had every reason to be heavyhearted, yet they were not. For here you were, Big James, named for me—you were a big baby. I was not—here you were: to be loved. To be loved, baby, hard, at once, and forever, to strengthen you against the loveless world. Remember that: I know how black it looks today, for you. It looked bad that day, too, yes, we were trembling. We have not stopped trembling yet, but if we had not loved each other none of us would have survived. And now you must survive because we love you, and for the sake of your children and your children’s children.

This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that, for the heart of the matter is here, and the root of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and *for no other reason*. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity. Wherever you have turned, James, in your short time on this earth, you have been told where you could go and what you could do (and *how* you could do it) and where you could live and whom you could marry. I know your countrymen do not agree with me about this, and I hear them saying, “You exaggerate.”

They do not know Harlem, and I do. So do you. Take no one’s word for anything, including mine—but trust your experience. Know whence you came. If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go. The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you. Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity and fear. Please try to be clear, dear James, through the storm which rages about your youthful head today, about the reality which lies behind the words *acceptance* and *integration*. There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and



there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that *they* must accept *you*. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that *you* must accept *them*. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity. Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shining and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one's sense of one's own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations. You, don't be afraid. I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the white man's definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper name. You have, and many of us have, defeated this intention; and, by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality. But these men are your brothers—your lost, younger brothers. And if the word *integration* means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it; great men have done great things here, and will again, and we can make America what America must become. It will be hard, James, but you come from sturdy, peasant stock, men who picked cotton and dammed rivers and built railroads, and, in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of great poets, some of the greatest poets since Homer. One of them said, *The very time I thought I was lost, My dungeon shook and my chains fell off*.

You know, and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon. We cannot be free until they are free. God bless you, James, and Godspeed.

Your uncle,  
James

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

1. Can you remember having a "Proustian moment," in which you experienced a startling, sudden shift in a previously fixed perspective in time, space (say, in a landscape or urban vista, an auto route, or a house in which the decor or arrangement of furniture has changed), or your knowledge of other people? Think, for example, about

how your impression of the professor and fellow students in a class has changed from the beginning of a semester to its end.

On the basis of the description of the meeting between two students, describe a similar personal conversation you have had that has required reading between the lines

Think of recent personal experiences or public events that illustrate some of the forms of irony described here

Debate whether “Defenders of the Sanctity of Marriage” is a fair exposure of the failure of some Republicans to practice what they preach or a cheap shot Would it be an effective rebuttal for Republicans to use a tu quoque argument making a similar list of divorced Democrats, or would most Democrats’ opposition to the Sanctity of Marriage Act discredit that rebuttal?

5 At the moment of history when you read this, does it look like President Bush’s war on Iraq did more to reduce or to increase the incidence and magnitude of world terrorism?

6 Both common sense and culturally conditioned assumptions incline us to believe in the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent However, writers like Camus, in “Reflections on the Guillotine,” and Sister Helen Prejean, in her nonfiction book about being a death-row nun, *Dead Man Walking*, make a strong case that this belief, based largely on deductive reasoning, is contradicted by empirical evidence and human psychology, which present a more complex, ironic perspective on the issue Both Camus’s and Prejean’s cases also use semantic analysis to argue that defenses of capital punishment tend to resort to verbal abstractions and euphemisms that are belied by the concrete, personal realities of executions If you favor capital punishment, read Camus and Prejean to see if they change your mind Weigh their arguments against those of deathpenalty advocates like Walter Berns in his book *For Capital Punishment*.

7 When *The Fire Next Time* was published in 1963, many whites reacted with defense mechanisms denying the truth of Baldwin’s arguments or their personal responsibility for racism, even though he was not accusing most whites of active racism but rather of “not knowing” and “not wanting to know” the facts of past and present racism, to avoid pushing for government action to end segregation, denial of civil rights, and other forms of discrimination Many white readers still react defensively reading Baldwin today If you are white and you do, try to gain some objective distance on why you react this way and consider whether your reaction can be reasonably defended or whether it might involve denial of your own “innocence,” in the sense of ignorance of the historical facts behind Baldwin’s arguments and those in “A Historical-Causal Analysis of the White Problem,” in Chapter 2

8 One way of getting some personal distance from your reaction to Baldwin is to think objectively about, and do research on, the ways in which African Americans have come closer to equality in the four decades since Baldwin was writing and ways in which they arguably have not, such as the conditions in inner cities described by Jonathan Kozol in “Other People’s Children” in Chapter 13

9 Baldwin's tone in this passage is a very interesting subject for rhetorical analysis. Do you think he was primarily addressing an audience of black or white readers? Whites are clearly "them" or "the other" here; Baldwin is highly sarcastic toward them, and many readers infer that he hated them. Yet he was obviously trying to appeal to their conscience and exhort them "to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it." And what is the effect of his calling them "our brothers" here? Read the rest of the book with an eye to Baldwin's complex shifts of tone in his attitude toward whites.

# Chapter 11. Some Key Terms in Logic and Argumentation

## Deductive and Inductive Arguments

This section continues development of the introduction to deduction and induction in Chapter 2. To reiterate, theorists of logic and rhetoric going back to Aristotle have distinguished between two basic forms of reasoning or argument, deductive and inductive. Very briefly and broadly, **deduction** involves reaching a **conclusion** (alternately called an **inference**) or supporting a **thesis** or **hypothesis** by reasoning through a logical chain of **premises** (or **assertions**), where, if the chain of reasoning is logically valid, the conclusion or thesis follows from the premises with certainty, as in a mathematical proof—from the postulates that *a* is a subset of *b* and that *b* is a subset of *c*, it follows with logical certainty that *a* is a subset of *c*. (It would not follow logically, however, that *b* is a subset of *a* or that *c* is a subset of either *a* or *b*.) **Induction** involves drawing a conclusion from, or supporting a **claim**, **assertion**, or hypothesis with **empirical** (or **experimental**) **evidence**. In induction, conclusions generally do not follow logically from claims with the mathematical certainty of deduction, but only with a greater or lesser degree of *probability*, as with the example in Chapter 2 of the antique cars on the highway: it's a pretty probable hypothesis that they're going to or from a car show, and that hypothesis could be proved with empirical certainty by following them, though this is a different *kind* of proof from a deductive one. Often, the premises in an inductive argument are used to lead not just to a limited conclusion (the cars are going to or from a show) but to a broader **generalization**, an **analogy**, a **causal**, **statistical**, or other variety of analysis like those surveyed in Chapter 2, or to a moral or value judgment. A number of these inductive forms are analyzed in depth in other chapters (causal analysis in Chapter 13), so they will not be examined here, beyond some general guidelines on analogies and statistical arguments, along with a discussion of accounting for variable factors.

I personally don't think it's worth spending a great deal of time in what you write laboring differences between inductive and deductive reasoning. Most real-life arguments mix 260

elements of deduction and induction, and the main practical value of the distinction is to be able to identify which elements need to be evaluated through deductive means—verifying the internal logic of the argument—and which through inductive means—

verifying the evidence and whether it is sufficient to warrant the conclusion. Nor is it especially practical to use a lot of formal logical terms in your writing. It may become useful to you, if you can't quite figure out what's fishy about an argument, to recast it into an **enthymeme** and then a **sylllogism**, as in some of the examples below, to see what issue is being evaded. But usually you can figure that out, and write about it, just with common sense and everyday language.

## Varieties of Induction

*The Use and Misuse of Analogies and Equations.* In an argumentative analogy, the speaker or writer presents us with something that we recognize as true about one situation, then tries to persuade us that another situation is similar, and therefore that the same is true about it. (It might be useful also to use the terms **equation** or **equivalency**, in which it is argued that two situations are not only similar but exactly the same or "morally equivalent." The parallel term to **false analogy**, then, would be **false equation**.) Scholars of rhetoric disagree about the value of analogies in argumentation. Some scholars go to the extreme of claiming that all analogies are false because no two situations in life are exactly alike. A more moderate position is that an analogy is valid if there are more significant similarities between the two situations than differences *on the specific point of comparison*; if the differences can be shown to be greater than the similarities, however, then the analogy is false.

In Chapter 5, we encountered Rush Limbaugh's claim, "It is neither farfetched nor unfair to draw an analogy between the civil rights leadership and the Soviet Communist leadership, insofar as exploitation of their people is concerned. The leaders of both enjoy the privileges of class at the expense of the masses, who do all the work and whom the leaders purport to serve" (*The Way Things Ought to Be* 118). However, Limbaugh provides no evidence to support the analogy beyond his assertion that civil rights leaders make their income by soliciting contributions and receiving government support (traits that, as we have noted in another analogy, they share with leaders in many other American nonprofit organizations, liberal and conservative). It is universally recognized that the Soviet Communist leadership exploited their people through imposing a brutal police state in which millions were arbitrarily executed, imprisoned, enslaved, or forcibly exiled. In the absence of any evidence presented by Limbaugh of crimes of such magnitude (or, indeed, any crimes at all) by American civil rights leaders, can we reasonably conclude that there are more important differences between the two groups than similarities, and that the analogy is both illogical and a case of the fallacy of **guilt by association**?

In "Civil Disobedience," discussed in Chapter 8, Henry David Thoreau argued that we have a moral obligation to disobey laws that we consider grossly unjust. Thoreau explains that he refused to pay his taxes in support of America's war against Mexico to gain border territories including Texas and thus extend slavery to Texas when it became a state. Thoreau's protest, against a government acting in conservative inter-

ests, has long been used as a model to defend analogous liberal protest movements, including Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for independence of India from Great Britain following World War II, the 1950s civil rights sitins led by Martin Luther King in the American South, and the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964-65. However, conservatives might also draw analogies from Thoreau to support breaking liberally biased government laws, such as the actions of Oliver North and other officials of the Reagan administration around 1986 in selling arms illegally to the Iranian government in exchange for release of its American hostages, then using the profits to provide support for the Nicaraguan Contras, forces in rebellion against the left-wing government there, in the face of congressional legislation that had banned such support for the Contras.

In judging the validity of an analogy like the Thoreau-North one, we need to take careful consideration of the possible significant differences between the two situations. Is it important that Thoreau's act was an open protest against a government over which he felt he had no direct control, while North and his associates, as White House officials, were acting in *behalf of* the government, or more precisely the executive branch, against the legislative branch, and that they kept their acts secret from the American people? And is it significant that Thoreau's act was a nonviolent protest against his government making war and endorsing the violence of slavery, while North's efforts were in the cause of war making in Nicaragua? (To be sure, conservatives perceived the leftist Nicaraguan Sandinistas, then in power, as a more violent, corrupt force than the Contras—another analogy or comparison that has been disputed by opposing sides on the civil wars in Central America).

One more noteworthy analogy with Thoreau involved Theodore Kaczynski, the "Unabomber," whose manifesto drew directly from Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and *Walden* to justify killing scientists and government bureaucrats who Kaczynski believed were destroying the environment and civil society. Just the pros and cons about the validity of this and the previous analogies with Thoreau, or of other equally problematic analogies, can provide ample material for a full paper in themselves.

*The Use and Misuse of Statistics.* Statistics are an integral Part of many arguments, both in inductive and deductive reasoning. The inductive use involves gathering accurate statistical data through empirical research and drawing conclusions from the data. Deductive reasoning is applied in the logic of interpreting data; opponents might agree on the statistical evidence itself but select and interpret it differently or draw different conclusions from it. Some statistical arguments are so complex that you may need to take a course in economics or statistics to follow them, but those that appear in everyday political rhetoric and mass media ought to be comprehensible to lay readers or listeners with some close attention and commonsense reasoning; if they are not, that may be a sign they are deceptive.

Most of us tend to be easily impressed by statistics, but when confronted with statistics that contradict those supporting our side, we are also inclined to grumble skeptically, "Anybody can prove anything with statistics." Statistics are a key compo-

nent of political arguments as well as of advertising and public relations campaigns, and as such are subject to all the varieties of rhetorical strategies discussed throughout this book. **Partisan** forces on opposing sides often sponsor statistical research, polls, and surveys in which the deck is stacked to guarantee that the results will support that side. Thus, each side can produce statistical findings that seem irrefutably to support its case, though the other side's opposite findings seem equally impressive. Once again, in any such case, one side's case may in fact be more credible than the other's, so do not give in to cynical despair in thinking you can't believe *anyone*: simply learn to spot partisan statistical studies when you encounter them and to evaluate them as such, wherever possible weighing them against parallel studies, or **rebuttals**, by the other side. And watch out for the **ESBYODS principle**, in the tendency to **ratio-nalize** that the statistics supporting your own side must be right! Extensive analysis of statistical arguments concerning the recent growth of income and wealth inequities in the United States will be central to chapters 20 and 21.

*Accounting for All Variables or Factors.* Scientists doing empirical research use terms like "controlling for variables." In testing the effectiveness of a medical drug, for example, they will compare the result of the drug with that of a placebo, a pill containing no medicine, given to patients while telling them it's the real thing, to control for the possible psychological factor of people's tendency to believe they feel better just because they have taken a medication.

Responsible empirical research in the social sciences also entails the attempt to account for all significant variables or factors in drawing a particular conclusion or inference. Failure to do so may lead to a form of **non sequitur** or **hasty conclusion** logical fallacy. In causal analysis, the **reductive fallacy** is the reduction of a probable multiplicity of causes to a single one, neglecting other possible factors. In statistical analysis, similar fallacies often result from failure to recognize factors in a situation—or an interpretation of their significance—other than the ones emphasized, and this failure is sometimes a form of deliberate deception. (In "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" in Chapter 5, this is identified as a frequent mode of downplaying arguments or evidence unfavorable to one's own side or favorable to the other side.) For example, liberal critics of the outsourcing of American jobs to other countries through globalization often argue that it has resulted in a loss of jobs and economic decline here, while they disregard the possibility that globalization has also resulted in financial benefits and job creation here through the import of low-priced foreign products and increased demand for American exports.

As will be discussed in chapters 20 and 21, conservative defenders of tax cuts for the rich passed by Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush frequently cite as evidence of their fairness the fact that following them, the rich are "bearing a greater share of the burden of taxes" by paying higher dollar amounts in taxes and a higher percentage of total tax revenues. This evidence, however, neglects two other significant variables: (1) the fact that both the dollar amount of income for the rich and their share of income in relation to other social classes have increased too, so that their

greater share of taxes is just a natural consequence of their greater income and other classes' lower income (which resulted, at least in part, from these tax cuts)—so that their paying higher taxes is hardly a “burden”; and (2) that overall tax revenues have arguably declined as a consequence of tax cuts for the rich, with other classes paying less tax on lower income. On the same issue, however, conservatives argue that liberals neglect another possible factor: that prior to the tax cuts, rich people often sought tax shelters for their income rather than pay at high rates, and that with lowered rates they are now investing that money productively and thus paying taxes on it.

In another conservative defense of President Bush's tax cuts, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks writes, “Some outside economists say the cuts created or preserved 1.5 million jobs.” Brooks unfortunately fails to identify those economists, their possible political bias, or a source in which their evidence can be looked up. His argument also opens questions about other possible variables: Has the income from these 1.5 million jobs and the tax revenue they generate offset the amount of revenue lost to the government through the tax cuts? Did some of the gains from the cuts for the wealthy go toward investments in companies outsourcing jobs to other countries? Wouldn't the lost tax revenue have gone to create about the same number of jobs through government employment? Is public sector employment, financed through taxes, any less valuable to the national economy than private sector employment? (This is a crucial point of difference between political conservatives and liberals or leftists, which is explored further in chapters 15, 20, and 21.)

## Varieties of Deduction

*Syllogisms.* The classic form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism, consisting of two premises and a conclusion drawn from them, as in the classic example presented in Chapter 2:

*First premise:* All humans are mortal

*Second premise:* Socrates is a human

*Conclusion:* Socrates is mortal

In this form of syllogism, known as a **categorical syllogism**, one of the premises makes some kind of generalization (*all . . . always . . . none . . . never*), and the other premise states that someone or something belongs to the category in the first, so that the conclusion affirms that the characteristic of the category in the first also applies to the instance of that category in the second. In order for this and other kinds of syllogism to be logically sound, both of the premises must be true (they must be factually accurate and adequately supported), and the conclusion must follow logically (with certainty, inescapably) from both of them. (The fallacy of non sequitur refers to a conclusion that does not follow thus.)

Few deductive arguments about the kind of social issues emphasized in this book have the certainty of mathematical proofs, and establishing their premises often necessitates elements of inductive reasoning. The generalizing premise in a categorical



sylogism must be verified through the inductive principles of evaluating generalizations discussed in Chapter 7. The second premise may be established through a variety of means—in this case by definition or classification of Socrates as a man, but in other cases by the several varieties of inductive supporting evidence surveyed in Chapter 2. In 2004, for example, conservatives argued, “Liberals favor tax-and-spend policies. John Kerry is a liberal. So Kerry favors taxand-spend policies.” In order for this conclusion to be sound, we must empirically verify both the generalization in the first premise about liberals and the categorizing of Kerry as a liberal in the second.

The deductive reasoning in syllogisms (especially categorical ones) and enthymemes can also be fallacious in ways related to mathematical sets and subsets, as in the example above about *a*, *b*, and *c*. In the syllogism concluding that Socrates is a mortal, one might conceivably draw the conclusion that Socrates is a cat, but this would be a non sequitur because there is nothing about cats in the premises. One might also reason something like: all humans are mortals (creatures that die); Socrates is a human; therefore, all mortals are human. There are various formal names for this kind of fallacy; most simply, it is an **argument from the converse**; that is, it is a false inference to conclude from the fact that all humans are mortal that the converse, all mortals are human, is true. A useful tool for visualizing this kind of fallacy is circle diagrams, also called **Venn diagrams** (see fig. 11.1).

In Chapter 5 we used Venn diagrams in identifying the possible **false inference** in concluding, from Rush Limbaugh’s statement that up to 90 percent of minorities are Democrats, that 90 percent of Democrats are minorities. The circle diagrams in figure 11.2, appearing here and in Chapter 15, serve there to reveal a frequent argument from the converse, when people reason from the fact that Communists (governments or members of the Communist Party) are a subset of socialists to the false conclusion that socialists are a subset of Communists, or “All socialists are Communists.” Likewise, all Communists are Marxists, but not all Marxists are Communists. The diagrams also clarify the relations among socialism, social democracy, and capitalism.

Categorical syllogisms are often interchangeable with another form of deductive argument, called a *conditional argument* (sometimes called a *conditional syllogism*, or in Latin, *modus ponens*, “method of affirming”), such as the following:

If a person is human, then that person is mortal

Socrates is human.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

A few other kinds of deductive argument are:

*Argument by elimination.* The main idea for this form of argument is to state a set of choices or alternatives (and for this form of argument to work, these choices must be exhaustive, covering all of the possibilities), then eliminate one or more of these choices.

All humans are mortal

Therefore (putting the two diagrams together), A is a subset of C

Therefore, Socrates is mortal

Therefore, Socrates is a cat

Figure 11.1.

Once we do so, we are left with the remainder. For example, some people, not liking their choices from either the Democratic or the Republican parties, conclude that the only choices they have left are either to vote for a third-party candidate or not vote at all. In other words, they reason as follows: “My choices are to vote for the Democratic candidate, the Republican candidate, a candidate from an alternative party, or to vote for no one [statement of the alternatives]. I do not see enough difference between the Democrats and Republicans to vote for either [elimination of some of the alternatives]. Therefore, my only choices are to vote for a third-party candidate or stay at home [conclusion: the remaining alternatives].”

*Dilemmas.* The main idea for this sort of argument is similar to argument by elimination, in that we draw conclusions based on a set of choices or alternatives. But with dilemmas, we scope out the implications of the choices rather than eliminate them. For example, when thinking about the likely political future, we can reasonably say that either a Democrat or a Republican will win the presidency. What are the implications then for, say, the future of health-care policy? If the Democratic candidate wins, we might expect some legislation aimed at regulating the health-care industry in a way that, so they say, will reduce insurance premiums. If the Republican candidate wins,

Figure 11.2.

we might expect deregulation of the health-care industry, or some market-based approach aimed again, so they say, at reducing premiums. So in both cases what will happen is potentially a modest reduction in health-care costs, but no substantial reductions, and in neither case would there be guaranteed coverage for everyone, or a national insurance or “singlepayer” system as they have in almost every other democracy in the world. That seems to be our likely future for the near term. In this example of reasoning (you might disagree with the premises) the alternatives are set out (Democrat or Republican); implications are drawn from the alternatives; and the conclusion is the set of implications from all of the alternatives. If you argued, however, that we have to support either the Republican or Democratic plan because there is no other possible alternative, that would be an instance of the fallacy of **false dilemma**.

*Falsification and Reductio ad Absurdum:* The main idea behind this style of deductive argument is that if a false conclusion is implied by an assumption, then the assumption itself must be false. For example, one of the earliest arguments for rejecting the assumption that the earth is flat went like this: If the earth is flat, then when you watch a large sailboat sailing away, you should see it get smaller and smaller while being able to see the whole sailboat—both the boat and the sail—decreasing in size. But that is exactly what you do *not* see. Instead you see the boat fall below the horizon while you still see the sail. So the earth must not be flat. For this style of argument, there is a premise about the implication of the assumption—that is, if the assumption, then the implication (if the earth is flat, then . . .); then a premise to the effect that the implication is actually false (you don’t see the sailboat the way you should); and

finally a conclusion about the falsity of the initial assumption (the earth really isn't flat). Note, however, that the testing of the assumption here necessitates inductive reasoning, through empirical observation of boats sailing.

*Enthymemes.* As noted in Chapter 2, few arguments in everyday life are phrased as formal syllogisms or state all of the premises in the nice and tidy forms given above. Instead, deductive arguments most often take the form of an enthymeme, which is a syllogism in which one of the two premises is left unstated and is implied or hidden ("Socrates is a human; therefore, Socrates is mortal"). For a hidden premise to form an implicit Part of a valid chain of deductive reasoning, it must be one that, once added explicitly to the original premise, makes the conclusion follow syllogistically. Leaving a premise implicit is a perfectly reasonable, time-saving move if the unstated premise (here, "All humans are mortal") is so obviously true that no one is likely to question it. However, dispute very often arises over such a premise that the arguer assumes to be true but that her or his opponents do not. So one of the most important rhetorical skills that you can develop is learning to spot the disputable hidden premises on which an argument that you hear or read may be based. Such premises are often generalizations, so you should apply to them the usual tests for generalizations studied in Chapter 7: see if you can find significant examples that disprove the generalization or empirical evidence refuting it. (In Chapter 2, we used the example of Mario Savio's implied assertion that students in the university should have all the same rights as citizens under a democratic government, which is disputable on the empirical grounds that students' rights are generally by agreement subject to limitations.)

In a *Los Angeles Times* article on a California school-voucher initiative in 2000, a supporter of vouchers is quoted as arguing that a voucher redeemed at a private school would be worth \$4,000 and that this is \$2,000 less than what is normally spent on a child in a public school. Thus, "For every child that redeems a voucher and goes to private school, there's more money left in the system." This argument can be reworded as an enthymeme something like this:

*Premise:* Vouchers would save schools the difference between the cost of the voucher and what is now spent per student in the public schools.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, public schools would gain money for every student who leaves with a voucher.

However, an opponent of vouchers refuted this by saying, "The state distributes general fund money to schools based on how many students are enrolled, so funding could drop along with enrollment." With this empirical evidence provided by the opponents, we see that there is a hidden premise in the above enthymeme, which could be recast as a syllogism:

*Hidden premise:* Per student funding in public schools remains constant if the number of students declines.

*Premise:* Vouchers would save schools the difference between the cost of the voucher and what is now spent per student in the public schools.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, public schools would gain money per student for every student who leaves with a voucher.

In this form we can see that the truth of the first premise is disputed, so that even if the second premise is granted to be true, the conclusion does not follow. It is essential to bring premises into the open like this because they often contain what is most disputable in the argument, and hiding them amounts to **begging the question**.

To see how practical arguments combine deductive and inductive elements, consider that disputes over capital punishment often include the assertion “The death penalty deters potential murderers.” This argument is an enthymeme whose implicit reasoning goes something like:

*Premise:* Most normal, rational people would be deterred from committing murder by the fear of execution.

*Conclusion:* The death penalty is an effective deterrent to murder.

Opponents of capital punishment dispute this reasoning by challenging the hidden premise, that most murderers think the same way that normal, rational people do; many murderers are hardened criminals with low esteem for others’ lives or their own, or they are mentally ill, high on drugs or alcohol, or otherwise irrational at the moment of committing murder, so they are unlikely to be deterred by rational calculation of the risk. This deductive line of refutation is then joined to an inductive line, in which abolitionists argue that there is little empirical evidence showing a correlation between enforcement of the death penalty and crime rates. Thus the burden of proof is on defenders to produce enough evidence to the contrary to justify executions (opposition to which is based on several grounds, most prominently the high incidence of judicial error and variability of standards for sentencing in different places and times.)

Sometimes, advocates **shift ground** at this point and argue, somewhat facetiously, “Well, at least capital punishment deters the executed criminal from killing again.” This argument is, to begin with, based on an **equivocation**, a shifting definition of deterrence. Secondly, it contains a hidden premise: that preventing any criminal from committing further crime is in itself sufficient grounds for execution. This premise can be **reduced to absurdity** by an analogy: executing jaywalkers would also deter them from jaywalking again. If those making the first argument are serious, they need to qualify it (as do other defenders of capital punishment just for murder) by specifying why murder (and presumably only in the first degree) merits execution and not other crimes. In nineteenth-century America, horse thieves and cattle rustlers were hanged; in Puritan days, sodomy with animals was a capital offense, to say nothing of “witchcraft.” (This line of refutation is a form of falsification and *reductio ad absurdum* defined above: if preventing any criminal from committing further crime is in itself sufficient grounds for execution, then jaywalkers, horse thieves, and those who commit sodomy with animals ought to be executed; but the claim that we ought to execute jaywalkers et al. is indefensible; therefore, preventing criminals from committing further crimes

is not a sufficient justification in itself for executing them.) Conventional defenses of capital punishment tend similarly to shift ground from one line of deductive argument to another, as each line is refuted: from deterrence (of the individual criminal, or of others), to revenge (an eye for an eye), to protecting society (without consideration of the alternative of life imprisonment without parole), and so forth.

One version of the last argument above—protecting society—is also based on a hypothesis: “Murderers should be executed, because if they are not, they might escape from prison or murder guards and other inmates.” Most people would agree that this hypothesis is plausible in principle; however, it assumes the hidden premise that the incidence of escape or murder in prison is unacceptably high. This premise needs to be verified empirically. What does criminological research show about the number of murderers who have escaped or who have murdered within prison? Is it high enough to offset every argument against capital punishment? Does evidence show that it is possible to implement adequate protection against escape or killings in prison?

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

“I go to the gym every Tuesday and Thursday, and this same woman is always there working out. She must go every day.” What other inductive conclusions are possible here?

“‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’” (George Orwell, 1984 25.) What deductive conclusion would follow from these two premises?

The passage in David Brooks’s column quoted above, published in 2004, appeared in this paragraph:

There are four big objections to the tax cuts. The first is that you don’t cut taxes in a time of war. This is the least persuasive. Some outside economists say the cuts created or preserved 1.5 million jobs. It’s hard to see how the war effort would have been enhanced with those people out of work. If we had wanted to create a sense of shared sacrifice, which we should have, it would have been far better to institute an ambitious national service program.

In addition to the inductive problems implicit in the third and fourth sentences, the deductive reasoning here is rather elliptical. What is the hidden premise in the argument that you don’t cut taxes in a time of war? Why not? What is the relevance of creating a sense of shared sacrifice to the previous sentences? Is Brooks maybe implying that raising taxes in wartime would create “a sense of shared sacrifice” but that a national service program would be a preferable means of doing so? If so, why, and might this be a false dilemma? Might another alternative that Brooks is excluding, rather than President Bush’s flat-rate tax cuts giving the biggest benefits to the wealthy, be a proposal such as John Kerry’s to raise taxes on those with yearly income over \$200,000, which would require some sacrifice by the wealthy? Try to rewrite the paragraph in a sequence that would make the line of argument clearer. 4. Judge whether the following analogies are sound or false, and explain why:

In a letter to the editor of the New York Times objecting to the editors' criticism of the Walt Disney Company's decision not to distribute Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* in 2004, Disney CEO Michael Eisner wrote: "Your accusations of stifling free expression are misplaced. The First Amendment does not say that The New York Times must print every article presented to it or that the Walt Disney Company must distribute every movie." (Also evaluate this as a *tu quoque* argument, as defined in Chapter 12.)

Columnist Thomas Sowell writes, "Ironically, those politicians who complain most loudly about the outsourcing of jobs often advocate the outsourcing of the job of making foreign policy and safeguarding American national security to the United Nations or to our allies in Europe."

### **A letter to the editor of the New York Times argued:**

Since the Littleton, Colo., shooting, we've seen politicians, newscasters, and talk-show hosts all reciting the same nonstop mantra. "America is the most heavily armed society in the world; we have too many guns." It's just not true.

The most heavily armed country in the world is Switzerland.

Its per capita gun ownership greatly exceeds that of the United States and every other country. Switzerland has a small standing army and would therefore call upon the entire citizenry to defend the country.

Yet the Swiss do not experience the United States' level of gun-related crime and school violence. Gee, maybe it has to do with values, morals and culture, not the number of guns.

### **Letter to the editor in the San Francisco Chronicle:**

So I smoke for 30 years, get cancer, and it's the tobacco company's fault. I use a gun, and it's the gun manufacturer's fault. By following this logic, I can get stoned drunk and run you over with my car, and it's the distillery's and the car manufacturer's fault.

Are any individuals in our society responsible for anything, or is everything someone else's fault?

A California ballot proposition in 1998 (which was defeated) would have required labor unions that contributed money to politicians to poll their members and give them the option of receiving their share of dues funding any contribution back in cash if they didn't support it. Opponents argued that by the same principle, corporations contributing to politicians should be required to poll all of their stockholders and give dissenters the same option of getting back a share of their stock.

Historian Michael Bellesiles has published research purporting to support the interpretation of the Second Amendment right to bear arms as referring only to militias. Among Bellesiles's arguments (which incidentally have met with strong criticism regarding their empirical accuracy) was that a much smaller percentage of individuals

actually owned guns in Colonial times than today. A law professor wrote about Bellesiles's argument in a letter to the editor of *Lingua Franca*: "After all, scholars like Jane Mansbridge and Michael Schudson point out that the percentage of eligible voters participating in town meetings during Colonial times was similarly small. One hopes that Bellesiles would

not argue that this low participation rate means that the framers of the Constitution did not believe in a right to vote." Evaluate this analogy, and do some research on criticisms of Bellesiles's research, which have been extensively covered in general-circulation journals and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

When the scandals over abuse by American forces of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq broke in 2004, the following exchange was aired on Rush Limbaugh's radio program:

Caller: It was like a college fraternity prank that stacked up naked men.

Limbaugh: Exactly. Exactly my point! This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation and we're going to ruin people's lives over it and we're going to hamper our military effort, and then we are going to really hammer them because they had a good time. You know, these people are being fired at every day..... You ever heard of need to blow some steam off?

## Implications and Inferences

Though the two terms are often confused, the speaker or writer *implies*, the listener or reader *infers*. Hidden assertions in enthymemes are one common form of implication in arguments, but there are other forms of implicit arguments: hints, suggestions, and forms with connotations of malicious intention like innuendo and insinuation. Fallacies and misunderstandings occur on both the sending and the receiving side here: the writer or speaker is responsible for avoiding false implications, and the reader or listener is responsible for not making **false inferences**. A student paper analyzing a column by investigative reporter Jack Anderson about accidents in nuclear facilities accurately points out, "Most of Anderson's examples are about mishaps in nuclear weapons testing, but he implies without support that these provide evidence that nuclear *power plants* are unsafe."

Writers also talk about "the implications in So-and-So's position," meaning possible empirical consequences of the position as it is formulated. We talked earlier about the necessity of **drawing the line** in any position you take, indicating its limits to prevent the possibility of its being pushed farther than you would be willing to defend. If you fail to draw that line, then your argument may be subject to reduction to absurdity or charged with leading to a **slippery slope**, rhetorical techniques of pushing an opponent's unqualified position to its extreme logical consequences, in order to show a weakness in it.

On the inference side, students—and professional writers as well—frequently go off the track by misunderstanding what a source text means or reading something into it that the author did not imply. **Polemicists** frequently draw false inferences from an opposing source, sometimes unintentionally, sometimes maliciously. The same student who made the sound argument above about Jack Anderson's column, drew the conclusion, "Jack Anderson is opposed to nuclear power, so his arguments are biased." Anderson, however, was not making a blanket argument against nuclear power plants but only urging greater safety measures in them—though his arguments still might have been biased. As frequently happens when we are emotionally involved in a subject, this student's strong pro-nuclear feelings may have led him into a <strong>reaction formation</strong> causing him defensively to jump to an exaggerated conclusion.

## Setting the Agenda

In public disputes, opponents not only present opposing arguments on various points at issue but also often attempt to control what issues are and are not addressed to begin with. Each side, in other words, tries to "set the agenda" to **play up** discussion of issues on which its spokespeople think their position is strongest, and to **downplay** or avoid discussion altogether of issues more favorable to the other side. There is not necessarily anything devious about attempting to control the agenda—everyone does it in any argument, and those on one side may be quite justified in believing that their agenda is more important than the other side's and in trying to make theirs prevail for that reason. Ideally, when you do this, you should provide convincing support for why your agenda is more important.

Since about the 1992 presidential election, the Democratic and Republican parties, along with media and scholars that side with one or the other, have been jockeying to control the public agenda. Republicans have played up "the social agenda" on issues including abortion, family values (defined partly in opposition to expansion of homosexual rights), gun control, and affirmations of religion in public life. Democrats, more concerned about the growing gap in income and power between the rich and the middle class and poor, which they argue has resulted partly from the "supply-side" economic policies of President Reagan in the 1980s, have played up "the economic agenda." So when Bill Clinton gained the 1992 Democratic presidential nomination and polls showed that the public was more concerned about economic insecurity than about the social and moral issues being stressed by President George H. W. Bush and the Republicans, Clinton's campaign staff's slogan became "It's the economy, stupid!"

You have probably inferred by now that *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy* has a liberal-to-leftist agenda. If this is true, it is because I decided over the course of writing this book that it would be hypocritical to give the impression that there is an even



balance of strong and weak arguments on the liberal and conservative side of every issue addressed here. After being brought up and working for years in a conservative background, I have subsequently been led by several decades of teaching and studying public rhetoric, and of reading widely and deeply in both left and right sources, to what I think is a reasoned conclusion that the democratic (small *d*, not the Democratic Party) left (as opposed to the Communist left—see Chapter 15), while far from faultless, more often than not has greater intellectual independence, stronger evidence and reasoning, and social justice on its side than the right, while conservative arguments tend to be less sound logically and more typically tainted by being the product of highly organized and funded **special interests** in the Republican Party, corporate lobbies, public relations firms, mass media, foundations, and research institutes. (For documentation on this point, see David Brock, *The Republican Noise Machine*.) Indeed, liberals and Democrats frequently lament that they have failed to build up the kind of networks and funding that conservatives have since the 1970s, and they have recently been trying to counter with think tanks like the Center for American Progress and Air America Radio.

Many of the readings and analyses throughout the book are intended as supporting evidence for my judgment here, and it is up to you as a reader to judge the merits of that evidence. To illustrate, Chapter 1 includes four articles on left and liberal student activism past and present—by Savio, Reed, Moburg, and Giroux—but only one on conservative activism, sponsored by Young America’s Foundation. My justification was that all of the progressive groups mentioned have been organized at students’ own initiative. They are not connected to the Democratic Party and stand to the left of it politically. Their only sources of outside support (to my knowledge) are, in Moberg’s article, some labor unions, whose own financial resources, like those of their individual members, are extremely limited. The constituencies these students speak for, like the poor and sweatshop workers, or students themselves, cannot afford to hire lobbyists or to fund foundations. Conservative student organizations more often are Republican-aligned and do have outside supporters, mainly wealthy corporate foundations, which in many cases have actually organized and funded the groups; a single patron, billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife, who is one of the most influential financial backers of Republican causes, has through his foundations given some \$146 million to conservative campus organizations including the Young America’s Foundation (source, *Washington Post*, cited by Eric Alterman in *What Liberal Media?* 250). According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 14, 2004, A9): “About a dozen national [conservative] organizations—among the largest are Young America’s Foundation, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, and the Leadership Institute—spend some \$38 million annually pushing their agendas by bringing speakers to colleges and financing student publications.” *Time* magazine’s online edition, in an article titled “The Right’s New Wing,” August 22, 2004, reporting that YAF’s annual budget is \$13 million, notes:

Today the left can claim no youth organization as powerful as Young America’s Foundation, ISI, or the Leadership Institute. One of the biggest young-liberal groups,

the Sierra Student Coalition (an arm of the Sierra Club), has a budget of just \$350,000 for 150 college chapters. . . . Last school year, the 38-year-old National Association for Women spent twice the amount it usually does on campus in order to publicize April's feminist march on Washington, but the total, \$5,000, was just 4% of Young America's budget.

At the same time, I have tried my best to abide by my own "ground rules for polemicists," listed below, by presenting conservative arguments in their strongest formulations, voiced by their leading spokespersons and in an accurate, fair-minded account—even when I, or readers, may not find them persuasive. Furthermore, openly admitting this "bias," I cordially invite conservative teachers, students, colleagues, and critics to challenge anything and everything in this book, and I will welcome suggestions for incorporating rebuttals and alternative views in future editions. For example, while my analysis of conservative student organizations **implies** that they may have **conflicts of interest** because of their Republican-aligned and corporate sponsors, their defenders will certainly refute this argument as committing the **ad hominem** or **guilt by association** fallacies (see Chapter 12). David Horowitz's article "The Intellectual Class War" in Chapter 15 makes exactly this refutation; he also argues that liberal foundations outspend conservative ones and that corporations are as inclined to support liberal causes as conservative ones (although he does not quite explain why capitalistic corporations would fund their opponents, as a general rule, and he downplays the more overtly conservative financiers like Richard Mellon Scaife, whose foundations fund Horowitz's own enterprises). Horowitz further has argued elsewhere that outside-funded conservative student organizations, such as one he helped organize called Students for Academic Freedom, are simply counteracting the liberal bias of most university faculties, especially in the humanities and social sciences. For more on this topic, see the section "Research Institutes and Foundations ('Think Tanks')" at the end of Chapter 15.

Deviousness in agenda setting comes about when those on one side, knowing their position is weak on some issue or set of issues, try to keep it off the agenda by diverting discussion to other, less important issues. This rhetorical move involves **stacking the deck**, **evading the issue**, **distraction**, or invoking a **red herring**. In reading and listening to arguments, then, we need to be alert, not just to what topics are being discussed, but also to significant ones that are *not* being discussed for purposes of evasion. This can be a difficult task without any clues; the best way to find clues is to read sources on the opposing side that may point out what the first side is suppressing. In your own writing, you can then cite those sources for a line of rebuttal to the first side. For example, in Chapter 14, in "Bunker Hunt's Greatest Investment," the author, Holly Miller, suppresses any mention of Hunt's fraudulent business activities and spectacular rise and fall in the silver market; you would need to have heard accounts of these activities elsewhere to perceive how Miller is stacking the deck, and then you would need to cite some of these accounts in rebuttal to Miller.

Sometimes you read that a certain writer or speaker has a “hidden agenda.” We often encounter hidden agendas in personal relations, as when a couple gets into an argument that is not really about what it seems to be about. Something deeper is obviously bugging one of them, but it may take hours or days of probing, guessing, or dead silence before the real problem comes out. In public argument, a hidden agenda is similar to **special pleading**, in that the person might appear to be presenting issues objectively but is in fact arguing for a partisan position. More specifically, it involves making what appears to be a single, manifest argument, while that argument really is a kind of code for, or opening wedge toward, a larger ideological agenda. For example, conservatives argue that when liberal scholars or journalists advocate more government spending on education, the environment, civil rights, welfare, public broadcasting, or the arts and humanities, or when they advocate more government regulation of business, their hidden agenda is to advance the dominance of their own intellectual class within governmental and nonprofit bureaucracies. **[Reader Advisory: Look for possible signs of this hidden agenda throughout *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy*.]** When such liberals hear this criticism, they retort that conservatives too have a hidden agenda beyond the pros and cons of government spending and regulation, which is to eliminate liberal competition to corporate domination, by cutting public funds for fields that favor liberal constituencies like minorities, labor unions, and the poor, or in which liberals are widely employed and in which they can express their viewpoint, such as education and public broadcasting. (For more systematic accounts of liberal and conservative lines of argument on these issues, see chapters 15, 20, and 21.)

Critics of mass media talk about “the agenda-setting function of the media,” referring to the power of the media to determine not only what news stories or dramatic topics are transmitted but also what broad issues come to public attention. The Anita Hill versus Clarence Thomas conflict put sexual harassment on the agenda of the media, which had previously paid little attention to it; likewise for the militia movement before and after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. And of course the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, put not only terrorism much higher on the national agenda than it had been before, but also American foreign policy in the Middle East and Central Asia. Libertarians and socialists criticize the media for excluding their ideological viewpoint from the agenda of American political discourse, by restricting the range of commentary on current events to Republicans and Democrats.

## Tone and Style

Tone is a key term in argumentative rhetoric, as well as in expository writing and literature. It refers to the author’s implicit attitude, the tone of voice you “hear” in a piece of writing. Its

importance in argumentation lies in the appropriateness and persuasive effectiveness of the tone the author chooses to use. So in your own writing, you always need to be aware of making your tone appropriate and persuasive for the subject at hand. You are apt to alienate readers, for example, if you use a facetious, snide tone in addressing a subject that they are likely to consider a serious one. Likewise, your analysis of sources' arguments should include judging the effectiveness of their tone.

Some of the adjectives applicable to the tone of the various readings throughout this book include *compassionate, fair-minded, evenhanded, calmly and carefully reasoned, (all characteristic of **Rogsonian argument**), objective, opinionated, inspirational, sentimental, skeptical, cynical, humorous, ironic, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, sarcastic, facetious, angry, belligerent, accusatory, derisive, strident, shrill, polemical, and invective*. For example, it was suggested in the exercises in Chapter 3 that the tone of Diane Ravitch's "Multiculturalism" was considerably more sympathetic and evenhanded in its tone toward liberal constituencies than that in the readings by her fellow conservatives Rush Limbaugh and William J. Bennett. David Brock's "Strange Lies" in Chapter 5 was much more calm, toned down, more skeptical and selfquestioning in its approach to the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas case than his own earlier reportage or the angry articles by Rush Limbaugh and June Jordan.

The **style** of a piece of writing, especially in the sense of its level of discourse, is related to its tone. Popular journalistic writing is likely to be more simplified, generalized, and superficial, as well as more polemical, than serious journalism or scholarly writing. Writers using the latter styles, however, often combine serious research and documentation with a polemical tone, as in the readings by Robert Weissberg here, by Naomi Wolf and Christina Hoff Sommers in Chapter 4, Jonathan Kozol and William J. Bennett in Chapter 13, Steve Brouwer and David Horowitz in Chapter 15, Joel Bleifuss in Chapter 18, and several of the authors of readings in Chapter 20.

## Polemics

*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines a polemic as "A controversy or argument, especially one that is a refutation of or an attack upon a specified opinion, doctrine, or the like." The plural form is *polemics*, though it is usually used as a singular noun like *politics* and *economics*. Polemics involves strongly opinionated, often partisan arguments on exactly the kinds of controversies that dominate this book; hence most of the readings here are polemical. Some scholars and teachers of rhetoric place a negative **connotation** on polemics as being opposed to objective or scientific writing. The viewpoint throughout this book, however, is that polemics is a vital Part of the subject matter of education and public discourse, and that we simply need to judge polemical arguments on how well they adhere to the principles of responsible rhetoric. To be sure, because a certain level of professional knowledge is prerequisite to writing polemics responsibly, student writers should avoid taking

polemical positions on subjects that they have not studied thoroughly; on the other hand, a large Part of the intention of this book is to help you evaluate the quality of polemical writing in sources you study.

The negative connotation often attached to polemics derives partly from the false equation of polemics and **invective**, defined by *American Heritage* as a form of argument “characterized by abuse and insult” (see Chapter 18 for more on invective.) Polemics sometimes does take the form of invective, but not necessarily. The following rules for fair play in polemics indicate principles that responsible polemicists honor but that writers of invective do not. You should not only attempt to follow these rules in whatever you write but also use them to evaluate the sources about which you are reading and writing.

## Ground Rules for Polemicists

1. Do unto your own as you do unto others. Apply the same standards to yourself and your allies that you do to your opponents, in all of the following ways.

2. Identify your own ideological viewpoint and how it might bias your arguments. Having done so, show that you approach opponents’ actions and writings with an open mind, not with malice aforethought. Concede the other side’s valid arguments—preferably toward the beginning of your critique, not tacked on grudgingly at the end or in inconspicuous subordinate clauses. Acknowledge points on which you agree at least partially and might be able to cooperate.

3. Summarize the other side’s case fully and fairly, in an account that they would accept, prior to refuting it. Present it through its most reputable spokespeople and strongest formulations (not through the most outlandish statements of its lunatic fringe), using direct quotes and footnoted sources, not your own, undocumented paraphrases. Allow the most generous interpretation of their statements rather than putting the worst light on them; help them make their arguments stronger when possible.

4. When quoting selected phrases from the other side’s texts, accurately summarize the context and tone of the longer passages and full texts in which they appear.

5. When you are repeating a secondhand account of events, say so—do not leave the implication that you were there and are certain of its accuracy. Cite your source and take account of its author’s possible biases, especially if the author is your ally.

6. In any account that you use to illustrate the opponents’ misbehavior, grant that there may be another side to the story and take pains to find out what it is. If opponents claim they have been misrepresented, give them their say and the benefit of the doubt.

7. Be willing to acknowledge misconduct, errors, and fallacious arguments by your own allies, and try scrupulously to establish an accurate proportion and sense of reciprocity between them and those you criticize in your opponents. Do not play up the other side’s forms of power while denying or downplaying your own side’s.

8. Respond forthrightly to opponents' criticisms of your own or your side's previous arguments, without evading key points. Admit it when they make criticisms you cannot refute.

9. Do not substitute ridicule or name-calling for reasoned argument and substantive evidence.

*Vouchers, Choice: Opposing Views*]]

*By Deroy Murdock*

From *Knoxville News Sentinel*, March 4, 2002

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*Economic Research Foundation in Fairfax, Va.*

The U.S. Supreme Court is considering oral arguments it heard recently on the constitutionality of Cleveland's school voucher program. As the nine justices deliberate, they should repeat this simple mantra: "School vouchers are just Pell Grants for kids."

Opponents of Cleveland's program—which gives some 4,200 low-income students up to \$2,250 to help attend whatever schools they want—argue that it violates the separation of church and state, since most of the initiative's beneficiaries and their parents have chosen to use their vouchers at Catholic schools.

As it happens, Catholic campuses were ready, willing and able to accept these voucher-funded students. Others, admittedly fewer, have taken their vouchers elsewhere. This is the definition of school *choice*.

If these vouchers unconstitutionally entangle church and state, then so do Pell Grants. This popular voucher program gives up to \$3,300 in federal money to help students attend colleges and universities that they and their parents choose.

As Joshua Hall, director of educational policy at the free-market Buckeye Institute in Columbus, Ohio, explained to me, Pell Grants can purchase course credits at government-run institutions such as Ohio State University. They also may be used at private, secular schools—such as Case Western Reserve University—and even the Methodists' Baldwin-Wallace College and the Jesuits' John Carroll University. Oddly enough, People for the American Way is not tying its knickers in knots to keep Pell Grants away from college students at these private schools, all in or near Cleveland.

And just listen to what Hillary Clinton told the 1996 California Democratic Party convention: "We also need to increase the number and maximum award of Pell Grants."

Defenders of the dreadful educational status quo quickly reply that college kids are old enough to decide whether they want God as their study partner. So, then, why do antivoucher liberals support the \$4.8 billion Child Care and Development Block Grant program? It provides federal funds for day care.

The vouchers can be used at government-run child-care facilities, at private, nonsectarian establishments and even at day-care centers run by religious institutions. The preschool at the Rev. Floyd Flake's Allen AME Church in Queens, N.Y., accepts these

vouchers. Its federally funded 3to 5-yearold students actually memorize verses of the Holy Bible!

Indeed, Section 658-P of the federal Child Care and Development Fund law explicitly states: "Nothing in this sub Chapter shall preclude the use of such certificates for sectarian child-care services if freely chosen by the parent." Where is the outrage?

In fact, rather than denounce this program, which allows taxpayer dollars to flow from Washington to parents into the pockets of priests and ministers—liberals want even more money for the child-care program.

"The president has made a string of decisions with disturbing consequences for millions of children," Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., said at a press conference last March 21. Gephardt complained that President Bush's FY 2002 budget "reduces resources for existing Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) projects by \$285 million."

On April 3, 2001, Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., asked reporters, "Which children are they going to leave behind, when 60,000 families—60,000 kids—will lose the needed support under the Child Care Development Block Grant?"

Just last Jan. 30, the left-wing Children's Defense Fund released a statement declaring that President Bush "should put considerable investment in the Child Care and Development Block Grant this year so that 2 million more children in working families can have quality, affordable, safe child care and enter school ready to learn and succeed."

The anti-voucher crowd clicks its churchstate angst on and off like a flashlight. Federal vouchers for church-based educational services? "We want more!" for pre-schoolers.

However, they're pure evil from kindergarten through high school. But give us more for college students. If day-care workers and university professors joined the National Educational Association in droves, the position of anti-voucher politicians beholden to the NEA finally might develop some consistency.

As it is, this hodgepodge reveals the moral Chapter 11status of those who gleefully relegate young black kids in Cleveland and beyond to the back of the opportunity bus.

CHICKEN LITTLE CALLING OUT, 'GLOBAL WARMING!' THOMAS SOWELL 277

*Chicken Little Calling Out, "Global]] Warming!"*

*By Thomas Sowell*

*From The Knoxville News-Sentinel, June 8, 2002*

*Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford, California.*

The campaign to stampede the federal government into drastic action to counter global warming has never let honesty cramp its style. The most recent ploy has been the release of a study from the Environmental Protection Agency which concluded that human actions were responsible for rising temperatures and that government restrictions on those actions were necessary to prevent various disastrous scenarios from unfolding.

The problem is that all this hysteria was based on a computer model which had been shown to be incompatible with factual data.

Patrick Michaels, a professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia, had already exposed the inability of that computer model to account for existing temperature changes before its release to the public was allowed to suggest that it was able to predict future temperature changes.

This is by no means the first time that a supposedly scientific report turned out to be a political report wrapping itself in the mantle of science. Last year, the National Academy of Sciences issued a report, garnished with the names of numerous eminent scientists, which was widely hailed in the media as proving the dangers of global warming.

The problem with that particular report was that the scientists whose names were put on display had not written the report nor even seen it before it was released.

One of those eminent scientists, Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Richard S. Lindzen, publicly repudiated the conclusions of the study on which his name had been displayed. As Lindzen, a meteorologist, pointed out, "The climate is always changing. Innumerable factors go into temperature changes and many of these factors, such as the changing amounts of heat put out by the sun during different eras, are beyond the control of human beings."

The same kind of ploy was used by a United Nations report on climate in 1996. After the scientists had reviewed the report, the following sentence was added without their knowledge: "The balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate." But that is not what the scientists said.

What are all these ploys about? There are people in the environmental cult and in the media who are determined to have the United States and other countries sign the Kyoto treaty that would drastically restrict how our economy works and what kind of life the average American could lead.

Anything that allows them to impose their superior wisdom and virtue on the rest of us gets a sympathetic hearing. Moral melodrama also has great appeal to some. As Eric Hoffer said, "Intellectuals cannot operate at room temperature."

Every record hot day is trumpeted in the media as showing global warming. But record cold days are mentioned only as isolated curiosities, if they are mentioned at all.

Environmental cults have already stampeded us into recycling programs that studies have shown to be counterproductive—except for appeasing shrill zealots and allowing them to feel like they are saving the planet.

In the 1970s, the big scare was global cooling—a new ice age. And, of course, drastic government action was needed to head it off. There has to be moral melodrama.

The real question is not whether human beings have any effect on temperature. The question is: How much? And how much can we change the temperature—and at what price? And what if we do nothing? What will happen? And how dire will it be?



Professor Michaels estimates that most of the global warming over the past century has been due to the sun's getting hotter. If we do everything the Kyoto treaty calls for, it would not lower the average temperature in the world by half a degree over the next 50 years. But it could wreck some economies.

And what if we do nothing? Actually there are benefits to global warming, such as a longer growing season, but we are not likely to see a lot of those benefits because there is not likely to be a lot of warming. Moreover, it is mostly the very cold places that are getting warmer.

As Michaels points out, "Siberia has warmed from minus 40 to minus 28 in January." Is anyone complaining—other than professional complainers and professional doomsayers?

## Lies, Damn Lies and Racial Statistics

*By Charles Krauthammer*  
From *Time*, April 20, 1998

ACCEPTANCE OF BLACKS, LATINOS TO UC PLUNGES

—*Los Angeles Times*, April 1

ADMISSIONS PLUNGE AT U OF CALIFORNIA FOR THREE MINORITIES

—*New York Times*, April 1

BLACK, HISPANIC ADMISSIONS PLUNGE AT TWO CALIF. CAMPUSES —  
*Washington Post*, April 1

The headlines were sensational, and the editorial writers were not far behind in drawing the politically correct conclusion: PROPOSITION 209 SHUTS THE DOOR (*New York Times*). In the relentless campaign against Proposition 209, which in 1996 abolished racial preferences in California, the "plunge" in minority students accepted for next fall at the University of California is political dynamite, alleged proof that the new colorblind admissions policy shuts the schoolhouse door in the face of minorities.

Of course, any plunge directly contradicts what proponents of affirmative action have been saying for 25 years: that under affirmative action there was no real academic discrepancy between minorities and whites admitted and that the students were all "qualified," with just marginal differences between them.

So fervently did affirmative-action proponents cling to these fictions that they went to great lengths to suppress the facts. In one famous case, in 1991, a Georgetown University law student who found and published the discrepancy between average white and black LSAT scores found himself reprimanded by the university for publishing the unmentionable.

Well, no matter. The facts are out. And affirmative-action proponents are eagerly waving them like a bloody shirt. At two elite University of California campuses, Berkeley and UCLA, black and Hispanic admissions are down significantly. On the basis of

admissions, the number of black freshmen at Berkeley will decline 57% from 1997; the number of Hispanics, 40%. The drop at UCLA is 43% for blacks, 33% for Hispanics.

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But the University of California has eight campuses, not two. How are blacks and Hispanics doing overall? University officials did not see fit to release the numbers until two days later, with the predictable result that the full story—the mitigating story—was buried. It turned out that at the University of California, the drop was far less dramatic: for blacks, not 57% but 17.6%; for Hispanics, not 40% but 6.9%.

Even these numbers do not tell the full story. This year there was a huge increase—to 6,846, or fully 15% of admissions—of those who did not identify themselves by race. (This is not surprising, given the fact that after Proposition 209 there was no advantage or disadvantage associated with race.) Not counting these students and looking just at those whose race we know for sure, black and Hispanic admissions at the UC system declined only slightly, from 17.7% to 17.2% of freshmen. (African Americans going from 3.7% to 3.3%, Hispanics remaining steady at about 14%.) This is shutting the schoolhouse door?

True, there was a significant drop in nonAsian minority admissions to the two most competitive UC schools. But there was a countervailing increase in such admissions at the less competitive schools. At UC Riverside, for example, there was a 34% increase in black admissions and a 43% increase in Hispanic admissions.

What happened? Contrary to the avalanche of media stories, non-Asian minority students are not being shut out of the University of California. They are, instead and finally, being assigned to campuses that better fit their level of academic preparation.

Affirmative-action proponents decry as a national tragedy the fact that black admissions to Berkeley make up not 5.6% but 2.4% of the freshman class. But what happens *after* admission? Affirmative-action proponents don't tell you that the dropout rate for blacks at Berkeley is 42%, vs. 16% for whites.

Given the huge academic handicap burdening black students admitted under affirmative action—their average SAT scores were 288 points below the Berkeley average—this dropout rate is understandable. These students were arbitrarily thrown into an environment with students far more advanced academically. The result was predictable: failure. Even more tragic is the fact that these bright black students, as social theorist Thomas Sowell puts it, “were perfectly qualified to be successes somewhere else” but were instead “artificially turned into failures by being admitted to high-pressure campuses, where only students with exceptional academic backgrounds can survive.”

But the welfare of these individual students is far less important to affirmative-action propagandists than puffing out their chests and boasting about admissions numbers. Consider: under affirmative action, nearly half the black freshmen at Berke-

ley don't make it. Under the new color-blind system, yes, the black freshman class is cut roughly in half (hence the headlines). What will happen to the less advanced half—those who didn't qualify academically and would probably have ended up among the 42% that drop out? They will likely end up at other UC campuses where they should do very well.

This is a national tragedy? On the contrary. This is showing respect for minority students, treating them as individuals, not statistics. This is caring about their future—academic success, graduation, career—not risking it by artificially assigning them to a school one notch too advanced just to satisfy the moral vanity of quota-driven bureaucrats and politicians.

## White Racism: The Seductive Lure of an Unproved Theory

*By Robert Weissberg*

From *The Weekly Standard* March 24, 1997

In 1964, America's most eminent sociologist, Talcott Parsons, and its most eminent black academic, Kenneth Clark, collaborated on a magisterial tome called *The Negro American*. What is most striking about the book today, which is as dated as its title, is that it has no index entries for either "racism" or "white racism." Nor does Howard Ehrlich's 1973 work *The Social Psychology of Prejudice*, which reviewed 600-plus studies on ethnic prejudice. Differences between blacks and whites were thought to be caused by other forces, like the cultural legacy of slavery, unequal access to economic resources, educational inequities. The real culprit, as Ehrlich's title indicates, was not "white racism" but "prejudice," which was certainly considered a formidable impediment to black progress, but not a decisive one. Moreover, it was clear to all and sundry that prejudice was a condition of ignorance, for which education and ever greater interracial contact were the cure.

Today, of course, "white racism" is endlessly invoked, measured, dissected, and employed as an all-purpose explanation of African-American malaise. There are, perhaps, as many varieties of "white racism" as Eskimos have names for snow—"crypto-racism," "neoracism," "meta-racism," and "kinetic racism," among many others. College administrators vie with black activists in passionately calling for anti-racism wars, while white liberals flagellate themselves and their fellow Caucasians.

Almost any failing can be, and has been, excused by "white racism." One study, for example, argued that a racist, sexist, Eurocentric bias in *mathematics* blocked the scientific and intellectual development of minorities (Anderson, *Journal of Negro Education*, 1990). Traditional explanations of the absence of an entrepreneurial culture among American blacks, for example, are not only quickly dismissed, but the mere mention of them is itself considered evidence of a whiteracist "mind-set."

After decades of false leads, it seems, the problem's root cause has been finally exposed. Compared with, say, the century or so it took for the public to accept the notion

that germs cause disease, the embrace by universities, businesses, and government of the “white racism” explanation took but a historical millisecond. Why the dramatic change? There are two possible explanations for the sudden popularity of the “white racism” argument. One is scientific: Empirical evidence proves it. The other is that the “white racism” argument is politically convenient. Let me address each in turn.

The science of white racism is based on three simple propositions. The first is that nearly all whites, consciously or unconsciously, hold negative views of blacks. These views vary from old-fashioned stereotypes—e.g., blacks are childlike and excitable—to pseudoscientific notions—e.g., blacks are genetically less intelligent.

The second proposition is that these ideas deeply permeate society, are transmitted by books, films, art, music, and wherever else information is conveyed, and are implicitly written into our laws and institutional arrangements. All together, this constitutes white racism on a grand cultural scale.

The final and critical proposition is that white-racist beliefs are readily absorbed by blacks themselves and work their destructive power from the inside out. At its core, the incapacitation is psychological. White racism is a cognitive virus, inculcated by whites and passed on to blacks, that eventually creates the all-too-familiar tangle of pathologies.

Clearly, many whites harbor negative images of blacks. And it is equally true that many blacks passionately believe their difficulties flow from white racism. But to my knowledge, no scientific research demonstrates how white racism—as a mental state among *whites*—incapacitates blacks. *PsycInfo*, a database that covers the field of psychology, features 87 entries from 1967 to 1995 when you use the keywords “white racism.” None of these studies, however, attempts to explain just how white racism operates; its negative impact is merely assumed. Books by Cornell West, Derrick Bell, and others who analyze the destructive costs of white racism are likewise mute when it comes to offering hard evidence. Nor have inquiries to fellow scholars concerned with this subject elicited help in finding a single study to confirm the hypothesis that white racism harms blacks.

To appreciate the unsound empirical foundation of white racism’s impact, consider one purported example of its documentation. It is offered by a well-published, Harvard-trained research professor at the University of Florida, appears in a scholarly journal, and is allegedly scientific in design. In “The Continuing Significance of Racism,” published in the June 1992 *Journal of Black Studies*, Joe R. Feagin asks the question: What explains growing black attrition at predominantly white colleges? After reviewing other possible explanations—lack of financial aid, family deterioration, growing drug use, a disdain for education—Feagin sets off to demonstrate that the real culprit is the racist environment at white-dominated colleges and the ways in which blacks on campus routinely encounter debilitating hostility from white students, professors, administrators, even alumni.

Almost 200 middle-class African Americans were interviewed during 1988-89 to determine the source of the black exodus from college. Unpleasant memories are the

only data Feagin presents. The views of relevant whites and other potentially pertinent information—academic records, for example—are not supplied. The interpretations of the black ex-students are not challenged, and corroborating details are not solicited.

A few such encounters are objectively hostile acts—being called “nigger” in public, for example, or racially charged encounters with police. Such clearly defined hostility might well have a negative impact on academic performance. But such hostility is the exception, not the rule, in Feagin’s research. Most professors would recognize the vast majority of Feagin’s tales if they came from white students: They are the lame, desperate excuses common to the academically and personally troubled. Several respondents complain about feeling unarticulated aversion to their personal features, like black hair or black speech inflection. Others believe they are not being treated as distinctive individuals. White professors made students feel bad by fretting about their poor attendance and correcting their English.

But in Feagin’s research all these woes—remarkably similar to the woes of the adolescent in every novel, every television show, every cliché, trying to find a place for himself or herself in a cold, cruel world—are considered the result of white racism. It was, Feagin says, a ceaseless Part of campus life, permeating everything from the secret meaning of casual conversations to the official “white” literary style. The campus environment cannot help but take an enervating toll. After experiencing all the unexpressed, nearly imperceptible, but “real” antagonism towards their very blackness, black students find dropping out a survival technique.

In legal language, these are all unsupported accusations—no evidence is offered of malice, physical intimidation, or slander. But this is the very nature of the charge of white racism. When we are asked to consider whether someone was discriminated against, we can do so because discrimination is objective in character. An academically well-qualified black who is denied admission to a college that accepts less qualified whites could justifiably claim discrimination based on race.

But white racism is subjective by definition. According to Feagin and its other theorists, even though white racism may be invisible to all but the recipient, if the recipient *feels* it, the feeling itself validates the existence of the phenomenon. The *intent* of the white racism is irrelevant; for example, a white teacher disproportionately praising black students might be guilty of racism if blacks sense that the praise is given solely because they are black. Because of white racism’s fundamentally subjective character, anti-discrimination laws aimed at overt behavior cannot banish it even if such laws are effective. Therefore, eliminating bias in and of itself cannot bring racial harmony.

Not only does the white-racism theory lack scientific support, its deficiencies are obvious. Contradictory evidence abounds. Thomas Sowell has pointed out that blacks from the British West Indies exceed both native black Americans *and whites* in their professional and economic attainment. If white racism is so deeply ingrained, how can we explain all the white-dominated government and corporate efforts to ameliorate past discrimination? What about all the blacks elected in cities and congressional districts

with white majorities? Nor can all the poll data depicting the absence of racist views among whites be ignored.

What is especially remarkable is the contrast between the intensive scrutiny given *The Bell Curve* and other statistical examinations of racial differences and the credulousness with which the white-racism theory has been treated. While *The Bell Curve* and its variants have produced an industry of hostile symposia placing every shred of evidence under a microscope, the white-racism theory escapes inspection.

This is hardly accidental.

If white racism is such a frail explanation, why does it have such cultural reach? Why do social scientists, who are so expert at devastating flimsy arguments, buy it so unquestionably? Why are white public officials, even outspoken conservatives, silent when society's racism is invoked as an all-purpose explanation of our ills? The answer is simple: The white-racism theory of injury has enormous appeal—to *whites themselves*. The theory's allure rests on its political and psychological utility.

First, consider simple monetary costs: "Curing" white racism may not work, but white-racism theorists themselves can be bought off pretty cheaply. Balance the outlays for diversity workshops, cosmetic educational adjustments, modifying public vocabulary, and other largely symbolic antiracist gestures with, say, creating effective social-welfare programs, guaranteeing educational attainment, or strictly enforcing the criminal code, and you see how it works.

Imagine a college dean who is under pressure to ensure the graduation of hundreds of poorly prepared minority students. That is a formidable task; progress would be expensive, the labor would be intensive, and the result uncertain. But if this savvy bureaucrat proclaims white racism the culprit, one that can be conveniently addressed by mandatory four-hour sensitivity workshops, his burden lightens immeasurably.

There is no end to the novelties our college dean could propose to satisfy the white-racism theorists. An African-American cultural center. A few multicultural courses, maybe even a sub-discipline. And, of course, if he resists these solutions, that resistance will help confirm white racism's lingering, tenacious grip on *him*.

Those who choose to face race issues headon must accept the eventuality of well-publicized marches, demonstrations, takeovers, lists of non-negotiable demands, lawsuits, boycotts, and possible acts of violence. Thus, agreeing with militants that white racism is to blame should be considered an act of *diplomacy*.

The theory offers well-meaning whites easy salvation compared with previous redemptive paths. Since, according to the theory, black problems originate in white minds, the responsibility of whites is to think "good thoughts." Atonement and a state of grace are achieved by using the proper terminology (e.g., "African-American community," not "black neighborhood") and disassociating from anything critical of the white-racism theory. Thus, on a college campus, reading *The Bell Curve* is itself a sin. By expunging dangerous negative stereotypes and inappropriate cultural expectations, whites can achieve a form of earthly salvation—even as other responsibilities seem to *lighten*. The obligations of the 1960s—sending kids

to integrated schools, making financial donations, occasionally walking a picket line—are now unnecessary. Indeed, these once-virtuous gestures may actually reflect the white-racism idea that blacks cannot manage their own struggle!

The white-racism theory excuses whites of the 1990s from the good deeds that offered salvation in the 1960s. They no longer have to participate in interracial dating. They need not seek out black friends or fund civilrights organizations. Instead, they can perfect their attitudes privately.

And for those old-fashioned white liberals from the 1960s, the white-racism theory is deliverance. It drives out more disturbing, awkward, and embarrassing explanations of racial differences in outcomes that were not supposed to persist after the efforts of the Great Society were undertaken. How do they reconcile \$5 trillion in Great Society programs with the decimated black family and a ghetto in worse condition than it was before the 1960s?

The white-racism theory offers the answer. Not only does it bestow responsibility “where it belongs,” but the guilt is virtually immutable, incurable. The masochistic liberal may have an impeccable public record, but he knows his racist soul to be beyond purification. After all, doesn’t he avoid rundown black neighborhoods? Doesn’t he fear lower-class black males when they pass him on the street? Such uncontrolled reactions confirm the key element in the white-racism argument: All whites, regardless of deeds and denials, harbor anti-black feeling. Authoritatively telling a 1960s liberal that he suffers from racism is like telling a hypochondriac that he is ill.

The white-racism theory has created a booming business for whites and blacks alike—those skilled at hunting white racism down, exposing its destructive power, and hectoring its perpetrators. It offers them a lucrative lifetime career in academia and diversity-counseling and provides similar remuneration to the bureaucrats who hire them. Governments have no choice but to create paid task forces to examine school textbooks, curriculums, even school disciplinary actions. Though these expenditures constitute little more than high-minded extortion, they can be publicly justified as a small price to pay for the promise of racial peace.

Thus, the white-racism argument offers something for everybody. Even conservative unbelievers may (privately) acknowledge that its official acceptance maintains an uneasy social peace without leading to skyrocketing deficits. Realistic liberals frustrated by government’s failure receive some psychological comfort: Social-welfare expansion, courtimposed integration edicts, anti-discrimination laws, preferential-treatment programs, and so on were good, well-intentioned ideas, but they could do nothing about the true sickness.

Something for everybody—yes, except the black kids in Feagin’s study and their cohorts who are sentenced to a lifetime of believing that they are hated, that they will always be hated, and that there is nothing they can do about it.

*Closing the Wealth Gap*]]

By P. J. O’Rourke

From Cato Speeches and Transcripts, 1999

*P.J. O'Rourke is the Cato Institute's Mancken research fellow. He delivered these remarks at a June 1977 conference in Shanghai, China.*

It's important to remember that this is not a marily to discuss the "hows" and "whys" and technocratic conference. We are not here pri"ifs"of Chinese economic development. On

those subjects, more powerful people than we will have more important discussions than this. We are here to discuss ideas.

And the most important idea we are discussing is collectivism. I do not mean collectivism as it specifically applies to Chinese socialism. I mean collectivism as a general premise of almost all political systems in the world.

The foundation of collectivism is simple: There should be no important economic differences among people. No one should be too rich. No one should be too poor. We should "close the wealth gap."

This is a very powerful idea.

This is a very common idea.

This is a very bad idea.

"Gaps"—differences—are innate to mankind. Do we want to close the "beauty gap" and make every woman look like Margaret Thatcher? Do we want to close the "talent gap" and field a World Cup football team starring, for example, the people on this panel?

In a world without gaps we'd all be the same. We'd all be the same sex. Who'd get pregnant? We'd all know the same things. What would we talk about? We'd all have the same work. Some job that would be. We'd all get the same vacation. Five point seven billion people playing a game of volleyball— 2.85 billion to a side. The idea of a world where all people are alike—in wealth or in anything else—is a fantasy for the stupid.

But proposing to close the "wealth gap" is worse than silly. It entails a lie. The notion of economic equality is based on an ancient and ugly falsehood central to bad economic thinking. There's a fixed amount of wealth. Wealth is zero-sum. If I have too many cups of tea, you have to lick the tea pot. But wealth is based on productivity. Productivity is expandable. Otherwise there wouldn't be any economic thinking, good or bad, or any tea or tea pots either.

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution human productivity has proven to be fabulously expandable. The economist Angus Maddison has been studying economic growth since the 1950's. In 1995, under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, he published a book, *Monitoring the World Economy 1820-1992*. The earth had fewer natural resources and no more farm land in 1992 than it had in 1820 and in that period the earth's population multiplied by five. But, in 1990 U.S. dollars, the value of everything produced in the world grew from \$695 billion in 1820 to almost \$28 trillion in 1992 and the amount of that production per person went from \$651 to \$5,145.



A collectivist can hear these figures and claim they are just averages, claim they don't show who actually got that money. The collectivist can recite the old saying: "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer." But there is no statistical evidence of this. The United Nations Population Division's "World Population Prospects: 1996 Revision" contains past and present statistics on infant mortality and life expectancy at birth. And these figures don't present the same averaging problems as per capita world product. No matter how rich the elite of a country is, its members aren't going to live to be 250 and distort the averages. And if the few rich babies in a country live and the mass of poor babies in a country die, that country will not have a "normal" infant mortality rate but a very bad one. Infant mortality and life expectancy are reasonable indicators of general well-being in a society.

Besides giving figures for individual countries, the U.N. consolidates averages into three groups: "More Developed Regions," "Less Developed Regions," and "Least Developed Regions." The last meaning countries that are damn poor—Laos, Madagascar, Chad. In the early 1950's the richer countries in the world had an average of 58 deaths per 1,000 live births. They now have an average of 11. Over the same period the poorest countries went from 194 deaths per 1,000 to 109. The "gap" was 136 dead babies 40 years ago and the "gap" is 98 dead babies now. This is still too many dead babies, of course, but the difference isn't increasing. The rich are getting richer but the poor aren't becoming worse off. They're becoming parents.

The same trend is seen in life expectancy. In the early 1950's people in rich countries had a life expectancy of 66.5 years. Now they live 74.2 years. In the poorest countries average lifespans have increased from 35.5 years to 49.7 years. The difference in life expectancy between the world's rich and poor has decreased by 6 1/2 years. The rich are getting richer. The poor are getting richer. And we're all getting older.

So, if wealth is not theft, if the thing that makes you rich doesn't make me poor, why don't collectivists concentrate on the question, "How do we make everyone wealthy?" Or better, "How have we been managing to do this so brilliantly since 1820?"

Why, instead, do collectivists concentrate on the question, "How do we redistribute wealth?"

And it is especially the collectivists in the non-socialist West who do this. Bill Clinton is more concerned with redistribution than anyone in the Chinese government.

Such collectivism is, I think, not only silly and untruthful but immoral.

The Ten Commandments in the Old Testament of the Bible are very clear about this.

Now the Bible might seem to be a strange place to do economic research—particularly for a person who is not very religious and here in a country that is not predominately Jewish or Christian.

However, I have been thinking—from a political economy point of view—about the Tenth Commandment.

The first nine commandments concern theological principles and social law: thou shalt not commit adultery, steal, kill, etc. All religions contain such rules. But then

there's the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

Here are God's basic rules about how the Tribes of Israel should live, a very brief list of sacred obligations and solemn moral precepts, and right at the end of it is, "Don't envy your friend's cow."

What is that doing in there? Why would God, with just ten things to tell Moses, choose, as one of them, jealousy about the things the man next door has? And yet think about how important to the well-being of a community this commandment is. If you want a donkey, if you want a meal, if you want an employee, don't complain about what other people have, go get your own. The tenth commandment sends a message to collectivists, to people who believe wealth is best obtained by redistribution. And the message is clear and concise: Go to hell.

Collectivism is silly, deceitful, a sin. It's also cowardly. We fear the power others have over us. And wealth is power. So we fear the rich.

But how rational is this fear? Take a midnight stroll through a rich neighborhood then take a midnight stroll through the U.S. Capital. Yes, you can get in a lot of trouble in Monte Carlo. You can lose at roulette. But you're more likely to get robbed in the slums of Washington.

Not that we should begrudge the crimes of those poor people. They're just practicing a little "free-lance collectivism." They're doing what the U.S. Government does, in their own small way. Because the real alternative to the power of the rich is not the power of the poor but plain, simple power. If we don't want the world's wealth to be controlled by people with money then the alternative is to have the world's wealth controlled by people with guns. Governments have plenty of guns.

The theory of this is quite good. The robber puts down his pistol, picks up the ballot box and steals from rich people instead of from you. But the reality is different. Witness the track record of collectivism in this century. The holocaust, Stalin's purges, the suffering caused by the Great Leap Forward here.

We should quit thinking about the "wealth gap" and start thinking about wealth. Wealth is good. Everybody knows that about his own wealth. If you got rich it would be a great thing. You'd improve your life. You'd improve your family's life. You'd purchase education, travel, knowledge about the world. You'd invest in wise and worthwhile things. You'd give money to noble causes. You'd help your friends and neighbors. Your life would be better if you got rich. The lives of the people around you would be better if you got rich. Your wealth is good. So why isn't everybody else's wealth good, too?

Wealth is good when many people have it. It's good when few people have it. This is because money is a tool, nothing more. You can't eat money or drink money or wear money. And wealth—an accumulation of money—is a lot of tools.

Tools can be used to do harm. You can hit somebody over the head with a shovel. But tools are still good. When a carpenter has a lot of tools we don't say to him, "You

have too many tools. You should give some of your saws and planes and nails and chisels to the man who's cooking omelettes." We don't try to close the "tool gap."

Wealth brings great benefits to the world. Rich people are heroes. They don't usually mean to be but that's their moral problem not ours. Most of the world now admits that free enterprise works. Economic liberty makes people rich. But in our residual collectivism and our infatuation with equality we keep trying to get rid of rich people.

There's a joke President Reagan told about the way collectivist politicians treat rich people. A traveling salesman stays overnight with a farm family. When the family gathers to eat there's a pig seated at the table. And the pig has three medals hanging around his neck and a peg leg. The salesman says, "Um, I see you have a pig having dinner with you."

"Yes," says the farmer. "That's because he's a very special pig. You see those medals around his neck? Well, the first medal is from when our youngest son fell in the pond, and he was drowning, and that pig swam out and saved his life. The second medal, that's from when the barn caught fire and our little daughter was trapped in there and the pig ran inside, carried her out and saved her life. And the third medal, that's from when our oldest boy was cornered in the stock yard by a mean bull, and that pig ran under the fence and bit the bull on the tail and saved the boy's life."

"Yes," says the salesman, "I can see why you let that pig sit right at the table and have dinner with you. And I can see why you awarded him the medals. But how did he get the peg leg?"

"Well," says the farmer, "a pig like that— you don't eat him all at once."

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Review Naomi Wolf's "The Beauty Myth" and Christina Hoff Sommers's "The Backlash Myth" as well as the student discussion of them in Chapter 4. How Rogerian are both Wolf and Sommers in representing the opposing position fairly and sympathetically, and how closely do they follow the above "Ground Rules for Polemicists"? How effectively do both combine scholarly style with a polemical tone?

The five readings here are all conservative rebuttals to liberal or leftist arguments, including several made in other readings throughout the book. They make use of statistical arguments and analogies, and they are all more or less polemical, although they vary from one another in tone. Evaluate them by the criteria suggested in this chapter. Also refer to the "Guide to Political Terms and Positions" and "Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric" in Chapter 15 to help identify the conservative lines of argument in each. The pieces by Krauthammer, Sowell, and Murdock are short op-ed columns; O'Rourke's is a transcript of a speech, somewhat longer (but as typical of speeches, containing little documentation); Weissberg's is a longer analysis appearing in a weekly journal of opinion. Compare and evaluate the authors' use of facts and figures within the space and style limitations of these forms.

P. J. O'Rourke is a conservative humorist, and the tone of this talk is semifacetious. The talk was delivered, however, at the Cato Institute, the most prominent libertarian

think tank, and he is addressing serious economic issues. Can you draw the line here between purely humorous points and serious arguments? Of the several analogies throughout the talk, which do you think are to be taken seriously, and how valid are they by the criteria in this chapter? Most prominently, O'Rourke equates "the wealth gap" with "the beauty gap" or "the talent gap." How significant a difference is it that beauty and talent are inborn qualities beyond the influence of public policies, while degrees of wealth can be controlled by government legislation concerning tax rates, minimum wage laws, regulation of corporate practices-as in the Securities and Exchange Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Justice Antitrust Division- and so forth? To what extent do his arguments against reducing economic inequality substantively refute the arguments by Jonathan Kozol in Chapter 13, Steve Brouwer in Chapter 15, and Holly Sklar and David Francis in Chapter 20? Does O'Rourke draw the line about what extreme of economic inequality would become intolerable? Can you push the implications in his arguments to extremes to reduce it to absurdity?

O'Rourke concludes his talk with a joke. In such cases, jokes serve as a form of analogy for the arguments being made. Evaluate this joke as an analogy.

Weigh the arguments in Robert Weissburg's "White Racism: The Seductive Lure of an Unproven Theory" against those in "A Historical-Causal Analysis of 'The White Problem'" in Chapter 2, Jonathan Kozol's "Other People's Children" in Chapter 13, and James Baldwin's "My Dungeon Shook" in Chapter 10.

Both Charles Krauthammer's "Lies, Damn Lies, and Racial Statistics" and Thomas Sowell's "Look behind Statistics for Changing Definitions" in Chapter 9 refute liberal statistical studies supporting affirmative action in college admissions. Read the book Sowell cites, *The Shape of the River*, by William Bowen and Derek Bok, and other liberal sources to see how effectively Sowell and Krauthammer refute their statistical and other arguments.

Find some liberal, environmentalist sources that defend the positions Sowell refutes in "Chicken Little Calling Out, 'Global Warning,'" to compare their arguments with Sowell's. See for example the pamphlet *The Way Things Really Are: Debunking Rush Limbaugh on the Environment*, published by the Environmental Defense Fund (257 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10010). Sowell calls liberal environmentalists "shrill zealots." How legitimate would it be to use a tu quoque line of argument against him to suggest that his tone is equally that of a shrill zealot? Would his columns be more or less persuasive if he used less invective, name-calling, and sarcastic put-downs of his opponents?

In "Vouchers, Choice: Opposing Views," Deroy Murdock makes an analogy equating school vouchers with Pell Grants and federal child-care support, in order to point out a double standard on the Part of liberals who support the latter programs but oppose vouchers. How well does he support this analogy? Can you think of any signifi-

cant differences between the programs he equates that would make the analogy false? Murdock and Sowell are both conservative blacks who criticize policies like affirmative action, welfare, and opposition to vouchers that are favored by liberal blacks. Compare Murdock's versus Sowell's reasoning and tone.

# Chapter 12. Logical and Rhetorical Fallacies

Sometimes after students have started to study fallacies, they are inclined to approach arguments searching just for fallacies in them, only looking for points to pick apart, rather than also looking for good, fallacy-free arguments or those that effectively point out fallacies in someone else's argument. The latter approach should be Part of your goal in studying this list of logical and rhetorical fallacies. ("Logical fallacies" is the usual term, referring mainly to unintentional flaws in reasoning. "Rhetorical fallacies" here refers to more devious motives in, and modes of, argument.)

Students sometimes also fret excessively over what is the proper label for a fallacious argument, rather than simply explaining in their own words how the argument is fallacious; pinning the label to the fallacy may be worthwhile, but it is secondary to showing your understanding of the argument's substantive flaws. Another source for fretting is which of several similar terms is the "right" one; several of these terms, however, are synonymous or closely enough related so that they may be interchangeable. Here are some clusters of related fallacies, gathered from the alphabetical glossary below.

- Presenting only one side of a story, or slanting an account to one side: propaganda, special pleading, stacking the deck, half-truth, double standard, selective vision, cleans and dirties, *tu quoque* (in the sense of pointing out legitimately the fallacy in opponents who are guilty of the same fault of which they accuse others).
- Oversimplification: overgeneralization, sweeping generalization, either-or, false dilemma, false dichotomy, reductive fallacy, not accounting for all factors or variables.
- Hasty conclusion or non sequitur: inadequate evidence, unrepresentative sample, argument from the exception.
- Inconsistency: compartmentalized thinking, self-contradiction, doublethink, shifting ground, equivocation, "I Won't, but I Will," "Heads I Win, Tails You Lose."
- Distraction: begging the question, evading the issue, shifting ground, red herring, irrelevance.

- Personal attacks: *ad hominem*, name-calling, straw man, poisoning the well, smearing, character assassination, *tu quoque*, guilt by association, derision, distortion.
- Appeals to widespread opinion or common practice: *ad populum*, bandwagon, plain folks, appeal to the past or resistance to change, common practice, two wrongs make a right.
- Emotional appeal: appeals to pity or fear, demagoguery, scare tactics, sentimentality, religiosity, flag-waving, jingoism.

## Glossary of Logical and Rhetorical Fallacies

**ad hominem.** Latin for argument “against the man.” The rhetorical fallacy of attacking the character or motives of an opponent as a means of discrediting or evading the substance of his or her arguments. Variants include *name-calling*, *poisoning the well*, *smearing*, and *character assassination*. What is or is not *ad hominem* can be a difficult judgment call. Certainly the character and motives of writers are relevant factors in evaluating their arguments (the term **ethos** in classical rhetoric refers to determining the credibility of speakers’ character and to the positive image they try to establish with their audience), although evaluation of these factors should never be a substitute for judging arguments on their own grounds. In calculating sources’ possible biases, we need to become aware of **special interests** that they or those for whom they speak may represent, and whether they are political **partisans**, paid propagandists, public relations or advertising agents—in which case their arguments are likely to be **special pleading** and subject to more skeptical scrutiny than those made by independent journalists or scholars. And we need to inform ourselves of their record of credibility in the past. Presenting negative evidence against a source on these counts is a perfectly valid line of argument, *but it must be adequately documented* to avoid *ad hominem*, and it still needs to be supplemented with substantive evaluation of the arguments. A **predictable pattern of political rhetoric** is that those whose character or motives have been legitimately discredited will charge that they are the victims of character assassination.

**ad ignoratiam.** Latin, “argument to what is not known.” The logical fallacy of arguing that because we do not know that something is not true, or that because something cannot be disproved, therefore it *is* true—arguing, for example, that because it cannot be proved that God does not exist, therefore God *does* exist.

**ad populum.** Latin, appeal “to the people.” The logical fallacy of arguing that something is true because many or most people believe it is, or that a policy is valid because many or most agree with it. The fallacy lies in the fact that mass opinion is not always well informed, accurate, or morally just (see Michael Kinsley’s example of misinformed public opinion about U.S. foreign aid, in “The Intellectual Free Lunch”

in Chapter 2). Appeal to popular opinion is one of the most frequent lines of public argument, and here again it can be a tough judgment call to determine when it is valid and when fallacious. Democracy itself is based on majority rule, as expressed in elections and opinion polls, so all sides seek to gain majority approval; we all want to believe, and want our audience to believe, that our position has wide support. However, we are all inclined to a **double standard** or **selective vision** in invoking popular opinion when it supports our side but seeing the *ad populum* fallacy when it supports the opposition. (For example, Republicans claimed to have public opinion on their side when they launched impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton, but when that support dwindled to a minority, they then **shifted ground** to charge that the public had lost the moral fortitude to do the right thing.)

When *is* it valid to cite majority opinion in the general population, or within any particular group, to support your position? When you can present evidence that the majority is well informed and/or has benefited from the policy you advocate.

**appeal to authority** or **transfer of authority**. This logical fallacy takes three common forms. One is citing as a source on a particular subject someone who is an authority on *some* subject but not the one at issue, or even someone who is only, in Daniel Boorstin's phrase, "well-known for being well-known." (The celebrity endorsement ad is the most frequent occasion for this form.) Another form is citing the opinion of a source who is an authority on the issue as sufficient in itself, without presenting the evidence on which that opinion is based. The opinions of those who are authorities on a subject are likely to be supported with better evidence than those of nonexperts, but their evidence still needs to be documented. The third form is when a genuine authority is cited, but the authority's opinion diverges from the opinions of other authorities or is otherwise suspect. This might happen when the cited authority has a conflict of interest or holds an opinion about an issue that differs from the consensus of other authorities in a field. To avoid this third form of the fallacy, you should acknowledge the difference and present a case for why this authority's word should prevail over others' if you think it should.

**appeal to fear** or **scare tactics**. Along with its flip side, **appeal to pity**, the most common form of **emotional appeal**—most prominently in calls for war or, more recently, protection against terrorism.. This is another case where a judgment call is always necessary to determine whether such an appeal has legitimate grounds, when it is a perfectly valid line of argument, or whether it is deliberately fabricated or exaggerated to frighten people into compliance with those in power, or to attract a profitable media audience.

**appeal to the past or tradition**, or **resistance to change**. The logical fallacy of arguing for a policy only because it has been followed in the past or is a tradition in one's culture, regardless of whether it might be outdated.

**appeal to pity**. A common variety of **sentimentality**. The judgment call here is whether the people being defended truly deserve pity or whether the audience's heartstrings are being tugged on fraudulently. For example, in law courts, attorneys



will often attempt to elicit the jury's pity for their clients to help their clients' case. But pitying someone is not a good justification for thinking that he or she did or did not commit a crime or that his or her legal claims have any warrant. Evidence is needed for that.

**argument from the converse.** The logical fallacy of starting with a statement whose truth has been established, in the form of "All (or most) Xs are Y," then jumping to the converse conclusion, "All (or most) Ys are X," which is a form of **non sequitur**. This fallacy can usually be explained in terms of logical classes and subclasses or sets and subsets, as in mathematics, and illustrated through circle diagrams (see Chapter 11).

**argument from the exception.** The logical fallacy of supporting an argument with a case that is an exception to the rule, contrary to the larger body of evidence supporting the opposing side; synonymous with an **unrepresentative sample**.

**bandwagon.** A variety of **ad populum**, attempting to lure you to get on the bandwagon, to agree with a policy or take an action because "everybody's doing it." Extremely common in advertising.

**begging the question.** A fallacy in deductive logic in which a conclusion depends on prior acceptance of a premise whose truth has not been established or is disputable. Often used synonymously with **circular argument**.

**changing the subject** or **shifting ground.** This rhetorical fallacy occurs when people have no effective response to a refutation of an argument they have made, so they bring up a different line of argument on the same subject while hoping no one notices that they are **evading the issue**.

**circular argument.** A logical fallacy in which a reason given in support of a conclusion presupposes the truth of the conclusion, or in which the conclusion depends on prior acceptance of a premise that is believed only because the conclusion is already believed. "I believe the president is telling the truth." "How do you know that?" "Because he's a Godfearing man." "How do you know that?" "Because he says so, and he tells the truth." Another form is the attempt to support a premise with words that simply repeat the premise in slightly different language; for example, "Capitalism is desirable because it promotes free enterprise." Free enterprise is just another name for capitalism, so the argument does not give a reason why capitalism, or free enterprise, is desirable.

**cleans and dirties.** The rhetorical fallacy of using **connotatively** loaded language applying all positive words to your side and all negative ones to your opponents', purely for **emotional appeal**, without sufficient evidence that the words are accurate. Using loaded language like this is not fallacious, however, if it *is* supported by evidence.

**common practice.** The rhetorical fallacy of justifying a shady ethical practice because "everybody does it." Also see *tu quoque* and **two wrongs make a right**.

**compartmentalization** or **compartmentalized thinking**. Logical self-contradiction or inconsistency. In its extreme form it results in Orwellian **doublethink**. The concept can also apply to saying one thing but doing another.

**demagogy** or **demagoguery**. The use of **emotional appeal** by unscrupulous politicians or other public figures to manipulate the ethnocentric beliefs or prejudices of a mass audience for their own benefit.

**derision**. A form of **ad hominem** in which the opponent's ideas or character are just ridiculed or sneered at without any substantive refutation.

**distortion**. The rhetorical fallacy of misrepresenting an opponent's ideas, whether unintentionally or intentionally. Related to **straw man**.

**double standard**. The rhetorical fallacy, or mode of deception, in which a variety of critical standards are applied to opponents but are not applied consistently, not applied as strongly, or not applied at all to one's own views or to the views of people on one's side. See "A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" in Chapter 5, as well as **selective vision** and **stacking the deck**.

**doublethink**. Coined by George Orwell in his novel *1984* to describe the logical or rhetorical fallacy of being induced by propaganda to believe self-contradictory ideas like "war is peace," "slavery is freedom," "ignorance is strength." Also applicable to abrupt reversals or deceptions in political policies without recognition of an inconsistency. In *1984*, a government reduction in the chocolate ration is announced as an increase, but the people swallow it unquestioningly.

**either-or**. Also known as *false dilemma* or *false dichotomy*. The fallacy of setting two positions in opposition to each other when they might be mutually compatible, or of suggesting that there are only two feasible alternatives when there are in fact others.

**emotional appeal**. The rhetorical fallacy of invalid appeal to the audience's emotions at the expense of reason. Appeals to emotion are fallacious generally when they appeal to feeling about something *as evidence* for it. For example, fearing that global warming is now happening cannot serve as evidence that it is happening. However, if there is firm evidence that global warming really is happening, our fear of the consequences can be used as a good reason supporting a call to action. For distinctions between valid and fallacious appeals to emotion, see Chapter 14.

**equal and opposite extreme**. The logical fallacy of rejecting an irrational, extreme position, but then failing to **draw the line** in lurching to an opposite extreme that is equally irrational, as in critics of the prejudices in white or male-dominated culture who end up proclaiming the innate superiority of blacks or women, in "reverse racism" or "reverse sexism."

**equivocation**. The rhetorical fallacy of changing the sense in which a word is used, in the middle of an argument, or of using a definition of it that is not applicable in the context. A mode of **shifting ground**. For example, when people defending capital punishment because they believe it deters potential murderers are confronted with **empirical evidence** to the contrary, they sometimes respond, "Well, it deters the

executed criminal from killing again.” **evading the issue**. There are several fallacious means of trying to squirm out of acknowledging that one’s opponent has made a point that one cannot logically refute, including **begging the question**, **changing the subject**, introducing a **red herring**, **shifting ground**, **ad hominem**, **name-calling**, and **tu quoque** attacks on the opponent.

**false analogy or false equation**. The logical fallacy of arguing that two situations are similar to one another or exactly the same, so that what we accept as true about one should also be accepted about the other, when there are significant differences between them. For distinctions between valid and false analogies, see Chapter 11.

**faulty causation**. See the following causal fallacies in Chapter 13: **post hoc, ergo propter hoc**; **reductive fallacy**; **slippery slope**; **blaming the victim**; **too much or too little?**; **giving your side credit for positive results**, **blaming the other side for negative results**; **confusion of cause and effect**.

**flag-waving, jingoism**. The rhetorical fallacy of emotional appeal deceptively manipulating patriotism and fear of a foreign enemy.

**guilt by association**. The rhetorical fallacy of smearing opponents by falsely associating them with a disreputable person or organization. It is not fallacious to criticize opponents for their actual, admitted association with disreputable forces.

**half-truth**. The rhetorical fallacy of **stacking the deck** by **playing up** only those portions of a truth that favor one’s own side, while suppressing mention of other portions that discredit it, as in ads that boast of a certain feature of a brand without mentioning that every other brand of the product has the same feature.

**hasty conclusion**. The logical fallacy of jumping to a conclusion based on inadequate evidence, an **unrepresentative sample**, or an **overgeneralization**.

**heads I win, tails you lose, or damned if you do, damned if you don’t, or you can’t win**. A variety of **stacking the deck** or **shifting ground** in which opponents are criticized for one reason if they take a particular position but criticized for another reason if they take the opposite position.}

**inadequate evidence or unrepresentative sampling**. In inductive reasoning, the fallacy of drawing a conclusion or making a generalization based on a sampling of evidence, or set of examples, too small to generalize from or unrepresentative of a larger sampling.

**inconsistency or self-contradiction**. The logical fallacy of an argument some of whose parts are inconsistent with, or contradict, others in the same argument or an earlier one by the same author.

**inductive leap**. A form of **non sequitur** or **hasty conclusion** in which one jumps to an extreme conclusion based on skimpy **empirical evidence**.

**irrelevance**. An argument that is not relevant to the point at issue. Whether intentional or unintentional, it is a form of **evading the issue**.

**I won’t . . . but I will**. A common form of **compartmentalized thinking**. This was a favorite during the Cold War, when politicians routinely used phrases like, “I won’t say my opponent is a Communist, but ”

**let's you and him fight.** The rhetorical fallacy of people provoking conflicts between others, on a personal, social, or international level, while avoiding risk themselves. Especially common in people advocating war ("We've got to fight them or else . . ."), when they themselves, and often their family members, have no intention of risking their own lives in battle or even joining the armed forces. A form of **What do you mean, "we"?**

**lip service.** The rhetorical fallacy of making a public show of belief in a popular cause, such as religion or patriotism, while not practicing what one preaches.

**name-calling.** The most common variety of **ad hominem**, substituting nasty words describing opponents for reasoned refutation of their arguments. As with other forms of **emotional appeal**, name-calling can be a valid rhetorical method *if you support the name you call someone by sufficient evidence*, or if such evidence has been historically established beyond much dispute— such as, "Hitler, Stalin, and Saddam Hussein were insane, murderous tyrants."

**non sequitur.** Latin, "it does not follow," that is, one statement does not follow logically from the previous one. The many kinds of non sequitur include **sylogisms** or **enthymemes** in which the conclusion does not follow from a premise, **evading the issue**, **circular argument**, **hasty conclusion**, **inductive leap**, **faulty causation**, and **argument from the converse**. Also a general term for an abrupt change of subject in which the second subject is asserted to be related to the first but isn't.

**overgeneralization** or **sweeping generalization.** The logical fallacy of making a generalization that is so vague or vast as to be practically useless, or that jumps to a conclusion about a large class of people or things based on an **inadequate** or **unrepresentative sampling**.

**oversimplification.** The broadest category of the many logical and rhetorical fallacies that reduce a complex set of realities to an overly simplistic, black-and-white explanation. See Chapter 10.

**plain folks.** The rhetorical fallacy of a politician or other public figure who in wealth, power, or education is an **elitist** but who pretends to be a **populist**, speaking like, and claiming to represent the interests of, the masses of ordinary citizens, often for the purpose of **demagogic** manipulation.

**propaganda.** A deliberately one-sided view of any issue, usually produced by governments, political parties and candidates, **special interests**, and professional agents in their service. Propaganda employs the whole range of rhetorical methods of **stacking the deck**. See chapters 18 and 19.

**quotation out of context.** The rhetorical fallacy of quoting a few words or sentences from a source text in a manner that makes them appear to have a different meaning than they have within the context of the complete text. This is a common tactic in writers of **invective** who deliberately distort their opponents' ideas in this manner. It is also used by advertisers of cultural productions to put the most favorable spin on journalistic reviews, as when an ad quotes a review of a movie calling it

“spectacular,” when the full text reads, “This film is the most spectacular disaster in years.”

**red herring.** The rhetorical fallacy of **changing the subject** by jumping from addressing an issue to dragging in another one, usually strong in **emotional appeal**, to distract attention from the first.

**religiosity.** The rhetorical fallacy of an insincere, exaggerated, or sentimentalized posture of religious belief, without evidence of any theological or moral substance, as when politicians profess their deep religious faith in order to court votes, or adamantly defend “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, but don’t practice their faith. Popular films and TV series about guardian angels and charming nuns, without any real religious substance, are another example, such as *The Sound of Music*, with its pseudoreligious organ swells and lines such as “like a lark that is learning to pray.” (Can you visualize a lark learning to pray?)

**selective vision.** The rhetorical fallacy of seeing, or discussing, only your opponents’ bad policies and behavior, while turning a blind eye to your own side’s similar faults. Synonymous with **double standard**.

**sentimentality.** The rhetorical fallacy of using excessive or manipulative evocation of positive **emotional appeal**. Words commonly applied to sentimental appeals are “tear-jerking,” “corny,” and “sappy.” Staples of sentimentality are **religiosity**, flag-waving, images of Mom and apple pie, cute little children and puppy dogs, soap-opera-like **appeal to pity** (as in celebrity journalism’s accounts of the tragedies of the rich and famous), and so on. Also used in public relations to fabricate a cosmeticized, saintly image of some public figure or organization (see chapters 14,18). Like other forms of emotional appeal, sentimentality is often employed with **selective vision**, by which one tries to gain sympathy for a favored individual or group while ignoring the fact that an opponent or some other social group might deserve as much or more sympathy. In politics and war, sentimentality is evident in selective emotional appeals for one’s own side’s causes or forces while the opponents’ are demonized.

**shifting ground.** The logical or rhetorical fallacy of changing your position or line of argument—especially in a contradictory manner—without justification, resulting in **compartmentalized thinking** or **doublethink**. In the 2000 presidential election, when the Florida Supreme Court was overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court to give George W. Bush the victory, Democrats, who usually support the primacy of federal government over state governments, shifted ground in denouncing the U.S. Supreme Court action, while Republicans did the opposite shift.

**special pleading.** The rhetorical fallacy of claiming to be an objective, neutral analyst in order to conceal the reality that one is an advocate for **special interests** or one side of an issue, or of arguing that some extenuating circumstances apply—“I’m special” “This case is special”—when in fact the circumstances are not very special (and if we granted an exception in this case, we would have to grant far too many exceptions). In other words, an argument that tries to establish an exception where

there is no real warrant for it, as when students ask to be allowed to take a class when they haven't fulfilled the prerequisites, without giving sufficient reasons why the prerequisites should not be applied in their case. **stacking the deck**. General term for the whole repertory of rhetorical fallacies—including **double standard** and **selective vision**—used to present a **propagandistically** one-sided view, through **playing up** all arguments and evidence in favor of one side while **downplaying** or suppressing altogether all arguments and evidence against that side and in favor of the other side. See “A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric” in Chapter 5.

**straw man**. The rhetorical fallacy of depicting an image of opponents that bears no real resemblance to them or that distorts or oversimplifies their ideas and then claiming that you have disposed of their ideas by refuting the false version of them.

**tokenism**. A form of **lip service** in which one complies minimally or halfheartedly with a required policy, such as equal-opportunity hiring, with “a token woman” or “a token minority.” **tu quoque**. Latin, “you too.” The rhetorical fallacy of defending your side against an accusation by saying the other side is guilty of the same abuse. A form of **two wrongs make a right**. *Tu quoque* can be a valid, effective line of argument if it is not used to excuse your side from fault but to point out the other side's hypocrisy in not practicing what they preach to others.

**two wrongs make a right**. The logical fallacy of rationalizing one's bad behavior on the grounds of **common practice**, **tu quoque**, or “getting even.” That is, it's okay for me/us to do this, because you/our opponents have done the same thing. This is frequently practiced with a **double standard**, by which one side—in war, for example—will justify its atrocities or desire to get even, while denying any such justification to the other side.

**what do you mean, “we”?** The rhetorical fallacy of a falsely all-encompassing “we,” as when a teacher says, “We'll have an exam next week,” or a wealthy government official says, “We all need to make sacrifices in this time of war,” or a corporate polluter says, “We're all concerned about the environment.”

**wishful thinking**. The form of **rationalization** in which people believe what they want to believe, or what benefits them or their allies, rather than drawing reasoned conclusions.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

What possible fallacies are found in the following arguments, or which ones are being alleged by the writers in the people they criticize? In the latter cases, how persuasive are their allegations?

A letter in the San Antonio Express-News in 2004:

Your editorial “Scalia makes a bad call in Cheney energy case” chastised Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia for refusing to recuse himself from a case involving the vice president [Richard Cheney].

However, I noted a March 19 article in the Los Angeles Times reported that 13 congressmen asked Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg to withdraw from abortion cases “because of her affiliation with the National Organization of Women

Legal Defense and Education Fund.” Since you were quick to criticize Scalia for going on a duck hunt with the vice president, I wonder how you feel about Ginsburg’s activities on behalf of the abortion industry.

”I don’t believe these statistics showing that economic opportunity for most Americans has declined since the 1970s. My parents worked their way out of poverty into the middle class, so anybody can.”

The book *The Myth of Separation*, by David Barton, a spokesperson for the Christian Coalition, argues that the “founding fathers” intended the First Amendment only to protect the practice of religion from government, not also to protect individuals from government imposition of religion. (The main object of his criticism is the 1962 Supreme Court decision declaring officially sponsored and organized prayer in public schools unconstitutional.) Barton quotes Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danville Baptist Association, the best-known statement of the notion of a wall of separation between church and state, as saying, “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between church and state’” (41). However, Barton leaves out the first part of the same sentence: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions” (Thomas Jefferson: Writings 510).

Barton also writes in *The Myth of Separation*:

As a note of interest, while the phrase “separation of church and state” is not found in the United States Constitution, it is found in another prominent document—the Constitution of the Soviet Union:

Article 124: In order to ensure citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the State, and the school from the church.

It seems that, because of the current Court’s rulings, we have more similarities with the Soviet Union than we might have thought. (45)

In the 2004 presidential election, Democrats charged that Vice President Richard Cheney had conflicts of interest in large Defense Department contracts for the war in Iraq with Halliburton Industries, of which Cheney had previously been CEO and from which he was still receiving deferred payments. Republicans replied that these charges were just *ad hominem* and character assassination. What arguments and evidence might be produced to support the opposing sides?

A columnist in a campus newspaper sides with liberals, who, the writer says, consider national health care a right, against conservatives, who consider it a privilege, then comments, “Let’s set aside the ironies of how privileged those that subscribe to the latter notion of health care are.”

New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd in July 2004 quoted President George W Bush saying in defense of attacking Iraq, “So I had a choice to make: either take the word of a madman or defend America.” He also said of the terrorists, “We will confront

them overseas so we do not have to confront them here at home.” Dowd commented, “That’s nonsense. Just because terrorists are attacking Americans abroad doesn’t mean terrorists are poised to also attack us at home. . . . It’s just like the presidents other false dichotomies: You’re either with us, or you’re with the terrorists. If we don’t stop gays from marrying, it will destroy the institution of marriage.”

”I’ve seen a lot more lawn signs and bumper stickers for Candidate X than for Candidate Y, so I guess I’ll vote for X.”

”People in nearly every other democratic country except the United States have enacted legislation for national health insurance. So maybe we should consider their models as a possible alternative to ours.”

In his syndicated column (June 26, 2004), Thomas Sowell, who is black, wrote (with no further support): “People sometimes ask if I have tried to convince black leaders to take a different view on racial issues. Of course not. I wouldn’t spend my time trying to persuade the mafia to give up crime. Why should I spend time trying to convince race hustlers to give up victimhood? It’s their bread and butter.”

Al Franken’s book *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them* contains a Chapter documenting the factual errors and criticizing the ad hominem name-calling in Ann Coulter’s *Slander: Liberal Lies about the American Right*. The Chapter is titled “Ann Coulter: Nutcase,” and among Franken’s comments on Coulter’s misquotations of sources is, “Coulter pulls this wild distortion, like so very, very many, directly out of her ass” (14).

”No conclusive evidence has been found that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. But there’s no conclusive evidence that he didn’t, so I think he did.”

A radio talk show host defended tax cuts for the rich on the grounds that they are paying an increasingly larger share of taxes. In response to a caller who pointed out that this is because they have gained an increasingly larger share of income, he said, “And they deserve to have higher income because they work hard for it.”

In their book *The Hammer: Tom DeLay—God, Money, and the Rise of the Republican Congress*, Lou Dubose and Jan Reid describe House of Representatives majority leader Tom DeLay as a man with a “petty and vindictive mean streak” whose coming to Christ they characterize as being “born again into Republican electoral politics.” They add, “This is not to suggest that his motives were anything less than spiritual, but the result was political.”

Bill O’Reilly, commenting on Fox News about critics of the Iraq war in 2003: “This is just fair warning to Barbra Streisand and others who see the world the way you do. We don’t want to demonize you, but those of you who hurt the country at a time like this, let’s just say you will be spotlighted.”

In a critical review of Michael Moore’s film *Fahrenheit 9/11* posted on Salon.com, June 21, 2004, Christopher Hitchens wrote: “The same ‘let’s have it both ways’ opportunism infects his treatment of another very serious subject, namely domestic counterterrorist policy. From being accused of overlooking too many warnings-not



exactly an original point-the administration is now lavishly taunted for issuing too many.”

In his book *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities*, conservative professor John M. Ellis alleges about Marxist (but anti-Communist) literary theorist Fredric Jameson: “Jameson’s great admiration of Mao Zedong . . . is evident. Maoism is for him ‘the richest of all the great new ideologies of the 60s’” (121). Ellis fails to quote Jameson’s next sentence in the cited text: “One understands, of course, why left militants here and abroad, fatigued by Maoist dogmatisms, must have heaved a collective sigh of relief when the Chinese in turn consigned ‘Maoism’ itself to the dustbin of history.”

In a column for the Springfield (Mo.) *News-Leader*, June 9, 2004, Joan Collins wrote:

[Our National Security Strategy policy statement] claims to have human dignity at its core. The policy devotes an entire Chapter to saying the United States ‘will stand firmly for the non-negotiable demand of human dignity.’

This conflict between the principle of human dignity and the action of our soldiers arrogantly ordering Iraqi prisoners to engage in humiliating indignities symbolizes the arrogance of a policy that says we will dominate the world and are immune from its judgment. How does ‘human dignity’ square with imperial designs?

From “Radio Waves: Invisible Danger,” by Arthur Firstenberg, *Earth Island Journal*, Winter 2000-2001:

World health authorities have been puzzled by recent sharp increases in asthma, sleep disorders, hypertension, tinnitus, and memory-loss. Influenza and flu-like illnesses also have become more severe and more frequent. In the US, this sharp increase began in November 1996, the same time that digital cell phone service first became available in many cities. In the last four years, RF [radio frequency] and microwave radiation levels have increased tenfold around the world.

An article in the Los Angeles Times online edition, November 1, 2004, “Filling In the Facts in Kerry’s and Bush’s War of Words,” by Nick Anderson, pointed out: Bush said, “Only a year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, the senator proposed massive cuts in America’s intelligence budget.”

It is true that Kerry proposed cutting intelligence funding by several billion dollars in 1994, but Kerry’s proposal was Part of a larger bipartisan effort to cut the federal deficit. Bush’s new CIA director, Porter J. Goss, also proposed cuts in intelligence funding as a congressman at the time.

Kerry has voted for many intelligence funding bills since he joined the Senate in 1985.

On Iraq, Kerry said . . . that Bush’s “mistakes and misjudgments have hurt our troops, driven away allies, diverted out attention from Osama bin Laden and the real war on terror.” . . . But the Democrat did not mention that he had voted for the congressional resolution that authorized Bush to invade Iraq.

In the 2004 presidential election debates, Democratic candidates John Kerry and John Edwards raised the subject of Vice President Cheney's daughter being an open lesbian, ostensibly in order to praise the Cheneys' tolerance of homosexuality. Republicans charged that this was a stealth ploy to flaunt the fact in order to alienate homophobic Republicans from Cheney. Discuss this as a variant of "I won't (make an issue out of the daughter's homosexuality) . . . but I will."

After September 11, 2001, Ann Coulter wrote on her Web site about Islamic fundamentalists, "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity." Coulter has never been in military service.

# Chapter 13.Causal Analysis

Do sex education and condom distribution in high schools lead to increased sexual activity by students?

Does capital punishment deter murderers?

Is constantly putting more criminals in prison an effective solution to the high crime rate, or is it merely a Band-aid approach that treats the symptoms without doing anything to cure the root causes of crime, and does it perhaps, ironically, *increase* crime by breeding future criminal behavior in prisoners?

Does gun control reduce crime? Does having a gun in your house make you safer?

Does violence on television or in movies provoke violent behavior in viewers? Does pornography provoke sexual crimes?

Did President Reagan's military buildup win the Cold War?

Does smoking cause cancer?

Does welfare destroy incentive to work and promote illegitimate births?

Why haven't women achieved parity with men in jobs and income?

Is affirmative action a solution to, or a cause of, racial divisiveness?

What is the origin of the breakdown in family values?

Does raising the minimum wage increase unemployment?

Have Reaganomics and Bushonomics had a beneficial or a harmful effect on the American economy? Does reducing tax rates stimulate the economy? Does everyone benefit equally from across-the-board tax cuts?

Causal analyses are probably the most common and controversial variety of argument in social and economic issues. They are mainly forms of **inductive reasoning**, depending on **empirical evidence** for adequate support. Causal analysis can be highly eloquent and powerful; its skillful practitioners typically draw from a repository of **cultural literacy**, marshaling historical or socioeconomic data and assuming the ability of readers or listeners to follow an **extended line of argument** that develops a sequence of historical or social causes and effects. **Irony** and **paradox** also often characterize skillful causal arguments, as illustrated in Chapter 10, and they are intrinsic to variations such as **vicious circle** or **self-fulfilling prophecy** lines.

Here is an example of a two-step vicious circle argument. First Step: Since the 1970s, most analysts agree, the number of well-paying jobs in the United States has decreased; the increasing competition for a smaller share of jobs has pressured many high school and college students to follow an exclusively vocational curriculum at the expense of general education. The general-education curriculum, however, includes the civic literacy and critical thinking skills necessary to try to understand the

causes for the declining job market and possible courses of political action to reverse it, so by restricting themselves to the vocational curriculum, students are caught in the vicious circle of never having access to the information they need to understand or challenge the socioeconomic forces constricting their options. Second Step: Once those same students graduate to become taxpayers and parents, because they have never learned the value of general education for their life choices, they are apt to vote for tax cuts that reduce funds for general education in public secondary schools and colleges, thus creating another vicious circle, as they now further deprive their children, or themselves as adult students, of the same value.

Causal analyses are often highly politicized; opposing forces devote sizable economic and rhetorical resources trying to persuade us that their causal analysis is the correct one; on each of the issues listed at the head of this Chapter and many more, conservative and leftist sources come up with “irrefutable evidence” proving that the historical or socioeconomic facts support their side. Moreover, causal analysis is susceptible to an entire, distinct repertory of fallacious and deceptive reasoning, as will be surveyed here. So as a critical reader, listener, and writer, you need to learn to make well-reasoned judgments about which causal arguments are logical and which are fallacious.

The remainder of this Chapter is devoted to an examination of some common causal fallacies you may encounter.

***Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc.*** Latin for “After this, therefore because of this” (“post hoc” for short). Arguing, without adequate evidence, that because one thing followed another chronologically, or because the two occur simultaneously, or because they are correlated in some other way, the first caused the second. It has been found that most male sex offenders view pornography, but is it logical to conclude that the pornography caused them to commit sexual offenses? Contrary evidence would be that many men view pornography who never commit a sexual offense, or that countries where pornography is legal tend to have low rates of sexual crimes. (Note that the latter argument does not **imply** the converse post hoc argument, that an abundance of pornography causes a low sexual crime rate—it only suggests that there is no verifiable causal relation between pornography and sex crimes one way or the other; the low sex crime rate might be attributable to other cultural factors.)

Variants on post hoc include **wishful** or magical **thinking** (also forms of **ratio-nalization**), in which we convince ourselves, without adequate evidence, of the truth of what we want to believe, or what serves our own interests to believe, about the cause of favorable events. A whimsical example is provided by the joke about the man who every day passes on the sidewalk of his city another man who constantly and frenetically snaps his fingers. Finally, curiosity gets the better of the first man and he stops the other to ask him, “Why do you always snap your fingers like that?”

“It keeps away elephants.”

“Keeps away elephants? That’s the craziest thing I ever heard of.”

"Oh, yeah? You may think it's crazy, but I've been doing this all my life and I've never been trampled by an elephant."

**Reductive Fallacy.** Reducing a probable multiplicity of causes to one; a common variety of **oversimplification**. In contrast to post hoc, in which a causal relation between two events is claimed where there is none provable, in the reductive fallacy there might be such a relation, but there are probably other significant causes as well. To claim "All the problems of African Americans today are attributable to slavery" may be true in a broad historical sense, but it is reductive to disregard the multiple, complex probable factors that postdated slavery (see "A Historical-Causal Analysis of 'The White Problem'" in Chapter 2).

**Slippery Slope.** Arguing that if one particular thing occurs, it will lead inevitably to another particular thing, then to another and another, on down a slippery slope of consequences that are more and more remote and unverifiable. Post hoc and reductive fallacy usually refer to

events that have already occurred, while slippery slope arguments are usually a prediction that a present situation or one proposed by your opponents will have dire future consequences.

Be careful not to label every argument based on a prediction or **hypothesis** a slippery slope; judge each on its own plausibility. Rush Limbaugh argues that Democrats and liberal civil rights leaders opposed Republican Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court because he stood for attitudes contrary to theirs in racial matters. "As a result [of his appointment], blacks inevitably will be drawn away from the traditional civil rights leaders. . . . Once that happens, a certain percentage of minority votes will likely abandon the Democratic party" (*The Way Things Ought to Be* 119). This hypothesis has a respectable degree of plausibility; it is quite possible that some blacks have changed parties as a result of Thomas's appointment and of other recent efforts by the Republican Party to attract more black voters. The prediction can also be verified empirically by studying the demographics of voters since Thomas has been on the Court; this is, in fact, an excellent research project.

On the other hand, elsewhere in the same book Limbaugh argues, "No one can convince me that the point of [multiculturalism] is not to discredit all that America stands for— and the ultimate goal, I firmly believe, is the destruction of the capitalist way of life, the destruction of free enterprise, and the establishment of socialism" (213). This is classic slippery slope, beginning with a key term, "multiculturalism," whose definition is ambiguous, and continuing with a string of dire consequences that have no apparent connection (certainly none established by Limbaugh) to what many advocates of multiculturalism claim to believe; in other words, Limbaugh is attacking a **straw-man** multiculturalist.

A con artist in Meredith Willson's musical comedy *The Music Man* (1959) devises this famous slippery slope patter song, "Ya Got Trouble" to gull the citizens of River

City, Iowa, around 1900, into believing that the arrival of a pool hall in their community poses dangers that only the band instruments and uniforms he is selling can avert.

\*\*\*“Ya Got Trouble”

## **From The Music Man, Act One, Scene Two G.P. Putnam and Sons, NY, 1958 By Meredith Willson**

HAROLD

Ya got trouble, my friend, right here, I say, trouble right here in River City. Why sure I'm a billiard player, Certainly mighty proud I say I'm always mighty proud to say it. I consider that the hours I spend With a cue in my hand are golden. Help you cultivate horse sense And a cool head and a keen eye. 'Jever take and try to give An iron-clad leave to yourself From a three-rail billiard shot?

But just as I say, It takes judgement, brains, and maturity to score In a balkline game,

*I say* that any *boob* kin take And shove a ball in a pocket. And I call that sloth!

The first big step on the road

To the depths of deg-ra-day—

I say, first, medicinal wine from a teaspoon, *Then* beer from a bottle.

An' the next thing ya know,

Your son is playin' for money

In a pinch-back suit.

And list'nin to some big out-a-town Jasper Hearin' him tell about horse-race gamblin'. Not a wholesome trottin' race, no!

But a race where they set down right on the horse!

Like to see some stuck-up jockey-boy

Sittin' on Dan Patch? Make your blood boil?

Well, I should say.

Friends, lemme tell you what I mean.

Ya got one, two, three, four, five, six pockets in a table. Pockets that mark the diff'rence Between a gentlemen and a bum, With a capital “B,”

And that rhymes with “P” and that stands for pool!

And all week long your River City

Youth'll be frittern away,

I say your young men'll be frittern!

Frittern away their noontime, suppertime, choretime too!

Get the ball in the pocket,

Never mind gittin' Dandelions pulled

Or the screen door patched or the beefsteak pounded.

Never mind pumpin' any water

'Til your parents are caught with the cistern empty

On a Saturday night and that's trouble, Oh, yes we got lots and lots a' trouble. I'm thinkin' of the kids in the knickerbockers, Shirt-tail young ones, peekin' in the Pool Hall Winda after school, look, folks!

Right here in River City.

Trouble with a capital "T"

And that rhymes with "P" and that stands for pool!

Now, I know all you folks are the right kind a' parents.

I'm gonna be perfectly frank.

Would ya like to know what kinda conversation goes On while they're loafin' around that Hall?

They're tryin' out Bevo, tryin' out cubebs, Tryin' out Tailor Mades like Cigarette Feends! And braggin' all about

How they're gonna cover up a tell-tale breath with Sen-Sen. One fine night, they leave the pool hall, Headin' for the dance at the Arm'ry!

Libertine men and Scarlet women!

And Rag-time, shameless music

That'll grab your son and your daughter

With the arms of a jungle animal instinct!

Mass-staria!

Friends, the idle brain is the devil's playground!

PEOPLE

Trouble, oh we got trouble,

Right here in River City!

With a capital "T"

That rhymes with "P"

And that stands for Pool,

(That stands for pool.)

We've surely got trouble!

Right here in River City,

Right here!

Gotta figger out a way

To keep the young ones moral after school!

Trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble . . .

HAROLD

Mothers of River City!

Heed the warning before it's too late!

Watch for the tell-tale sign of corruption!

The moment your son leaves the house,

Does he rebuckle his knickerbockers below the knee?

Is there a nicotine stain on his index finger?

A dime novel hidden in the corn crib?

Is he starting to memorize jokes from Capt.  
 Billy's Whiz Bang?  
 Are certain words creeping into his conversation?  
 Words like "swell?"  
 And "so's your old man?"  
 Well, if so my friends,  
 Ya got trouble, Right here in River city!  
 With a capital "T"  
 And that rhymes with "P"  
 And that stands for Pool.  
 We've surely got trouble!  
 Right here in River City!  
 Remember the Maine, Plymouth Rock and the Golden Rule!  
 Oh, we've got trouble.  
 We're in terrible, terrible trouble.  
 That game with the fifteen numbered balls is a devil's tool!  
 Oh yes we got trouble, trouble, trouble!  
 With a "T"! Gotta rhyme it with "P"!  
 And that stands for Pool!!!  
 PEOPLE  
 Trouble, oh we got trouble,  
 Right here in River City!  
 With a capital "T"  
 That rhymes with "P"  
 And that stands for Pool,  
 That stands for pool.  
 We've surely got trouble!  
 Right here in River City,  
 Right here!  
 Gotta figger out a way  
 To keep the young ones moral after school!  
 Trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble . . .

**Blaming the Victim.** A frequent form of rationalization involves explaining the misfortune of those below us on the social scale, for which we might be actively or passively responsible, as the result of their own inadequacies. Blaming the victim has been a historical constant in prejudice against women and African Americans (see "A Historical-Causal Analysis of 'The White Problem'" in Chapter 2). Another example, previously mentioned here, would be teachers or older citizens who get angry at today's students for being poorly informed about history or current events, when most of these students are simply victims of schools that have failed to teach these subjects adequately. Teachers are also frequently blamed for these shortcomings, but again, if communities do not care enough about good teaching to provide tax funding for



adequate training, testing, payment, and classroom conditions for teachers, then the community is blaming the victims of its own indifference—both the teachers and the students. **[Reader Advisory: I might be special pleading here.]**

This example of blaming the victim also illustrates the related term **scapegoating**, as teachers are made the scapegoat for the community's failures. It is not only victims who are scapegoated, however. In the Salem witch trials of the late seventeenth century, innocent members of that Massachusetts community were arbitrarily accused of being agents of the devil, as scapegoats for the disintegration of the earlier, close-knit Puritan community. Likewise, Hitler singled out the Jews to use as scapegoats for Germany's economic troubles in the 1930s. The irony of both the cases of Salem and Germany is that, although they were not originally cases of blaming the victim, the accused "witches" and Jews became victims through a self-fulfilling prophecy; naming a group as a scapegoat results in their becoming victimized.

**Too Much or Too Little?** When someone argues that a course of action has been unsuccessful because it has been pushed too far, is the reverse possibly true, that it has not been pushed far enough to have a fair chance to succeed? Thus conservatives point to all the government money that has been spent on public education or welfare without visible results, as evidence that the effort has been misguided from the beginning, while liberals counter by claiming that this amount has merely been **tokenism**, inadequate to meet the real needs of schools or poor people. Liberals say that tax cuts instituted by Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush were misguided because they led to massive increases in federal deficit spending and the national debt, while conservatives protest that liberal opposition prevented the even greater cuts that would have been necessary for the policy to have positive results. In the face of such arguments, you need to resist being swayed just by assertions on either side and to evaluate the supporting evidence.

**Giving Your Side Credit for Positive Results, Blaming the Other Side for Negative Results.** This is a staple of campaign rhetoric. When economic conditions are good, the incumbent party can be predicted to take credit for them, whether they are verifiably the result of that party's policies, the late-appearing results of the other party's previous term in office, or sheer coincidence. When present conditions are bad, expect the opposition party to blame them on the incumbents—with the same likelihood of unverifiability. At best, such analyses usually commit the reductive fallacy, though in some cases one side may actually have valid evidence for its claims; so, as always, compare the dueling evidence with an open mind.

**Confusion of Cause and Effect, or Addressing Effects, or Symptoms, or Reactions, Rather than Causes or Actions.** One of President Bush's justifications for the war on Iraq in 2003 was that Iraq was harboring terrorists. When the American forces occupying Iraq came under attack by terrorists, conservatives said, "See, we told you so. This proves we were right." But liberals said, "There was not a substantial number of terrorists in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, who was not closely allied with the Islamic fundamentalists who were the main source of terrorism. But when he was

overthrown and American forces moved in, a power vacuum was created, and Islamic fundamentalists and other terrorists swarmed into the country from adjoining Arab states, eager to attack Americans who were now easy prey. So attacking Iraq caused the widespread presence of terrorists there.” These opposing analyses are likely to be debated for years to come.

This is also an extremely common pattern of fallacy in arguments about issues such as crime, poverty, and welfare, and it is often used in tandem with blaming the victim. This fallacy, or the possibility of it, often comes out in disagreements about whether affirmative action is a cause of racial and gender discrimination or a reaction against them (though it is also possible that, in a **vicious circle**, it is both). In another constant public dispute, conservatives argue that welfare causes poverty, through destroying the incentive to work, and also causes illegitimate births, through the increased financial support welfare mothers receive for additional children; liberals **refute** this argument by claiming that most able-bodied recipients of welfare turn to it because there are no jobs available or because they are working at jobs whose wages are below the poverty level, and that poverty itself, for various cultural and psychological reasons, is the main cause of illegitimate births among the poor and that the meager additional welfare benefits are a minor motivation at best. These disagreements in turn lead into policy disputes about whether reducing welfare will cause more people to find jobs, and whether cutting off welfare benefits for additional children will dissuade women from having further children.

Yet another related causal dispute between conservatives and liberals is whether granting welfare benefits to women with children results in their independence from men, to the point that the women throw men out or deprive them of their sense of family responsibility—or whether this is a reversal of the more common causality, that a growing number of men have lost a sense of paternal responsibility for other reasons and have abandoned their women and children, forcing the women to turn to welfare.

These are all issues in which you should be wary of **deductive** arguments that simply posit a hypothetical scenario that concurs with one side’s ideological biases. In such issues you should look for sound inductive arguments based on empirical studies.

## Other People’s Children: North Lawndale and the South Side of Chicago

*Jonathan Kozol*

From *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Crown, 1992). *The following Chapter from Savage Inequalities, about Chicago inner city schools, begins with a transition from the previous chapter, about East St. Louis, Illinois, “which is 98% black, has no obstetric services, no regular trash collection, and few jobs. Nearly a third of its families live*

on less than \$7,500 a year" (7). Schoolchildren there suffer from numerous illnesses caused by toxic waste and waste from Pfizer and Monsanto chemical plants.

Almost anyone who visits in the schools of East St. Louis, even for a short time, comes away profoundly shaken. These are innocent children, after all. They have done nothing wrong. They have committed no crime. They are too young to have offended us in any way at all. One searches for some way to understand why a society as rich and, frequently, as generous as ours would leave these children in their penury and squalor for so long—and with so little public indignation. Is this just a strange mistake of history? Is it unusual? Is it an American anomaly? Even, if the destitution and the racial segregation and the toxic dangers of the air and soil cannot be immediately addressed, why is it that we can't at least pour vast amounts of money, ingenuity and talent into public education for these children?

Admittedly, the soil cannot be de-leaded overnight, and the ruined spirits of the men who camp out in the mud and shacks close to the wire fencing of Monsanto can't be instantly restored to life, nor can the many illnesses these children suffer suddenly be cured, nor can their asthma be immediately relieved. Why not, at least, give children in this city something so spectacular, so wonderful and special in their public schools that hundreds of them, maybe thousands, might be able somehow to soar up above the hopelessness, the clouds of smoke and sense of degradation all around them?

Every child, every mother, in this city is, to a degree, in the position of a supplicant for someone else's help. The city turns repeatedly to outside agencies—the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the federal and Illinois EPA, the U.S. Congress, the Illinois State Board of Education, religious charities, health organizations, medical schools and educational foundations—soliciting help in much the way that African and Latin American nations beg for grants from agencies like AID. And yet we stop to tell ourselves: *These are Americans*. Why do we reduce them to this beggary—and why, particularly, in public education? Why not spend on children here at least what we would be investing in their education if they lived within a wealthy district like Winnetka, Illinois, or Cherry Hill, New Jersey, or Manhasset, Rye, or Great Neck in New York? Wouldn't this be natural behavior in an affluent society that seems to value fairness in so many other areas of life? Is fairness less important to Americans today than in some earlier times? Is it viewed as slightly tiresome and incompatible with hardnosed values? What do Americans believe about equality?

"Drive west on the Eisenhower Expressway," writes the *Chicago Tribune*, "out past the hospital complex, and look south." Before your eyes are block after block of old, abandoned, gaping factories. "The overwhelming sensation is emptiness. What's left is, lit

erally, nothing."

This emptiness—"an industrial slum without the industry," a local resident calls it—is North Lawndale. The neighborhood, according to the *Tribune*, "has one bank, one supermarket, 48 state lottery agents . . . and 99 licensed bars and liquor stores." With

only a single supermarket, food is of poor quality and overpriced. Martin Luther King, who lived in this neighborhood in 1966, said there was a 10-to-20-percent “color tax” on produce, an estimate that still holds true today. With only a single bank, there are few loans available for home repair; private housing therefore has deteriorated quickly.

According to the 1980 census, 58 percent of men and women 17 and older in North Lawndale had no jobs. The 1990 census is expected to show no improvement. Between 1960 and 1970, as the last white families left the neighborhood, North Lawndale lost three quarters of its businesses, one quarter of its jobs. In the next ten years, 80 percent of the remaining jobs in manufacturing were lost.

“People carry a lot of crosses here,” says Reverend Jim Wolff, who directs a mission church not far from one of the deserted factories. “God’s beautiful people live here in the midst of hell.”

As the factories have moved out, he says, the street gangs have moved in. Driving with me past a sprawling red-brick complex that was once the world headquarters of Sears, Roebuck, he speaks of the increasing economic isolation of the neighborhood: “Sears is gone. International Harvester is gone. Sunbeam is gone. Western Electric has moved out. The Vice Lords, the Disciples and the Latin Kings have, in a sense, replaced them.

“With the arrival of the gangs there is, of course, more violence and death. I buried a

young man 21 years old a week ago. Most of the people that I bury are between the ages of 18 and 30.”

He stops the car next to a weed-choked lot close to the corner of Sixteenth and Hamlin. “Dr. King,” he says, “lived on this corner.” There is no memorial. The city, I later learn, flattened the building after Dr. King moved out. A broken truck now occupies the place where Dr. King resided. From an open side door of the truck a very old man is selling pizza slices. Next door is a store called Jumbo Liquors. A menacing group of teen-age boys is standing on the corner of the lot where Dr. King lived with his family. “Kids like these will kill each other over nothing—for a warm-up jacket,” says the pastor.

“There are good people in this neighborhood,” he says, “determined and persistent and strong-minded people who have character and virtues you do not see everywhere. You say to yourself, ‘There’s something here that’s being purified by pain.’ All the veneers, all the facades, are burnt away and you see something genuine and beautiful that isn’t often found among the affluent. I see it in children—in the youngest children sometimes. Beautiful sweet natures. It’s as if they are refined by their adversity. But you cannot sentimentalize. The odds they face are hellish and, for many, many people that I know, life here is simply unendurable.

“Dr. King once said that he had met his match here in Chicago. He said that he faced more bigotry and hatred here than anywhere he’d been in the Deep South. Now he’s gone. The weeds have overgrown his memory. I sometimes wonder if the kids who

spend their lives out on that corner would be shocked, or even interested, to know that he had lived there once. If you told them, I suspect you'd get a shrug at most "

On a clear October day in 1990, the voices of children in the first-floor hallway of the Mary McLeod Bethune School in North Lawndale are as bright and optimistic as the voices of small children anywhere. The school, whose students are among the poorest in the city, serves one of the neighborhoods in which the infant death rate is particularly high. Nearly 1,000 infants die within these very poor Chicago neighborhoods each year. An additional 3,000 infants are delivered with brain damage or with other forms of neurological impairment. But, entering a kindergarten classroom on this autumn morning, one would have no sense that anything was wrong. Kindergarten classes almost anywhere are cheerful places, and whatever damage may already have been done to children here is not initially apparent to a visitor.

When the children lie down on the floor to have their naps, I sit and watch their movements and their breathing. A few of them fall asleep at once, but others are restless and three little boys keep poking one another when the teacher looks away. Many tiny coughs and whispers interrupt the silence for a while.

The teacher is not particularly gentle. She snaps at the ones who squirm around—"Relax!" and "Sleep!"—and forces down their arms and knees.

A little boy lying with his head close to my feet looks up, with his eyes wide open, at the ceiling. Another, lying on his stomach, squints at me with one eye while the other remains closed. Two little girls, one in blue jeans, one in purple tights, are sound asleep.

The room is sparse: a large and clean but rather cheerless space. There are very few of those manipulable objects and bright-colored shelves and boxes that adorn suburban kindergarten classrooms. The only decorations on the walls are posters supplied by companies that market school materials: "Winter," "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn," "Zoo Animals," "Community Helpers." Nothing the children or teacher made themselves.

As the minutes pass, most of the children seem to sleep, some of them with their arms flung out above their heads, others with their hands beneath their cheeks, though four or five are wide awake and stare with boredom at the ceiling.

On the door is a classroom chart ("Watch us grow!" it says) that measures every child's size and weight. Nakisha, according to the chart, is 38 inches tall and weighs 40 pounds. Lashonda, is 42 inches and weighs 45. Seneca is only 36 inches tall. He weighs only 38.

After 30 minutes pass, the teacher tells the children to sit up. Five of the boys who were most restless suddenly are sound asleep. The others sit up. The teacher tells them, "Folded hands!" They fold their hands. "Wiggle your toes!" They wiggle their toes. "Touch your nose!" They touch their noses.

The teacher questions them about a trip they made the week before. "Where did we go?" The children answer, "Farm!" "What did we see?" The children answer, "Sheep!" "What did we feed them?" A child yells out, "Soup!" The teacher reproves him: "You weren't there! What is the right answer?" The other children answer, "Corn!"

In a somewhat mechanical way, the teacher lifts a picture book of Mother Goose and flips the pages as the children sit before her on the rug.

"Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to fetch her poor dog a bone. . . . Jack and Jill went up the hill This

little piggy went to market..... "

The children recite the verses with her as she turns the pages of the book. She's not very warm or animated as she does it, but the children are obedient and seem to like the fun of showing that they know the words. The book looks worn and old, as if the teacher's used it many, many years, and it shows no signs of adaptation to the race of the black children in the school. Mary is white. Old Mother Hubbard is white. Jack is white. Jill is white. Little Jack Horner is white. Mother Goose is white. Only Mother Hubbard's dog is black.

"Baa, baa, black sheep," the teacher read, "have you any wool?" The children answer: "Yessir, yessir, three bags full. One for my master " The master is white. The sheep are black.

Four little boys are still asleep on the green rug an hour later when I leave the room. I stand at the door and look at the children, most of whom are sitting at a table now to have their milk. Nine years from now, most of these children will go on to Manley High School, an enormous, ugly building just a block away that has a graduation rate of only 38 percent. Twelve years from now, by junior year of high school, if the neighborhood statistics hold true for these children, 14 of these 23 boys and girls will have dropped out of school. Fourteen years from now, four of these kids, at most, will go to college. Eighteen years from now, one of those four may graduate from college, but three of the 12 boys in this kindergarten will already have spent time in prison.

If one stands here in this kindergarten room and does not know these things, the moment seems auspicious. But if one knows the future that awaits them, it is terrible to see their eyes look up at you with friendliness and trust—to see this and to know what is in store for them.

In a fifth grade classroom on the third floor of the school, the American flag is coated with chalk and bunched around a pole above a blackboard with no writing on it. There are a couple of pictures of leaves against the windowpanes but nothing like the richness and the novelty and fullness of expression of the children's creativity that one would see in better schools where principals insist that teachers fill their rooms with art and writing by the children. The teacher is an elderly white woman with a solid bun of sensible gray hair and a depleted grayish mood about her. Among the 30 children in the room, the teacher says that several, all of whom are black, are classified "learning disabled."

The children are doing a handwriting lesson when I enter. On a board at the back of the room the teacher has written a line of letters in the standard cursive script. The children sit at their desks and fill entire pages with these letters. It is the kind of lesson that is generally done in second grade in a suburban school. The teacher seems bored

by the lesson, and the children seem to feel this and compound her boredom with their own. Next she does a social studies lesson on the Bering Strait and spends some time in getting the class to give a definition of a “strait.” About half of the children pay attention. The others don’t talk or interrupt or fidget. They are well enough behaved but seem sedated by the teacher’s voice.

Another fifth grade teacher stops me in the corridor to ask me what I’m doing in the building. He’s 50 years old, he tells me, and grew up here in North Lawndale when it was a middle-class white neighborhood but now lives in the suburbs. “I have a low fifth grade,” he says without enthusiasm, then—although he scarcely knows me—launches into an attack upon the principal, the neighborhood and the school.

“It’s all a game,” he says. “Keep them in class for seven years and give them a diploma if they make it to eighth grade. They can’t read, but give them the diploma. The parents don’t know what’s going on. They’re satisfied.”

When I ask him if the lack of money and resources is a problem in the school, he looks amused by this. “Money would be helpful but it’s not the major factor,” he replies. “The parents are the problem.”

The principal, Warren Franczyk, later tells me this: “Teachers are being dumped from high school jobs because of low enrollment. But if they’ve got tenure they cannot be fired so we get them here. I’ve got two of them as subs right now and one as a permanent teacher. He’s not used to children of this age and can’t control them. But I have no choice.”

The city runs a parallel system of selective schools—some of which are known as “magnet” schools—and these schools, the principal tells me, do not have the staffing problems that he faces. “They can select their teachers and their pupils. So it represents a drain on us. They attract the more sophisticated families, and it leaves us with less motivated children.”

Chicago, he tells me, does not have a junior high school system. Students begin Bethune in kindergarten and remain here through eighth grade. Eighth grade graduation, here as elsewhere in Chicago, is regarded as a time for celebration, much as twelfth grade graduation would be celebrated in the suburbs. So there are parties, ball gowns and tuxedos, everything that other kids would have at high school graduation. “For more than half our children,” says the principal, “this is the last thing they will have to celebrate.”

Even in the most unhappy schools there are certain classes that stand out like little islands of excitement, energy and hope. One of these classes is a combination fifth and sixth grade at Bethune, taught by a woman, maybe 40 years of age, named Corla Hawkins.

The classroom is full of lively voices when I enter. The children are at work, surrounded by a clutter of big dictionaries, picture books and gadgets, science games and plants and colorful milk cartons, which the teacher purchased out of her own salary. An oversized Van Gogh collection, open to a print of a sunflower, is balanced on a table-ledge next to a fish tank and a turtle tank. Next to the table is a rocking chair.

Handwritten signs are on all sides: "Getting to know you," "Keeping you safe," and, over a wall that holds some artwork by the children, "Mrs. Hawkins's Academy of Fine Arts." Near the windows, the oversized leaves of several wild-looking plants partially cover rows of novels, math books, and a new World Book Encyclopedia. In the opposite corner is a "Science Learning Board" that holds small packets which contain bulb sockets, bulbs and wires, lenses, magnets, balance scales and pliers. In front of the learning board is a microscope. Several rugs are thrown around the floor. On another table are a dozen soda bottles sealed with glue and lying sideways, filled with colored water.

The room looks like a cheerful circus tent. In the center of it all, within the rocking chair, and cradling a newborn in her arms, is Mrs. Hawkins.

The 30 children in the class are seated in groups of six at five of what she calls "departments." Each department is composed of six desks pushed together to create a table. One of the groups is doing math, another something that they call "math strategy." A third is doing reading. Of the other two groups, one is doing something they describe as "mathematics art"—painting composites of geometric shapes—and the other is studying "careers," which on this morning is a writing exercise about successful business leaders who began their lives in poverty. Near the science learning board a young-looking woman is preparing a new lesson that involves a lot of gadgets she has taken from a closet.

"This woman," Mrs. Hawkins tells me, "is a parent. She wanted to help me. So I told her, 'If you don't have somebody to keep your baby, bring the baby here. I'll be the mother. I can do it.'"

As we talk, a boy who wears big glasses brings his book to her and asks her what the word *salvation* means. She shows him how to sound it out, then tells him, "use your dictionary if you don't know what it means." When a boy at the reading table argues with the boy beside him, she yells out, "You ought to be ashamed. You woke my baby."

After 15 minutes she calls out that it is time to change their tables. The children get up and move to new departments. As each group gets up to move to the next table, one child stays behind to introduce the next group to the lesson.

"This is the point of it," she says. "I'm teaching them three things. Number one: self-motivation. Number two: self-esteem. Number three: you help your sister and your brother. I tell them they're responsible for one another. I give no grades in the first marking period because I do not want them to be too competitive. Second marking period, you get your grade on what you've taught your neighbors at your table. Third marking period, I team them two-and-two. You get the same grade as your partner. Fourth marking period, I tell them, 'Every fish swims on its own.' But I wait a while for that. The most important thing for me is that they teach each other....."

"All this stuff"—she gestures at the clutter in the room—"I bought myself because it never works to order things through the school system. I bought the VCR. I bought the rocking chair at a flea market. I got these books here for ten cents apiece at a flea



market. I bought that encyclopedia—” she points at the row of World Books—“so that they can do their research right here in this room.”

I ask her if the class reads well enough to handle these materials. “Most of them can read some of these books. What they cannot read, another child can read to them,” she says.

”I tell the parents, ‘Any time your child says, “I don’t have no homework,” call me up. Call me at home.’ Because I give them homework every night and weekends too. Holidays I give them extra. Every child in this classroom has my phone.”

Cradling the infant in her lap, she says, “I got to buy a playpen.”

The bottles of colored water, she explains, are called “wave bottles.” The children make them out of plastic soda bottles which they clean and fill with water and food coloring and seal with glue. She takes one in her hand and rolls it slowly to and fro. “It shows them how waves form,” she says. “I let them keep them at their desks. Some of them hold them in their hands while they’re at work. It seems to calm them: seeing the water cloud up like a storm and then grow clear.....

”I take them outside every day during my teacher-break. On Saturdays we go to places like the art museum. Tuesdays, after school, I coach the drill team. Friday afternoons I tutor parents for their GED [high school equivalency exam]. If you’re here this afternoon, I do the gospel choir.”

When I ask about her own upbringing, she replies, “I went to school here in Chicago. My mother believed I was a ‘gifted’ child, but the system did not challenge me and I was bored at school. Fortunately one of my mother’s neighbors was a teacher and she used to talk to me and help me after school. If it were not for her I doubt that I’d have thought that I could go to college. I promised myself I would return that favor.”

At the end of class I go downstairs to see the principal, and then return to a secondfloor room to see the gospel choir in rehearsal. When I arrive, they’ve already begun. Thirty-five children, ten of whom are boys, are standing in rows before a piano player. Next to the piano, Mrs. Hawkins stands and leads them through the words. The children range in age from sixth and seventh graders to three second graders and three tiny children, one of whom is Mrs. Hawkins’s daughter, who are kindergarten pupils in the school.

They sing a number of gospel songs with Mrs. Hawkins pointing to each group—soprano, alto, bass—when it is their turn to join in. When they sing, “I love you, Lord,” their voices lack the energy she wants. She interrupts and shouts at them, “Do you love Him? Do you?” They sing louder. The children look as if they’re riveted to her directions.

”This next song,” she says, “I dreamed about this. This song is my favorite.”

The piano begins. The children start to clap their hands. When she gives the signal they begin to sing:

Clap your hands!

Stamp your feet!

Get on up

Out of your seats!

Help me

Lift 'em up, Lord!

Help me

Lift 'em up!

When a child she calls "Reverend Joe" does not come in at the right note, Mrs. Hawkins stops and says to him: "I thought you told me you were saved!"

The children smile. The boy called "Reverend Joe" stands up a little straighter. Then the piano starts again. The sound of children clapping and then stamping with the music fills the room. Mrs. Hawkins waves her arms. Then, as the children start, she also starts to sing.

Help me lift 'em up, Lord!

Help me lift 'em up!

There are wonderful teachers such as Corla Hawkins almost everywhere in urban schools, and sometimes a number of such teachers in a single school. It is tempting to focus on these teachers and, by doing this, to paint a hopeful portrait of the good things that go on under adverse conditions. There is, indeed, a growing body of such writing; and these books are sometimes very popular, because they are consoling.

The rationale behind much of this writing is that pedagogic problems in our cities are not chiefly matters of injustice, inequality or segregation, but of insufficient information about teaching strategies: If we could simply learn "what works" in Corla Hawkins's room, we'd then be in a position to repeat this all over Chicago and in every other system.

But what is unique in Mrs. Hawkins's classroom is not what she does but who she is. Warmth and humor and contagious energy cannot be replicated and cannot be written into any standardized curriculum. If they could, it would have happened long ago; for wonderful teachers have been heroized in books and movies for at least three decades. And the problems of Chicago are, in any case, not those of insufficient information. If Mrs. Hawkins's fellow fifth grade teachers simply needed information, they could get it easily by walking 20 steps across the hall and visiting her room. The problems are systemic: The number of teachers over 60 years of age in the Chicago system is twice that of the teachers under 30. The salary scale, too low to keep exciting, youthful teachers in the system, leads the city to rely on low-paid subs, who represent more than a quarter of Chicago's teaching force. "We have teachers," Mrs. Hawkins says, "who only bother to come in three days a week. One of these teachers comes in usually around nine-thirty. You ask her how she can expect the kids to care about their education if the teacher doesn't even come until nine-thirty. She answers you, 'It makes no difference. Kids like these aren't going anywhere.' The school board thinks it's saving money on the subs. I tell them, 'Pay now or pay later.'"

But even substitute teachers in Chicago are quite frequently in short supply. On an average morning in Chicago, 5,700 children in 190 classrooms come to school to find they have no teacher. The number of children who have no teachers on a given morning

in Chicago's public schools is nearly twice the student population of New Trier High School in nearby Winnetka.

"We have been in this class a whole semester," says a 15-year-old at Du Sable High, one of Chicago's poorest secondary schools, "and they still can't find us a teacher."

A student in auto mechanics at Du Sable says he'd been in class for 16 weeks before he learned to change a tire. His first teacher quit at the beginning of the year. Another teacher slept through most of the semester. He would come in, the student says, and tell the students, "You can talk. Just keep it down." Soon he would be asleep.

"Let's be real," the student says. "Most of us ain't going to college. We could have used a class like this."

The shortage of teachers finds its parallel in a shortage of supplies. A chemistry teacher at the school reports that he does not have beakers, water, bunsen burners. He uses a popcorn popper as a substitute for a bunsen burner, and he cuts down plastic soda bottles to make laboratory dishes.

Many of these schools make little effort to instruct their failing students. "If a kid comes in not reading," says an English teacher at Chicago's South Shore High, "he goes out not reading."

Another teacher at the school, where only 170 of 800 freshmen graduate with their class, indicates that the dropout rate makes teaching easier. "We lose all the dregs by the second year," he says.

"We're a general high school," says the head of counseling at Chicago's Calumet High School. "We have second and third grade readers. We hope to do better, but we won't die if we don't."

At Bowen High School, on the South Side of Chicago, students have two or three "study halls" a day, in part to save the cost of teachers. "Not much studying goes on in study hall," a supervising teacher says. "I let the students play cards. I figure they might

get some math skills out of it."

At the Lathrop Elementary School, a short walk from the corner lot where Dr. King resided in North Lawndale, there are no hoops on the basketball court and no swings in the playground. For 21 years, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, the school has been without a library. Library books, which have been piled and abandoned in the lunch room of the school, have "sprouted mold," the paper says. Some years ago the school received the standard reading textbooks out of sequence: The second workbook in the reading program came to the school before the first. The principal, uncertain what to do with the wrong work-book, was told by school officials it was "all right to work backwards."

This degree of equanimity in failure, critics note, has led most affluent parents in Chicago to avoid the public system altogether. The school board president in 1989, although a teacher and administrator in the system for three decades, did not send his children to the public schools. Nor does Mayor Richard Daley, Jr., nor did any of the previous four mayors who had school-age children.

"Nobody in his right mind," says one of the city's aldermen, "would send [his] kids to public school."

Many suburban legislators representing affluent school districts use terms such as "sinkhole" when opposing funding for Chicago's children. "We can't keep throwing money," said Governor Thompson in 1988, "into a black hole."

The *Chicago Tribune* notes that, when this phrase is used, people hasten to explain that it is not intended as a slur against the race of many of Chicago's children. "But race," says the *Tribune*, "never is far from the surface "

As spring comes to Chicago, the scarcity of substitutes grows more acute. On Mondays and Fridays in early May, nearly 18,000 children—the equivalent of all the elementary students in suburban Glencoe, Wilmette, Glenview, Kenilworth, Winnetka, Deerfield, Highland Park and Evanston—are assigned to classes with no teacher.

In this report, the city's dropout rate of nearly 50 percent is regarded by some people as a blessing. If over 200,000 of Chicago's total student population of 440,000 did not disappear during their secondary years, it is not clear who would teach them.

In 1989, Chicago spent some \$5,500 for each student in its secondary schools. This may be compared to an investment of some \$8,500 to \$9,000 in each high school student in the highest-spending suburbs to the north. Stated in the simplest terms, this means that any high school class of 30 children in Chicago received approximately \$90,000 less each year than would have been spent on them if they were pupils of a school such as New Trier High.

The difference in spending between very wealthy suburbs and poor cities is not always as extreme as this in Illinois. When relative student needs, however, have been factored into the discussion, the disparities in funding are enormous. Equity, after all, does not mean simply equal funding. Equal funding for unequal need is not equality. The need is greater in Chicago, and its children, if they are to have approximately equal opportunities, need more than the children who attend New Trier. Seen in this light, the \$90,000 annual difference is quite startling.

Lack of money is not the only problem in Chicago, but the gulf in funding we have seen is so remarkable and seems so blatantly unfair that it strikes many thoughtful citizens at first as inexplicable. How can it be that inequalities as great as these exist in neighboring school districts?

The answer is found, at least in part, in the arcane machinery by which we finance public education. Most public schools in the United States depend for their initial funding on a tax on local property. There are also state and federal funding sources, and we will discuss them later, but the property tax is the decisive force in shaping inequality. The property tax depends, of course, upon the taxable value of one's home and that of local industries. A typical wealthy suburb in which homes are often worth more than \$400,000 draws upon a larger tax base in proportion to its student population than a city occupied by thousands of poor people. Typically, in the United States, very poor communities place high priority on education, and they often tax themselves at higher rates than do the very affluent communities. But, even if they tax themselves

at several times the rate of an extremely wealthy district, they are likely to end up with far less money for each child in their schools.

Because the property tax is counted as a tax deduction by the federal government, home-owners in a wealthy suburb get back a substantial portion of the money that they spend to fund their children's schools—effectively, a federal subsidy for an unequal education. Home-owners in poor districts get this subsidy as well, but, because their total tax is less, the subsidy is less. The mortgage interest that homeowners pay is also treated as a tax deduction—in effect, a second federal subsidy. These subsidies, as I have termed them, are considerably larger than most people understand. In 1984, for instance, property-tax deductions granted by the federal government were \$9 billion. An additional \$23 billion in mortgage-interest deductions were provided to home-owners: a total of some \$32 billion. Federal grants to local schools, in contrast, totaled only \$7 billion, and only Part of this was earmarked for low-income districts. Federal policy, in this respect, increases the existing gulf between the richest and the poorest schools.

All of these disparities are also heightened, in the case of larger cities like Chicago, by the disproportionate number of entirely tax-free institutions—colleges and hospitals and art museums, for instance—that are sited in such cities. In some cities, according to Jonathan Wilson, former chairman of the Council of Urban Boards of Education, 30 percent or more of the potential tax base is exempt from taxes, compared to as little as 3 percent in the adjacent suburbs. Suburbanites, of course, enjoy the use of these nonprofit, tax-free institutions; and, in the case of private colleges and universities, they are far *more* likely to enjoy their use than are the residents of inner cities.

Cities like Chicago face the added problem that an overly large portion of their limited tax revenues must be diverted to meet nonschool costs that wealthy suburbs do not face, or only on a far more modest scale. Police expenditures are higher in crime-ridden cities than in most suburban towns. Fire department costs are also higher where dilapidated housing, often with substandard wiring, and arson-for-profit are familiar problems. Public health expenditures are also higher where poor people cannot pay for private hospitals. All of these expenditures compete with those for public schools. So the districts that face the toughest challenges are also likely to be those that have the fewest funds to meet their children's needs.

Many people, even those who view themselves as liberals on other issues, tend to grow indignant, even rather agitated, if invited to look closely at these inequalities. "Life isn't fair," one parent in Winnetka answered flatly when I pressed the matter. "Wealthy children also go to summer camp. All summer. Poor kids maybe not at all. Or maybe, if they're lucky, for two weeks. Wealthy children have the chance to go to Europe and they have the access to good libraries, encyclopedias, computers, better doctors, nicer homes. Some of my neighbors send their kids to schools like Exeter and Groton. Is government supposed to equalize these things as well?"

But government, of course, does not assign us to our homes, our summer camps, our doctors—or to Exeter. it does assign us to our public schools. Indeed, it forces us to

go to them. Unless we have the wealth to pay for private education, we are compelled by law to go to public school—and to the public school in our district. Thus the state, by requiring attendance but refusing to require equity, effectively requires inequality. Compulsory inequity, perpetuated by state law, too frequently condemns our children to unequal lives.

In Illinois, as elsewhere in America, local funds for education raised from property taxes are supplemented by state contributions and by federal funds, although the federal contribution is extremely small, constituting only 6 percent of total school expenditures. State contributions represent approximately half of local school expenditures in the United States; although intended to make up for local wealth disparities, they have seldom been sufficient to achieve this goal. Total yearly spending—local funds combined with state assistance and the small amount that comes from Washington—ranges today in Illinois from \$2,100 on a child in the poorest district to above \$10,000 in the richest. The system, writes John Coons, a professor of law at Berkeley University, “bears the appearance of calculated unfairness.”

There is a belief advanced today, and in some cases by conservative black authors, that poor children and particularly black children should not be allowed to hear too much about these matters. If they learn how much less they are getting than rich children, we are told, this knowledge may induce them to regard themselves as “victims,” and such “victim-thinking,” it is argued, may then undermine their capability to profit from whatever opportunities may actually exist. But this is a matter of psychology—or strategy—and not reality. The matter, in any case, is academic since most adolescents in the poorest neighborhoods learn very soon that they are getting less than children in the wealthier school districts. They see suburban schools on television and they see them when they travel for athletic competitions. It is a waste of time to worry whether we should tell them something they could tell to us. About injustice, most poor children in America cannot be fooled.

**Table 11.1. School Funding in the Chicago Area (Figures for the 1988-1989 School Year) School or District Spending Per Pupil**

Niles Township High School	\$9,371
New Trier High School	\$8,823
Glencoe (elementary and junior high schools)	\$7,363
Winnetka (elementary and junior high schools)	\$7,059
Wilmette (elementary and junior high schools)	\$6,009
<i>Chicago (average of all grade levels)</i>	<i>\$5,265</i>

*Source:* Chicago Panel on School Policy and Finance.

**Table 11.2. School Funding in New Jersey (Figures for the 1988-1989 School Year)**

<b>District</b>	<b>Spending Per Pupil</b>
Princeton	\$7,725
Summit	\$7,275
West Orange	\$6,505
Cherry Hill	\$5,981
Jersey City	\$4,566
East Orange	\$4,457
Paterson	\$4,422
Camden	\$3,538

*Source:* Educational Law Center, Newark, New Jersey.

Table 11.3. School Funding in the New York City Area (Figures for the 1986-1987 School Year)

<b>District</b>	<b>Spending Per Pupil</b>
Manhasset	\$11,372
Jericho	\$11,325
Great Neck	\$11,265
Bronxville	\$10,113
Rye	\$9,092
Yonkers	\$7,399
Levittown	\$6,899
Mount Vernon	\$6,433
Roosevelt	\$6,339
New York City	\$5,585

*Source:* "Statistical Profiles of School Districts" (New York State Board of Education).

Table 11.4. The Widening Gap (School Funding in Six Districts in the New York City Area: *Changes in a Three-Year Period*)

<b>District 1986-1987</b>	<b>SchoolYear 1989-1990</b>	<b>School Year</b>
Manhasset	\$11,372	\$15,084
Jericho	\$11,325	\$14,355
Great Neck	\$11,265	\$15,594
Mount Vernon	\$6,433	\$9,112
Roosevelt	\$6,339	\$8,349
New York City	\$5,585	\$7,299

*Source:* "Statistical Profiles of School Districts" (New York State Board of Education) and *New York Times*.

# Crisis in American Education

*William J. Bennett*

From *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Children and Our Culture* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992)

There's a Chuck Berry song that goes in part, "I got a chance, I oughta take it." Well, I got my chance when President Reagan asked me to be Secretary of Education in 1985, and I was going to take it. I didn't want to leave that job and say to myself, "Boy, when I was Secretary, I wish I had said such and such." I've always tried to say what I really thought while I held a post, not later; to speak truthfully and not to leave with a lot of "I should have said." I hate it when you don't find out what government officials really think until after they leave office and write a "revealing" memoir. "Retirement candor" cheapens the currency; it makes people suspicious of what people say when they are in the job. At least I can say that when I had my chance I took it.

"How can anyone who [cares] about children not feel terrible about Chicago schools?" This was the question I put to the city during a November 1987 visit while I was Secretary of Education. For about \$4,000 per student per year, Chicagoans were supporting a public school system in which nearly half of the children who entered the public school system dropped out before graduating from high school, many to become involved in lives of welfare dependency, drugs, or violent crime. When the scores of the American College Testing (ACT) Program (a standard collegeentrance exam) were disclosed, more than *half* of the city's public schools reported high school senior scores in the *bottom 1 percent* of schools nationwide.

The Chicago public school system—the nation's third largest after Los Angeles and New York—was "the worst in the nation," I said. "You have an educational meltdown." (An employee of the Chicago public school system later insisted, "We are not the worst public school system in America. Detroit is worse." I told him that he was guilty of what Justice Holmes called "low aspirations.")

And practically everyone in Chicago—parents, employers, other teachers, and the schoolchildren themselves—knew it. In recent years we've seen some efforts at improvement, but the seventies and eighties in Chicago saw countless thousands of young lives ruined, and still today, tens of thousands of children are not being educated. According to the *Chicago Tribune* (in a full-page editorial written at the end of a tough, unflinching investigative series in 1988), "The Chicago public schools are so bad, they are hurting so many thousands of children so terribly, they are jeopardizing the future of the city so much that drastic solutions must be found."

The *Tribune* series charged school administrators with "institutional child neglect." Here are but a few of the many horror stories documented:

- All 22 students in Grace Currin's 4thgrade class were supposed to attend summer school in 1988 because, their principal said, Currin did not teach the children



enough to pass to the next grade. Currin did not hand in a lesson plan all year. Four principals tried unsuccessfully to have Currin fired. “It’s a terrible shame,” said Dyanne Dandridger-Alexander, a principal. “Those children have suffered because they have a totally inept teacher that no one has been able to fire.” Parents who sat in on her classes said they were at a point where they thought it was hopeless. Currin said she did not deserve the negative ratings. “I still think they did not really get to know me as a teacher,” she said. “I am Part of the problem, but remember, you can’t expect miracles when you have low achievers.” Currin told the *Tribune* that her career goal was “to retire at full pension.”

- Deborah Harris was suspended from Chicago’s Shoop Elementary School after she consistently refused to go to her 7th-grade classroom. Each day she gave the principal a doctor’s note saying that she should be given “light duties.” Harris was told daily, in writing, by the principal and the district

superintendent, to report to class. She hid in the boiler room, according to testimony. The hearing officer ordered Harris reinstated because the board had not given her written notice that she would be fired if she did not go to class. Harris took a leave of absence the day she was reinstated to Curtis Elementary School and never returned. The board appealed the ruling but lost. “We were shocked,” one attorney said. “Hearing officers view this as a man’s or woman’s livelihood. The hearing officer barely mentioned the children.” • In 1987, ten weeks into the first semester, typing students at Du Sable High School had gone through four substitutes, none of them trained to teach typing or certified in any business subject. During the 11th week, a certified typing teacher arrived, and only then did the students learn where to place their hands on the keyboard. Four weeks later, she took a job in private industry. “It’s a shame that we have been in this class a whole semester and they still can’t find us a teacher,” according to one fifteen-year-old, who spent most of one teacherless class putting on makeup and fixing her hair. “We’ll probably have to take it over again.” Chicago School Superintendent Manford Byrd, Jr., was surprised that such a situation existed. “I’m not aware of that kind of imbalance,” he told the *Tribune*. “Our aim is to get regular certified teachers in all the openings. But I don’t know if we’ve ever been in a better shape than we are now.” • The Chicago Board of Education headquarters, called “Pershing Gardens” by school critics, is in a former warehouse that was renovated at a cost of \$22 million. The nearly 3,000 people who worked at the offices on the South Side listened to piped-in music, walked on thick carpets, and enjoyed a panoramic view of the city from their 5th-floor cafeteria.

The late Harold Washington, then mayor of Chicago, was outraged by my criticisms of the city’s public school system. “Mr. Bennett has a lot of gall to be criticizing Chicago public schools—or any other school system,” he said. Chicago Board of Education president Frank Gardner added, “We hope the impact of his statements do [sic] not further demoralize teachers, who are doing an excellent job.”

Jacqueline Vaughn, president of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), one of the most powerful teacher unions in the country, told a group of teachers, “I resent your efforts being taken for granted and [people] saying we are responsible for the ills in education because, without us, they would have none.

“We are tired of being given mandates, dictates, instructions and directions from everybody when we are not asked to give our input,” she said. “We don’t tell them [parents and others] what to do in their kitchens, so why should they tell us what to do in our classrooms?” Vaughn elicited frenzied applause from the assembled school employees.

During a joint press conference with Vaughn, I said I’d be more impressed with her union if it made some effort, any effort, to get rid of its bad teachers while rewarding its good ones.

Her reply was Chicago didn’t have *any* bad teachers.

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education released the landmark report *A Nation at Risk*, the closest thing we have had to a national education grievance list. It cited, among other problems, poor performance by American students on a variety of international education tests; a decline in scores on most standardized tests; and a decline in student knowledge in crucial subjects such as English and physics. It gave voice to the growing public sense of crisis about our children and their schools. “The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people,” the report said. “We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.” Countless reports since 1983—some issued by me—have further documented a performance that can only charitably be described as mediocre. “American education is to education what the Soviet economy is to the economy,” according to Chester E. Finn, Jr., one of the most insightful commentators on American education.

Our students score last in math and science in comparison with students of other industrialized nations. A 1989 international comparison of mathematics and science skills showed American students scoring at the bottom and South Korean students scoring at the top (South Korean students perform at high levels in math at *four times* the rate of U.S. students). Ironically, when asked if they are good at math, 68 percent of American students thought they were (the highest percentage of any country) compared to 23 percent of South Korean students (the lowest percentage of any country), which demonstrates that this country is a lot better at teaching self-esteem than it is at teaching math.

According to the 1991 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study, 72 percent of our fourth-graders can do third-grade math, only 14 percent of our eighth-graders can do seventh-grade math, and only 5 percent of our high school seniors “showed an understanding of geometry and algebra that suggested preparedness for the study of relatively advanced mathematics,” i.e., for college-level math.

Math and science aren’t the only subjects where American students are left in the backwaters of education. Finn and Dianne Ravitch, authors of *What Do Our Seventeen*

*Year Olds Know?*, have shown that 43 percent of our high school seniors could not place World War I between 1900 and 1950. More than two-thirds of them did not know even the half-century in which the Civil War took place. And more than 75 percent were unable to say within twenty years when Abraham Lincoln was President.

One-third of high school students tested in 1986 did not know that the Declaration of Independence marked the American colonists' break from England. Sixty percent did not know that *The Federalist Papers* was written to urge ratification of the Constitution, and 40 percent could not say even approximately when the Constitution was written and ratified. Only three students in five were able to recognize a definition of the system of checks and balances that divides power among the three branches of our federal government.

According to an NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress]-based survey of 21-to-25-year-olds conducted in 1986, fewer than 40 percent were able to interpret an article by a newspaper columnist. And the situation is worse among minorities; just one in ten black young adults and two in ten Hispanic young adults can satisfactorily interpret the same newspaper column. In 1989, *National Geographic* did a survey of geography knowledge. Americans aged eighteen to twenty-four finished *last* among ten countries, including Mexico.

Yet in Chicago and in cities and state capitals all across America, instead of rolling up their sleeves and beginning the hard task of improving education, the education establishment—that wide array of professional organizations putatively representing teachers, administrators, and other educators—by and large offers a steady stream of defenses, denials, ultimatums, and repeated calls for more money. Many of these education bureaucrats, or “educrats,” have abdicated their responsibility; they should abdicate their authority as well. The few who occasionally break rank and point to problems in the system are usually quickly brought back into line or punished. Too often this education establishment itself is the single greatest obstacle to sound education reform.

When I was in Chicago, I said it was time to challenge the unions, and to “explode the ‘blob’”—the bloated education bureaucracy, that ever-increasing population of nonteaching personnel. Whether enrollment declines or increases, the blob always grows—setting new guidelines, rules, procedures, and thereby helping to destroy the capacity of schools and communities to run their own schools free of interference. All school districts have a blob, and together they make the American Education Blob. It may be staffed by fine, well-intentioned people, but when they act together, it is a powerful obstacle to educational achievement and school and parental autonomy.

Unfortunately, much of the education establishment, which includes the unions and other “professional” educational organizations, opposes every common-sense reform measure: competency testing for teachers, opening the teaching profession to knowledgeable individuals who have not graduated from “schools of education,” performance-based pay, holding educators accountable for how much children learn, an end to tenure, a national examination to find out exactly how much our children know, and parental

choice of schools. These are reforms most Americans endorse and are all initiatives that I endorsed or proposed legislatively while I was Secretary of Education. It should come as no surprise, then, that I found myself in constant friction with the education establishment. If you cut through all of the cant and self-justifying rhetoric, you will confront this hard reality: the education establishment opposes reform because it is interested in maintaining *power*. It will fight to expand that power, and it will fight ferociously any attempt to rein it in. In the end, our children pay the highest price. That I would clash with these special interests was thus inevitable. Our clashes became a major feature of my tenure.

So it went. For three and a half years, my efforts to challenge American education met well-organized institutional resistance, most often from the educational establishment: teacher unions, education lobbyists, and bureaucrats—all groups skilled at the exercise of narrow, self-interested political power. Early on, their opposition appeared as a form of denial—the schools were not so bad as they seemed. A little later, the opposition took a different tack, admitting that things might be bad, but insisting that they could not be fixed in or by the schools—that first “society” or “the system” must be altered. More recently we heard what might be called opposition by extortion, the false claim that fixing our schools would require a fortune in new funding.

But the fundamental problem with American education today is not lack of money; we do not underspend, we underproduce. A review of some 150 studies shows no correlation between spending and educational achievement. The American people have been remarkably generous in their contributions to our schools. In 1990 we spent \$414 billion on education, roughly \$140 billion more than on national defense. In the international competition on education spending, the United States wins the gold medal. In absolute terms we spend more on education than any other nation in the world. And expenditures keep climbing. In 1950, we spent (in 1989 dollars) \$1,333 per student. In 1989, we spent \$4,931. As John Silber, the president of Boston University, has written, “It is troubling that this nearly fourfold increase in real spending has brought no improvement. It is scandalous that it has not prevented substantial decline.” During that period we probably experienced the *worst* educational decline in our history. Between 1963 and 1980, for example, combined average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores—scores which test students’ verbal and math abilities—fell 90 points, from 980 to 890.....

The more I visited schools the more I deviated from the Washington/education establishment orthodoxy. Seeing outstanding schools in action makes it clear why they succeed: *local people, leadership, community commitment*, and *shared values*, not federal tutelage.

From time to time we provided the media with lists of schools that work. Those who wished to find out the possibilities of American education, or who thought it couldn’t be done, needed only to visit these schools and see for themselves. You can’t learn it, you can’t know it, simply by the aggregate numbers or the studies. To the doubters,

to cynics, to the no-can-doers, you need to repeat what I once heard a parent say to her child about a school: "You go there and then you *will* learn."

In my trips I came across men and women who deserve to be regarded as true American heroes. They are for the most part quiet, unsung heroes. But for the work they do and the lives they change, we can all be grateful. Thankfully, many of their communities already are. There's no exact "blueprint" of what makes for an outstanding teacher; great teaching and great leadership come in all styles. But these teachers and principals are people of good character, committed to academic excellence, and have a genuine regard for the well-being of children.

Ted Yanak, an eighth-grade teacher of American history and government at Miller Junior High in West San Jose, California, had a classroom covered, plastered, and overwhelmed with clippings, posters, and campaign paraphernalia—buttons, hats, and bumper stickers. At a meeting with students, parents, and teachers, he was singled out by the principal to thunderous applause. He frequently appeared at these events dressed in a bright red jacket, blue pants, red-white-and-blue shoes, a flag-print tie, and a tricolor hat. He gives his heart to his students and he works them hard. They learn their history, and they repay him with their affection, appreciation, and achievement born of effort equal to his.

Carolyn Oubray, a self-composed young professional, teaches English the old-fashioned way to young black women at Xavier High School in New Orleans. In her senior class on Edgar Allan Poe, Elayne and I witnessed her stress "disciplined thinking and disciplined analysis" to her students. They responded with thoughtful, disciplined answers. Xavier has a traditional curriculum, heavy on the basic disciplines. Later, Mrs. Oubray and her principal proudly explained to us that the uniformed, well-educated students of Xavier made something good of their lives.

"You won't find many Xavier girls on welfare, and you won't find them having babies as teen-agers because they have nothing else to do," she told us. Elayne was pleased to hear that. She directs a program in Washington, D.C., called "Best Friends," aimed at encouraging young women to remain abstinent while in school. Her program works and so does the regime at Xavier, and with the same effect. "Our girls have plenty to do," Oubray told us, "and they graduate from here and make good lives for themselves. And when they get married and have children, they send their daughters here."

In the end, it is people like this—the individual principal, teacher, superintendent, parent, and citizen—who make all the difference in our schools. "In every case there was someone who took a personal interest in children and their future," I once told a group of business leaders. "Not a government, but a *face*. Such people are like guardian angels we used to hear about in school—close by, watching, helping you and expecting you to do your best."

I told the audience about businessman Eugene Lang, who spoke at the sixth-grade graduation in his old Harlem elementary school and promised each child \$2,000 toward college tuition. Most of the children who remained in that district stayed in school to accept the offer, thwarting a 40 percent dropout rate. The \$2,000 that each young-

ster received was roughly the amount of a federal Pell Grant. “But our Pell Grants don’t motivate like Eugene Lang motivates,” I told them. The difference was personal encouragement and support.

This, then, is the iron law of education: the “system” doesn’t educate anyone. Individuals do. Yeats wrote, “All the drop-scenes drop at once / Upon a hundred thousand stages,” and it is on those individual stages that the educational dream fails or succeeds. In our time there are a few well-known giants on the school stage. I went to their classrooms to see what all the excitement was about and whether the accolades were merited. They were.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Outline Kozol’s and Bennett’s causal analyses of the problems of inner-city schools in Chicago and elsewhere, and what you see as their main points of disagreement. With reference to “A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric,” what significant arguments on the opposing side does each downplay or ignore altogether?

With reference to “Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric” in Chapter 15, what left-versus-right oppositions do these two articles illustrate, and how well do they support these lines of argument?

Bennett sees the main source of opposition to educational reform as “the education establishment—that wide array of professional organizations putatively representing teachers, administrators, and other educators,” including “the unions” and “the bloated education bureaucracy, that ever-increasing population of nonteaching personnel.” Does this imply that teachers or their unions and administrators and other nonteaching personnel form Part of a homogeneous “blob”? How does this equation account for the fact that teachers are employees while administrators are management (hence tending to be more conservative), so that the two groups are often in conflict, with unions representing teachers against management? Do some research on the extent to which these groups are united or opposed, and on which are most influential in determining educational policy.

Bennett says nothing here about the funding discrepancies between wealthy, mostly white school districts and poor, mostly minority ones, nor does he address the historical and current socioeconomic conditions that, according to Kozol and “A Historical-Causal Analysis of ‘The White Problem,’” are the main causes of these discrepancies. What do you think Bennett would see as the relationship, and relative importance, of these problems and “the education establishment”? Does Kozol perhaps ignore the negative influence of the groups Bennett criticizes in the inner-city schools he discusses? How much power would they seem to have, positively or negatively, in dealing with the financial and socioeconomic injustices Kozol describes?

Bennett’s two anecdotes about successful schools are among several he presents as examples of inner city schools in which skilled, enthusiastic teachers and principals overcome negative circumstances. Kozol presents a similar case about teacher Corla Hawkins, but he argues that such cases represent an inadequate sampling or argument

from the exception, because “the problems are systemic” and cannot be overcome systematically or reliably by individual effort; nor should the burden be put on individual teachers to prevail against a system in which the deck is stacked economically against them and their students, and in favor of those in wealthy, white school districts. (The primacy of individual effort or of systemic injustices is a recurrent, general point of opposition between conservatives and liberals in addressing socioeconomic problems.) Compare the evidence Kozol presents here with Bennett’s throughout the rest of *The De-Valuing of America* to judge which of their generalizations on this point are better argued.

The reforms advocated by Bennett and other conservative leaders include “competency testing for teachers, opening the teaching profession to knowledgeable individuals who have not graduated from ‘schools of education,’ performance-based pay, holding educators accountable for how much children learn, an end to tenure, a national examination to find out exactly how much our children know, and parental choice of schools.” What effect do you see the implementation of these policies—along with a voucher system facilitating parental choice of private schools, which Bennett has actively promoted—having on the innercity schools and neighborhoods Kozol describes? (Read more conservative sources to see what they say about incentives for private schools—especially for-profit ones, which Bennett has also promoted—to locate in inner cities.) None of these policies involve a substantial general increase in funding for schools of the kind Kozol advocates. Is Bennett’s implication that these measures would negate any need to change the financial discrepancies between wealthy and poor districts? Can you defend this position?

Bennett plays up the negative influence of liberal special interest groups in education. What conservative special interests might be involved in issues like vouchers and systems of for-profit private schools?

Conservatives like Bennett point to polls showing that many parents in inner cities support vouchers for private schools because they would prefer to take their children out of failing public schools. Liberals respond that this reasoning involves several causal fallacies: treating symptoms without providing a cure for the root problem (inadequately funded schools), blaming the victim, and a vicious circle in which the flight of better-motivated students out of failing public schools will contribute to their further failure. Debate the pros and cons of these opposing positions.

To what extent do Kozol’s and Bennett’s analyses present either-or thinking? Write a paper, perhaps drawing on Rogerian argument, that imagines solutions combining elements from both sides and rejecting none from either.

*Post-Feminist Swill Redux*]

*By Susan Douglas*

From *In These Times*, December 8, 2003

There it sat on the dining room table exuding kryptonite: the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* with the cover headline: “Q: Why don’t More Women Get to the

Top? A: They Choose Not To.” The subtitle read, “Abandoning the Climb and Heading Home.” An angelic white Madonna in her Ann Taylor outfit with what appeared to be the Hope diamond on one finger, several selections from Tiffany’s bracelet department on her wrist, and a toddler in her lap represented all these American mothers who are “heading home.” I feared the worst—yet another post-feminist piece of swill about how mothers can’t hack it at work and would much rather play Chutes and Ladders all day. I was not to be disappointed.

Since the late ’80s and the debut of “the mommy track,” we have been subjected to these stories about mothers seeing the light and chucking it all for junior. The format is almost always the same. Five women who went to Yale and, say, the Harvard Business School, married to men whose salaries equal the operating budget of Wal-Mart, decide to have kids and then quit their jobs and— poof—there is a national “movement” of mothers not only rejecting the workplace, but feminism as well. This article, written by Lisa Belkin (a former *Times* reporter who decided to quit and write freelance because her husband could easily support them), follows the template perfectly. Only here the privileged white women we meet from the “Opt-Out Revolution” are Princeton alums (as is Belkin) or from other elite universities who then went to work in law firms or newsrooms.

This post-feminist drumbeat is a slap at mothers who do work for a living, because they need to, want to, or both. It is also, of course, an assault on feminism as misguided, irrelevant, out-of-date, or all the above. As one of the mothers tells Belkin, “I don’t want to take on the mantle of all womanhood and fight a fight for some sister who isn’t really my sister because I don’t even know her.” Ouch. Well, as a feminist throwback to the days of “sisterhood is powerful,” I do think that all mothers must debunk these stories each and every time they appear, for ourselves and for each other. We mothers, whether we work outside the home or not, must say “Excuuuse me” to such alleged “trend reports” that pit working mothers against stay-at-home mothers and undermine mothers who work. So let’s begin.

**Excuse me #1:** Class bias, race bias, need we say more? In fact, at one point Belkin notes that 95 percent of white men with MBAs are working but only 67 percent of white women with MBAs are. But she adds (parenthetically, no less) that the numbers for African-American women are closer to those of white men. Doesn’t this make you a tad suspicious about the whole notion of “choice?”

**Excuse me #2:** The discourse of “choice.” Despite the headlines, what we learn inside the article is that the first two women we meet, one an attorney, the other a television reporter, were confronted with speed-up at work—55to 75-hour weeks—at the same time they were having children. Both asked for shorter and more flexible hours and were turned down. Their “choice” was to maintain their punishing schedules or to quit. I am sorry, but this is not a choice. As one of these women admits, “I wish it had been possible to be the kind of parent I want to be and continue with my legal career.” The cover headline totally misrepresents this woman’s dilemma.



**Excuse me #3:** Selective use of statistics. The article emphasizes findings from a recent survey in which 26 percent of women in senior management said they did not want a promotion. So that means nearly threequarters did. And how does that compare to men, many of whom don't want high-stress jobs either? We then learn that *Fortune* reported that out of 108 women in high-powered jobs, "at least 20" have chosen to leave. Maybe I'm dumb at math, but doesn't that mean that four-fifths have not made this "choice?"

**Excuse me #4:** Biology is destiny. Whenever you need to keep women in their place, it's always good to cite examples from the animal kingdom. Belkin uses baboon analogies. She makes the usual disclaimer about the misuse of biology, and then goes on to tell us that we mothers (but not dads?) are genetically driven to protect our kids and "seeking clout in a male world does not correlate with child well-being." You mean earning a decent salary does not correlate with being able to take care of your kids?

**Excuse me #5:** Buried lead. The real story here is not about mothers "choosing" not to work. It's about the ongoing inhumanity of many workplaces whose workaholic cultures are hostile to men and women. Americans work anywhere from six to nine weeks a year longer than most Europeans And many "high powered" jobs like corporate attorney are lethally boring and stressful to both genders.

But, you know, when the real story is about capitalism run amok, it's commonplace to turn it into a story about a human failing, in this case the failure of feminists. So let's be clear about who has really failed mothers, including the privileged ones in this article. First, Congress and successive presidential administrations. For decades, the federal government has refused to provide a quality national daycare system, decent maternity and paternity leaves, or after-school programs. Second, much, though not all, of corporate America and the preposterous workaholic culture it fosters.

Mothers of America, it's time to talk back and refute insulting post-feminist propaganda.

## Equality: A Grand Fallacy

*By Thomas Sowell*

From *Knoxville News Sentinel* July 24, 2004

A record-breaking new class-action lawsuit against Wal-Mart claims this retail chain discriminates against women, for which of course vast millions of dollars are being demanded. The New York Times aptly summarized the case—"about 65 percent of the company's hourly-paid workers are women, but only 33 percent of its managers are."

The grand fallacy of our times is that various groups would be equally represented in institutions and occupations if it were not for discrimination This preconception has

undermined, if not destroyed, the legal principle that the burden of proof is on the accuser.

Wal-Mart is only the latest in a long series of employers who have been hit with charges of discrimination on the basis of statistical differences among members of their workforce—between women and men in this case.

Back during the 1980s a similar charge was brought against Sears, even though no one could find a single woman in all the hundreds of Sears stores who had been discriminated against—just numbers that were different as between women and men.

When you broke down the numbers, it turned out that women were not equally represented among people who sold automotive equipment or construction materials. It also turned out that many women had no interest in selling automotive equipment or construction materials and had turned down opportunities to do so.

In many other situations, women have avoided jobs that demand such long hours of work or so much travel that it would make taking care of their children virtually impossible. The biggest difference in income is between married women and everyone else. Women who never married have long held their own economically.

The most blatant fact about male-female differences is often ignored by those on the hunt for discrimination: Women have babies.

That usually means interruptions in careers and different choices of careers beforehand, because some occupations can stand interruptions better than others.

It is hardly surprising that women work Part time more often than men, drop out of the labor force more often than men, specialize in a different mix of jobs and major in different subjects in college and postgraduate education.

Seldom are the data sufficiently detailed to permit comparisons of women and men who are the same on all the variables that matter. But the more detailed the data, the higher is a woman's income relative to a comparable man, sometimes surpassing that of men.

Male-female differences in incomes and occupations rose or fell throughout the 20th century as women's age of marriage and childbearing rose and fell. But such mundane facts carry little weight with lawyers or social crusaders on the hunt for discrimination.

Once a lawsuit is under way, the pressure is on the accused employer to settle, rather than risk bad publicity that could hurt profits. And, once they settle, that is taken as proof of guilt, no matter what anybody says.

People without the slightest knowledge of economics or the slightest experience running a business will boldly assert that women are paid only 75 percent—or some other percent—of what men make for doing the same work.

Think about it. If an employer could hire four women for the price of hiring three men, why would he ever hire men at all?

Even if the employer was the world's biggest sexist, he could not survive in business if his competitors were getting one-third more output from their employees for the same money.

Sheer dogmatic repetition has pounded into our minds the notion that all groups have similar capabilities, when in fact they do not necessarily have even the same interest in developing the same capabilities.

Potential may be the same, but developed capabilities depend on a lot more, including interest and circumstances. Yet those who start with the preconception of equal capabilities are quick to seize upon numbers showing group differences in results as proof that someone else has done something wrong. That is the grand fallacy of our time.

*Topic for Discussion and Writing*

Douglas writes a regular column, with a feminist viewpoint, for the leftist journal of opinion *In These Times*. Sowell is a nationally syndicated columnist based at the conservative Hoover Institution. How do their opposing ideological positions come out here? To what extent do they address the same aspects of income and job inequality? (Douglas's piece is a direct rebuttal to a long cover article on the subject in the *New York Times Magazine* earlier in 2003, which you might look up.) At what points does one directly refute the other's position or the opposing ideological position in general, and how effectively?

# Chapter 14. Uses and Misuses of Emotional Appeal

The term **emotional appeal** is sometimes used in rhetoric textbooks with a negative **connotation**, as a form of fallacy, but that is misleading. Emotional appeal is by no means always, or even usually, incompatible with logical reasoning in argumentation. The most eloquent expressions of humanity throughout history have appealed to feeling as well as to reason: “Give me liberty, or give me death,” “We have nothing to fear but fear itself,” “I have a dream.” Emotional appeal is acceptable and even admirable when it is fully warranted by the facts (either as generally agreed on or as established through evidence) and reasoned analysis of the situation; it only becomes fallacious when it becomes a *substitute* for a wellsupported argument and distracts attention from the weakness of a poorly supported one, as a form of **evading the issue**. It is often a tricky judgment call, however, to determine when an emotional appeal is justified and when it isn’t, and the **ESBYODS principle** comes strongly into play here, inclining us all to judge that such an appeal is justified whenever it is on our own side and fallacious whenever it is on the other.

## Appeals to “cleans” and “dirties”

Emotional appeals are sometimes categorized as either “appeal to pity” or “appeal to fear,” but this oversimplifies the range of emotions in both categories; a broader way of dividing them might be to separate them into semantic “**cleans**,” words connoting positive emotions, and “**dirties**,” those connoting negative emotions. “Clean” appeals evoke not only pity but also patriotism, religion, children and family, the elderly and disabled, romantic love, cute animals, “America, Mom, and apple pie.” **Sentimentality** is a word applied to an appeal to such emotions that we sense is manipulative or out of proportion to reality, laid on too heavily, to the point of being “corny” or “sappy.” Again, however, we constantly need to judge when an appeal to such emotions is warranted by the situation and when it goes over the edge into sentimentality. In Martin Luther King’s 1963 “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” protesting segregated public facilities in Alabama, King describes one among the many personal effects of segregation on African Americans:

You suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park

that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky. (King, *Why We Can't Wait*, 22)

Is this passage overly sentimental? It can plausibly be argued that everything in it was warranted by the facts of the situation and that describing the devastating emotional effects of segregation constituted logically powerful evidence. On the other hand, it might be argued that King laid the emotion on a bit more than was necessary, as in twice using the adjective “little,” and that his case would have been just as effective without the use of “little.” What do you think?

”Dirty” appeals evoke “fear and loathing” of people who are evil, or “other”; such appeals are heavy on **name-calling**, frequently along with the whole range of logical fallacies and modes of deceptive reasoning surveyed throughout this book that serve to demonize opponents. Once again, however, name-calling in itself is not necessarily fallacious. Is it name-calling to say that Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden were vicious, murderous tyrants? Yes, but it is almost universally agreed that these names are accurate. Name-calling only becomes fallacious, then, when it is applied to an opponent who does not manifestly deserve a “dirty” label, when it is not supported by adequate evidence, when it serves only as a smear instead of being Part of a reasoned argument.

## Puff Pieces and Hatchet Jobs

A stock form of journalistic article or book known in the trade as a “puff piece” is an uncritical promotion for the public figure it is written about, making him or her appear unrealistically virtuous or glamorous. Puff pieces are either designed by public relations (PR) agencies hired by the subject, with the cooperation of editors, or written at the initiative of the editors themselves to make the subject look good for one reason or another—political sympathies, possible advertising revenue if the subject is a businessperson, cronyism with the medium’s executives, and so on. Puff pieces are the verbal counter Part to, and are often accompanied by, photos or sketches touched up to make the subject look unrealistically attractive and benevolent, like the official portraits of Communist dictators—rosy-cheeked, twinkly-eyed “Uncle Joe” Stalin, Chairman Mao, or “Comrade Fidel” kissing babies.

A similar portrait of investor Bunker Hunt for the cover story in the *Saturday Evening Post*, written by Holly G. Miller, included in this chapter, depicts Hunt as younger than his years, thinner than his 250 pounds, and uncharacteristically healthy complexioned and smiling. Hunt and his brother Lamar inherited a multi-billion-dollar fortune from their father, H. L. Hunt, an oil wildcatter and commodities speculator whose eccentricities included bigamy. (The Texas Hunts were the model for the Ewings on *Dallas*, though the television show’s characters were depicted, with typical media

sentimentality, as considerably better looking and more glamorous than the stodgy Hunts.) In 1979 the Hunt brothers illegally tried to corner the silver market—that is, to buy up the major share of the world’s silver supply—so that the scarcity of the commodity would cause its value to skyrocket, at once benefiting from the inflation that was at a peak then and also causing further inflation. Early in 1980, silver prices reached their peak, increasing to nine times their level a year before, but then the market collapsed, drastically reducing the Hunts’ net worth, estimated to be in the range of \$7 billion to \$14 billion. The Hunts were convicted of racketeering, fined \$10 million for fraudulent trading by the Commodities Futures Trading Commission and \$130 million in a civil lawsuit for defrauding the Peruvian government’s mineral marketing company, and required by the Internal Revenue Service to pay multimillion-dollar back taxes. However, the *Saturday Evening Post* article, which appeared in 1985 after most of these events, contains no hint of this history, which is strikingly conspicuous by its absence. Without knowing exactly how the article came to be published in this form, we can recognize in it the classic traits of a puff piece, presenting Bunker Hunt as little less than a saint, and it resembles the kind of article typically initiated by a public relations agency hired by wealthy figures to polish up a tarnished public image.

The opposite of a puff piece is a “hatchet job,” an article or book calculated to smear and **play up** everything unfavorable to its subject and **downplay** or suppress anything favorable, often with malicious and deceptive intent. (Another word for speech or writing that employs the insulting, abusive style of the hatchet job is **invective**, discussed further in Chapter 18.)

Sometimes the same article or book is a combined puff piece on the author’s allies and a hatchet job on her or his enemies, like the articles in Chapter 5 by Rush Limbaugh and June Jordan. Limbaugh’s is clearly a puff piece for Clarence Thomas and a hatchet job on Anita Hill, while Jordan’s is the opposite, although it appears that Limbaugh and Jordan were motivated by their **partisan** passions rather than by ulterior motives. In *Blinded by the Right*, David Brock, recanting his journalistic efforts as a conservative, explicitly describes his earlier book on Anita Hill and attacks on Bill Clinton as “hatchet jobs” and “hit pieces” and asserts that this kind of malicious invective is deliberately encouraged in conservative journalistic circles.

## Bunker Hunt’s Greatest Investment

*By Holly G. Miller*

From *The Saturday Evening Post*, January-February 1985

In rumpled pin stripes and disheveled dress shirt, Nelson Bunker Hunt takes a pool-side seat among the bronzed and briefed sun worshipers of southern Arizona. He nods when someone inquires, from across a gin and tonic, if his three-piece suit feels comfortable under the desert rays.

“These are my resort clothes,” he deadpans.

If the jacket looks oversized, it's because Hunt recently embarked on a trim-downshape-up program that calls for time on a treadmill and slow jogs around his sprawling Texas ranch. Shoehorning an exercise regimen into his jammed work schedule wasn't easy. As one of America's richest men, Hunt has never placed leisure activity at the top of his priority list—at least not when the phone is ringing, a meeting has to be chaired or a decision needs to be made.

But at age 58, he's doing better. Although he expertly side-steps the question of retirement, he explains his workday is shorter now—6 a.m. to 6 p.m.—and more and more details are being delegated to his lieutenants.

"Really, I don't work as hard as I should," he insists. "There are some things I don't enjoy doing, businesswise, so I'm directing my attention to what I like to do and less to the drudgery part. In that respect, I'm probably looking for the easier life."

For Hunt, that translates into football—brother Lamar owns the Kansas City Chiefs—his classical-art collection and his thoroughbred horses. He is respected around the world as a breeder and owner of race horses and trains them in Kentucky, France, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Texas. Thoroughbreds in the Hunt stable have won 100 major stakes races in seven countries, and his prize filly, Dahlia, has earned more than \$1.5 million in five years.

"He's very sports-minded," says his secretary, Jo Gilmore. "I'm amazed that after a grueling day at the office, rather than go home and watch television, he's ready to attend a sports event. He's so curious about everything—especially people. He's the kind of person who passes a box on a table and is compelled to open it."

The combination of investment savvy, curiosity and appreciation for fine antiques has led him to acquire enviable collections of rare painted vases and gold, silver and bronze coins that date back to early Egypt, Rome and Greece. More contemporary *objets d'art*, particularly equestrian sculpture and paintings, decorate his plush offices on the 24th floor of the Thanksgiving Tower.

In spite of the valuable trappings around him Hunt describes himself as "a man of little vanity," and seems to have no idea of the influence he commands. His demeanor is the comfortable-as-an-old-shoe variety, hardly smacking of the spit-and-shine discipline he struggled with as a student at Culver Military Academy. He spent three years at the venerable Indiana institution, cringes at memories of his attempts to conform to the strict rules—yet those memories are fond enough that he was shocked when his alma mater went coed several years ago.

"I liked it," he insists. "But I wasn't a very good military person. I didn't shine my shoes too well or keep my clothes as spotless as they should be. Culver was so strict that later, when I joined the Navy, it seemed like a picnic in comparison. The staff at military school used to write to parents every few weeks to tell them how their sons were doing. I don't think my letters were all that complimentary. My mother got tired of reading about my problems."

He credits his mother with being a key influence in his life. Not only did she help mold his personality first by exposing him to (and then rescuing him from) the rigors of

Culver's field artillery troop, but she instilled in him her own concern and appreciation for people. She guided his education from the disciplined Hoosier military setting to Pennsylvania's very proper Hill School, to the University of Texas, to Southern Methodist University. Along the way he mingled with a smorgasbord of people and learned, by his mother's example, to blend with every mix.

"In a way, my mother was the most democratic person I ever knew," he says of Lyda Bunker Hunt. "It didn't matter to her if a person were the king of England, a cabdriver or a waiter. She treated them all in the same polite manner. To this day I'll have people I don't even know come up to me and say they never met a lady with a finer personality and more kindly manner. I think that's remarkable because she's been gone since 1955. That's almost 30 years now.

In their mother's memory, Bunker and his six brothers and sisters donated \$3.5 million to underwrite a new building for the Dallas Highland Park Presbyterian Church's expansion program.

Oil wildcatter H. L. Hunt was the richest man in America when he died in 1974. He left \$2 billion to his offspring. That legacy has mushroomed, thanks in Part to Bunker's business acumen. His success is reflected in his various titles: chairman, Hunt Energy Corporation, Hunt International Resources Corporation and Hunt Electronics Corporation; president/director of numerous companies in countries where Hunt interests actively pursue searches for oil, gas, coal and geothermal energy; past chairman, Texas

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Bible Society; past chairman, executive committee, Here's Life campaign, Campus Crusade for Christ; past president, Council for National Policy.

If business titles can be traced to his father, his zeal for good works is a result of his mother's influence. He is an outspoken Christian, a longtime member of the Presbyterian Church, who quietly investigates and then invests generously in evangelical causes. He recalls no dramatic conversion experience as a child, but claims what he learned in conventional Sunday School classes in Tyler, Texas, always underscored at home by his mother.

"She was probably more instrumental in my Christian commitments than my father was, although in the latter 20 years of his life my father was a strong believer," said Bunker. "My mother's best friend in Tyler was a wonderful Christian lady named Mrs. Wilcox. Her sons were grown and off to college, so she used to invite me to spend time at her house. She knew the Bible better than any preacher I ever remember; she really got me interested in spiritual things."

He approaches religion almost academically, claiming the bible is "the finest historical document" available. Although he occasionally makes reference to a Biblical passage in conversation, he downplays his knowledge by apologizing for his loose paraphrase which, more often than not, is King James verbatim. He prefers to live his faith rather than to talk about it, never smokes and rarely drinks—I think I'm a little allergic to it," he confides—and leaves any evangelizing to the brethren with the theological degrees.

"I don't know that I'd be a very good one-on-one witnesser, although I occasionally talk to a friend," he says. "Maybe I do my witnessing through helping some organizations. That could be the easy way out, and I don't now if it's Biblical or not, but if it helps bring a few people to the Kingdom, so much the better."

His favorite causes run the gamut from the STEP Foundation (Strategies to Elevate People), which is geared to helping urban minorities, to Campus Crusade, the fundamentalist effort to strengthen Christian principles in college-age students. He's been an advocate of the Campus Crusade ministry for 20 years and has watched the organization grow from its founding on eight or ten campuses to its current presence in more than 100 countries and on every major campus in the United States. His belief in the campus ministry led him to provide \$5.5 million to underwrite the Film *Jesus*, released in 1979 and distributed by Warner Brothers.

"The Campus Crusade and Here's Life people felt it would be a tremendous evangelical tool, that no comparable film could do what this movie could do," he says. "I kept hearing about it and finally decided I'd help them make it. I think now it's available in 60 or 80 languages and is being shown all over the world. I've heard of places where 5,000 see the film and afterward, 2,500 accept Christ. I'm glad it's worked out so well. If I don't do anything else, maybe that's something worthwhile that I've done."

While he prefers to maintain a low profile himself, he keeps in close contact with highly visible evangelists such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. He tracks their efforts and boasts of their accomplishments.

"I'm no great church historian but the pendulum swings, and right now there's a tremendous acceptance for the gospel. Jerry Falwell told me the other day that his theological school is producing 250 graduates a year and each graduate will go out and start a church or school. Of course organizations like Pat Robertson's are doing so much good and reaching so many people on television. In this country we had gone so far toward the agnostic and atheistic side that we had to experience a revulsion. I think a lot of politicians are surprised at the depth of religious interest and beliefs. If America survives it will be because of its return to Christian beliefs."

He hopes the trend toward religious evangelism and political conservatism will eliminate legal abortion and curb the government's welfare program. He's a vocal opponent of both and expresses disbelief at one and dismay at the other. His fondness for children colors these feelings: "How can anyone justify taking a baby's life?" he asks; and, "Sure, a lot of worthy people—children in particular—need assistance, but I think America would be better off if the churches and individuals supplied the help."

To support his beliefs he cites examples from personal experience. He recalls, as a boy growing up in Arkansas and Texas, watching as neighbors pitched in to help a member of the community who was in financial difficulty. To underscore the need to trim welfare, he tells of owning a ranch adjacent to an Indian reservation. He claims many Indians have lost their initiative because of too many government giveaways of too much cash. Again, he advocates less federal aid and more involvement by the private sector.

Such comments, often quoted in the media, evoke a deluge of requests for donations. Hunt admits to being solicited by more good causes than he can afford, and he's devised some loose guidelines to help him pick the recipients of his contributions.

"Basically, I don't give to 'individual situations,' he explains. 'I'm very sympathetic, I hear heart-rendering stories, but there's no way I can help them. So, I give to a few organizations; that's the best I can do, and I hope the organizations will do well with my donations.'"

He refutes the notion that wealthy industrialists like Bunker Hunt have a social responsibility to give away a certain portion of their earnings. No one tells Bunker Hunt when, why and how much he's going to give in support of worthy charities. He makes his own decisions and is not influenced by persons advocating that he has an obligation to share his fortune.

"I suspect I've contributed as much or more than anyone around," he says. "I enjoy giving to causes I believe in, but I certainly don't give to them because I think it's my social responsibility. Of course there are liberal folks who imply such an obligation exists, but most of them won't contribute any of their own money. They want the government to do it. They try to give a guilt complex to anyone who works hard to produce something that's valuable. Well, I think that's a phony situation. I'm probably

overly generous to a lot of causes, but I don't think that makes me any better, and I don't think I do it because I feel any sort of obligation."

His candor borders on outspokenness and when taken out of context by media interviewers results in a less-than-accurate portrayal of the man. He is neither materialistic nor pompous. His modest wardrobe is purchased off the rack, he drives his own car and when he travels by air he specifies coach rather than first-class. Unlike many colleagues in his income bracket, he prefers to mingle with the crowd at large social gatherings rather than seal himself off with a phalanx of security guards. But if his image has suffered at the hands of magazine and newspaper biographers who attempt to "capture" him in 2,000 words or less and emphasize his vast holdings, he harbors no grudges. Even when offered the opportunity to counter the misconceptions, he shrugs and declines.

"I really don't care. I accept the media for what they are, as they are . . . which is not very favorable where I'm concerned. I don't expect a good press; in fact, I have a saying I think is accurate: The press can make a heel out of a hero or a hero out of a heel. We see this happen every day. That may be overstated or oversimplified, but journalists have the power to paint any picture they desire."

More important to him than building a positive public image is maintaining the solid personal rapport he and his wife, Caroline, enjoy with their son, 3 daughters and 12 grandchildren. Although Bunker jokingly accuses Caroline of being an "overzealous grandmother," he credits her with adding softness to his strict child-rearing philosophy. Among the results has been a mutual respect on the part of parents and children. This relationship Hunt has every intention of exploring and savoring.

"I'd say my priorities right now are to enjoy life, my children, my grandchildren, my friends, and to stay healthy," he stresses.

Interestingly, he doesn't mention acquiring more money. Or oil. Or silver. Or real estate.

"Being financially rich or financially poor can't be compared with being happy," he says. "Some of the happiest people you'll meet are some of the poorest. I've observed that most groups of wealthy people are sort of miserable. They sit around and worry about their money and the problems it causes. Me? I've never been much of a worrier."

Neither has he been one to sit around. In spite of his efforts to shorten his workday, delegate authority and schedule more leisure time with his family, he can't be expected to retire to a neutral corner of his mammoth Texas ranch now that the causes he champions are coming into vogue. He greets society's swing back to basics with what his friends in the news media might label "cautious optimism."

"I'm encouraged about the increased spiritual awareness because if we have a good

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING 331

spiritual atmosphere in the world, the political situation will improve too. When the people are good, we have good government. Yes, we're getting better . . . at least I hope so."

Does he expect, as a longtime proponent of conservatism, to enjoy new clout in his spiritually aware atmosphere? Will he, for

instance, command the ear of the President 24 hours a day? The questions bring a slow smile and spark his quick wit: "I've never seen fit to talk to the President . . . or vice versa," he quips.

Which is the more social version of another favorite response, usually reserved for his pals, the media: No comment.

Nelson Bunker testifying in Congressional hearings on his illegal activities in trying to corner the world silver market. (Photo: *Time*)

## Topics for Discussion and Writing

How does the author, Holly Miller, attempt by implication and hints between the lines to gloss over (1) Hunt's fraudulent activities in silver trading, (2) his weight, (3) his father's bigamy, (4) the fact that Hunt is so wealthy that he has no need to "work" as working is usually conceived?

The article emphasizes Hunt's ownership of thoroughbred horses, rare art, and rare coins. These happen to be three kinds of investment favored by the very wealthy because special interest legislation has provided tax advantages for them and because their appreciation in resale value has far outstripped the rate of inflation (i.e., they are good "hedges against inflation"). How does the article put a favorable spin on these investments by Hunt?

Enumerate some of the many examples of how the article downplays the immense wealth and power of Hunt and his family, depicting them as plain folks.

To what extent would you argue that Hunt's charitable activities, support of the Campus Crusade for Christ, and other religious commitments offset his devious financial dealings? What arguments can be made for and against the consistency of those financial dealings with the teachings of the New Testament about wealth and poverty? Might this be a case of compartmentalized thinking and rationalization?

Read the "Guide to Political Terms and Positions" in Chapter 15 and note the ways in which Hunt's views about government policies on wealth and poverty exemplify the conservative positions outlined there. What evidence do he and Miller provide that would be useful to cite as source material in support of the conservative position? Does the fact that he was born a billionaire enhance or diminish his qualifications to speak as an authority on the behavior of poor people? Could his views on these topics be interpreted as special pleading?

"Pictures don't lie." Analyze the two pictures of Bunker Hunt, one a photo, the other a sketch, as examples of the subjectivity of viewpoint in the use of pictures in journalism: their selection by an editor to create a favorable or unfavorable image, the particular details that contribute to that image, and so on. Can you judge which picture of Hunt is more accurate?

# Predictable Patterns of Wartime Rhetoric: Appeals to Fear and Pity

Naturally, the common people do not want war . . . but after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country.

—*Hermann Goering, Minister of War in Nazi Germany*

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

—*Samuel Johnson, eighteenth-century English essayist and poet*

We're in a bigger, better war for our patriotic pastime.

We don't know what we're fighting for, but we didn't know the last time.

—*George and Ira Gershwin, "Strike Up the Band" (1937)*

Where have all the soldiers gone, long time passing, where have all the soldiers gone, long time ago?

Where have all the soldiers gone? Gone to graveyards every one. When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

—*Pete Seeger, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" (1961)*

Since September 11, 2001, appeal to fear has been the dominant tone of American public discourse. Fear of another terrorist attack was George W. Bush's administration's major justification for the war on Iraq and the major theme of his reelection campaign in 2004. The sheer, indisputable evil of Al Qaeda's attacks on America, and the fear that they would be repeated, understandably made Americans long for strong, resolute leadership, an effective retaliation for 9/11, and assurance against further attacks. So the Bush administration benefited from a great deal of public suspension of skeptical doubt stemming from wishful thinking that the president had the "war on terror" under control. In any such situation, however, blind, wishful trust accorded to the leader presents the danger that a less than wholly virtuous administration might manipulate both the fear and the trust for its own, partisan advantage. Likewise, the Iraq war was presented as a retaliation for 9/11 and preventative action against recurrence of terrorist attacks and was justified by claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al Qaeda. Whether the war was in fact an effective deterrent or an act prompted by emotional wishful thinking and faulty intelligence information leading to a fiasco with the <strong>ironic</strong> consequence of increasing the likelihood of terrorism is a matter of fierce disagreement at this writing, in the midst of the 2004 election campaign, and it undoubtedly will continue

to be well into the future. So the rhetorical issue is the extent to which the Bush administration's appeals to fear, to pity for the victims of 9/11 and the American troops fighting in Iraq, and to patriotism were justified by the realities or were devices to keep that administration and the Republican Party in office and to intimidate their opponents or critics. The larger question is the extent to which, in the light of past history, political leaders can be expected to use appeals to fear and pity to wage, or respond to, wars honestly or dishonestly. This section will explore that and related issues.

## War Destroys Truth and Memory

A familiar saying is that the first casualty in every war is truth. The selling of wars nearly always depends on lies about the true nature of war. Wars throughout history, even the most justifiable ones like World War II, have brought out subhuman behavior in many individuals in every country that takes part in them—side by side with acts of great heroism and self-sacrifice, to be sure. The gruesome flesh-and-blood realities of war belie the high-minded, flag-waving ideals that tend to blind the masses who rally to “support our troops,” a point made eloquently in Mark Twain's “The War Prayer.”

To begin with, war destroys historical memory. The intensity of emotion provoked by every war is so great that the natural human inclination is for individuals to perceive each war as unique and unprecedented, and that is invariably the way it is presented by every warring country's government and media. In the manner Mark Twain depicts in “The War Prayer” (prompted by the Spanish-American War), later in this chapter, when people get caught up in “war fever,” they lose all perspective. The consequence is that the same tragic mistakes can be repeated over and over again with each new war, and all too often, as Goering noted, unscrupulous rulers are able to manipulate the populace into uncritically supporting a war, just or not, while anyone who critically questions the war or tries to provide some historical perspective is denounced as unpatriotic or even treasonous. Historically, it has often been writers, artists, scholars, and other intellectuals who have raised critical questions about impending wars; they are invariably reviled at the time, yet history has often proved them to be in the right.

The agonizing problem here is precisely that in historical perspective some wars have been judged to be just and others unjust. In American history the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War II, the Korean War, and the war in Afghanistan have been almost unanimously regarded as just, but the Mexican-American and Spanish-American wars, World War I, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and the Iraq war have all been strongly disputed at the time they occurred and subsequently. But whether a war is right or wrong, in America or in other countries, governments resort to the same emotional appeals and propagandistic rhetoric, as indicated by the quotation from Hermann Goering describing Hitler's incitement of the Germans to war. In *Boswell's Life of Johnson* in 1791, James Boswell famously quoted Samuel Johnson

as saying, “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.” However, in an example of the fallacy of **quotation out of context**, Boswell’s explanatory follow-up is rarely quoted: “But let it be considered, that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest” (251). In other words, the cynical manipulation of appeals to patriotism (along with appeals to religion) is one of the most frequent tools of **demagogues**.

Every government in every war can be predicted to lie, or at least to resort to one-sided propaganda and semantic slanting that oversimplifies the issues in dispute, attributing totally virtuous motives to our side and totally evil ones to the enemy. The home country’s armed forces will be called “our boys” and “our brave, patriotic troops.” The other side’s soldiers will never be referred to as “their boys” but labeled with depersonalizing phrases like “enemy forces.” Nor can it ever be suggested that they might be equally brave and patriotic, that they have loved ones who grieve their deaths.

As George Orwell says in his essay “Politics and the English Language,” the realities of war “are too brutal for most people to face, and . . . do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, questionbegging, and sheer cloudy vagueness” (256). So our news media suppress photos or footage of enemy bodies and, even more so, American bodies; nor are the bodies of civilian “collateral damage” shown. Whenever a gruesomely realistic photo does leak through the censorship screen into the mass media, people scream about this outrage to “decency.” The section from Paul Fussell’s book *The Real War 1939–1945* included in this Chapter describes graphically the ghastly realities of war that governments and media euphemize, in a similar manner to Twain’s “The War Prayer” nearly a century earlier.

In a column about the Iraq war in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 16, 2004, online edition), titled “War Rhetoric’s Toll on Democracy,” Bruce A. Williams, a communications professor at the University of Illinois, discussed Harold Lasswell, the founder of the modern public relations industry in early twentieth-century America and an advocate of governmental propaganda:

Lasswell argued that mobilizing public opinion through propaganda was a prerequisite for modern war, since conflict had become total, requiring conscript armies and the marshaling of a nation’s entire resources. The justification for war had to be widely understandable and capable of fostering total popular commitment to the conflict. Since it’s difficult to communicate to a mass audience the inevitably complex and usually debatable reasons for one nation’s use of force against another, the leader of the enemy state must be used to stand for the entire nation and then demonized. Lasswell meant the term quite literally: The enemy leader must be portrayed as the incarnation of evil, the devil himself. Sound familiar? Just as Saddam Hussein became the personification of both Iraq and evil, so too was Kaiser Wilhelm used by Allied propagandists in World War I.

In every war there is profiteering by the corporations who provide weapons and other military materiel as well as contracting for reconstruction, and their lobbies often have close ties to government officials, to the point where they sometimes become the tail wagging the dog in determining military policy. And yet, no government will admit that profiteering is taking place or is influencing policy. (See “The Military-Industrial Complex” in Chapter 18.) A presidential administration might exploit the public’s psychological need to believe in its trustworthiness in order to push its partisan political agendas, having little or nothing to do with the war effort, through a Congress whose members are afraid to be branded unpatriotic if they vote against the president, and without critical scrutiny by news media, which are similarly intimidated.

Another predictable pattern in every side in every war is that the government will attempt to censor news of defeats suffered and blunders or atrocities committed by our military. It is always tempting to rationalize government lying, or at least secrecy, in war. We think, Well, our leaders have secret information that we don’t, and revealing the truth might tip our hand to the enemy. Or, alternately, we want to believe that we can trust our leaders to act in our interests because they have that secret information. Or, we believe that making unfavorable events public gives aid and comfort to the enemy. (So when in the Iraq war stories and photos came out showing gross American abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, some conservatives complained that this news should have been suppressed.) All of these justifications might be true in any given case—but they also might *not* be true in any given case and leaders may simply be using them to cover up lies, blunders, criminal acts, or financial corruption. So none of these arguments should be accepted uncritically, without skeptically checking out the facts.

## The History of War

Throughout all the centuries of history previous to our own age, wars were a constant in most societies, going back to prehistoric battles for survival, wars between adherents of opposing religious beliefs and denominations, fights for imperial conquest and booty, for extension of land in the formation of nations, or for corporate control of foreign natural resources and labor. Emperors, kings, and aristocrats waged wars for their personal vanity and machismo, forcing masses of their subjects into bloodbaths against the masses of their rivals’ states, while the rulers usually stayed on the sidelines but got all the glory for victory. In these cases, wars played much the same role as sports do in our day; spectators held parties like today’s tailgate parties while watching the battles of the American Civil War.

In every one of those wars, the masses have been incited by patriotic propaganda and high ideals about the glories of fighting for one’s country, by demonization of the enemy, and by claims that God is on their side. Most of those wars have also been



started by wealthy old men who personally benefited from them but who themselves often have been exempt from risking their lives in them, as have been their children. (Prominent exceptions to this rule have arguably included, in America, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War II, in which George Herbert Walker Bush and John F. Kennedy volunteered for combat—as did Kennedy’s older brother, who died—along with several wealthy movie and sports stars. In the Vietnam War, John Kerry volunteered for combat and Al Gore was a frontline army journalist.) Those wars have been fought mainly by poor young men with few other options in life, usually drafted or in earlier ages kidnapped and forced into fighting, who have had nothing to gain personally from the war and have generally been regarded contemptuously by the rulers as “cannon fodder.”

In America’s most recent war at this writing, that in Iraq beginning in 2003, much has been made by political leaders and the media of our volunteer armed forces fighting out of patriotic motives. This was unquestionably true in many cases. But wouldn’t a less sentimentalized view be that many, if not most, young people who joined the peacetime army did so primarily because they were poor and lacked many other opportunities, so military service offered them an education and job skills? (There were very few instances in this war of volunteers who were politically connected, wealthy, or prominent in show business and sports.) How many of them expected to find themselves in the Middle Eastern desert wearing combat gear in 110-degree heat, fighting an enemy whose very identity was unclear, and confronting a culture, language, and religion largely unknown to them, with a great deal of hostility toward America directed at them personally? The abuses at Abu Ghraib prison by American forces in 2003 reflected, to some extent, the lack of preparation of many rank-and-file personnel for dealing with war prisoners or with captives of such a different culture, most of whom turned out to have no connection to terrorism or Saddam Hussein. How many of those who volunteered for service would have done so if they had known what awaited them in Iraq?

Regardless of the grim, suppressed realities that have marked past wars and that persisted at some level in the Iraq war, it cannot be denied that September 11 confronted the

United States with a warlike situation and a very real enemy, in Al Qaeda, different from any in our history, which created a legitimate cause for fear and demanded some kind of military response. The question then becomes whether the Bush administration’s antiterrorism policies, in Iraq and elsewhere, were sincerely motivated and effective or were opportunistic and ineffective, which at this writing remains open to debate.

## **The Position of the Soldier**

Emotional appeals in support of every war are keyed to sympathy for the members of our military forces, and they are frequently shown in interviews voicing their be-

lief in the justice of the cause for which they have been called to fight. There is no denying the sacrifices that troops are called on to make, or the bravery and patriotism that many show. But are those fighting in a war objective sources of judgment on its justness? What is the situation of the typical combat soldier? (I will refer to “he” here for brevity, with the understanding that women are increasingly present on the front lines.) From the moment he begins training, generally speaking, he is not presented with a multiperspectival education on the complexities of right and wrong in the present war but is indoctrinated with one-sided propaganda about the rectitude of our country’s cause and the villainy of our enemies, along with rigid requirements to follow orders and accept the hierarchy of command. (It was this reduction of soldiers to unthinking conformity that Thoreau criticized in “Civil Disobedience,” studied in Chapter 8.) Soldiers who might question these oversimplifications after what they see in combat are generally coerced into keeping quiet.

Moreover, soldiers and their families almost inevitably have an overwhelming emotional need to believe that the cause for which they are killing and dying is just. For them, as for citizens in general, the possibility that young men and women are being asked to die “in vain,” in the cause of some political ruler’s vanity, greed, or political advantage, is understandably unbearable. So an element of psychological denial of that possibility is almost certain to be the result, and anyone who publicly voices that possibility is almost certain to be fiercely resented.

The soldier is trained for combat by being turned into a brutal killer, with attitudes similar to those that characterize sociopathic criminals in civilian life. When stories come out about atrocities or torture by our forces, we pretend to be shocked at such “un-American” conduct, without acknowledging that such behavior may be the not-too-surprising extension of the brutality that is necessarily bred into fighting forces. The soldier has to be conditioned to dehumanize the soldiers on the opposing side into “dirty” animals who will kill him if he doesn’t kill them. (In the musical comedy *Bye Bye Birdie*, a dimwitted rock star satirically modeled on Elvis Presley is drafted into the peacetime army in the 1950s. His managers exploit the occasion for publicity, and at a press conference he declares, “Gee, I can’t wait to go over there and get me one of those dirty Jerries [Germans]—or whoever’s dirty this time.”) The soldier is not encouraged to understand that the soldiers on the other side are likely to have been conditioned in exactly the same way toward “those dirty Americans.” So one soldier meets the other on the battlefield and, sure enough, there’s that dirty enemy trying to kill him. They are intent on killing each other, perhaps without ever understanding that both are just following their orders and conditioning, with no personal cause for hatred toward one another.

Now, all of the above attitudes into which soldiers are indoctrinated might well be necessary in even the most honorable war. The point here is how many emotional forces can blind them, and the rest of us, and how difficult—though necessary—it is to resist those forces and try to form a more detached judgment on whether *this* war is just or unjust.

## “We Support Our Troops”

Another pressure against critical thinking is “support our troops” slogans. The argument goes something like, “We could debate about whether this war was justified or not before it began, but now that our troops are in battle, we have to support them by showing a united front because dissension at home undermines troop morale and gives aid and comfort to the enemy.” The problem with this thinking is that it can be exploited—and repeatedly has been throughout history—by unscrupulous rulers who know that once they start the war, they can use it to extort compliance and silence dissent.

A similar mind-set was attacked by Mark Twain in one of several of his criticisms of the Spanish-American War and the American military occupation of the Philippines from 1900 to 1906. In a situation that had possible parallels with the Iraq war, the United States supported Philippine independence from Spain, but American military forces aiding the rebels there stayed on after the Philippines gained independence and turned the country into an *American* colony. The American politicians and public, with wishful ethnocentrism, believed that the Filipinos would be grateful for our bringing them what Twain sarcastically called “The Blessings of Civilization Trust” (“trust” meaning a business monopoly), in much the same way the Bush administration predicted the Iraqis would be grateful for our overthrow of Saddam Hussein. However, the Filipinos rose up in resistance to the American occupation, and (in one of the more suppressed episodes in our history) American troops massacred upward of twenty thousand insurgents. In a fragment from an unfinished work titled “Glances at History” or “The Papers of the Adam Family,” Twain writes, in terms reminiscent of Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” half a century earlier:

Against our traditions we are now entering upon an unjust and trivial war, a war against a helpless people, and for a base object—robbery. At first our citizens spoke out against this thing, by an impulse natural to their training. Today they have turned, and their voice is the other way. What caused the change? Merely a politician’s trick—a high-sounding phrase, a blood-stirring phrase which turned their uncritical heads: *Our Country, right or wrong!* An empty phrase, a silly phrase. It was shouted by every newspaper, it was thundered from the pulpit, the Superintendent of Public Instruction placarded it in every schoolhouse in the land, the War Department inscribed it upon the flag. And every man who failed to shout it or who was silent, was proclaimed a traitor—none but those others were patriots. To be a patriot, one had to say, and keep on saying, “Our Country, right or wrong,” and urge on the little war. Have you not perceived that that phrase is an insult to the nation?

For in a republic, who *is* “the Country”? Is it the Government which is for the moment in the saddle? Why, the Government is merely a *servant*—merely a temporary servant; it cannot be its prerogative to determine what is right and what is wrong, and decide who is a patriot and who isn’t. Its function is to obey orders, not originate them. Who, then, is “the Country”? Is it the newspaper? is it the pulpit? is it the

school superintendent? Why, these are mere parts of the country, not the whole of it..... They are but one in the thousand; it is in the thousand

that command is lodged; *they* must determine what is right and what is wrong; they must decide who is a patriot and who isn't

Each must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, and which course patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide it against your convictions is to be an unqualified, inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country; men label you as they may. If you alone of all the nation decide one way, and that way be the right way according to your convictions of the right, you have done your duty by yourself and by your country—hold up your head! You have nothing to be ashamed of.

The stupid phrase needed help, and it got another one: "Even if the war be wrong we are in it and must fight it out: *we cannot retire from it without dishonor.*" Why, not even a burglar could have said it better. We cannot withdraw from this sordid raid because to grant peace to those little people upon their terms—independence—would dishonor us. You have flung away Adam's phrase—you should take it up and examine it again. He said, "*An inglorious peace is better than a dishonorable war.*" (108-9)

As Twain asked, if the motives of the government that starts a war are devious or if its tactics are a disaster, is it really a sign of patriotism or support of our troops not to question the government that has forced them into pointless slaughter, and not to try to stop the slaughter before it gets worse? Recent revelations about the Vietnam War indicate that both Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon (as well as Johnson's secretary of defense Robert McNamara, as revealed in his memoirs) realized that it had been a fatal mistake to get into it, but they were afraid they would lose face—and reelection if they admitted as much publicly and withdrew. So they continued to send tens of thousands of American troops to their death and continue the death of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, just because they couldn't admit they were wrong. Furthermore, the war policies of incumbent presidents are frequently influenced by upcoming elections; so whether soldiers and civilians live or die may be determined by cynical calculations of what will get the incumbent reelected.

## **"God Is on Our Side"**

One of the most extreme instances of ethnocentrism is the belief by virtually every country or faction in every war throughout history that God is on its side. The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century was followed by some two hundred years of bloody wars between Catholic and Protestant countries, and of civil wars between those religions, and even denominations within them, in the same countries. Both the Union and the Confederacy in the Civil War prayed to the same God for victory. Nazi Germany's slogan was *Gott 1st Mit Uns*-(God is with us) as they murdered six million Jews in the name of upholding Christian civilization. The Israelis believe the Jewish God is on their side, and the Palestinians believe that Allah is on theirs. The 9/11

hijackers and Osama Bin Laden praised Allah and believed that they would get into heaven by killing the Western infidels.

The compartmentalized thinking of Christians, whose key beliefs include loving your neighbor as yourself, loving your enemies, and turning the other cheek but who have invoked God or Jesus Christ in wars from the medieval crusades up to the American war on Iraq, has long been a favorite topic for literary satirists. Jonathan Swift in book 4 of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) gives a long list of ridiculous reasons for which Christian countries in Europe had gone to war, foremost among which were the most petty differences in theological beliefs. Another famous eighteenth-century satirist, Voltaire, described in his novel *Candide* (1759) a battle between the armies of two Christian monarchs, in which ten thousand men were killed and no one won, after which "the two kings in their respective camps celebrated the victory by having *Te Deums* sung" (322.) (The *Te Deum* is a Christian hymn of praise to God.) As noted in Chapter 6, Mark Twain wrote around 1900, "Man is the Religious Animal. He is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion-several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself, and cuts his throat if his theology isn't straight." If God loves all his children, does it seem likely that he looks down approvingly on any of them hating others and tearing them to shreds? Or that he "blesses" the armies of one nation-state, ruled by all-too-human political and economic elites, over all others?

## The Role of the Media

News media are always caught in a bind during the buildup to and fighting of wars. On the one hand, they like to see themselves as independent, neutral investigators and reporters of the facts. On the other hand, they are afraid they will be perceived by the government and the public as unpatriotic if they report facts that are unfavorable to the war effort. The result is that, over and over again, the pattern is repeated of news media being pressured into taking the government's case for war at face value. The media's—and public's—credulity is reminiscent of the comic strip "Peanuts," in which every fall, Lucy tells Charlie Brown she'll hold the football on the ground while he kicks it. Every year she pulls the ball away at the last second and he falls on his butt. But every year he ardently believes her assurances that *this* year she won't. We always want to believe that *this* time the government is telling the truth, in defiance of all past evidence to the contrary. We might think that this history would teach the media to be extra skeptical and scrupulous *next* time, but it never seems to.

In the early stages of the Vietnam War, most major media went along unquestioningly with the justifications presented by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Years later, those media acknowledged that they had been taken in. During the Gulf War in 1991,

the media accepted military officials' claims about the effectiveness of the Patriot missile, claims that subsequently proved to be false (see Bret Watson's "How to Watch the Next War" in Chapter 18). And yet again during the buildup to the Iraq war in 2002 and 2003, most media accepted the Bush administration's claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, his ties to Al Qaeda, and others. By 2004, however, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other major news sources published editorial statements admitting that they had been insufficiently skeptical and had allowed themselves to be misled on these issues. The Iraq war brought the innovation of "embedded reporters," journalists accompanying American forces into action, with the promise that their reports could produce unprecedented accuracy. After the fact, however, several of these reporters and their news agencies admitted that the pressure on them to suppress unfavorable reports in the perceived cause of patriotism was just too strong to resist.

"When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?"

## Conclusion

To reiterate, this has been a survey of some reasons to be skeptical about emotional appeals by government and media in support of war. None of these reasons are sufficient cause to conclude that President Bush's justifications for the Iraq war were false, or that any such future justifications will be. They might quite conceivably have *been* true at that particular time and be confirmed as such in the future. In any given situation like this, however, opposing accounts of the facts must be weighed open-mindedly and evenhandedly, according to all of the guidelines presented throughout this book. The point here is, yet again, not to let yourself be swayed by listening only to what you would *like* to believe, on one side or the other, not to be swayed by the emotional appeal and semantic slanting that always accompany war—particularly the appeals to fear following 9/11 that could conceivably stampede us into military "quick fixes" that might just increase the dangers facing us—rather than demanding reasoned argument from leaders, the media, and ourselves.

*The War Prayer*]]

*By Mark Twain*

From *Europe and Elsewhere*, Harper 1923

It was a time of great and exalting excitement, in every breast burned the holy fire ment. The country was up in arms, the war of patriotism; the drums were beating, the

bands playing, the toy pistols popping, the bunched firecrackers hissing and spluttering; on every hand and far down the receding and facing spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched down the wide avenue gay and fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion

as they swung by; nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest deeps of their hearts, and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country, and invoked the God of Battles, beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpouring of fervid eloquence which moved every listener. It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety's sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.

Sunday morning came—next day the battalions would leave for the front; the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their young faces alight with martial dreams—visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender!—then home from the war, bronzed heroes, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbors and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag, or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths. The service proceeded; a war Chapter from the Old Testament was read; the first prayer was said; it was followed by an organ burst that shook the building, and with one impulse the house rose, with glowing eyes and beating hearts, and poured out that tremendous invocation—

"God the all-terrible! Thou who ordainest, Thunder thy clarion and lightning thy sword!"

Then came the "long" prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was, that an evermerciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers, and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in the day of battle and the hour of peril, bear them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them to crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honor and glory—

An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness. With all eyes following him and wondering, he made his silent way; without pausing, he ascended to the preacher's side and stood there, waiting. With shut lids the preacher, unconscious of his presence, continued his moving prayer, and at last finished it with the words, uttered in fervent appeal, "Bless our arms, grant us the victory, O Lord our God, Father and Protector of our land and flag!"

The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside—which the startled minister did—and took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spellbound

audience with solemn eyes, in which burned an uncanny light; then in a deep voice he said:

"I come from the Throne—bearing a message from Almighty God!" The words smote the house with a shock; if the stranger perceived it he gave no attention. "He has heard the prayer of His servant your shepherd, and will grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His messenger, shall have explained to you its import—that is to say, its full import. For it is like unto many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than [[he who utters it is aware of—except he pause and think.

"God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two—one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear of Him Who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this—keep it in mind. If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invite a curse upon a neighbor at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse upon some neighbor's crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.

"You have heard your servant's prayer—the uttered Part of it. I am commissioned of God to put into words the other Part of it—that Part which the pastor—and also you in your hearts—fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard these words: 'Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!' That is sufficient. The *whole* of the uttered prayer is compact into those pregnant words. Elaborations were not necessary. When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory— *must* follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God the Father fell also the unspoken Part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!

"O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle—be Thou near them! With them—in spirit—we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it—for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen."

(*After a pause.*) "Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits."



It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.

*The Real War 1939-1945*]

Paul Fussell

From *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, Oxford University Press, 1989

The peruser (reader would be the wrong distributed as to constitute virtually a definiword) of the picture collection *Life Goes to tive* and official anthology of Second World War (1977), a volume so popular and widely War photographs, will find even in its

starkest images no depiction of bodies dismembered. There are three separated heads shown, but all, significantly, are Asian—one the head of a Chinese soldier hacked off by the Japanese at Nanking; one a Japanese soldier's badly burnt head (complete with helmet), mounted as a trophy on an American tank at Guadalcanal; and one a former Japanese head, now a skull sent home as a souvenir to a girlfriend by her navy beau in the Pacific. No American dismemberings were registered, even in the photographs of Tarawa and Iwo Jima. American bodies (decently clothed) are occasionally in evidence, but they are notably intact. The same is true in other popular collections of photographs, like *Collier's Photographic History of World War II*, Ronald Heiferman's *World War II*, A.J.P. Taylor's *History of World War II*, and Charles Herridge's *Pictorial History of World War II*. In these, no matter how severely wounded, Allied soldiers are never shown suffering what in the Vietnam War was termed traumatic amputation: everyone has all his limbs, his hands and feet and digits, not to mention an expression of courage and cheer. And recalling Shakespeare and Goya, it would be a mistake to assume that dismembering was more common when warfare was largely a matter of cutting weapons, like swords and sabers. Their results are nothing compared with the work of bombs, machine guns, pieces of shell, and high explosives in general. The difference between the two traditions of representation is not a difference in military technique. It is a difference in sensibility, especially in the ability of a pap-fed public to face unpleasant facts, like the actualities apparent at the site of a major airplane accident.

What annoyed the troops and augmented their sardonic, contemptuous attitude toward those who viewed them from afar was in large Part this public innocence about the bizarre damage suffered by the human body in modern war. The troops could not contemplate without anger the lack of public knowledge of the Graves Registration form used by the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, with its space for indicating "Members Missing." You would expect frontline soldiers to be struck and hurt by bullets and shell fragments, but such is the popular insulation from the facts that you would not expect them to be hurt, sometimes killed, by being struck by parts of their friends' bodies violently detached. If you asked a wounded soldier or Marine what hit him, you'd hardly be ready for the answer "My buddy's head," or his sergeant's heel or his hand, or a Japanese leg, complete with shoe and puttees, or the West Point ring on his

captain's severed hand. What drove the troops to fury was the complacent, unimaginative innocence of their home fronts and rear echelons about such an experience as the following, repeated in essence tens of thousands of times. Captain Peter Royle, a British artillery forward observer, was moving up a hill in a night attack in North Africa. "I was following about twenty paces behind," he wrote in a memoir,

when there was a blinding flash a few yards in front of me. I had no idea what it was and fell flat on my face. I found out soon enough: a number of the infantry were carrying mines strapped to the small of their backs, and either a rifle or machine gun bullet had struck one, which had exploded, blowing the man into three pieces—two legs and head and chest. His inside was strewn on the hillside and I crawled into it in the darkness.

In war, as in air accidents, insides are much more visible than it is normally well to imagine. And there's an indication of what can be found on the ground after an air crash in one soldier's memories of the morning after an artillery exchange in North Africa. Neil McCallum and his friend "S." came upon the body of a man who had been lying on his back when a shell, landing at his feet, had eviscerated him:

"Good God," said S., shocked, "here's one of his fingers." S. stubbed with his toe at the ground some feet from the corpse. There is more horror in a severed digit than in a man dying: it savors of mutilation. "Christ," went on S. in a very low voice, "look, it's not his finger."

In the face of such horror, the distinction between friend and enemy vanishes, and the violent dismemberment of any human being becomes traumatic. After the disastrous Canadian raid at Dieppe, German soldiers observed: "The dead on the beach—I've never seen such obscenities before." "There were pieces of human beings littering the beach. There were headless bodies, therewere legs, there were arms." There were even shoes "with feet in them." The soldiers on one side know what the soldiers on the other side understand about dismemberment and evisceration, even if that knowledge is hardly shared by the civilians behind them.

## **War Is the Supreme Drug. An Interview with Author Chris Hedges**

From TomPaine.com. October 30, 2002.

Chris Hedges has been a war reporter for the past 15 years, most recently for the *New York Times*, and earlier for the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and NPR. His book, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (Anchor Books, 2003), a finalist for the National Book Critics Award, is one of the most striking analyses and critiques of what happens to people and societies as they go to war to be published in many years. Writing with a clarity and tone reminiscent of Albert Camus, Hedges unravels the myths and dysfunctional nationalism that grip nations heading to war;

the intoxicating effect of these causes and rhetoric; and the terrible costs that soldiers, victims and societies pay—when the realities of

war—not the rhetoric—are experienced. He spoke to TomPaine.com’s Steven Rosenfeld.

TomPaine.com: When a country prepares for war and goes to war, there are changes in that country’s politics and culture. You write that a myth emerges—a seductive myth as leaders spin out a cause. You write that a patriotism, a “thinly veiled form of self-worship appears.” What do you mean by this myth, this cause, this patriotism and what you then say is an intoxicating result?

Chris Hedges: Well myth is always Part of the way we understand war within a society. It’s always there. But I think in a peacetime society we are at least open to other ways of looking at war. Just as patriotism is always Part of the society, in wartime, the myth becomes ascendant. Patriotism, national selfglorification, infects everything, including culture. That’s why you would go to symphony events and people wave flags and play the “Star Spangled Banner.” In essence, it’s the destruction of culture, which is always a prerequisite in wartime. Wartime always begins with the destruction of your own culture. Once you enter a conflict, or at the inception of a conflict, you are given a language by which you speak. The state gives you a language to speak and you can’t speak outside that language or it becomes very difficult. There is no communication outside of the cliches and the jingos, “The War on Terror,” “Showdown With Iraq,” “The Axis of Evil,” all of this stuff. So that whatever disquiet we feel, we no longer have the words in which to express it. The myth predominates. The myth, which is a lie, of course, built around glory, heroism, heroic self-sacrifice, the nobility of the nation. And it is a kind of intoxication. People lose individual conscience for this huge communal enterprise.

TP.c: You write there are different war myths—myths that fuel conflicts. What type of myth do you see animating the discussion today in the United States as it looks at Iraq?

Hedges: Well I think the myth is remarkably similar from war zone to war zone. At least, as it pertains to how the nation that prosecutes a war looks at itself. We become the embodiment of light and goodness. We become the defenders of civilization, of all that is decent. We are more noble than others. We are braver than others. We are kinder and more compassionate than others—that the enemy at our gate is perfidious, dark, somewhat inhuman. We turn them into two-dimensional figures. I think that’s Part of the process of linguistically dehumanizing them. And in wartime, we always turn the other into an object, and often, quite literally, in the form of a corpse.

TP.c: Where are we in the United States, now, in this progression?

Hedges: Well, we’ve come frighteningly far in this process. And this has been a long progression. It began at the end of the Vietnam war. The defeat in Vietnam made us a better nation and a better people. We were forced to step outside our own borders and

see how other people saw us. We were forced to accept very unpleasant truths about ourselves—our own capacity for evil. I think that that process, especially during the Reagan years, or at least that state, began to disintegrate. War once again became fun: Grenada; Panama, culminating in the Persian Gulf War. So that we're now at a process—Freud argues that all of life, both for the individual and within human society, is a battle between Eros, or love, and Thanatos, or the death instinct. And that one of these instincts is always ascendant, at one time or another. I think after the Vietnam war, because of the terrible costs that we paid, because of the tragedy that Vietnam was, Eros was ascendant. I think after the Persian Gulf war, where we fell in love with war—and what is war, war is death—Thanatos is ascendant. It will, unfortunately, take that grim harvest of dead, that ultimately those that are intoxicated with war must always swallow, for us to wake up again.

TP.c: When you say the rush to war is like a drug, how is it addictive? What void does it fill? What needs are fulfilled by this kind of rhetoric and this kind of myth-making, and this kind of political discourse, that are not otherwise accomplished in a peacetime political environment?

Hedges: Well, I think war is probably the supreme drug. War—first of all, it is a narcotic. You can easily become addicted to it. And that's why it's often so hard for people who spend prolonged times in combat to return to peacetime society. There's a huge alienation, a huge disconnection, often a longing to go back to the subculture of war. War has a very dark beauty, a kind of fascination with the grotesque. The Bible called it "the lust of the eye" and warned believers against it. War has a rush. It has a hallucinogenic quality. It has that sort of stoned-out sense of—that zombie-like quality that comes with not enough sleep, sort of being shelled too long. I think, in many ways, there is no drug, or there are no combination of drugs that are as potent as war, and one could argue as addictive. It certainly is as addictive as any narcotic.

TomPaine.com: For people who haven't read your reports in the *New York Times*, or don't know what actually goes behind the reporting that's gone into them, where have you been that has brought you on this course to write about this topic?

Chris Hedges: Well, I went to Seminary—I didn't go to journalism school. So this stretches way back to my own education, my own theological education, my study of ethics. I went to war, not because I was a gun nut, or wanted adventure, although to be honest, that was Part of it. I did have a longing for that kind of epic battle that could define my life. I grew up reading everything on the Holocaust and on the Spanish Civil War, but I went as an idealist. I went to Latin America in the early '80s when most of these countries were ruled by pretty heinous military dictatorships. And I thought this was as close as I was going to come in my lifetime to fighting fascism. I wanted that. Unfortunately, I didn't understand what war was. And I got caught up in the subculture, and to be honest, the addiction that war was. And I ended up over the next 15 years traveling from war zone to war zone to war zone with that fraternity of dysfunctional war correspondents who became my friends—some of whom were killed,

including my closest friend who was killed in Sierra Leone in May of 2000. So I got sucked into the kind of whirlpool that war is—into the death instinct.

TP.c: For people here, in the states, who have never been in a war zone, can you just talk about some of the situations you put yourself into and what you saw about war that is completely counterpoint to the rhetoric about the cause.

Hedges: Well, the cause is . . . is always a lie. If people understood, or individuals or societies understood in a sensory way what war was, they'd never do it. War is organized industrial slaughter. The good example is the Vietnam War. It began as a mythic war against communism and this kind of stuff, and— especially when the middle class began finding their sons coming home in body bags— people began to look at war in a very different light. It no longer was mythic. It became sensory war, i.e., we began to see war without that film, that mythic film that I think colors our vision of all violent conflicts. And then the war became impossible to prosecute. So the cause, the myth, the notion of glory— those are lies. They're always lies. And nations need them. Empires need them especially in order to get a populace to support a war. But they're untrue.

TP.c: So, you'd be sent into the field to cover different conflicts, what would you see that would be fundamentally at odds with this— what you're describing as the lie?

Hedges: Well, it takes anyone in combat about 30 seconds to realize that they've been lied to. War, combat is nothing like it's presented—not only by the entertainment industry, by Hollywood, but by the press, by writers such as Cornelius Ryan or Stephen Ambrose, who just died. These are mythmakers. The press is guilty of this. The press in wartime is always Part of the problem. But when you get into combat, it's venal. It's dirty. It's confusing. It's humiliating, because you feel powerless. The noise is deafening. But, most importantly, you feel fear in a way that you've probably never felt fear before. And anyone who spends a lot of time in combat struggles always with this terrible, terrible fear—this deep, instinctual desire for selfpreservation. And there are always times when fear rules you. In wartime, you learn you're not the person you want to be—or think you were. You don't dash out under fire to save your wounded comrade. Occasionally, this happens, but most of the time you're terrified. And that's very, very sobering. And it's a huge wake-up call. It shows you that the images that you've been fed, both about war, and that you have created for yourself, are wrong.

TP.c: Well, what do you think reporters can or should be doing that's different?

Hedges: Well, I think the big thing is you can't accept the language the state gives you. I mean, this is not a war in any conventional sense—I'm talking about the "War on Terror"—nor is it a war on terror. I think we have to dissect the cliches. Cliches are the enemy of bad writing, but also the enemy of clear thought, as George Orwell wrote. I think that's the first thing, we have to not speak in the language in which the state gives us. Secondly, I think we have to ask the hard questions. And I think the *New York Times* hasn't been bad on this. I think the *Times* has been pretty good, by looking at "what is it?" There was an editorial, I think in yesterday's *Times*, that said, "You know, there is no hard intelligence that he [Saddam Hussein] has anything that

he's going to use against us, and before we go to war you have to show us." That is the proper response, and I laud the paper for printing that editorial.

TP.c: What's so interesting is, it doesn't get much stronger than that. Yet, on the other hand, what you write about in the book, is that a lot of people in the country who aren't privy to details at that level, or aren't as politically tuned in—they want to believe that this cause is good. They trust what the president says. And there's an appeal, as you say, in society's march toward war that fills certain needs.

Hedges: Well, I think that's the problem. There's a lot that we just don't really feel like seeing because we're having too much fun exulting in our own military prowess and our ability to mold and shape the world in ways that we want. There is a kind of suspension of self-criticism, both as a nation and as a person that takes place in wartime. And that's Part of what removes the anxiety of normal daily living. We're no longer required to make moral choice. Moral choice has been made for us by the state. And to question the decisions of the state is to be branded, not only a traitor, but to be pushed outside that kind of communal entity within a society that war always creates. And that's a very difficult, lonely and painful experience. So most people, not necessarily because they're bad people in any way, but most people find it emotionally far more convenient, but also far more pleasurable just to go along. The problem is, under poor leadership, or wandering into a war where we shouldn't be, we can find ourselves in heaps of trouble.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

What semantic themes surveyed in Chapter 9 are reiterated in the readings by Twain, Fussell, and Hedges?

Do you think Samuel Johnson's "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel" is a reckless over-generalization, or just literary hyperbole for shock effect? How could the wording be qualified to be more generally acceptable?

Could you reasonably draw the inductive inference from the text or any of the readings in this section that no war is justified? If this is not their implication, what is? To put it another way, they all suggest that many people in the United States and other countries who rush to support wars on the basis of abstract appeals to fear and pity by their government are apt not to understand the flesh-and-blood realities of war. Hedges says, "If people understood, or individuals or societies understood in a sensory way what war was, they'd never do it." Is it conceivable that people could understand these realities but still reasonably support a particular war? How might this line of reasoning apply to military action in Afghanistan, Iraq, or elsewhere in reaction to September 11? For example, the September 11 hijackers were indifferent to shedding blood. Can such people be opposed without bloodshed, on the individual level or through war? Try to write a paragraph or more that expresses possible reasoning on opposing sides here.

If governments and news media are unwilling to tell the truth about the goriness of war, about blunders and atrocities on our side, for fear that their people would not

support even a just war if they knew the full truth, what does this suggest about the relation between government and the governed in democracy today, and between the media and their audience? See Chapter 16 for more on the question of whether media “give the people what they want.”

Do you think Chris Hedges’s credentials qualify him as an authoritative source in writing about war? How do his having studied in a religious seminary and his stated affinity with writers like Orwell, Camus, and Freud inform his viewpoint and the way he articulates issues? Do you find this literary dimension rhetorically effective or not? This interview with him appeared some six months before the war in Iraq began, but he expressed skepticism about slogans like “the War on Terror” and “Showdown with Iraq.” You might do an Internet search to see what he had to say about the war after the fact. Conservatives might argue that Hedges has a liberal bias. What arguments might they present in rebuttal to his?

### **Debate with classmates the following hypotheses:**

Anyone who advocates a particular war should be willing to die in it. It is hypocritical to say, in effect, “Let’s you and him fight,” especially when the “you” has no personal relationship to the speaker.

If rank-and-file military troops are dying in a war, should corporations be allowed to profit from military contracts? Should their profits be surtaxed to help pay for the costs of war? How can we know that the tail of corporate profits is not wagging the dog of war policy?

During a war, everyone in a country should be expected to make sacrifices. Wars are hugely expensive, and the Iraq war added billions of dollars to deficit spending, which was already at record heights. Shouldn’t everyone be willing to pay higher taxes in wartime? How many Americans who supported the Iraq war would have been willing to have their taxes increased, and by how much, to pay for it? Were President Bush’s continued attempts to cut taxes during wartime an example of telling voters that they could have their cake and eat it too, by entering into an expensive war without having to sacrifice anything for it?

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## **Part 3. Thinking Critically About the Rhetoric of Politics and Mass Media**



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Chapter

## Chapter 15. Thinking Critically about Political

# Chapter 16. Rhetoric

## Prestudy Exercises

How would you define the words liberal and conservative? Just use free association, without too much deliberation and without looking the words up.

How do you think an ardent conservative would define liberal and conservative? How do you think an ardent liberal would define the same words?

Look up the following words in a current collegiate dictionary: conservative, liberal, libertarian, radical, right wing, left wing, reactionary, fascism, plutocracy, capitalism, socialism, communism, Marxism, democracy, totalitarianism, freedom, free enterprise. Only note the definitions pertinent to political ideology, not any other senses.

Either individually or in teams of classmates, compare the definitions of some of these terms in (a) two or more current dictionaries, (b) a collegiate-sized dictionary, an abridged dictionary, and (at the library) an unabridged dictionary, (c) an earlier edition of the same dictionary from forty or fifty years ago (again at the library).

## Political Semantics

To begin with, *liberal*, *conservative*, and other terms like those in the prestudy exercises are constantly used by American politicians, mass media, and individuals as though they had a fixed, universally agreed-upon definition; yet, as these exercises have probably indicated to you, such terms are almost infinitely ambiguous, especially when writers and speakers fail to indicate the exact sense or context in which they are using the words. Politicians and other public figures sometimes deliberately exploit the ambiguity of these terms by using them simply as **cleans** and **dirty**, strong on **connotative** slanting but weak in **denotative** meaning.

Much similar confusion is caused in argumentation when two opponents deliberately or unconsciously use different definitions of these terms as underlying assumptions—that is, they **stack the deck** by using the definitions favorable to their own side and unfavorable to the opponent's. Thus, the conservative is apt to assume a definition of *conservative* something like “cautious, responsible, moral” and of *liberal* something like “wasteful, permissive, immoral,” while the liberal uses *liberal* to mean “open-minded, humane, progressive” and *conservative* to mean “bigoted, greedy, and hypocritically self-righteous.” (Remember a key axiom of semantics and rhetoric: whoever defines the terms gains the upper hand in argumentation.)

How much help are dictionary definitions of these terms? Here are the pertinent definitions in *Random House Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2001 edition):

**liberal.** Favorable to progress or reform, as in political or religious affairs. Pertaining to, based on, or having views or policies advocating individual freedom of action and expression. Of or pertaining to representational forms of government rather than aristocracies and monarchies. Free from prejudice or bigotry; tolerant. Free of or not bound by traditional or conventional ideas, values, etc.; open-minded.

**conservative.** Disposed to preserve existing conditions, institutions, etc., or to restore traditional ones, and to limit change. Cautiously moderate. Traditional in style or manner; avoiding novelty or showiness. Having the power or tendency to conserve.

Now, in some of these senses—such as attitudes toward reform or change—the two ideologies are clearly opposed. But in other senses, the two are incomparable, like apples and oranges. Nothing in the definitions of *conservative*, or in most contemporary American conservatives' professed beliefs, suggests that conservatives support aristocracies and monarchies, that they oppose progress, that they are intolerant or opposed to individual freedom (indeed, many conservatives believe *they* are the defenders of individual freedom against encroachments by liberals). Likewise, few liberals consider themselves incautious or absolutely opposed to tradition and conservation (indeed, contemporary American liberals tend to be more committed to environmental conservation than most conservatives). Moreover, each side regularly accuses the other of **compartmentalized thinking** in pursuing behavior or policies that are just the opposite of their professed ideals.

So not even the largest unabridged dictionary provides an adequate explanation of the **context** of oppositions between liberals and conservatives, or leftists and rightists, at any particular historical time or place, including present-day America. Fully understanding those oppositions necessitates a far more complex, multidimensional study in semantics. What are some of these dimensions?

***Reader Advisory:** The following sections lead rather deeply into subject matter that would normally be expected in a political science or contemporary history textbook, and some students or teachers might question its appropriateness in an English text and course. Please try to keep in mind that the essential context here is semantic: the necessity for you as a writer to have a clear conception in your own mind of the exact sense in which you use any of these political terms and to convey that conception to your reader either by explicit definition or by the context of the passage in which they appear. As a critical reader, you also need to hold professional writers whose work you are analyzing, or citing as sources, accountable for the same clear usage. Another semantic issue here is the incredible ambiguity of political terms, especially as they are used in the discourse of government and mass media, and the oversimplification that results in their public usage. While the following discussion addresses that problem and tries to indicate the process needed to overcome it as much as possible within the confines of space here, a large degree of oversimplification is unavoidable, as it would be in any text short of a booklength treatment. The map is not the territory.*

## Liberalism, Conservatism, Democrat, Republican

Furthermore, within any single ideological belief, there are usually many different varieties, degrees, and factions, all of whom disagree, often heatedly, among themselves, although they are generally united in opposition to broader ideological adversaries. Contemporary American conservatives are divided among numerous factions, paleoconservatives (i.e., longterm, old-fashioned ones) versus neoconservatives (converts from liberalism, maintaining vestiges of liberal ideas), the religious right versus libertarians (there is also, however, a Libertarian Party opposing both Republicans and Democrats), blue-collar and middle-class conservatives (the “Joe Lunchpail” stereotype) versus upper-class ones (“country club conservatives”), small businesspeople versus multinational corporate executives and inheritors of fortunes, and so on. Those who call themselves conservative run the gamut from Ku Klux Klanners and American Nazis to upholders of an earlier, patrician notion of conservatism defending hereditary aristocracy, a united church and state, and the elite, high culture of Western civilization.

American liberals likewise are divided among factions, which include, among others, organized labor, the majority of poor people and racial minorities, teachers and scholars in humanistic subjects, liberally inclined members of the upper classes (“limousine liberals”), feminists, environmentalists, consumer advocates, and “neoliberal” centrists like Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and John Kerry. This mix is further complicated by the fact that the Democratic Party, which most liberals support, was throughout the twentieth century the party of very conservative big-city political machines, Southern white segregationists, “Reagan Democrats” (former rank-and-file Democrats who in the 1960s and 1970s became more conservative and in many cases started voting Republican), and circles of large corporate campaign contributors and lobbyists similar to those who support the Republicans—in many cases the same ones contribute to and lobby *both* parties. In other words, an **argument from the converse** must be avoided here: most liberals are Democrats, but most Democrats are not liberal.

Because of the influence of the conservative factions in the Democratic Party, many people who consider themselves liberal or left-of-liberal (most prominently, members of the New Left movements that arose in the 1960s) dissociate themselves from the Democratic Party or would like to see it move much further to the left than it has been since at least the time of Roosevelt’s New Deal in the 1930s and 1940s. So it is a semantic fallacy, which you should avoid, to use *Democrat* and *liberal* synonymously. If many Democrats are conservatives, are there also liberal Republicans? Yes, though fewer than conservative Democrats. Before about 1968, there was a sizable liberal wing of the Republican Party, represented by leaders like Nelson Rockefeller and the young George H. W. Bush. The presidencies of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, however, have led to domination of the party by its conservative wing up to the present, although there are still some relatively liberal Republicans like John McCain and Elizabeth Dole.

Nevertheless, you should avoid equating *conservative* with *Republican* in opposition to *Democrat*, mainly because of the large numbers of conservative Democrats.

The diversity of interests within both major American parties suggests the semantic problems presented by the **culturally conditioned assumption** of a two-party system, in contrast to the multiparty system of most other contemporary democracies. One wit has observed that if the Democratic Party were in any Western European country, it would be five different parties. The multiplicity of constituencies in both parties, the overlap of some similar constituencies in both parties, and the widespread corruption in both—all diminishing the differences between the two—frequently result in an **either-or fallacy**: many voters, disillusioned with one party, turn toward the other for a while, then when they get disillusioned with that one, turn back toward the first again, without understanding that both are too diffuse and corrupt to provide any significant alternative to one another. There *are* other parties on the ballot in many states, such as the Reform Party, the Libertarian Party, the American Independent Party (more consistently conservative than the Republicans), the New Party, Peace and Freedom, and Socialist parties (all pro-labor and democratic socialist), and the Green Party (environmentalist); there is no law preventing voters from turning to them, or to independent candidates like Ralph Nader and Ross Perot. Many political analysts believe that breaking the monopoly of the two-party system, or at least establishing proportional representation in legislatures, which would enable other parties to gain seats in proportion to their votes, would be a progressive step for American politics and clear public discourse..

*Grammatical Note: In the context of U.S. politics, Democrat and Republican are the names of parties, and as such must always be capitalized; liberal and conservative are names of ideologies—that is, systems of political or philosophical beliefs—so they and other ideological terms discussed here subsequently should never be capitalized except at the beginning of sentences. In the United States there is no such thing as “the Liberal Party” or “the Conservative Party.” Democratic is the adjective form of the party’s name; democratic is the adjective form for the ideology of democracy. Likewise for Republican and republican. Although we cannot hear these distinctions in speaking (we have to make them through the context of surrounding words), it can be very confusing for readers if you do not use the correct capitalization in writing.*

## Socialism, Communism, Marxism

Yet another set of terms that are widely used in a confusing manner includes *socialism*, *communism*, and *Marxism*. Here again, each of these ideologies contains many opposing variations and factions among its adherents. *Socialism* is the broadest term; *communism* and *Marxism* are two of many varieties, or subsets, of socialism. (See “A Guide to Political Terms” for further explanation.) Capitalization usage for these terms varies widely among writers and publishers; most commonly, *Socialist* and *Communist*

*nist* are used in reference to particular political parties, *socialist* and *communist* in reference to the ideologies, the usage I follow in this book.

*Marxism* denotes both the philosophical or theoretical views of Karl Marx and his followers and the political doctrines applied by Communist parties and governments claiming to base their practices on Marxian ideology. The complications here begin with the infinity of disagreements among the intellectual followers of Marxist ideology—the varying degrees of their acceptance of Marx’s original views and of revisions of them adjusted to changing historical circumstances from Marx’s time, their emphasis on different facets of Marxism, including Marxian philosophy, economics, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural criticism, and so on. Most contemporary Marxist theorists interpret Marxism as a democratic ideology, but the political practice of self-styled Marxist parties and governments (sometimes designated Marxist-Leninist) has most often been undemocratic and totalitarian—causing many theoretical Marxists to denounce Communist parties for exploiting Marx’s concept of communism (lower case *c*) to institute perverse distortions of his ideals. Marxist or neo-Marxist theory has continued to exert a strong influence in the contemporary intellectual and academic world; many scholars who are not doctrinaire Marxists, including myself, have found validity in one form and degree or another of Marxist ideas (again, in

support of democracy and freedom); in fact, several of the aspects of critical thinking in this book and Chapter reflect Marxist concepts. A common rhetorical tactic of political rightists, however, has been to try to discredit theoretical Marxist scholars and their ideas through red-baiting **guilt by association** with Communist dictatorships. (The circle diagrams at the bottom of the page may help to clarify the relations among these terms.)

## The World Political Spectrum

Terms like *liberal* and *conservative*, *leftist* and *rightist* are ambiguous not only because they have a vast number of denotations and connotations but also because they cannot be accurately understood in isolation but only within a larger context, framework, or schema of beliefs and relative positions on a spectrum. The writer seeking accuracy of definition needs to key these political terms to a spectrum of positions from far right to far left in the United States and the rest of the world (see table 15.1).

Table 15.1 is based on the world alignment from the time of World War II to around 1985. Although much has changed since 1985, rendering some of the schema obsolete, this model retains value as a map of the alignments that shaped the dynamics of world and American politics over most of the twentieth century and in some important ways persist in the twenty-first. (See the more extensive notes on table 15.1 at the end of this Chapter for some of the modifications in the twenty-first century.) Upheavals in the Communist world since the 1980s have especially compounded semantic complexities: the adjective “leftwing” has been historically equated with communism as a political

and economic ideology opposed to capitalism, but if left-wing is defined as opposition to the status quo, does that make those who have overturned the status quo in Communist countries leftists or rightists? In post-Cold War Eastern Europe, supporters of the old Communist regime are now generally designated “right-wing” and “conservative,” while those working for democratic government and a capitalist economy are designated “liberal.”

Several further explanations and qualifications are also necessary regarding table 15.1. “Social democratic” is the term applied to the mixed economy in Canada and Western European democracies, which maintain a basically capitalist economy but with government ownership of some large industries like utilities, airlines and railroads, television and radio; considerably more government regulation and guidance of business; more progressively

Table 15.1. Twentieth-Century Political Spectrum

<———— ——  Dictatorship	—	————Left Wing	RightWing ———— —	—	—>
---------------------------------	---	------------------	------------------------	---	----

Political Democracy. Freedom   Dictatorship
X

Communism   ☒L J, Socialism   ☒L J, Capitalism Plutocracy   Fascism
USSR

- China
- Cuba
- North Vietnam Cambodia North Korea Zimbabwe | Nicaragua (Sandinista) Chile (Allende) | Sweden Denmark Norway | France USA
- Italy Japan
- Germany
- Spain
- Canada
- England
- American Parties
- Green Democratic Republican



Libertarian | Chile (Pinochet) Philippines (Marcos) South Africa (Apartheid) El Salvador (1980s) Nicaragua (Sornosa) South Vietnam South Korea  
 Taiwan  
 Indonesia  
 Nazi Germany Fascist Italy Franco Spain Fascist Japan | |  
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structured taxes (i.e., increasing percentage of tax on higher-level incomes); and more government-subsidized health care, education, and family benefits. (See Steve Brouwer’s “If We Decided to Tax the Rich” later in this Chapter as an argument for the benefits of Europeanstyle social democracy over American capitalism.) Since the 1980s, Western European countries have moved toward somewhat more privatization in these fields, but still not to the extent of the United States. So a politician or position labeled “moderate” in the United States is considered right-wing from today’s European or Canadian perspective, while many American “radicals” would be “moderates” in Europe or Canada. Similarly, many “ultraconservatives” in American terminology appear “moderate” in comparison to fascistic countries. The practical significance is that, to expose themselves to a fuller range of ideological viewpoints, students need to seek out sources, mainly left-of-liberal and libertarian, excluded from the mainstream of American discourse, though such sources may be hard to find in many communities.

Another semantic confusion in American public discourse results from our tendency to equate terms referring to political systems, such as *democracy*, *freedom*, *justice*, *patriotism*, and *dictatorship*, with words referring to economic systems—*capitalism* or *free enterprise* and *socialism*. As indicated in the bracketed terms in table 15.1 and in the Guide to Political Terms below, in dictionary definitions and in actual historical practice, both a capitalist and a socialist economy can exist under either a democratic or dictatorial government. To oversimplify a complex point, capitalism under a political dictatorship is plutocracy, socialism under a political dictatorship is (capital C) Communism, while fascism consists of a combination of socialist and capitalist economies in the service of militaristic nationalism, as opposed to the internationalistic essence of socialism in general (**Nazi** is an acronym of **National Socialist**), under an all-powerful political dictatorship.

One must again go beyond dictionary definitions to address the relation between these political and economic systems in actual practice, for partisans of varying ideologies assume different connections between, say, freedom and democracy on one hand and capitalism and socialism on the other. Conservatives argue that capitalistic free enterprise is the economic system that best contributes to political freedom and democracy, but leftists argue (as in the socialist position described in the Guide to Political Terms below) that free enterprise in practice tends to destroy democracy and freedom because capitalists gain excessive political power. To the extent that in American usage “capitalism” is commonly used synonymously with political democracy and freedom—in disregard of the dictionary definitions— conservatives have managed to

control the semantic agenda, excluding from public discourse widespread arguments for democratic socialism or social democracy. If conservatives say, for example, “Post-Communist Russia is moving toward democracy,” when the fact is that Russia is moving toward a capitalist economy, this argument is based on the underlying assumption that capitalism necessarily leads to democracy. Leftists would **refute** this argument somewhat as follows: “Russia’s turn toward capitalism does not necessarily mean a turn toward democracy; a political dictatorship of the Communist Party is simply being replaced by a political dictatorship of capitalists.” More generally, leftists argue, “Sweden, Norway, and Denmark—with semisocialistic economies—certainly have more democratic politics than many capitalist countries like pre-Castro Cuba, El Salvador in the 1980s, South Africa before free elections there, the Philippines under Marcos, or Indonesia and Saudi Arabia today—all dictatorships supported by the United States because they were friendly to American business and military interests. Furthermore, the United States has befriended Communist China, not because it has changed into a democracy, but because it has changed from a Communist dictatorship into a capitalist dictatorship; the United States usually gets along fine with dictatorships, so long as they are capitalist and do business with American corporations.”

## The American Political Spectrum

Looking at the placement of American Parties in the worldwide left-to-right spectrum in table 15.1 calls attention to the **ethnocentrically** limited span of ideology represented by the poles of the Republican and Democratic parties and of “conservatism” and “liberalism” that define the boundaries of most American political, journalistic, scholarly, and cultural discourse. Political forces that are considered liberal in the United States, for example, usually stay well within the limits of capitalist ideology, and thus are considerably to the right of the labor, social-democratic, and Communist parties with large constituencies in most other democratic countries today. We need to keep this limitation in mind when we consider controversies over political viewpoints in American communications media. ( Chapter 16 further develops the complexities of this topic.)

As with American political figures, the whole range of American news media—along with individual journalists and scholars, and even figures or shows in popular entertainment like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Barbra Streisand, Doonesbury and Mallard Fillmore, Madonna and Bruce Springsteen, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* and *The Simpsons*—can be placed on a spectrum from left to right in such a precise way that their political identity can be agreed on to a large extent by those of every ideological persuasion. In both sections of table 15.2, even the division into columns is an arbitrary semantic oversimplification of what could be broken down into several more columns or even a continuous, linear spectrum from left to right. Rather than speaking of “the liberal *New York Times*,” one should explain and document the sense and degree of

liberalism referred to. “Liberal” in relation to what other media? One might clarify the label by placing the *Times* to the left of *Time* but to the right of the *Nation*. (Many of these placements are disputable, to be sure, and subject to revision as different media and individuals periodically shift their positions. The placement of libertarians is especially problematic; here they are placed between liberal and conservative, but for more refinement, see the following Guide to Political Terms and Positions.)

## A Guide to Political Terms and Positions

### Left Wing, Right Wing, Capitalism, Communism, Socialism

After we establish a spectrum of positions from far left to far right, we still need to concretize the notions of left and right in terms of specific ideological beliefs, as follows.

*Left wing and right wing* (also see table 15.1). *The left wing* (adjective: *left-wing* or *leftist*) is a broad term that includes a diversity of parties and ideologies (which often disagree among themselves but usually agree in their opposition to the right wing) including liberals, nearest the center of the spectrum, and—progressively toward the left—socialists and communists (the latter two are also sometimes called “radical”). *Progressive* is a word that is sometimes used synonymously with *liberal* but is sometimes a **euphemism** for more radical leftism.

*The right wing* (adjective: *right-wing* or *rightist*) is a broad term that includes a diversity of parties and ideologies (which often disagree among themselves but usually agree in their opposition to the left wing) including libertarians, nearest the center of the spectrum, and—progressively toward the right—conservatives, ultraconservatives, plutocrats, and fascists.

*Leftists tend to support:*

The poor and working class

Labor (employees), consumers, environmental and other regulation of business

More equality (economic, racial, sexual) than at present

Civil and personal liberties; government control over economic liberty

Cooperation

Internationalism

Pacifism (exception: Communists)

Questioning of authority—skepticism

(exception: Communism is authoritarian)

Government spending for public services like education, welfare, health care, unemployment insurance, broadcasting

Progressive taxes, i.e., greatest burden on wealthy individuals and corporations

Religious pluralism, skepticism, or atheism

*Rightists tend to support:*

Middle and upper class  
 Management (employers), business, unregulated enterprise  
 The present state of equality, or return to earlier states  
 Economic liberty; controls on personal liberties (e.g., abortion, prayer in schools, sexual conduct)  
 Competition  
 Nationalism (primary loyalty to one's own country)  
 Strong military and willingness to go to war  
 Acceptance of authority, especially in military, police, and strong "law and order" policies  
 Government spending for military, subsidies to business as incentive for growth and competition against public sector  
 Low taxes for wealthy individuals and corporations as incentive for investment ("supply-side economics" or "trickle-down theory")  
 Religious orthodoxy  
*Capitalism.* Capitalism is an economic system based on private investment for profit. Jobs and public services are provided, and public needs met, to the extent that investment in them will predictably result in a return of capital outlay. In its principles capitalism does not provide any restrictions on extremes of wealth and poverty or on social power, but its advocates (especially pure, libertarian capitalists) believe that the workings of a freemarket economy, unrestricted by government controls or regulation, will minimize social inequity.  
 Capitalism is not a political system; in principle, a capitalist economy can operate under either a democratic government or a dictatorship, as in plutocracy or fascism (see table 15.1).  
*Socialism.* An economic system based on public investment to meet public needs, provide full employment, and reduce socioeconomic inequality. Socialism does not allow great extremes of wealth and poverty, though most forms allow for some range of differences in salary. In various models of socialism, investment and industrial management are controlled either by the federal government or by local governments, workers' and consumers' cooperatives, a variety of community groups, and so on. Socialism is not a political system; in principle, a socialist economy can operate under either a democratic government or a dictatorship, as in Communism (see table 15.1).  
*Communism.* With lower-case c, communism refers to Marx's ideal of the ultimate, future form of pure democratic socialism, with virtually no need for centralized government. With upper-case C as in present-day Communist parties, Communism is a socialist economy under undemocratic government. Historically, Communists have manipulated appeals to left-wing values like socioeconomic equality and worldwide cooperation in order to impose police-state dictatorship and military aggression.

**Table 15.2. American Media, Journalists, and Commentators from Left to Right**

## **A. Media**

### **1. Left**

TheNation

In These Times MotherJones Extra!

TheProgressive ZMagazine

Village Voice PacificaRadio

Air America Radio

### **2. Liberal**

LA Times

NY Review

Harper's

New Yorker

PBS Documentaries 60Minutes

New York Times

### **3. Liberal-to-Conservative 4. Conservative**

Time

Newsweek

U.S. News & World Report

WashingtonPost

Atlantic

NewRepublic

Reason

CBS news

NBC, ABC news

LehrerNewsHour

ReadersDigest WeeklyStandard Wall St. Journal Commentary AmericanSpectator

NationalReview McLaughlin Group Washington Times Insight

Most newspapers, local TV & radio

## **B. Journalists and Commentators**

<b>1. Left</b>	<b>2. Liberal</b>	<b>3. Libertarian</b>	<b>4. Conservative</b>
Alexander Cockburn Molly Ivins			

Noam Chomsky Edward Herman

Katrina vanden Heuvel Barbara Ehrenreich Robert Scheer Jonathan Kozol Todd Gitlin Jim Hightower Bob Herbert Jeff Cohen

Norman Solomon Gore Vidal

Julianne Malveaux Victor Navasky Roger Wilkins Cornel West

Betty Friedan Ralph Nader Katha Pollit Jesse Jackson Bernie Sanders Paul Wellstone Michael Moore Eric Alterman Michael Lerner

Lewis Lapham William Greider

Susan Sontag Barbara Kingsolver Arundhati Roy Bill Moyers Holly Sklar]] | Dan Rather Tom Brokaw Ted Koppel Jim Lehrer Larry King Cokie Roberts Oprah Winfrey Rosie O'Donnell Bob Woodward Mark Shields Paul Krugman David Broder Michael Kinsley Frank Rich Gloria Steinem Seymour Hersh David Halberstam Carl Bernstein Donald Barlett James Steele Naomi Wolf John K. Galbraith James Carville George Stephanopolous Cynthia Tucker Al Franken Martha Nussbaum Bill Maher Arianna Huffington\* David Brock\*]] Michael Lind\* Former conservative | Virginia Postrel Stephen Moore Doug Bandow Debra Saunders Nat Hentoff James Pinkerton Jesse Ventura | Rush Limbaugh Pat Buchanan Jerry Falwell Pat Robertson William F. Buckley Paul Harvey Sam Donaldson George Will John McLaughlin Fred Barnes Paul Gigot Charles Krauthammer William Safire Robert Novak Phyllis Schlafly John Leo Cal Thomas Thomas Sowell Gordon Liddy Bob Grant Don Imus R. Emmett Tyrrell Laura Ingraham Mona Charen William Kristol Sean Hannity Michael Novak Norman Podhoretz John Podhoretz Milton Friedman Henry Kissinger Dinesh D'Souza Lynne Cheney Florence King Mary Matalin Christina Sommers Ann Coulter Jeff Jacoby Tucker Carlson Bill O'Reilly Bernard Goldberg Michael Savage David Horowitz\*]] Christopher Hitchens\*]] |

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**\*\*Former leftist |** Plutocracy. Rule by the rich; a capitalist economy under undemocratic government.

*Fascism.* A combination of capitalist and socialist economies under an undemocratic government. Historically, fascists have manipulated appeals to conservative values like patriotism, religion, competitiveness, anticommunism, respect for authority and law and order, traditional morality and the family, in order to impose police-state dictatorship. Fascism typically is aggressively militaristic and imperialistic and promotes racial hatred based on theories of white (or “pure Aryan”) supremacy and religious persecution of non-Christians. It glorifies strong authority figures with absolute power.

**Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, Libertarians**

*Conservatives.* In the American context, most conservatives are pro-capitalist, believing that a capitalist economy best promotes political democracy. In other words, they believe what’s profitable for big business also serves the interests of good government, labor, consumers, the environment, and the public in general—“What’s good for General Motors is good for America.” Because mainstream conservatives believe

a major function of government is to help business maximize profits, they justify low taxes and government subsidies, protections, and bailouts for big business. They believe that the capitalistic, or free-enterprise, system is the best guarantee of equal social opportunity for everyone and that a large diversity of private enterprises is the best guarantee against excessive concentration of power in government (the main danger of socialism). They believe that abuses by businesses can and should be best policed or regulated by business itself; when conservatives control government, they usually appoint businesspeople to cabinet positions and regulatory agencies without perceiving any **conflict of interest** in the practice. Mainstream conservatives tend, however, to want government to control *personal* conduct in areas like abortion, censorship, sexual behavior, and religion, with the exception that they oppose gun control.

*Liberals.* Most American liberals, like conservatives, basically believe in capitalism. But they also believe that the interests of big business are frequently contrary to those of democratic government and of employees, consumers, the environment, and the public in general. They think that capitalism tends to lead to excessive concentration of wealth in a few corporations and individuals, leading in turn toward plutocratic government—dictatorship of the rich. So they think that capitalism needs to be saved from its own self-destructive tendencies and kept on an even keel by policing business abuses through government regulation, by limiting extremes of wealth and poverty through progressive taxation and through welfare, unemployment insurance, Social Security, public education, and other free or low-cost public services. Though they are not “antibusiness,” as conservatives charge, liberals support labor unions as a counterbalance to the power of big business. These are the classic positions of the Democratic Party, though that party has moved more in the direction of conservatism in many ways through the last three or four decades. Liberals generally think, however, that government should *not* control personal conduct (except for gun control, which they tend to favor); in this area, they are much the same as libertarians.

*Socialists.* While liberals (and Democrats) want to save capitalism by regulating it, socialists want to replace it altogether. And while American liberals support the Democratic Party, socialists see both Democrats and Republicans as pro-capitalist, plutocratic parties, so they favor forming a separate socialist or labor party. American socialists, or radicals, believe more strongly than liberals that the interests of big business are contrary to democracy and the public interest; they believe that capitalism is basically an irrational, corrupt system; that the profit motive is destructive of the natural environment and of traditional morality; and that wealthy business interests inevitably gain control over government, foreign and military policy, the media, and education and use the power of employment to keep the workforce and electorate under their control. They believe it is in the nature of capitalism for owners of businesses to maximize profits by getting the most work out of employees for the lowest wages possible. They think liberal government reforms and attempts to regulate business are usually squashed by the power of business lobbies and that even sincere liberal reformers in government offices usually come from or represent the ethnocentric viewpoint

of the upper classes. The socialist economic alternative is to operate on a nonprofit basis at least the biggest national and international corporations, as well as the defense industry, thereby preventing at the source the excessive accumulation of wealth and power through profits gained by capitalist investors. Socialists also go beyond liberal support of labor unions; they would have most businesses owned and managed democratically by their workers. In other words, socialism is an extension of the principles of democratic government into control of *economic* institutions. On the principle that there are many more workers than capitalists, and that it is the workers whose labor produces the profits that go into capitalists' pockets, a government and economy controlled by the totality of workers would be far more democratic than our present plutocracy. Short of the distant goal of full socialism, they tend (as in Europe and elsewhere) to form "social democratic" parties implementing a "mixed economy" of capitalism and socialism under democratic government, but they move further toward socialism than American liberals and Democrats. Socialists tend to side with liberals and libertarians in not wanting government to control personal conduct (though Communist governments tend to be highly "conservative" in legislating morality).

*Libertarians.* Libertarians agree with democratic leftists in supporting civil liberties and personal freedom in moral conduct, and with democratic rightists in supporting economic free enterprise with no or minimal government interference, and they accuse both leftists and conservatives of compartmentalized thinking or inconsistencies between the two realms. Thus, while libertarianism is one form of conservatism, libertarians criticize mainstream conservatives for inconsistency when they support government subsidies or bailouts for business or protectionist policies supposedly in the national interest. They are neither nationalistic and militaristic (like mainstream conservatives) nor for international cooperation (like leftists); they believe in unrestricted economic competition and free trade internationally as the best road to world peace. They oppose military drafts and favor minimal government spending on defense. They tend to oppose big defense spending as a racket for **special interests** and agree with leftists that arms races and wars result from excessive influence of the military and the defense industry on the government and economy of each opposing country.

## Notes on the Guide to Political Terms and Positions

I have attempted here to arrive at definitions that are acceptable to leftists and rightists alike—or at least to arrive at agreement between leftists and rightists on what they disagree about. This is a fiendishly difficult enterprise, since it is nearly inevitable that anyone attempting to do this, even with the best intentions, will stack the deck to some extent by projecting her or his own biases into the definitions. The best way to deal with this difficulty is to get suggestions for improvements from people



on the other side, as I have done in modifying this schema over several years. The whole schema is best understood as an exercise in semantic open-endedness, open to constant, dialogic revision; you should use it that way too, adding your own and your classmates' suggestions for improvement.

## A Note on Leftists and Rightists

The topics under "Leftists tend to support" and "Rightists tend to support" need some qualification. Note the phrasing "tend to"; that is to say, these oppositions and other general categories in this section are not asserted as absolute or total but only indicate the sympathies of the majority of people in each group, taking account of many exceptions and historical changes of allegiance. As for the list of issues on which leftists and rightists are opposed, there is bound to be dispute over the very way these oppositions are set up. For example, as the summary of the conservative position above indicates, conservatives will argue that the interests of business, management, and unregulated enterprise are not opposed to the interests of the poor, working class, employees, consumers, or the environment. Their arguments may be persuasive, yet the neutral fact remains that leftists and rightists constantly argue over whether these sets of interests are opposed or not.

The issues of economic, racial, and sexual equality are among the most heated sources of contemporary disputes. My initial wording here was that leftists tend to support equality and rightists inequality in these areas. My justification was that throughout most of Western history, conservatives have defended undemocratic, established hierarchies of class, race, and gender, while the eighteenth-century movement for democracy that culminated in the American Revolution and the credo that "all men are created equal" (with the significant exception of women and slaves) was the basis of modern liberalism.

Even in contemporary America, some conservatives continue to defend certain forms of inequality within a democracy. For example, in *Giants and Dwarfs*, a sequel to his controversial 1987 book *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom argues against the excessive democratization of higher education: "The university is, willy-nilly, in some sense aristocratic in both the conventional and natural senses of the term. It cannot, within broad limits, avoid being somewhat more accessible to the children of parents of means than to the children of the poor" (291). And he asserts that the liberal campaign for affirmative action "will brook no vestige of differentiation in qualities between men and women..... It

would more willingly accept a totalitarian regime than a free one in which the advantages of money, position, education, and even talent are unevenly distributed" (367). Another way of putting Bloom's argument is that excessive liberal demands for greater equality will have the **ironic** opposite effect of establishing a new, worse hierarchy of inequality with bureaucratic administrators at its top. Economic inequality

is defended in this book's readings by other conservatives, such as P. J. O'Rourke, "Closing the Wealth Gap," in Chapter 11, and Thomas Sowell, "Equality: A Grand Fallacy," in Chapter 13.

Not all contemporary conservatives go so far in defense of inequality as Bloom, O'Rourke, or Sowell, however. A more typical current conservative, or libertarian, line of argument is that unrestricted free enterprise is a more effective means of reducing all forms of inequality than liberal government legislation for affirmative action or progressive taxation, minimum-wage laws, and other attempts at more equitable income distribution. Another line used by conservatives is that they believe in equality of opportunity, as opposed to leftists' belief in equality of outcome, as in affirmative action. Many leftists, however, consider this a **false dichotomy**, since their position is that minorities, women, and the poor do *not* have equality of opportunity at present, so that affirmative action and other liberal policies are aimed at overcoming *this* inequality, not at attaining rigid equality of outcome. These are the reasons I have revised my wording to define the opposition as one between liberal calls for greater equality than at present versus conservative defenses of our present system as the best guarantor of equality. I hope, again, that this wording allows leftists and rightists to agree on what they disagree on. Do *you* agree, and if not, how can you improve on the definition?

On controversies like abortion, sexual conduct, pornography, legalization of drugs, and prayer in schools, leftists try to control the agenda by defining these issues in terms of civil and personal liberties, while rightists try to define them in terms of conservative morality versus liberal immorality or permissiveness. On morality in general, conservatives accuse leftists of favoring total relativism, hedonism, and rewarding of laziness, in opposition to conservative restraint and industriousness. Leftists claim this is another false dichotomy and **oversimplification**, misrepresenting what they actually believe and involving **selective vision** in ignoring comparable immoral behavior on the Part of many conservatives who do not practice what they preach. Since neither side accepts the premises of the other on these issues, no common ground may be attainable here beyond agreement on what the disagreements are.

Another approach to these issues involves the possibility of compartmentalized thinking on both sides. Leftists tend to justify a permissive position on issues of personal morality as a defense of individual liberties against intrusive government control, but on economic issues they favor government control to curb immoral business practices or economic policies that result in excessive wealth and power for the corporate elite. Rightists tend to favor just the opposite: government control over personal morality but not over business morality. Similarly, conservatives say that they oppose big government spending and fostering of individual dependency on government handouts; yet liberals respond that conservatives are all for big government spending and handouts as long as they go to favored conservative constituencies like the military and corporate subsidies or bailouts. Libertarians believe that theirs is the only consistent position on all these issues. Do you agree with them, or can you find statements by either leftists or rightists that reconcile their apparent inconsistencies?

Concerning views on religion, some refinement is needed of the suggestion that leftists favor pluralism, skepticism, or atheism, while rightists favor religious orthodoxy. Certainly it is true that historically liberals, socialists, and communists have tended strongly toward religious skepticism, and consequently toward tolerance of diverse beliefs and even of atheism; at the extreme left, to be sure, Communist governments have been intolerant of religion. But these tendencies on the right and left must be qualified by noting that Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and others are all internally divided between conservative and liberal factions; many Catholic “liberation theologians” even have Marxist social sympathies, in spite of Marxism’s historical hostility toward religion as “the opiate of the masses.” Also, leftists frequently are less opposed to religion itself than to the hypocrisy they claim to find in conservatives who do not practice the religious values they preach. As for conservatives, they might say the word *orthodoxy* has a negative **connotation** and prefer to replace it with something like “traditional religious beliefs and moral values.” Religious conservatives too are divided between orthodox groups like Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition and more ecumenical or pluralistic ones.

## A Note on Fascism

As a consequence of some forty-five years of Cold War anti-Communism (1945-1990), most Americans are probably familiar with the notion that if leftist or even liberal values are pushed to extremes, they can lead toward Communism. Far fewer Americans understand that if conservative values are pushed to extremes, they can lead toward fascism. Our concept of fascism is generally limited to movies about Nazi military atrocities in World War II, which convey little sense of the ideology of fascism. In fact, it might be said that the greatest danger of fascism is that so few people understand what it really is, so many might be attracted to its publicly stated beliefs without comprehending its evils. Several of my students have said, in effect, “Gee, fascism values strong patriotism, military strength, and leadership, as well as religious orthodoxy, family values, and law and order. Sounds pretty good to me.” What they do not understand is that historically, fascists have manipulated these appeals to gain power and then abolished democracy and imposed brutal dictatorships. Nor did fascism disappear after World War II, as is widely believed; quasi-fascist dictatorships have thrived all around the world up to the present, as indicated in the “Right Wing” column of table 15.1, and the United States has had an embarrassing record of supporting them, partly because they were strongly anti-Communist but also partly because they tended to do business with American corporations and the military.

Fascism is the ultimate manifestation of the human tendency toward authoritarianism and conformity studied in Chapter 8. The “good German” soldiers and civilians under Hitler **rationalized** going along with Nazi atrocities because “Our leader must

know what he's doing" and they had been culturally conditioned to obey those in authority. The appeal of fascism is especially strong in periods of national danger, when **appeals to fear** can be manipulated by those in power, as indicated in "The Rhetoric of War" in Chapter 14. Lawrence Britt's "Fascism Anyone" in the readings here suggests sobering parallels between past fascist societies and certain tendencies in the United States following September 11, 2001. Britt's article presents a provocative subject for class debate.

## Notes on Social Class and Political Attitudes

The table on what leftists and rightists tend to support includes "the poor and working class" on the left and "middle and upper class" on the right. These class labels are among the most ambiguous in political usage in this country, where nearly all people tend to describe themselves as middle class and where the even vaguer term "working Americans" serves to blur any distinction between the working and middle class. The debatability of these definitions jumps to the forefront of public discourse when, for example, President Clinton raises taxes on the upper class and lowers them on the middle class, or when Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush cut tax rates across the board, prompting criticism that the biggest benefits go to the upper class. In both cases, the presidents claim the major beneficiary is the middle class ("working Americans"); the question then becomes where the line is to be drawn between working, middle, and upper class.

Also, the class people *support* is not always the same class to which they *belong*. Table 15.3 suggests a very rough, unscientific approximation of the makeup of American social classes and how the classes relate to political attitudes. You can test this schema against your own impressions.

The totality of citizens who are termed "liberals" or "conservatives" is a coalition of the very different constituencies belonging to the three socioeconomic classes in the two columns. Most published sources (politicians, journalists, scholars) that you will encounter are writers or speakers who belong to the upper-middle or upper classes on either the left or right; typically, however, they will claim to be speaking and acting as **populists**, in support of the lower classes, who lack access to media of public opinion. (And frequently members of the lower classes will praise and support those at the higher levels in their column.) In predictable rhetorical patterns, those at the upper levels on one side will say that they are true populists, having the interests of the lower levels on their side at heart, while partisans of the other side will accuse those on the first side of being **elitists** who hypocritically pretend to be populists, manipulating the lower-class masses for their own benefit. So you need to make a judgment call about which side is sincere.

The line suggesting an S-curve from bottom to top indicates the following. In America and other societies, people at the poorest level, left-wing populism (*populism* being defined

### **Table 15.3. Social Class and Political Attitudes, Left to Right**

(These are very general approximations, indicating simply the tendencies of the majority of people in each group, with exceptions, and open to dispute)

#### **LIBERAL CONSERVATIVE**

##### **UPPER CLASS**

Income Over \$200,000, Net Worth over \$5 Million

Limousine Liberals:

Some Democratic politicians, bureaucrats

Some executives and "stars" in media

A few labor union officials

Country Club Conservatives:

Big business executives and major stockholders, corporate lawyers and lobbyists

as what represents, or is to the benefit of, the majority, or the common people, as opposed to the socioeconomic or cultural *elite*) tend to be liberal or leftist, as do those a step above them economically who are unionized workers—labor unions being the prime constituency of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. (This group also tends to include first-generation immigrants and city dwellers.) People reaching a higher level within the working class, and in sectors like the military, tend more to be conservative Republicans, the constituency of right-wing populism. (This group also includes many rural and small-town dwellers and second-generation immigrants.) These are some of the divisions that after the 2000 presidential election came to identify "Blue States" as Democratic and "Red States" as Republican, although liberal versus conservative attitudes on religion and other "social issues" within this broad socioeconomic range are another complicating variable.

As working-class people, or their children, move up into the middle class and go to college, those who follow business-oriented majors tend to stay on the right through life, while general-education majors are more inclined to become liberals, remaining so if they go to work in the public, nonprofit sector (especially teachers and professors) or in media, the arts, and other intellectual fields. If they advance toward upper-class status, those who remain liberal as labor union or Democratic Party officials, media executives, or "stars" are often termed "limousine liberals" (think Warren Beatty, Rosie O'Donnell, and Oprah Winfrey), implying a compartmentalization between class status and political attitudes. It is, however, less common for those who attain this level to remain liberal (which is why the concept of the limousine liberal is something of a **paradox**) than to swing back toward the right, the natural tendency, almost by definition, of people who attain wealth and power—as, for example, teachers or college faculty who become administrators, journalists who become editors, and performers who become executives.

## Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric

The following list of predictable patterns, like the “Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric,” is intended mainly to enable you to recognize a particular line of argument when you see it, not automatically to dismiss it as biased. It is a necessary and perfectly legitimate Part of argumentation to make the strongest case you can for your own cause and to point out the faults in opponents’ positions. Once you recognize these patterns, the more important task is to evaluate whether the points being played up and downplayed are well-reasoned and supported, or whether they are just appealing one-sidedly to knee-jerk emotional response.

### *Leftists will play up:*

Right-wing bias in media and education; power of business interests and administrators  
Crimes and fraud by the rich; luxury, waste, selfish interests and control of government by private industry and the military

Conservative ethnocentrism and sentimentality toward the middle and upper classes and America abroad

U.S. military strengths, right-wing “hawks” scare tactics about foreign adversaries’ strengths and menace  
Conservative rationalization of right-wing extremism and foreign dictatorships allied with U.S. (e.g., South Vietnam in Vietnam War, El Salvador in the 1980s, South Korea, Saudi Arabia)

### *Rightists will play up:*

Left-wing bias in media and education; power of employees and unions  
Crimes and fraud by the poor; luxury and waste by government bureaucrats; selfish interests and control over government by labor unions, teachers, environmentalist and civil rights organizations

Leftist “negative thinking,”  
”sour grapes,” anti-Americanism, and sentimentality toward the lower classes and Third World peoples

Foreign adversaries’ strengths, menace, and manipulation of left-wing “doves”; left-wing scare tactics about negative consequences of American military actions

Liberal rationalization of left-wing extremism and Communist dictatorships or guerillas (e.g., Cuba, Sandinista Nicaragua, North Vietnam, North Korea, Aristide in Haiti, Mugabe in Zimbabwe)

## A Note on Twenty-first Century Modifications to Table 15.1

The worldwide, twentieth-century political spectrum in 15.1 has undergone considerable change. The major change in the 1990s was the collapse of the Soviet Union and

its satellite Communist governments in Eastern Europe. At this writing, there still exist some Communist dictatorships on the far left (most prominently Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, and China, though the latter two have moved toward a capitalist economy while remaining political dictatorships) and some plutocratic dictatorships on the far right (such as Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Indonesia, and Guatemala). However, the extreme poles of Communism on the left and Fascism on the right no longer dominate world politics as they did through much of the twentieth century. The United States still remains to the right of Europe, Canada, and Japan on the spectrum of socialist-to-capitalist democracies. However, Western Europe in recent decades has seen a resurgence of an extreme right-wing, prompted mainly by opposition to swelling ranks of immigrant labor, mainly Arab, which is perceived as a threat to native employment and culture and as a possible source of terrorism. Anti-Semitism is also prevalent in the European right, a phenomenon of compartmentalized thinking, in light of the right's equal anti-Arab bias and of the antagonism between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

Two primary complications have made the worldwide left-right polarity somewhat obsolete, although it remains viable in the American spectrum in table 15.2. One is economic globalization, which has to a large extent eclipsed national identities and ideological conflicts. Advocates of the global economy tend to be conservatives in the sense that they support big business, although they are sometimes termed "neoliberals" because they emphasize its progressive, democratizing effects on governments and economies in previously undeveloped countries. Opponents of globalization, generally leftists, say it is just a new form of colonialism and plutocracy calculated to drive down wages, worsen working conditions, and undermine unionized labor worldwide.

The other recent complication is the prominence of worldwide religious and ethnic conflicts, especially between, and within, the Western and Muslim worlds. Here distinguishing between left and right gets extremely complicated. Islamic terrorism is an outgrowth of Muslim countries that are internally conflicted between two different forms of conservative politics: secular, plutocratic (mainly oil-rich) forces (some allied with America and Western Europe, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, some hostile, like Iraq under Saddam Hussein); and fundamentalist Islamic movements hostile to the West, like Iran. No one in American public life endorses terrorism or supported Saddam Hussein, but most conservatives are "hawks" and most liberals "doves" in their degree of support for military and domestic antiterrorist policies. (Liberals tend to favor more international diplomacy and policies that address underlying causes of Muslim antagonism toward the United States, while conservatives tend to favor primarily military action.) The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is primarily a struggle over land, not ideology, although it also involves religion and colonialism. Israel is a leftist social democracy internally, but it is periodically dominated by governments that are right-wing (and closely allied to American conservatives) in their hard-line policy toward the Palestinian Arabs, in contrast to the Israeli left, which seeks compromise with the Palestinians. For these reasons and others, American conservatives generally support Israel, while leftists generally support the Palestinians.

# Political Viewpoints in Sources

Many sources that you will use for college papers have an explicit or implicit political viewpoint. Consider the following lists and discussion of American periodicals, book publishers, and research institutes identified by political position.

## General Circulation Periodicals

This is a partial list, mainly of journals of opinion, intended to supplement, not replace, the more accessible, mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, most of which have a centerconservative to center-liberal orientation. (These hyphenated terms reflect the discussion of table 15.2 above, suggesting that identifying points on a continuous spectrum from left to right would be more accurate than labels like “liberal” and “conservative.” A rough approximation can be achieved by sets of terms like “left-liberal,” “center-liberal,” “right-liberal,” and so on.)

*American Enterprise*

*American Prospect*

*American Spectator Atlantic Monthly Chronicles*

*Commonweal*

*Dissent*

*Extra!*

*Harper's*

*Human Events*

*Insight (Washington Times)*

*In These Times*

*Modern Age*

*Mother Jones*

*Ms.*

*The Nation*

*National Review*

*New Politics*

*New Republic*

*New York Review of Books*

*Sunday New York Times*

*New Yorker*

*Policy Review*

*Progressive*

*Public Interest*

*Public Opinion*

*Reason*

*Rolling Stone*

*Tikkun*



*Utne Reader*  
*Village Voice*  
*Washington Monthly Weekly Standard*  
*World Press Review*  
*Z Magazine*

Monthly Monthly Monthly Monthly Monthly Biweekly Bimonthly Bimonthly  
Monthly Weekly Weekly Biweekly Quarterly Monthly Monthly Weekly Biweekly  
Quarterly Weekly Biweekly Weekly Weekly Monthly Monthly Quarterly Monthly  
Monthly Biweekly Bimonthly Monthly Weekly Monthly Weekly Monthly Monthly

Center-to-right conservative  
Left-Liberal  
Right-conservative  
Right-liberal  
Left-conservative Christian  
Left-liberal Catholic  
Socialist-to-liberal  
Socialist  
Left-liberal  
Right conservative  
Right conservative  
Socialist  
Center-conservative  
Left-liberal  
Center-to-left-liberal  
Socialist-to left-liberal  
Center-conservative  
Socialist  
Right-liberal to left-conservative Center-to-left liberal  
Center liberal to left conservative  
Center-to-left liberal  
Center-to-right conservative Socialist  
Left-to-center-conservative  
Center-conservative  
Conservative libertarian  
Center-liberal  
Left-liberal  
Digest of liberal journals Left-liberal  
Center-liberal  
Center-conservative  
Digest of foreign views  
Socialist

Most of the influential national newspapers—such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*—attempt to strike a balance between liberal and conservative in their reporting, editorial and op-ed pages, and cultural reviews, although they are generally considered predominantly liberal (except by comparison to the smaller journals of opinion to their left, which delight in trashing the big papers for their relative conservatism).

The *Wall Street Journal*, however, is openly conservative, especially in its editorial and op-ed sections. The *Washington Times* was founded in the 1980s by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon as a conservative daily counter Part to the *Washington Post*. Most other newspapers around the country—along with TV and radio stations—tend either to be owned by large local business interests and consequently to represent their conservative politics and that of their corporate advertisers and community peers, or, more recently, to have been bought up by conservative national chains, as documented by Ben H. Bagdikian in *The New Media Monopoly*. In reading newspaper or news-magazine reviews of books on controversial topics, you should be aware that reviews are likely to be colored by the reviewer's own political viewpoint as well as that of the authors reviewed, and that editors' biases sometimes influence whether they assign a book to a reviewer who is on the same side as the author reviewed or to one on the opposing side. In both reviews and other articles written by either staffers or freelance authors (and sometimes even in letters to the editor), editors are also free to demand revisions and even to rewrite the author's text substantially, with or without permission, so much of what we read, watch, or hear may be filtered through editors' biases.

Journals of opinion in America and other countries have served, throughout their centuries-long history, largely as a voice for the particular political viewpoint of their owners (typically a single individual or family), although that viewpoint might change over the years with changes in owners or in the original owners' views. Two of the best-known for over a century have been the *Nation* and the *New Republic*; the early history of both was radical leftist—until the 1950s they were sometimes aligned with the Communist Party of America. The *Nation* has remained the best-known left-of-liberal journal (anti-Communist under publisher Victor Navasky, though its critics still claim to find vestiges of its earlier history), while the *New Republic* under the ownership of Martin Peretz since the 1960s has become conservative on some issues, liberal on others. Other accessible journals on the left-of-liberal side include *The Progressive*, *In These Times*, *Dissent*, *Mother Jones*, *Z Magazine*, and *Extra!* (published by FAIR, or Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting). The *New Yorker* has wide circulation and its scope is broader than politics, but insofar as it is partially a journal of opinion and reportage, in recent decades it has been consistently mainstream liberal. Two magazines well established in American history back to the mid-nineteenth century are *Harper's* and the *Atlantic Monthly*; like the *New Yorker*, they have semi-mass circulation and contain a wide variety of articles and fiction, but they have been generally liberal in their politics, though this has shifted with changes in owners and editors. For example,

in the last decade or so *Harper's*, under the editorship of Lewis Lapham, has been decidedly more liberal than *Atlantic Monthly*.

The best-known conservative journals of opinion since the 1950s have been *Commentary* (which under the editorship of Norman Podhoretz shifted sharply from left to right in the late 1960s) and *National Review*, long owned and edited by William F. Buckley, who also is a prominent spokesperson for the right on public television. With the rise of the conservative "counterintelligentsia" since the 1970s has come a profusion of other conservative journals, including *American Spectator* (which began as a semischolarly, conservative counter Part to the *New York Review*, but which now aims at a broader audience and contains more political exposes, opinion, and invective) and the *Weekly Standard*, funded by Rupert Murdoch and edited by William Kristol (who was chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle), which serves as the unofficial voice of the Republican Party intelligentsia. *Insight*, the weekly magazine of the *Washington Times*, is available at some newsstands nationally, and a *Washington Times* weekly edition also has national circulation, as does the *Washington Post* weekly. Several publications of the conservative research institutes discussed below began as scholarly journals but are now aimed at a general audience: *American Enterprise* (American Enterprise Institute), *Policy Review* (Heritage Foundation), and the *Cato Journal* (Cato Institute). *Reason* is a widely available libertarian journal.

## Publishers of Books and Reports

### *Liberal or Socialist*

Pantheon Press

Monthly Review Press

South End Press

Praeger

Beacon Press

Seabury/Continuum Books

Routledge

Methuen

Bergin & Garvey

New Press

Metropolitan Books

Common Courage Press

Paradigm Publishers

### *Conservative or Libertarian*

Arlington House

Freedom House

Brandon Books

Reader's Digest Books

Basic Books

Laissez-Faire Books (libertarian)

Regnery Books

Simon & Schuster

Free Press

Spence Publishing

Most of the major publishers of serious nonfiction and fiction books have no fixed political viewpoint, so they publish a mix of conservative and liberal works. Some of them, however, are predominantly, though not exclusively, conservative—Simon & Schuster, Free Press, Basic Books—and others are predominantly liberal, most notably Random House and its Pantheon division, though changes in corporate ownership have cut back on Pantheon's leftist offerings, and its editor Andre Schiffren left several years ago and started the New Press as an alternative. Several smaller presses publish almost exclusively conservative books and others almost exclusively liberal to left-of-liberal ones, as listed in the table of books.

## Research Institutes and Foundations (“Think Tanks”)

Institute for Policy Studies

Center for Responsive Law (*Public Citizen*)

Public Interest Research Groups

Common Cause (*Common Cause*)

Brookings Institution

Institute for Democratic Socialism

(*Democratic Left, Socialist Forum*)

Center for the Study of Democratic

Institutions (*New Perspectives Quarterly*)

Progressive Policy Institute

Center for American Progress

American Enterprise Institute

(*American Enterprise*)

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Hoover Institution (Stanford University)

Media Institute

Hudson Institute

Heritage Foundation (*Policy Review*)

Olin Foundation

Scaife Foundation

Cato Institute (libertarian)

Harry and Lynde Bradley Foundation

Manhattan Institute

Most of the American public is not very familiar with the workings of research institutes, also known as think tanks, or the foundations that fund them, but they

have become increasingly influential in the formation of public opinion in the past few decades, along **partisan** political lines. Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, large American universities have housed a variety of research institutes where faculty members work virtually full-time rather than teach; teaching faculties also conduct research projects with funding from government agencies, corporations, nonprofit foundations, and occasionally labor or consumer organizations. In both universities and the more recent private research institutes, projects dealing directly or indirectly with socioeconomic or environmental issues may have a liberal or conservative bias according to the researchers' and funders' own ideological inclinations. The best way to find out whether a book you use as a source has been sponsored by a foundation or think tank, liberal or conservative, is to look in the acknowledgments section at the beginning or end of most journalistic and scholarly books, where the author will thank such-and-such a foundation or institute for financial support. Similar affiliations of writers of op-ed columns are typically indicated in a biographical note.

In the early 1970s, a group of national conservative leaders sought a solution to what they saw as the overall liberal or left-of-liberal bias of American universities, at least in the humanities and social sciences, and of the media, foundations, and intellectual life generally. They set out to build up a conservative counterintelligentsia by persuading several large corporations and corporate-aligned foundations to pour millions of dollars into the creation of think tanks mostly independent of universities. These institutions would conduct research supporting conservative causes and would publish books and reports, magazines and newspaper articles and lobby the media, as well as provide policy analyses and proposals for conservative politicians. These foundations have also endowed professorships in many universities in an attempt to increase conservative influence within them. Thus the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University have been in direct service to Republican presidential administrations, members of Congress, and judges. From the eighties to the present, the Republican-allied Olin, Scaife, and Bradley foundations have sponsored many books, magazines, and public television programs as platforms for conservative journalists and scholars on education and "the culture wars." Books sponsored by these organizations include Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*, Christina Hoff-Sommers's *Who Stole Feminism?* and David Brock's *Real Anita Hill* and *The Seduction of Hillary Clinton* (portions of both had been published in *The American Spectator*, a flamboyantly conservative journal of opinion funded by billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife, who also funds the Scaife Foundation).<sup>1</sup> (As noted in Chapter 11, several of the same sponsors and foundations fund conservative college student organizations such as Young America's Foundation.) Al-

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<sup>1</sup> In a 1997 article for *Esquire* and in his 2002 book *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an ExConservative*, Brock tells of how he was dropped as a reporter by the *American Spectator* when that publication and Scaife found his book on Hillary Clinton insufficiently negative toward the Clintons. Scaife also withdrew his financial support from *American Spectator* when it did not pursue his personal campaign against President Clinton to his satisfaction.

though many other think tanks and foundations have a liberal orientation, the only ones with a direct link to the Democratic Party are the Progressive Policy Institute, a branch of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, with which Bill Clinton and Al Gore were affiliated, and more recently, the liberal Center for American Progress.

Conservatives, typified by David Horowitz in “The Intellectual Class War” here, argue that their foundations and think tanks serve as a legitimate counterforce to more lavishly funded foundations like Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and MacArthur, which support mainly liberal causes. Liberals argue that this is a **false analogy** on several points: unlike the conservative ones, these foundations are not exclusively involved with political issues, they do not have an overt political agenda or party affiliation, they do not act as agents of the corporations sponsoring them (indeed, some of the projects they fund are highly critical of such corporations), and they fund some conservative projects along with a majority of liberal ones whose nature makes them unlikely to receive corporate funding.

The rise of these conservative institutes has provoked a great deal of controversy, with liberals questioning the integrity of their research and charging them with conflict of interest and **special pleading**. Their defenders’ rebuttal is that their overt partisanship serves legitimately to counterbalance the covert liberal partisanship of most university faculties (at least in the humanities and social sciences), journalists, and foundations. And the liberal counterrebuttal is that liberal bias in these groups is a legitimate counterbalance to all the realms of American public discourse that are dominated by corporations—political lobbies, advertising and public relations, corporate-owned media, business-oriented academic departments, university trusteeships and administrations, and so on—and that most liberal scholars or journalists are not beholden to special interests funding them. Be that as it may, for our purposes here it is useful for you just to know that you are likely to get a liberal viewpoint in the courses and writing of university or research-institute scholars in the hu[[manities or social sciences and that you should compare it with the viewpoint of professors in business-oriented courses and information originating with the conservative think tanks.<sup>2</sup> The somewhat absurd nature of this recent politicization of research institutes was captured in a satirical column by Jon Carroll (*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1998, C20), “Thinking about Think Tanks”:

There are your right-wing think tanks and your left-wing think tanks. They are funded by people with agendas; they are stocked like trout streams with people of a particular ideological bent who produce papers that discover reasons why it Makes Sense to believe tweedle or, contrariwise, twaddle.

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<sup>2</sup> Several books have been written on the history of these conservative think tanks, including Sidney Blumenthal, *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment: From Conservative Ideology to Political Power* and Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America’s Social Agenda*. For personal accounts by former insiders in these circles who now criticize them for being **propaganda** organs of the Republican Party, see Michael Lind, *Up from Conservatism* and David Brock, *Blinded by the Right* and *The Republican Big Noise Machine*.

The people in the think tanks are often described as “respected” or “distinguished.” They are “scholars.” They just sit and think and think, and when they are done thinking, they believe whatever the person who’s paying them to think also believes.

# Chapter 17. Political Party Statements of Purpose

*From The California Voter Information Booklet  
November 2000*

## **Democratic Party**

With your support, Democrats from Governor Gray Davis to your local candidates will continue fighting for working families, our youth and the elderly. Democrats are dedicated to the issues that matter.

Together, Democrats have:

- Increased school accountability, supported teachers and improved public education, resulting in higher test scores
- Insured that California's economy will continue to expand
- Passed tough legislation to get assault weapons and Saturday Night Specials off our streets and out of our schools
- Enacted meaningful HMO reform, giving healthcare decisions back to patients and their doctors

By electing Al Gore as President, re-electing U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and supporting Democratic candidates for Congress and the State Legislature, Democrats will be able to continue fighting for:

- Expanded educational opportunities, including hiring more teachers
- Further reductions in violent crimes to make our neighborhoods and schools safer
- A woman's right to choose
- Seniors by protecting Social Security and Medicare benefits
- Affordable prescription drugs, especially for seniors
- Greater environmental protections and a clean environment for future generations



- Tolerance and the eradication of hate crimes

Please join us. Become a member of our e-mail network. Together, we can build a better California.

SENATOR ART TORRES, (Ret.), *Chairman* California Democratic Party  
 911 20th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-3115 916-442-5707 FAX: 916-442-5715  
 Email: info@a-dem.org Website: www.cadem.org

### **Republican Party**

Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President, fought to protect the freedoms of every American citizen. The California Republican Party shares his vision and spirit of fairness. Today, we are working hard to see that all of California's residents are empowered with the opportunity to enjoy the American dream.

Today, the California Republican Party is fighting for:

- *Better Schools* for our children. Parents, teachers and local school boards should decide what's best for our children—not the state education bureaucracy in Sacramento.
- *Safe Neighborhoods*, victims' rights and tougher criminal laws. No one is free if they feel threatened in their own homes and communities.
- *Tax Relief* and an accountable, efficient government responsive to the people who pay their salaries.

We feel that California's government today should be more like the businesses that serve you well. Your government should not be a burden in your life—saddling you with excessive taxes and regulations.

We are working for our state's future and to ensure that every Californian has the same opportunities regardless of race or ethnicity. Please join us as we work together to build a brighter, more prosperous California.

JOHN MCGRAW, *Chairman*

The California Republican Party

Ronald Reagan California Republican Center 1903 West Magnolia Boulevard, Burbank, CA 91506

818-841-5210 Email: Chairman@cagop.org Website: <http://www.cagop.org>

### **Natural Law Party**

The Natural Law Party was founded to create a new, mainstream political party to offer voters forward-looking, prevention-oriented, scientifically proven solutions to America's problems. Our principles and programs harness the most up-to-date scientific knowledge of natural law—the intelligence of nature that governs our complex universe—and apply it to public policy.

Currently America's fastest growing political party, the Natural Law Party stands for prevention-oriented government, conflict-free politics, and proven solutions, including:

- Natural health care programs shown to prevent disease and cut costs
- Education that develops students' full potential through programs that increase intelligence and creativity
- Effective, field-tested crime prevention and rehabilitation programs
- Lowering taxes through cost-effective solutions, not reduced services
- Protecting the environment through use of energy efficient and nonpolluting energy sources
- Safeguarding America's food supply through sustainable, organic agriculture practices
- Mandatory labeling and safety testing of genetically engineered food
- Ensuring a strong economy by harnessing the creativity of our citizens and implementing pro-growth fiscal policies
- Promoting more prosperous, harmonious international relations by increasing the export of U.S. know-how, rather than weapons
- Ending special interest control of politics by eliminating PACs, soft money, and lobbying by former public servants

NATURAL LAW PARTY OF CALIFORNIA P. O. Box 50843, Palo Alto, CA 94303  
831-425-2201 FAX: 831-427-9230

Email: [nlpca@aol.com](mailto:nlpca@aol.com) Website: [http:// www.natural-law.org](http://www.natural-law.org)

### **Reform Party**

The *Reform Party* is the leading national "third" party and is committed to:

- *Setting the highest ethical standards for the White House and Congress;*
- *Implementing Campaign Finance reform:* reduce campaigns to four months and require Members of Congress to raise all money from their district voters;
- *Balancing the budget and passing the Balanced Budget Amendment;*
- *Creating a new simpler and fairer tax system* to pay the bills, and requiring future tax increases be approved by the people;
- *Election reform:* voting on Saturdays and Sundays, not Tuesdays, so working people can get to the polls;
- *Term Limits:* three terms for the House and two terms for the Senate;

- *Carefully established plans for Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security;*
- *Negotiating trade agreements* promoting American jobs, protecting the environment and creating an environment in which small businesses can develop;
- *Lobbying reform:* prohibiting former officials from working for foreign interests as foreign lobbyists and prohibiting gifts from foreign interests at any time.

Join the thousands of Americans from every Part of the country who want to reform their government *now* and bring the control and the destiny of their families in line with the American Dream!

RAYMOND O. MILLS, *Chair*

Reform Party of California (“RPCa”)

P.O. Box 1914, Tustin, CA 92781

Messages: 888-82-REFORM Phone/Fax/ Hotline: 714-7-311-311

Email: ReformPartyOC@juno.com

Website: <http://California.ReformParty.org>

### **American Independent Party**

The American Independent Party, California affiliate of the Constitution Party, supports:

The sanctity of innocent human life, including the lives of the unborn;

Protection of American jobs from unfair foreign competition; repeal of NAFTA, GATT/WTO;

Limits on legal immigration, and an end to illegal immigration; no tax funded benefits to illegals;

Excellence in education, and right of parents to choose public schools, private schools, or home schooling;

Control of crime; capital punishment for the most aggravated offenses;

Right of citizens to keep and bear arms as provided by the Bill of Rights;

Ending the personal income tax, and abolition of the IRS;

A debt free money system;

A non-interventional foreign policy, and a strong national defense free of waste;

Protection of consumers’ rights in utility rates, insurance, health care, and housing;

Consideration of human needs in environmental concerns.

We oppose any revision of the California Constitution to limit the right to vote, impair the people’s right of initiative, overturn voter approved term limits, make it easier for government to tax and spend, or create bureaucratic regional governments.

We oppose both government speculation with social security funds, and affirmative action programs which substitute racial favoritism for individual ability.

PAUL MEEUWENBERG, *State Chairman* American Independent Party

1084 W. Marshall Blvd., San Bernardino, CA 92405

559-299-3875 Email: [sbaip@gte.net](mailto:sbaip@gte.net)

Website: [www.aipca.org](http://www.aipca.org)

### **Libertarian Party**

The Libertarian Party, founded in 1971, is one of the most successful third parties in U.S. history. Dozens of Libertarians hold office across California, including Mendocino County District Attorney Norman L. Vroman, Calaveras County Supervisor Thomas Tryon, and Moreno Valley Mayor Pro Team Bonnie Flickinger. Libertarians are neither liberal nor conservative. Libertarians believe that you have the right to live your life as you wish, without the government interfering—as long as you don't violate the rights of others. Politically, this means Libertarians favor rolling back the size and cost of government and eliminating laws that stifle the economy and control people's personal choices.

Specifically, the Libertarian Party of California is fighting to:

- Improve education by reducing the role of government and encouraging choice and competition
- Make neighborhoods safe by ending the failed War on Drugs, giving lawabiding citizens greater freedom to protect themselves, and punishing violent criminals rather than prosecuting victimless crimes
- Sharply reduce California's bloated \$100 billion state government

Increasingly, voters frustrated with the status quo are turning to the Libertarian Party. We invite you to join us as we fight for everyone's liberty on every issue, all the time.

MARK W. A. HINKLE, *Chair* Libertarian Party of California 14547 Titus St., Suite 214, Panorama City, CA 91402-4935

800-ELECT-US Email: [office@ca.lp.org](mailto:office@ca.lp.org) Website: [www.lp.org](http://www.lp.org)

### **Green Party**

The Green Party's core values include social and economic justice, ecological wisdom, nonviolence, and grassroots democracy.

We Support:

Living wages, safe workplaces, and the right to organize unions.

Strong local economies and an end to corporate welfare.

Universal health care, including alternative methods and mental health.

Protection of reproductive freedom.

Higher taxes on pollution and large corporations, lower taxes on working people.

More funding for education, while allowing schools to try the new ideas.

Ending unfair global trade laws.

Equal rights for people of all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, national origins, and economic backgrounds.

Ending attacks on the poor and immigrants through so-called welfare reform.

Stronger regulations for clean air and water and protection of endangered species, and eliminating toxic and cancer-causing chemicals.

More mass transit and bicycle access.

Increasing renewable energy and ending nuclear power, coal, and big dams as energy sources.

Organic and family farms.

Crime prevention—promote education, job opportunities, and nonviolent problem solving. Treat addiction as a health issue. No new prisons.

Abolishing the death penalty.

Use of the internet for free speech and information distribution.

Campaign finance reform and proportional representation.

The right of all to participate fully in democratic processes

GREEN PARTY OF CALIFORNIA

P.O. Box 2828, Sacramento, CA 95812 916-448-3437 Email: gpca@greens.org Web-site: <http://www.greens.org/california>

*If We Decided to Tax the Rich]]*

*By Steve Brouwer*

From *Sharing the Pie*, New York: Henry Holt, 1998. The footnotes which accompanied the original article have not been included with this reading.

*The very rich are different from you and me.*—F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

*Yes . . . they have more money.*—ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Can the people of the United States retake control, once again taxing the richest citizens at a progressive rate and creating a fair society for all? If we had a Congress and a president who were willing to promote the interests of the vast majority of Americans, we could recapture some of the accumulated wealth that has been transferred to the rich over the last two decades. A reallocation of our resources could serve working people in the following ways:

- by creating full employment, with a higher minimum wage and shorter workweek
- by supporting quality day care for all who need it
- by providing for federally funded health care that serves everyone
- by rebuilding the nation's schools, roads, bridges, sewers, and parks
- by offering free higher education and other training to all citizens

Measures such as this will certainly cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Where can we get this kind of money while keeping the budget deficit reasonably low? There are several places to start:

- We must reestablish upper-bracket federal income tax rates comparable to those imposed during the prosperous decades of the 1950s and 1960s. The current effective rate on the richest 1 percent, whose income is at least \$900 billion per year, is about 25 percent. An effective tax rate of 50 percent on the very richest 1 percent of Americans would raise an extra \$225 billion.
- Raise the effective tax rate on corporate profits to 50 percent, the approximate rate of the 1950s. Profits have risen dramatically, to over \$600 billion per year, while taxes have remained at an effective rate of about 25 percent, so this increase would yield another \$150 billion.
- Institute an annual wealth tax of 3 percent on the richest 1 percent of Americans; this will yield \$250 billion per year.
- Cut defense spending on new weaponry by \$100 billion to stay in line with the diminished military budgets of the rest of the world.

These proposals, and the \$725 billion they would raise, might outrage the corporations and the rich, as well as the politicians whom they have so carefully cultivated; but it would hardly be a case of impoverishing the well-to-do. The \$625 billion in increased taxation would simply restore the more equitable (but hardly equal) distribution of income and wealth enjoyed by Americans three decades ago. The exact fiscal measures used to achieve more egalitarian economic outcomes are not all that important; the ones listed above could be modified or partially replaced by others. (For instance, Social Security taxes could be made less regressive by assessing them on the highest salaries, and on all forms of property and financial income as well. Other worthy forms of taxation could be reestablished, such as the once progressive but now largely eviscerated inheritance tax.)

## **Big Problems Require Big Solutions**

A class war, waged by the rich with very little opposition from the working class, has already taken place. The size of economic transfers recommended here would enable us to redress the imbalance of power in appropriate proportion to the inequality that has been imposed over the past twenty years. The money is there, and its redistribution back to working people would establish the balance that exists in most of the other highly industrialized countries.

Righting the imbalance between the rich and the working class is not just a matter of tinkering with budget deficit rules or massaging the Consumer Price Index or the measures of productivity. It is a battle for political and economic power, a matter of control over the political economy. Sharing our economic resources more equitably again will require ordinary citizens to exercise their democratic rights in a determined and unified manner. This fundamental shift cannot be accomplished by a quick swing of

voters in one election, but only through a lengthy process of education and organization that convinces the American people that major changes are both desirable and possible.

## Labor and Work

Even though labor unions in the United States threw \$35 million into targeted congressional races in 1996, there is little merit in the conservative claim that organized labor has the same kind of power in the Democratic Party as big business interests have in the Republican Party. Unions have resources that are minuscule compared with those of business interests: in 1996, all labor associations together collected \$6 billion in dues, as compared with the \$4 trillion in revenues and \$360 billion in profits gathered by corporations. Labor can gain politically only when millions of working people, unionized and nonunionized, are engaged in the political process.

There are reasons for optimism. Despite the fact that the percentage of organized workers has been more than cut in half in the past forty years, from 35 percent to less than 15 percent, unions have made recent gains in organizing women, Hispanics, and African-Americans as members. In making an effort to organize the working poor and to alleviate the exploitation of part-time and contingent workers, unions are reviving the universal goals that once gave life to the labor movement. The emphasis on raising the wages of those at the bottom is crucial in two ways: it stresses the equal status due to all those who are willing to work, and it protects the wages and benefits of those already organized.

A distinct turnaround in public perceptions of the labor movement became evident in August of 1997 during the strike by drivers and package handlers at United Parcel Service. Opinion polls showed that Americans backed the Teamsters over UPS management by a margin of 2 to 1. This was a bit surprising given the Teamsters' well-publicized history of corruption and the fact that UPS was generally regarded as a good company. Two beliefs seemed most compelling to average Americans: first, that a company making billions in profits should be able to share them with hardworking employees; and second, that a company which had increased its number of part-timers to over 60 percent of its workforce, then paid them only half the wages of full-time workers, was trying to screw people over. This resonated with many average Americans who had either experienced downsizing themselves or who clearly understood that many companies felt free to throw loyal and competent workers aside.

The shift in public attitudes was having an effect on some voices emanating from the business press. *Business Week*, which had celebrated corporate CEOs as "stars" who deserved the 30 percent raises they received in 1995, did an about-face in April of 1997 when it reviewed the 54 percent increase in CEO compensation for 1996: "Call it Executive Over-Compensation," read the headline of their editorial, which concluded, "Compensation is running riot in many corner offices of corporate America. This simply has to stop." More surprising still was the magazine's reaction when it uncovered a tiny increase in wages of working Americans (about 1 percent) that had occurred between

the summer of 1996 and the summer of 1997: “The prosperity of recent years is finally being shared by those in the lower tier of the economy—and that is cause for celebration, not despair.” While *Business Week* was obviously premature in announcing that prosperity was being shared, its sentiments suggested that American concerns with inequality were finally being heard.

While the destruction of the social safety net has been a defeat for labor, welfare itself can be redefined by a progressive, laborbacked political program. Welfare should represent Part of a universal social contract that can be extended to anyone who meets with severe economic hardships. The contract would make only one demand: that every capable citizen be willing to work. In return each citizen would receive good wages, quality education, and job training, with the added benefits of universal health care and day care. This kind of practical social democracy, grounded in the culture of working people, would quickly deflate the false claims of the right, that the poor are “lazy,” “shiftless,” and worse. The vast majority of the unemployed and underemployed poor, of whatever race, would be happy to claim membership in a newly dignified working class.

The power of labor has been unfairly curtailed in recent decades, so it is necessary to fight the legal restrictions and management policies that prevent union activity among the poorly paid and unorganized. But this alone is not sufficient. The more challenging task is convincing a good portion of the middle class that it too benefits from working-class mobilization. New kinds of political and social organizations must be formed—not necessarily traditional labor unions—to articulate the goals that middleclass employees share with lower-paid workers. Political solutions will require a very broad solidarity among working Americans, a solidarity that can bridge class, racial, and ethnic lines. This should not be too difficult at a time when working conditions, benefits, and job security are deteriorating even among privileged salaried workers, and when many in the so-called middle class are being subjected to “working-class” treatment by senior management.

## Conclusion

This short book is filled with facts and numbers and analyses that some will consider negative, depressing, and downright unAmerican. My purpose in drawing this picture of the political economy is to plant the seeds of understanding in the minds of working Americans. Not all of our economic and social problems began the last two decades of the twentieth century, but the policies pursued during the Reagan-Bush-Clinton era have made things considerably worse. Working people have suffered so that a small elite could enlarge its fortunes. In turn, this accumulated money has been wasted on speculative trading, widespread fraud, and nonproductive sectors of the economy, as well as corporate investment in countries where labor is provided by desperately poor people.



The old structures of capital accumulation have brought us regular cycles of poverty and depression in the past. Today things are worse, for capital has lost whatever productive drive and capability it once possessed; the glorification of entrepreneurship in the 1980s brought on the destruction, not the multiplication, of our national assets. The upper class tried to regenerate itself through money games that were far removed from real economic production: the plunder of the banking system, the privatization of public savings, and the paper trade in corporate assets.

It seemed, only a few years back, that if the United States failed to break these habits we would keep sinking in relation to other highly industrialized countries. The ascent of the economies of Japan, Germany, and the rest of Western Europe from 1950 to 1990 was remarkable. They seemed poised to leave us behind precisely because they were taking much better care of their people at the same time that their societies were becoming more productive.

Today something more frightening is happening. The United States, in concert with the corporate engines of globalization, may well bring the rest of the industrialized world down to its level. Once that has happened, the forces unleashed by international finance capital will keep pushing living standards downward. It is uncertain whether the kinds of social democracy set up in Western Europe can survive the current trends that have internationalized capital. Now, as capital moves quickly from continent to continent, often searching for cheap labor disciplined by authoritarian regimes, the capitalists are becoming more internationalized, too (whether they know it or not). They cannot possibly show loyalty, whether feigned or real, to the working and middle classes in their own countries.

Without a sharp turnaround toward democracy and equality in the United States, Europe will be virtually alone in its commitment to social democracy. The pressures of low-wage immigrant labor, cheap imports from Eastern Europe and Asia, and free-market practices of governments are already threatening once secure areas of employment and causing right-wing populism to pop up in various Western European countries. Surprising numbers of middle-class and working-class voters have supported ultranationalist, neofacist parties throughout Europe because, like white male workers in the United States, they see their status slipping.

Europe's weakened remnants of social democracy may survive for a while, but are unlikely to do very well if the American, Japanese, and other international investors (including Europeans) keep filling the world's markets with cheaper products produced by mainland Chinese, Indonesians, Thais, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and others in the vast new workhouse of Asia. In this chaotic world mess, the authoritarian/austerity regimes based on the Taiwanese and South Korean experience will be the model for modern development; their kinds of management teams are exportable, as are their long hours and brutal working conditions. These factors are rapidly turning China, the ultimate labor resource, into a giant replica of the Asian Tiger economy.

In the United States few mainstream commentators are paying attention to the ways that "free-trade" ideology is undermining real freedom. They have failed, for instance,

to see the dark portents behind President Clinton's willingness to seek campaign contributions from Indonesian billionaires and Chinese corporations. Conservative columnist and former Nixon speechwriter William Safire was one of the few to see the situation clearly when he described "the central point of the ideo-economic struggle going on in today's world. On one side are governments that put 'order' above all, and offer an under-the-table partnership to managers who like arranged outcomes and a docile work force."

If Arkansas, which looks suspiciously like a center of Third World development within the United States, is the economic and political model stuck inside our President's head, then we are already in trouble. And if Singapore is the model state for globalizing high-tech development in the eyes of the world's investing class, then we are drifting toward something worse: an illusion of democracy called "authoritarian democracy."

Nearly one hundred and seventy years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that "the manufacturing aristocracy which is growing up before our eyes is one of the harshest that ever existed in the world. If ever a perma-

nent inequality of conditions and aristocracy again penetrate the world, it may be predicted that this is the gate by which they will enter." The new corporate aristocracy—controlling not just transnational manufacturing but also worldwide finance and services—is more powerful than anything de Tocqueville could have imagined, and it has diminished the prospects for democracy in America.

The citizens of the United States need to restrain the single-minded accumulation of private capital, invest in strong public institutions, and give human values some room to thrive. Real democracy requires that the people find ways to share wealth and power. As the repositories of immense wealth and technical expertise, the rich nations of the North ought to promote peaceful and fair development rather than unleash free-market chaos throughout the rest of the world. At home, the productive forces of the United States and the other advanced industrialized countries are easily sufficient to enhance equality and democratic values, as well as provide a comfortable standard of living for all.

*The Intellectual Class War]]*

*By David Horowitz*

From *The Art of Political War*, Spence Publishing, 2000

A few years after the fall of the marxist utopias, I found myself in Beverly Hills sitting next to a man who was worth half a billion dollars. His name was Stanley Gold, and he was chairman of a holding company that was the largest shareholder in Disney, at the time the largest media corporation in the world. Since I was engaged in a conservative project in the entertainment community and the occasion was a cocktail reception for a Republican senator, I quickly turned the conversation into a pitch for

support. But I was only able to run through a few bars of my routine before Gold put a fatherly hand on my arm and said, "Save your breath, David. I'm a socialist."

I am reminded of this story every time a leftist critic assaults me (which is often) and deploys the marxist cliché that I have "sold out" my ideals, or suggests that an opinion I have expressed can be explained by the "fact" that somewhere a wealthy puppetmaster is pulling my strings. I am not alone, of course, in being the target of such ad hominem slanders, which are familiar to every conservative who has ever engaged in a political debate.

Of course, those who traffic in sociallyconscious abuse have a ready answer for anecdotes like mine, namely, that it is an aberration. Even if it is true, therefore, it is false because there is a larger marxist "truth" that trumps little facts like this. This truth is that conservative ideas express the views of corporate America, serve the status quo, defend the rich and powerful, and legitimize the oppression of the poor. Whereas leftist views, however well paid for, are noble because they oppose all the injustice that corporate America, the status quo, and the rich represent. The "truth" is that conservative views *must* be paid for because they could not possibly be the genuine views of any decent human being with a grain of integrity or compassion.

In the fantasy world of the left, the figure of Stanley Gold can only be understood as a human oxymoron: a good-hearted capitalist who is a friend to humanity and a traitor to his class. But, then, so are such famous leftwing moguls as Ted Turner, David Geffen, Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg, Michael Eisner, and a hundred others less famous (but equally wealthy) that one could easily name.

In fact, Stanley Gold is exceptional only in his wit and candor—and his ideological frame of mind. For, unlike the self-identified progressives named above, the CEOs of most major corporations studiously avoid ideological politics, left or right, because such politics are not in the corporate interest. To become identified with a hard political position is to become a target for opponents who control the machinery of regulation and taxation and exert life-and-death power over business. Moreover, from a business point of view most politicians are fungible: the kind of favors businesses require can be performed by one politician as easily as another. It is safer to stay above the fray and buy politicians when necessary, Republicans as well as Democrats, conservatives and liberals. Money, not ideological passion, is the currency of corporate interest, power rather than ideas its political agenda. Therefore, politicians rather than intellectuals are the normal objects of its attention.

There are two exceptions to this rule of political neutrality. First, when an administration, for whatever reason, chooses to declare war on a wealthy individual, corporation, or even an entire industry, embracing the political opposition may seem the best option in an already bad situation. Big Tobacco, Microsoft, and Michael Milken, for example, when assaulted by government, adopted this defensive strategy (Tobacco and Microsoft went strongly Republican; Milken became a Democrat). Second, when political activists shake down a large corporation, a tactic almost exclusively of the left, the corporation will choose to underwrite their group. Under attack from radi-

cal Greens, for example, major companies like ARCO have become large subsidizers of the environmental movement. Through similar extortionist efforts, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/Push coalition has received more corporate underwriting than any dozen conservative groups put together.

Nevertheless, the norm for corporate interests remains the removal of themselves and their assets from ideological politics. The same applies to individuals who are serious financial players. I have had very conservative billionaires tell me that whatever their personal views, they cannot afford to be political (in my sense) at all.

A consequence of this standoff is that most of the contributions available to ideological activists of the left or right are either small individual donations solicited through direct mail campaigns or large institutional donations from tax-exempt foundations. In this area, too, the fevered imaginations of the left have created a wildly distorted picture in which well-funded goliaths of the right, Olin, Scaife, and Bradley, overwhelm the penurious Davids of the left. Edward Said, for example, used the platform of the once distinguished Reith lectures to attack Peter Collier and myself over the "second thoughts" movement we launched years ago as a critique of the left: "In a matter of months during the late 1980s, Second Thoughts aspired to become a movement, alarmingly well funded by rightwing Maecenases like the Bradley and Olin Foundations."

Some years later, a report appeared, "The Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations," documenting the annual disbursements of what were deemed to be the key conservative grant-giving institutions. The annual sum of the subsidies from twelve conservative foundations was seventy million dollars. This amount may seem large until one looks at the Ford Foundation, which dispenses all by itself more than five hundred million dollars each year—more than seven times as much—mainly to liberal and leftwing causes. Ford is the principal founder, for example, of the hard-left Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF), which lacks any visible base in the Mexican American community, but has been the principal promoter of illegal immigration and the driving force behind the failed multibillion-dollar bilingual education programs. Ford created MALDEF and has provided it with more than twenty-five million dollars over the years. Ford has also been the leading founder of left-wing feminism and black separatism on American campuses, and of the radical effort to balkanize our national identity through multicultural university curricula.

Ford is typical. The biggest and most prestigious foundations, bearing the names of the most venerable captains of American capitalism—Ford, Rockefeller, Mellon, Carnegie, and Pew—are all biased to the left, as are many newer but also well-endowed institutions like the MacArthur, Markle, and Schumann foundations. MacArthur alone is three times the size of the "big three" conservative foundations—Olin, Bradley, and Scaife—combined.

Moreover, these foundations do not represent the most important support the corporate "ruling class" and its social elites provide to the left. That laurel goes to the private and public universities that have traditionally been the preserve of the American aristocracy and now, as Richard Rorty has happily pointed out, are the

“political base of the left.” With its multibillion-dollar endowment and unmatched intellectual prestige, Harvard provides an exemplary case, its relevant faculties and curricula reflecting the absolute hegemony of left-wing ideas. The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard is arguably the most prestigious and important reservoir of intellectual talent and policy counsel available to the political establishment. Cabinet officials are regularly drawn from its ranks. Of its more than 150 faculty members, only five are identifiable Republicans, a ratio that is extraordinary given the spectrum of political opinion in the nation at large. Yet it is the rule in the university system.

The institutional and financial support for the left—through its dominance in the universities, the book publishing industry, the press, television news, and the arts—is so overwhelming it is hardly contested. There are no prestigious universities where the faculty ratio in the liberal arts and social sciences is 150 Republicans to five Democrats. There is not a single major American newspaper whose features and news sections are written by conservatives rather than liberals—and this includes such conservative-owned institutions as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, whose editorial pages are left wing as well, the *Orange County Register*, and the *San Diego Union*.

Some will object to my definition of what is “left” as a way of avoiding the irrefutable reality it describes. They will argue that because Noam Chomsky is regarded as a fringe intellectual by segments of the media, the media cannot be dominated by the ideas of the left. But this supposes that Chomsky’s exclusion is ideological rather than idiosyncratic. After all, Peter Jennings is a fan of Cornel West who is a fan of Noam Chomsky’s. Christopher Hitchens is a fan of Noam Chomsky and ubiquitous on television and in print. Regardless, the fact remains that an America-loathing crank like Chomsky is an incomparably more influential figure in the left-wing culture of American universities than any conservative one could name.

The left, it can hardly be disputed, is funded and supported by the very “ruling class” it asserts is the puppetmaster of the right and the oppressor of minorities, the working class, and the poor. Institutional support and funds provided to the intellectual left by the “ruling class” far exceed any sums it provides to the intellectual right, as anyone with a pocket calculator will grasp. Why is this so? Could it be that the marxist model itself is nonsense?

It is hardly evident, for example, that the interest of the corporate rich lies in preserving the status quo. If the Clinton years did nothing else, they should certainly have served to put this canard to rest. The Clinton Administration’s most important left wing projects were the comprehensive government-controlled healthcare plan, which failed, and the effort to preserve racial preferences, which succeeded. Both agendas received the enthusiastic support of corporate America—the health care plan from the nation’s largest health insurance companies and racial preferences from Fortune 500 corporations across the board.

Or try another measure: in the 1999 presidential primary campaign, Bill Bradley was the Democratic candidate running from the left. The chief points of Bradley’s

platform were a revival of the comprehensive Clinton healthcare scheme and the pursuit of left wing racial grievances. Bradley's most recently acquired African American friend is the anti-Semitic racist Al Sharpton, the black leader of choice for Democratic Party candidates. But despite these radical agendas, as everyone knows, "Dollar Bill's" thirty-plusmillion-dollar campaign war chest was largely filled by Wall Street, where he himself has made millions as a stockbroker over the years.

The explanation for the paradox is this: Unless one is seduced by the discredited poppycock of leftist intellectuals, there is no reason the rich should be adversaries of the poor or oppose their interests. Not in a dynamic market society like ours. Only if the market is a zero-sum game as marxists and their clones believe—"exploited labor" for the worker, "surplus value" for the capitalist—would leftist cliches make any sense. But they do not. The real-world relation between labor and capital is quite the opposite of what the left proposes. Entrepreneurs generally want a better-educated, better-paid, more diverse working force, because that means better employees, better marketers, and better consumers of the company product. That is why, historically, everywhere capitalism has been embraced, labor conditions have improved and inequalities have diminished whether there has been a strong trade union presence or not. That is why the capitalist helmsmen of the World Trade Organization are better friends of the world's poor than any of the Luddite demonstrators against them in Seattle.

The twenty-first century political argument is not about whether to help the poor, or whether to include all Americans in the social contract. Republicans embrace these objectives as firmly as Democrats, conservatives as well as liberals. The issue is how best to help the poor, how best to integrate the many cultures of the American mosaic into a common culture that works. Twenty years after the welfare system was already a proven disaster for America's inner city poor, Democrats and leftists were still demanding more welfare and opposing significant reforms. Clinton himself vetoed the Republican reform bill twice and only signed it when he was told he would not be reelected if he did not. Welfare reform has liberated hundreds of thousands of poor people from dead-end dependency and given them a taste of the self-esteem that comes from earning one's keep.

If the left were serious about its interest in the poor, it would pay homage to the man who made welfare reform possible, the despised former Speaker Newt Gingrich. If hypocrisy were not their stock-in-trade, selfstyled champions of the downtrodden like Cornel West and Marian Wright Edelman would be writing testimonials to Newt Gingrich as a hero to America's poor. But that will not happen. Instead, the left will go on tarring Gingrich and his political allies as the grinch who stole Christmas, as "enemies of the poor" and lackeys of the rich. Such witch-hunting is indispensable to the left's intellectual class war. The dehumanization of its opponents is the next best option to developing an argument to refute them.

In fact, there is no conservative party in America. Certainly not Republicans, who are responsible for the major reforms of the Clinton years. The mantle of reaction is better worn by the left, given its resistance to change and its rearguard battles against

the market and free trade. But the left controls the culture, and with it the political language. Therefore, in America, reactionaries will continue to be called “progressives” and reformers “conservatives.”

## Ventura: Act Got Old, But

### Message Prevails

*By James Pinkerton*

From *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 28, 2002

*James Pinkerton is a columnist for Newsday*

Jesse Ventura came in with a bang and went out with a whimper. Four years ago, the surprise third-party election of a former pro wrestler nicknamed “The Body” as governor of Minnesota was lionized by the media as the beginning of something new in American politics, something that might reach all the way to the White House.

But his act got old fast. His lamblike announcement last week that he would not seek re-election caused barely a ripple.

Which is a shame because, beneath the boas and the bluster, Ventura said things worth saying.

His libertarian message—as he described it, “liberal on social issues, conservative on economic issues”—resonated with many, maybe even most, Americans.

His victory proved that a candidate who could skim the libertarian cream off the two parties—by taking the free-marketeers from the Republicans, leaving behind the Falwellites, and taking the live-and-let-livers from the Democrats, leaving behind the Leftists—could win a major-state election.

But that was then. Now the winds of war are whistling up a return to big government, a comeback that may foil the dreams of free thinkers in both parties.

The paradox of libertarian politics is, those who would reduce the size of government must still know something about governance. And governance requires a base, a reliable bloc of supporters. In Ventura’s case, that would have required him to reach out to Republicans or Democrats in the legislature to secure steady support for his agenda.

Instead, he governed as he wrestled, flamboyantly and alone. So while he achieved some successes—enacting a tax cut, blocking abortion restrictions—a dozen of his vetoes were overridden, a record for the Gopher State. All of which proves that politics is more than just personality.

Indeed, he seemed mostly interested in expanding his own personality cult. He dictated or authorized a string of self-aggrandizing books, and one of them communicated the essence of his style: “Do I Stand Alone? Going to the Mat Against Political Pawns and Media Jackals.”

And, if his executive record was spotty, the times changed greatly as well. In 1998, it seemed that the Internet bubble would expand forever, lifting 20-somethings to

billionairedom and enriching everyone else, too. And, with no threats on the horizon—nobody thought much about those car-bomb attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa, exploded by an obscure group called alQaida—why not elect a man who emblemized, even better than Bill Clinton, the let-the-good-times-roll ethos of the era?

But now, post-Sept. 11, the mood has shifted from individuality to solidarity. The entrepreneur is eclipsed; the teamworking fireman is celebrated. Of course, in a time of terror, one should admire the valorous. But that's the point: As the American pacifist Randolph Bourne lamented in 1918, watching America militarize during the fight against the Kaiser's Germany, "War is the health of the state."

And so prospects for libertarianism might seem bleak. Not only is Ventura leaving office, but so is the term-limited Republican governor of New Mexico, Gary Johnson, who endorsed drug decriminalization. Yet, even amid the collectivist martial fervor billowing out of Washington, libertarian platforms remain.

Opposition to tax increases, for instance, runs strong; the Republican candidate seeking to replace Ventura has taken a no-tax-increase pledge. Across the country, in Massachusetts, Democrat Robert Reich, former secretary of labor under Clinton, has endorsed gay marriage, and all the other candidates in the contest, including the Republican, have endorsed some sort of legalized same-sex coupling.

In other words, both major parties hold some libertarian cards, and yet neither party is willing to play a consistent hand.

David Boaz, executive vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute in Washington, admits disappointment in Ventura but sees a development "combination of Social Security choice, school choice, social tolerance at home, combined with skepticism about military intervention abroad."

Boaz's words describe the once and perhaps future strength of a Ventura-like libertarian coalition, in which all those who don't wish to be trod upon find common cause in a newfound alliance of taxpayers, alternate lifestyles and other liberty-lovers.

So the opportunity sits latent, awaiting a candidate with the vision—or merely the ambition—to play all the pro-freedom cards at the same time.

## **Fascism Anyone?**

*Laurence W. Britt*

From *Free Inquiry* magazine, Volume 23, Number 2, 2003

We are two-and-a-half generations removed from the horrors of Nazi Germany, although constant reminders jog the consciousness. German and Italian fascism form the historical models that define this twisted political worldview. Although they no longer exist, this worldview and the characteristics of these models have been imitated



by protofascist<sup>1</sup> regimes at various times in the twentieth century. Both the original German and Italian models and the later protofascist regimes show remarkably similar characteristics. Although many scholars question any direct connection among these regimes, few can dispute their visual similarities.

Beyond the visual, even a cursory study of these fascist and protofascist regimes reveals the absolutely striking convergence of their *modus operandi*. This, of course, is not a revelation to the informed political observer, but it is sometimes useful in the interests of perspective to restate obvious facts and in so doing shed needed light on current circumstances.

For the purpose of this perspective, I will consider the following regimes: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Papadopoulos's Greece, Pinochet's Chile, and Suharto's Indonesia. To be sure, they constitute a mixed bag of national identities, cultures, developmental levels, and history. But they all followed the fascist or protofascist model in obtaining, expanding, and maintaining power. Further, all these regimes have been overthrown, so a more or less complete picture of their basic characteristics and abuses is possible.

Analysis of these seven regimes reveals fourteen common threads that link them in recognizable patterns of national behavior and abuse of power. These basic characteristics are more prevalent and intense in some regimes than in others, but they all share at least some level of similarity.

1. *Powerful and continuing expressions of nationalism.* From the prominent displays of flags and bunting to the ubiquitous lapel pins, the fervor to show patriotic nationalism, both on the part of the regime itself and of citizens caught up in its frenzy, was always obvious. Catchy slogans, pride in the military, and demands for unity were common themes in expressing this nationalism. It was usually coupled with a suspicion of things foreign that often bordered on xenophobia.

2. *Disdain for the importance of human rights.* The regimes themselves viewed human rights as of little value and a hindrance to realizing the objectives of the ruling elite. Through clever use of propaganda, the population was brought to accept these human rights abuses by marginalizing, even demonizing, those being targeted. When abuse was egregious, the tactic was to use secrecy, denial, and disinformation.

3. *Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause.* The most significant common thread among these regimes was the use of scapegoating as a means to divert the people's attention from other problems, to shift blame for failures, and to channel frustration in controlled directions. The methods of choice—relentless propaganda and disinformation—were usually effective. Often the regimes would incite “spontaneous” acts against the target scapegoats, usually communists, socialists, liberals, Jews, ethnic and racial minorities, traditional national enemies, members of other religions, secularists, homosexuals, and “terrorists.” Active opponents of these regimes were inevitably labeled as terrorists and dealt with accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as a “political movement or regime tending toward or imitating Fascism”—Webster's

4. *The supremacy of the military/avid militarism.* Ruling elites always identified closely with the military and the industrial infrastructure that supported it. A disproportionate share of national resources was allocated to the military, even when domestic needs were acute. The military was seen as an expression of nationalism, and was used whenever possible to assert national goals, intimidate other nations, and increase the power and prestige of the ruling elite.

5. *Rampant sexism.* Beyond the simple fact that the political elite and the national culture were male-dominated, these regimes inevitably viewed women as second-class citizens. They were adamantly anti-abortion and also homophobic. These attitudes were usually codified in Draconian laws that enjoyed strong support by the orthodox religion of the country, thus lending the regime cover for its abuses.

6. *A controlled mass media.* Under some of the regimes, the mass media were under strict direct control and could be relied upon never to stray from the party line. Other regimes exercised more subtle power to ensure media orthodoxy. Methods included the control of licensing and access to resources, economic pressure, appeals to patriotism, and implied threats. The leaders of the mass media were often politically compatible with the power elite. The result was usually success in keeping the general public unaware of the regimes' excesses.

7. *Obsession with national security.* Inevitably, a national security apparatus was under direct control of the ruling elite. It was usually an instrument of oppression, operating in secret and beyond any constraints. Its actions were justified under the rubric of protecting "national security," and questioning its activities was portrayed as unpatriotic or even treasonous.

8. *Religion and ruling elite tied together.* Unlike communist regimes, the fascist and protofascist regimes were never proclaimed as godless by their opponents. In fact, most of the regimes attached themselves to the predominant religion of the country and chose to portray themselves as militant defenders of that religion. The fact that the ruling elite's behavior was incompatible with the precepts of the religion was generally swept under the rug. Propaganda kept up the illusion that the ruling elites were defenders of the faith and opponents of the "godless." A perception was manufactured that opposing the power elite was tantamount to an attack on religion.

9. *Power of corporations protected.* Although the personal life of ordinary citizens was under strict control, the ability of large corporations to operate in relative freedom was not compromised. The ruling elite saw the corporate structure as a way to not only ensure military production (in developed states), but also as an additional means of social control. Members of the economic elite were often pampered by the political elite to ensure a continued mutuality of interests, especially in the repression of "have-not" citizens.

10. *Power of labor suppressed or eliminated.* Since organized labor was seen as the one power center that could challenge the political hegemony of the ruling elite and

its corporate allies, it was inevitably crushed or made powerless. The poor formed an underclass, viewed with suspicion or outright contempt. Under some regimes, being poor was considered akin to a vice.

11. *Disdain and suppression of intellectuals and the arts.* Intellectuals and the inherent freedom of ideas and expression associated with them were anathema to these regimes. Intellectual and academic freedom were considered subversive to national security and the patriotic ideal. Universities were tightly controlled; politically unreliable faculty harassed or eliminated. Unorthodox ideas or expressions of dissent were strongly attacked, silenced, or crushed. To these regimes, art and literature should serve the national interest or they had no right to exist.

12. *Obsession with crime and punishment.* Most of these regimes maintained Draconian systems of criminal justice with huge prison populations. The police were often glorified and had almost unchecked power, leading to rampant abuse. “Normal” and political crime were often merged into trumped-up criminal charges and sometimes used against political opponents of the regime. Fear, and hatred, of criminals or “traitors” was often promoted among the population as an excuse for more police power.

13. *Rampant cronyism and corruption.* Those in business circles and close to the power elite often used their position to enrich themselves. This corruption worked both ways; the power elite would receive financial gifts and property from the economic elite, who in turn would gain the benefit of government favoritism. Members of the power elite were in a position to obtain vast wealth from other sources as well: for example, by stealing national resources. With the national security apparatus under control and the media muzzled, this corruption was largely unconstrained and not well understood by the general population.

14. *Fraudulent elections.* Elections in the form of plebiscites or public opinion polls were usually bogus. When actual elections with candidates were held, they would usually be perverted by the power elite to get the desired result. Common methods included maintaining control of the election machinery, intimidating and disenfranchising opposition voters, destroying or disallowing legal votes, and, as a last resort, turning to a judiciary beholden to the power elite.

Does any of this ring alarm bells? Of course not. After all, this is America, officially a democracy with the rule of law, a constitution, a free press, honest elections, and a wellinformed public constantly being put on guard against evils. Historical comparisons like these are just exercises in verbal gymnastics. Maybe, maybe not.

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### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Regarding table 3, “Social Class and Political Attitudes, Left to Right,” and the notes following it, discuss in groups or write about how closely this hypothesis matches your sense of these realities. Do some research on the sociology and economics of social class, or on social class and political affiliations, to test against this model.

In the California ballot “Political Party Statements of Purpose,” how clearly are each of the seven parties identifiable in terms of the “Guide to Political Terms and Positions” in this chapter? Are there other distinguishing positions in these descriptions that are helpful to you? How would you rate them comparatively on their semantic concreteness versus abstraction or vague generalities?

Interview and get more detailed publications from officials of any of these parties that function in your area. Question them personally or in writing about the criticisms of their position made by their opponents.

On what points do Brouwer and Horowitz exemplify the oppositions in this Chapter under “Leftists/Rightists tend to support” and “Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric”? Evaluate the relative quality of reasoning and supporting evidence in Brouwer and Horowitz.

Brouwer’s viewpoint in “If We Decided to Tax the Rich” is left-of-liberal, or radical left, to the extent that he is arguing for the benefits of European social democracy over American capitalism. On what points does he criticize the Democrats and President Clinton from the left, and how does his criticism differ from Horowitz’s criticism from the right? What different lines of argument might he make if he were advocating pure socialism or Communism rather than social democracy?

On what specific points does Horowitz’s article “The Intellectual Class War” directly oppose Brouwer and other liberal or left views presented in this chapter and in other readings throughout this book? Does Horowitz seem to be more of a conservative or a libertarian?

The book in which Horowitz's "The Intellectual Class War" appeared, *The Art of Political War*, was published by Spence Publishing Company, an explicitly conservative publishing house. According to David Brock's *The Republican Noise Machine*, Horowitz was an advisor in the 2000 presidential election to George W. Bush, who took the theme of "compassionate conservatism" from Horowitz's "playbook" in *The Art* (Brock 103). Although Horowitz does not mention it in this chapter, which defends "the 'big three' conservative foundations—Olin, Bradley, and Scaife," elsewhere he acknowledges that he has received considerable financial support from all three for his books, his think tank Center for the Study of Popular Culture, the organization Students for Academic Freedom (which monitors alleged cases of liberal and leftist college faculty bias), and other projects including his Web site, [frontpage.com](http://frontpage.com). With reference to the discussion of conflict of interest in Chapter 17, judge whether Horowitz seems to be engaging in special pleading here or makes a wellreasoned argument in defense of funding by these foundations' Republicanaligned corporate sponsors.

The book in which Brouwer's "If We Decided to Tax the Rich" appeared, *Sharing the Pie: A Citizen's Guide to Wealth and Power in America*, was published by Henry Holt, a mainstream house with no clear political viewpoint. He has published other books with leftist presses, and a publisher's biographical note says he "organized and built housing cooperatives, founded a worker-owned construction company, and developed a community-owned housing program." No apparent partisan affiliations or conflicts of interest here, but you might "Google" him to see if you can find any.

Horowitz refutes a central leftist line of argument, that large corporations and wealthy individuals have strongly conservative, and most often Republican, political affiliations. He begins with an anecdote about multimillionaire Stanley Gold, who claims that he is a socialist, and argues that this is not a case of arguing from the exception. Does he provide an adequate causal analysis for the paradox of why wealthy corporations and individuals should ever support political forces that would divest them of their wealth and power? How clear is the sense of "socialism" as Horowitz discusses it here? Do you think Horowitz would say it extends to government or worker control of corporate policies concerning labor unions, wages, working conditions, and environmentalism?

As an individual or class research paper project, survey empirical studies objectively comparing: (a) corporations versus labor unions and (b) the Fortune 500 largest corporations and the Forbes 400 wealthiest individuals (or comparable corporations and individuals in your own state and locality), in terms of their support of conservative versus liberal or leftist causes, or the Republican versus the Democratic Party (or other parties), and the amount of money they spend in that support. Similarly compare relative conservative versus liberal or leftist political and financial backing of lobbies, political action committees, campaign contributions, media ownership and political advertising, foundations and think tanks..

How does James Pinkerton's article on Jesse Ventura clarify where libertarians differ from conservatives and liberals, Republicans, and Democrats (or from Brouwer

and Horowitz)? What strengths and weaknesses does Pinkerton find in the libertarian position?

Debate in class the feasibility of the implication in Lawrence Britt's "Fascism Anyone?" that conservative tendencies in the United States today could be leading toward fascism.

Relate the subject and viewpoint of the following cartoon to the topics of this Chapter and Chapter 16. Tom Tomorrow's cartoons appear in left-liberal journals like Z Magazine and American Prospect.

LET ME READ YOU SOMETHING, BIFF: "A NEWSPAPER MUST AT ALL TIMES ANTAGONIZE THE SELFISH INTERESTS OF THAT VERY CLASS WHICH FURNISHES THE LARGER PART OF A NEWSPAPER'S INCOME..."

"The press in this country IS...SO thoroughly DOMINATED BY THE WEALTHY FEW...THAT IT CANNOT BE DEPENDED UPON TO GIVE THE GREAT MASS OF THE PEOPLE that Correct information CONCERNING POLITICAL, Economical and Social subjects--

"--WHICH IT IS NECESSARY THAT THE MASS OF PEOPLE SHALL HAVE IN ORDER THAT THEY VOTE...IN THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM THE BRUTAL FORCE AND CHICANERY OF THE RULING AND EMPLOYING CLASSES."

T.M'Re-Weilf 16

WHO ARE YOU QUOTING, SPARKY? Some LEFT-WING WACKO ☒>

ACTUALLY. BIFF THAT WAS WRITTEN AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY BY E.W. SCRIPPS, Founder of the first MODERN NEWSPAPER CHAIN

WELL, HE WOULDN'T GET VERY FAR IN JOURNALISM today with an ATTITUDE LIKE THAT.

**SUPPOSE HE WOULDN'T...**

# Chapter 18. Thinking Critically about Mass Media

Do news, entertainment, and advertising media give the people what they want, or *tell* the people what they want? Can the media be objective, and *should* they be? How can it be that conservatives are convinced that the media have a left-wing bias while leftists are equally convinced the media have a right-wing bias? These issues are endlessly, heatedly debated by political partisans, media critics, and scholars. Once again, we must recognize the rhetorical and semantic ambiguities involved in addressing these questions in their full complexity. (The present Chapter develops some of the topics in Chapter 15 in specific reference to media, and the issues here parallel those about whether political elections and legislation truly represent the people, so it would be useful to review the concepts and definitions in that chapter. As in Chapter 15, this Chapter attempts to arrive at definitions and judgments that are acceptable to leftists and rightists alike, while recognizing the extreme difficulty in doing so, and it is likewise open to refinement and revision at readers' suggestions.)

## Do the Media Give People What They Want?

In a Chapter entitled "Masscult and Midcult" in his book *Against the American Grain* (New York: Vintage, 1962), Dwight Macdonald writes:

The masses are in historical time what a crowd is in space: a large quantity of people unable to express their human qualities because they are related to each other neither as individuals nor as members of a community. In fact, they are not related to *each other* at all. Yet this

collective monstrosity, "the masses," "the public" is taken as a human norm by the technicians of Masscult [mass culture]. They at once degrade the public by treating it as an object, to be handled with the lack of ceremony of medical students dissecting a corpse, and at the same time flatter it and pander to its taste and ideas by taking them as the criterion of reality.....

Whenever a Lord of Masscult is reproached for the low quality of his products, he automatically ripostes, "But that's what the public wants, what can I do?" A simple and conclusive defense, at first glance. But a second look reveals that (1) to the extent the public "wants" it, the public has been conditioned to some extent by his products, and (2) his efforts have taken this direction because (a) he himself also "wants" it—never

underestimate the ignorance and vulgarity of publishers, movie producers, network executives and other architects of Masscult— and (b) the technology of producing mass “entertainment” (again, the quotes are advised)

imposes a simplistic, repetitious pattern so that it is easier to say the public wants this than to say the truth which is that the public gets this and so wants it.....

For some reason, objections to the giving-the-public-what-it-wants line are often attacked as undemocratic and snobbish. But it is precisely because I do believe in the potentialities of ordinary people that I criticize Masscult. (9-11)

Do—and *should*—mass news and entertainment media “give the people what they want”? Both sides of this question are equally complex. Do those running commercial media really know what the people want, in the sense that large numbers of people actively make known to media representatives what they would like to read, hear, and see? Or are the people mainly providing passive feedback to what they are offered, in the form of random surveys and ratings polls that are impersonal and imprecise at best? Macdonald suggests that there is a **vicious circle** or **self-fulfilling prophecy** here: the people are conditioned, to some extent, to want what they get, or at least to take what they get in the absence of any preferable alternatives. Have audiences asked for the constantly increasing number and length of commercials on TV and radio? Have pro sports fans asked for constantly longer seasons and multiplying numbers of teams and league divisions, or have they simply failed to resist the TV broadcasters’ drive to increase coverage, and thus advertising revenue? Defenders of the media say no one is forced to watch or listen to anything, and everyone is free to take it or leave it. But critics like Macdonald ask, if we are all conditioned from the time we are infants to consume and accept media messages, are we really free to choose? (All these questions about the media parallel the questions about the whole, larger economic system of “free enterprise,” of which the media form a key part, and the conservative assumption that consumers are free to take or leave the products the system produces, as in the discussion of “the beauty myth” in Chapter 4.)

Furthermore, if “the people” are considered to be the largest segment of the audience numerically, that means those at the literacy level of high school graduates or lower—and they are indeed defined by many media marketers as the target audience. This is the presumed audience for supermarket tabloids like the *National Enquirer*, for action movies filled with shoot-outs and explosions, for pro wrestling, hate radio shows, and TV and radio programs like those of Jerry Springer and Howard Stern that parade outrageous sexual practices. Political **demagogues**, on the right or left, also give the people what they want, by appealing to the most uninformed and prejudiced segments of the population to win their support. This notion of “the people” as a mass of illiterates to be both pandered to and exploited by media and politicians, then, is quite removed from Thomas Jefferson’s and J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur’s ideal of a nation of critical citizens who “will carefully read the newspapers, enter into every political disquisition, freely blame or censure governors and others,” and whose education will



have “raised the mass of the people to the high ground of moral respectability necessary to their own safety, and to orderly government.”

The argument can be made that, instead of appealing to the lowest common denominator in the public, at least some media should give the more informed and critical segment of the people what *it* wants. Certain media, which are not exclusively concerned with “bottom-line” profitability, do in fact appeal to that segment—such as journals of opinion, public broadcasting, C-SPAN, and influential national newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. In other words, if the media were considered as a profession comparable to education, law, or medicine, wouldn’t it be reasonable to expect its practitioners to be more knowledgeable about world and national events, culture and the arts, than the mass audience, and therefore to have a responsibility to inform, even to educate their audience, in the manner of teachers, rather than descending to the level of the lowest common denominator? (In this **analogy**, few people would say that teachers should gear their classes to the level of the least informed or most prejudiced students.) This responsibility to inform was in fact the original intention of the chartering of the public airwaves by the federal government in the 1920s, and the takeover of broadcasting (first radio, then television) by advertising was strongly opposed by large segments of public opinion, led by then Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who by the standards of that time was considered a conservative Republican. Hoover said that it was “inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service . . . to be drowned in advertising chatter,” and that if a presidential message ever became “the meat in a sandwich of two patent medicine advertisements,” it would destroy broadcasting (quoted in Eric Barnouw, *The Sponsor* 15).

Traditionally, news divisions of national and local TV companies were not expected to garner high ratings or advertising revenue, and their losses were “carried” by owners out of some vestige of the public service concept at the origin of American broadcasting. This has changed in the past few decades, however, as news broadcasters have devised more profitable formats for what is now termed “infotainment,” including “happy-talk” and “top-forty stories” featuring “If it bleeds, it leads” sensationalism. One professional consultant who pioneered these formats justified them by claiming, “People who watch television the most are unread, uneducated, untraveled and unable to concentrate on single subjects more than a minute or two.”

Other recent influences in the sensationalizing of newscasts include the proliferation of twenty-four-hour-a-day cable TV networks and the concentration of media ownership by megacorporations like Disney, Time-Warner, and ABC-Capital Cities-Paramount, which have imposed demands that news divisions meet a profit quota comparable to that of their more profitable divisions to avoid elimination. (The same process has changed the book publishing industry, where corporate conglomerates have bought up relatively small, lowprofit publishers and textbook companies, resulting in demands for higher profits. These demands in turn have led to “dumbing down” of content, increased

prices, and more frequent new editions of the same textbooks to abort used-book resales. This trend has also been compounded by the monopolization of bookstores by big chains like Barnes and Noble and Borders.) These recent trends and related ones are addressed in the following article from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, from the perspective of world news coverage.

*A Professor Challenges the Press*]

*By Gabriela Montell*

From *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 15, 1999

SUSAN D. MOELLER remembers debating once with another photographer how to shoot corpses dumped by death squads in El Salvador. Which camera angles, the photographers wondered, would appeal to which publications?

The experience, and others in journalism and academe, led her to write *Compassion Fatigue* (Routledge, 1998), in which she analyzes how journalists cover international news and how readers and viewers respond to it.

Before that episode, “I was unaware of the editing of reality that goes on at every stage in the news-delivery process,” she says.

Ms. Moeller, now an assistant professor of American studies and director of the journalism program at Brandeis University, grew up on Belgium and Switzerland. She has worked as a cartoonist and a political consultant in Washington and as a photojournalist overseas. She went back to academe as an older student and earned a doctorate in history at Harvard University in 1987. She has been a Fulbright professor in Pakistan and Thailand.

She worked on *Compassion Fatigue* for two years; Walter Cronkite has called it an “important book.”

## Flashy Headlines

While many of Ms. Moeller’s criticisms of American press coverage are not new, she uses case studies to reveal a predicament— that reporters and editors simplify news reports and hype them with flashy headlines and dramatic images to keep audiences interested. Readers and viewers then turn the page or change channels when assailed by too much shocking or repetitive coverage.

Journalists contend that Americans don’t care about world news, but that’s a cop-out, says Ms. Moeller. Rather than confronting the causes of compassion fatigue, she says, reporters are compounding it by reducing international coverage and intensifying the sensational quality of what few stories are left.

One reason news organizations are cutting their overseas coverage, she says, is that they are focusing on short-term profits and nighttime ratings. Knight-Ridder, for example, owner of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, has insisted for the last five years that *The Inquirer* raise profits from 8 per cent to 15 per cent, she says.

News offerings on cable television and on the Internet are also contributing to the problem of overwhelmed readers and viewers. Since the 1980s, when CNN emerged, many companies have begun to provide 24-hour news on television and on line. Hard news alone can't fill that time, Ms. Moeller says, so journalists are turning to more sensational, tabloid-style features.

Among the American news media, she says, only business reporters realize how interdependent the world's countries are. It's no coincidence, she adds, that of the 286 foreign correspondents writing for American newspapers, 100 of them work for *The Wall Street Journal*.

Ms. Moeller teaches courses on reporting, history, American studies, and the role of journalists in international affairs. On the first day of her international-affairs class, she usually asks students to fill in the names of countries on a map of the world, with knowledge gleaned from the news. She began by having students complete the exercise individually, but she wound up putting them in groups because their ignorance was embarrassing. Students left entire regions of the world blank; they'd never heard of some countries in Africa or Asia, because those regions aren't covered by American journalists.

Ms. Moeller tells students to watch the news with a stopwatch in hand. When they find only 22 minutes of news and eight minutes of advertisements in a half-hour newscast, they begin to understand how little time television reporters have to cover the world, she says.

Famines, says Ms. Moeller, are often overlooked by U.S. news outlets. For a week in September 1997, journalists provided round-the-clock coverage of Princess Diana's death, but little time or space was devoted to the one million North Koreans who were close to death because of starvation that year. Reporters who cover world news tend to focus on those who have died, instead of on efforts to avert death, she says, and on celebrity, instead of on the poor and unknown. In that instance, it took the death of a princess to pierce the public's compassion fatigue.

When famine reports do make the news, they are distilled into images of starving children, says Ms. Moeller. Confronted with photographs or footage of infants with bloated bellies and flies in their eyes, she says, Americans respond by saying, "My God, send them food, so the famine will end!"

But famines, she says, have complex causes. "A famine is not a simple case of a biblical crisis, where the locusts come in and eat the crops and everybody starves," she says. Instead, famines are "caused by the inability to get food from where it is to where it is not." Often food cannot be transported because of civil war.

## **Impact of the Internet**

The Internet, says Ms. Moeller, has the potential to break the mold of routine world coverage. One advantage is that journalistic sites on the World-Wide Web can use links

to provide background information to articles. The catch, she says, is that links are helpful only if readers use them, and she doubts that they do.

Another benefit of on-line news is that there are no national borders on the Internet, Ms. Moeller says. Broader news coverage is accessible because “it’s as easy to go to a site that’s coming from Malaysia as it is to go to a site from South Africa.”

She cites two internationally focused World-Wide Web sites: Global Beat, which originates at New York University ([www.nyu.edu/globalbeat](http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat)), and oneworld, ([www.oneworld.org](http://www.oneworld.org)) which is supported by British Telecom. Both sites, while not owned by media corporations, provide a lot of context to international news, she says. She also recommends the Web site of the international weekly news magazine *The Economist* ([www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com)).

Charity organizations that work in other countries could also use the Internet to bypass journalists and get important information to the public, she says.

Competition from such sources on the Internet, says Ms. Moeller, is one of the few pressures she can think of that might induce American journalists to improve their international coverage.

These, then, are some of the complexities and dangers of “giving the people what they want” mainly in terms of maximizing audiences, and these are some implicit arguments in favor of media producers instead exercising their own professional judgment and tastes in setting the media agenda. This alternative, however, can lead to the danger at the **equal and opposite extreme**—of the producers manipulating audiences into compliance with their own biases or special interests. As Dwight Macdonald put it in an earlier version of “Masscult and Midcult,” comparing mass culture in capitalist and Communist countries, “The Lords of *kitsch* [a German term for mass culture], in short, exploit the cultural needs of the masses in order to make a profit and/or to maintain their class rule—in communist countries, only the second purpose prevails.” In the readings included in this chapter, leftists like Edward Herman point to instances of corporate owners and advertisers doing so to impose capitalist ideology, social conformity, trivial pursuits, and consumption of commodities as a “bread and circuses” distraction from critical political awareness, while conservatives like Bernard Goldberg point to instances of liberal media elites imposing their own self-interested politics in the manner Macdonald ascribes to Communists. Both sides here are apt to fall into the **heads I win, tails you lose** fallacy: when media bias favors their own side, they say the media are just giving the people what they want, but when bias favors the other side, they accuse the “media elite” of manipulating, and being contemptuous of, the people.

One final variable that needs to be factored in here (and that has received a lot of attention in recent media scholarship) is the extent to which audiences are capable of seeing through and resisting the ideological messages sent out by the media or of reappropriating those messages to their own purposes, and how much they do so in daily practice. This is a trickier question than it may first appear. You might firmly

believe that you are not “taken in” by advertising or political slanting in media, but can you be certain that you do not unconsciously absorb many **culturally conditioned assumptions** through the media? (For more on this question in regard to advertising, see Chapter 19.) For example, a review by John Cassidy in the *New Yorker* (January 25, 1999) of Juliet Schor’s 1998 book *The Overspent American* discusses Schor’s thesis that media images of upscale characters have prompted many Americans to go into debt to emulate their lifestyle. In contrast to earlier decades in which most Americans tried to keep up with the Joneses next door,

[T]hese days, according to Schor, they are more likely to judge themselves against the affluent yuppies who proliferate in shows like “Ally McBeal” and “Frasier.” Schor claims that every additional hour of television a person watches each week increases that person’s annual spending by about two hundred dollars. “The likely explanation is that what we see on television inflates our sense of what is normal,” she writes. “With a few exceptions, TV characters are upper-middle-class, or even rich.” (90)

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Explain why you agree or disagree with Macdonald that the media do not treat audience members as individuals but as “masses.”

Do you think that the media give you personally what you want? That you are completely free to “take it or leave it”? Or do you think your wants may have been conditioned by the media? How can you know? Consider as test cases the influence of the media on your views of one of the following: fashions in clothes and grooming; brand names; the most popular magazines; ideals of female or male mates; sports; popular music; news and politics; performers or dramatic characters on TV and in other media as role models for spending money, as described by Juliet Schor above.

Macdonald says, “For some reason, objections to the giving-the-public-what-it-wants line are often attacked as undemocratic and snobbish.” In other words, people tend to confuse criticisms like Macdonald’s of the media for looking down on and manipulating the common people with criticisms of the people themselves. Try to explain Macdonald’s distinction in your own terms, then explain why you agree or disagree with it.

In group discussions, see what examples various students come up with of people not being taken in by media manipulation but of having skeptical distance from media productions or turning them to their own personal, multicultural, or political purposes.

In connection with the discussion here of the dumbing down of news and other media under the influence of concentration of ownership and demands for increased profit margins, to what extent do you think these trends call into question (1) the operation of communication media for the purpose of corporate profit, (2) a broader fault in the ideology of “free enterprise” and the profit motive, in the tendency to aim at the lowest common denominator of taste or literacy in markets, and (3) the claims of conservatives to support moral principles in social issues while in economics they tend to subordinate those principles to the defense of maximizing profits?

With regard to the quotation at the end of this section from Juliet Schor about the social classes depicted in sitcoms and other media, monitor several popular TV programs or current movies to research the extent to which “upper-middleclass, or even rich” people are the norm.

The analogy was suggested above that at least some media should have an obligation to inform and educate the audience in the same way that teachers do. Discuss and write about the extent to which you find this analogy valid.

## Are News Media Objective? What Are Their Biases?

The directors of news media often insist that they are committed to objectivity in their news pages or newscasts and that they limit subjective viewpoints to their editorial and opinion pages or broadcast commentaries. Scholars of the media, however, have pointed out dozens of subjective variables that color selection and presentation of the news in both print and broadcast media. A partial list of these factors includes ownership of media companies; hiring of editors and reporters, and assignment of stories to particular writers and editors; selection of what stories to cover and books to review, of sources interviewed and letters to the editor published, of prominence in space or time accorded different sources, and of headlines (written by editors, not writers); editing, sequencing, and abridging of writers’ copy or camera footage; the institutional structure and conventions of news operations; and, of course, all of the rhetorical and semantic choices in every piece of writing or speaking that are discussed throughout this book.

I will give here just a few of an infinite number of possible illustrations of how journalists’ subjective judgments, political and otherwise, come out in every day’s news. The headline in the *New York Times* (October 3, 1998 A9) for a news analysis by R. W. Apple Jr., of the release by independent counsel Kenneth Starr of documents concerning President Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky, read, “In Latest Documents, Little Gain for Anyone.” Exactly the same analysis by Apple was reprinted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on the same date (A3), but the *Chronicle*’s headline and subhead were “Plot with Tripp to Nail Jordan Fizzles for Starr: Pile of Evidence Fails to Show Obstruction of Justice.” During the 1998 senatorial election in New York, Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post*, which editorially endorsed the Republican incumbent Al D’Amato against the Democratic challenger Charles Schumer, at one point ran a front-page headline “Al Storms Ahead,” followed by a story showing D’Amato leading in a poll by 1.3 percent. Shortly thereafter, a report that Schumer had gone ahead in the same poll by 4.2 percent was carried on an inside page with a smaller headline, “Chuck Squeaks Ahead of Al.” Schumer won by 9 percent.

A conceivable alternative to our present conventions of print and broadcast news being presented in the form of a monologue, with no questioning of the reporter's or editor's bias, might be to present the news in a more self-reflexive, multiperspectival format, in which several reporters and analysts with a variety of ideological viewpoints collaborate on the same story and take Part in a dialogue on the problems presented by their own subjectivity on each issue. One program that successfully applied this approach was a former nightly feature on PBS station KQED-TV in San Francisco, *Newsroom of the Air*. There are vestiges of it in the current PBS *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, which features nightly counterpoints by pairs or panels of commentators, though their ideological range is restricted to near-centrist liberals and conservatives. In the current absence of widely available media like this, your best alternative as a critical consumer of the news is to gain regular access to the widest possible range of media and to learn to compare their viewpoints on a day-to-day basis.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Read a current newspaper or view a TV newscast or background report looking for ways in which reporters have injected their opinion into ostensibly neutral reports. Also look for examples of reports in which a successful effort has been made toward neutrality or balancing of opposed views.

As a group project with your classmates, prepare a mock broadcast on yesterday's news with a panel of students representing a conservative, liberal, libertarian, socialist, feminist, and ethnic viewpoint on the day's events.

In group discussions with classmates, brainstorm what alternative systems of communications (or means of diversifying our present one) might be feasible. For example, what about national and local print media equivalents to public broadcasting? Research existing alternative media in America and systems in other countries that differ significantly from ours.

## **The Debate Over Political Bias in Media**

An attempt toward an evenhanded overview of this debate needs to be approached through further consideration of several of the complex rhetorical and semantic dimensions of the issue.

### **First Dimension: Ambiguity of Definitions**

Once again, terms like *left*, *right*, *liberal*, *conservative*, *centrist*, *moderate*, *mainstream*, *middle of the road*, *radical*, and *extreme* have no fixed, universally agreed-on definitions but can only be accurately referred to in some specified context. Most people like to consider themselves moderate and mainstream, and few describe their views as radical or extremist. (An exception would be leftists who accept the designation of radical in the sense of the word related etymologically to "root" from the Latin *radix*,

meaning that they believe in going to the root causes of social problems—e.g., the structure of capitalism—in contrast to what they perceive as the superficial policies of liberals who only deal with symptoms or effects while ignoring structural causes.) Often, “radical” and “extremist” are used merely as name-calling “**dirtyies**” against one’s opponents; so if you want to use those labels legitimately, you need to provide concrete support for them.

Another ambiguity in *moderate*, *centrist*, and *middle of the road* is that, although such words usually carry a favorable connotation, positions described with these labels may sometimes just be vague, muddled, and noncommittal. It is possible for such positions to be adhered to (say, by news media or scholars) in a dogmatic manner that excludes a hearing for any positions outside a narrow range near the center—in which case, it is conceivable to speak of “the radical middle,” “extremism of the center,” or “immoderate moderation.” Left-of-liberal Texas humorist Jim Hightower titled a recent book of his essays *There’s Nothing in the Middle of the Road but Yellow Stripes and Dead Armadillos*.

Finally, we must always ask about “centrist” and “middle of the road” positions, what are they the center of, and what road are they the middle of? For example, in a worldwide perspective, both American politics and news media are to the right of the many democracies that have large socialist, Communist, and labor parties and presses. Some views that are considered radical left here are considered centrist in the social democracies of Western Europe, Canada, and Japan, while those called centrist would be considered rightist from those countries’ perspectives. This is a very good reason to familiarize yourself, to the extent possible, with political views and media in countries that are not bound by American ethnocentrism.

A sarcastic commentary on this point was made in the *Los Angeles Times* Column Left/ Column Right section by socialist journalist Alexander Cockburn after the election of Democrat Gray Davis as governor of California in 1998:

“I am a moderate and a pragmatist by nature,” Davis declared. “I will govern neither from the right nor the left, but from the center, propelled not by ideology but by common sense.” This same common sense had prompted Davis earlier that day to meet with a platoon of lobbyists for the state’s energy, agriculture and real estate sectors at which time the incoming governor assured them of his profound concern for their interests. If there were equivalent encounters that day with farm workers, nurses and others from kindred walks of life, they escaped the attention of the press. As with Bill Clinton, centrism on Davis’ terms means uncritical acceptance of the most abrasive of all ideologies: the belief that the role of government is to promote the corporate agenda. (“Gray Davis’s Real Agenda: Corporatism,” Jan. 7, 1999, B9.)

Another consequence of the skewing of the American balance to the right in a worldwide and historical context is that “radical leftists,” that is, democratic socialists, in American politics and media are sometimes equated with “the radical right” of the Ku Klux Klan, American Nazis, racist or homophobic murderers, abortion-clinic bombers, violent militias, and



right-wing death squads elsewhere in the world. Even many conservatives, however, would probably agree that this degree of extremism would characterize few current American leftists, although it might have applied in earlier decades to the Communist Party or violent groups that emerged briefly in the 1960s like revolutionary Marxist-Leninist sects. (This is not to imply that most conservative politicians or media figures, such as Rush Limbaugh and Pat Robertson, endorse right-wing extremism; the criticism they are open to is selective vision in **downplaying** denunciation of right-wing extremists while they disproportionately **play up** every fault they find in leftists.) Perhaps the Nation of Islam would fit the “extreme left” category today, though some of its social and religious doctrines, such as male supremacy, are quite conservative.

To reiterate yet another important semantic distinction from Chapter 15, debates between *liberalism* and *conservatism* concern both economic and social (or moral) issues, and media are not always consistent on their positions in these two realms. For example, corporate media like Disney or the Fox network, which generally support the conservative economic interests of their owners and advertisers, present some productions that are widely perceived as liberal in *moral* issues, like *Pulp Fiction*, *Ellen*, *Married with Children*, and *South Park*—thereby convincing social conservatives of their liberal bias and providing leftists evidence of the hypocrisy of conservative business interests that preach morality but practice whatever is profitable. Partisans of one side often **stack the deck** by playing up alleged bias in their opponents in media on the basis of the opponents’ position on, say, moral issues like these while playing down their conflicting position on economic issues.

In their book *Watching America: What Television Tells Us about Our Lives*, S. Robert Lichter, Linda S. Lichter, and Stanley Rothman, whose research was funded by the conservative American Enterprise Institute and Olin and Scaife foundations, nevertheless admirably avoid this kind of selective vision by presenting clearly qualified distinctions between the economic and moral realms, and between liberals and radical leftists, in summarizing the findings of their research on the backgrounds and attitudes of the creators of current television entertainment. (Their results parallel similar findings by these and other conservatives about those who dominate news media.) About those creators’ “alienation” from mainstream American opinion, the authors say, “These findings suggest that the Hollywood community’s political alienation is rooted in social rather than economic issues. In fact, it is their social liberalism that most clearly distinguishes them from the general public” (16). And, “Television preaches a kind of Porsche populism that reflects Hollywood’s socially liberal and cosmopolitan sensibility. This is not to say that TV entertainment has followed this

agenda unreservedly or has engaged in anything like a radical critique of American society” (290).

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

If you can find BBC News or Worldnet on cable TV or the Internet, compare their reports on a day's news with coverage on the American networks. Or do the same with some of the international Internet sources cited below in the article "A Professor Challenges the Press": Global Beat, oneworld, the Economist.

Read several left-of-liberal journals of opinion like the Nation, In These Times, the Progressive, Z Magazine, and Extra! to see if their viewpoint strikes you as "radical" or "extreme." Read some conservative journals of opinion like American Spectator, the Weekly Standard, and National Review, or listen to Rush Limbaugh, Gordon Liddy, and Pat Robertson to see if they are as critical of rightwing extremists as they are of all liberals.

In an individual or group research project, monitor TV news and magazines, dramatic and entertainment shows, or current films to see if you find a distinction between liberal or conservative viewpoints on social (or moral) issues—for example, religion, abortion, drugs, sexual promiscuity, obscenity, homosexuality—versus economic ones such as depictions of different socioeconomic classes (the rich, the poor, and the middle class; professionals versus blue-collar workers; employers versus employees; multinational corporations and the global economy).

In the quoted column by Alexander Cockburn, explain his use of irony in the phrase "this same common sense" and his between-the-lines refutation of Governor Davis's claim that he is "propelled not by ideology."

Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman coined the phrase "Porsche populism." This is a figure of speech called an oxymoron, a form of paradox in which two words generally considered opposites are linked. What is your understanding of what they mean by this phrase? Is it essentially the same as "limousine liberalism"?

## **Second Dimension: Relativity of Viewpoint**

For an explanation of why conservatives see only left-wing bias in the media and leftists see only right-wing bias, let's come back to the spectrum of American media and commentators from left to right, slightly revised from Chapter 15(see table 16.1).

In the table, the division of sections A and B into four columns is an arbitrary semantic oversimplification of what could be broken down into several more columns or even a continuous, linear spectrum from left to right. Many of these placements are also disputable, to be sure, and subject to revision as different media and individuals periodically shift their positions.

If your viewpoint is that of the far right, you are obviously going to consider all the other points on the spectrum biased toward the left, while if your viewpoint is far left, you will consider all the others biased toward the right. This is not to say that the views from either end of the spectrum are inaccurate or eccentric. In table 16.1A, the media in columns 1 and 4 are more overtly partisan than those in columns 2 and 3. Most of those in column 4 overtly support conservatism and the Republican Party (although they disagree among themselves over the degree and nature of conservatism

the Republicans should stand for; see the discussion of differences among conservatives in Chapter 15). Most in column 1 in both sections A and B are to the left of the mainstream of the Democratic Party and of the media in table 16.1A, columns 2 and 3, and of the individuals in table 16.1B, column 2. Whether overtly socialistic or not, they are more critical than liberals of the Democratic Party, capitalism, and nationalism; more strongly pro-labor, multicultural, and feminist; and inclined to support leftist third parties, such as (most recently) the New Party, the Labor Party, and the Green Party. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), the *Nation*, Edward Herman, and Noam Chomsky criticize the true conservatism of the “liberal” media more than they do the overtly conservative media; when the “liberal” media acknowledge such criticisms at all, it is usually to dismiss the “radical” left with contempt.

By contrast to columns 1 and 4 in table 16.1A and columns 1 and 3 in table 16.1B, the media in table 16.1A, columns 2 and 3, and the individuals table 16.1B, column 2, are not overtly affiliated with one political party or ideology, and they insist on their commitment to neutrality or objectivity. In practice, however, many in table 16.1A, column 2, and table 16.1B, column 2, lean toward the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and its policies, although their support of Democrats, capitalism, and American nationalism clearly positions them to the right of those in column 1. Some in table 16.1A, column 3, however, and in table 16.1B, column 2, tend toward the more conservative wing of the Democratic Party (Carter-Clinton-Gore-Kerry) and the more liberal wing of the Republican Party—for example, John McCain, who in the 2000 primaries positioned himself to the left of George W. Bush. (So when Republicans make the case that the media in table 16.1A, column 3, have a liberal or left bias, they could perhaps more accurately argue that the bias is liberal-centrist, to the left of conservative Republicans but to the right of those in columns 1 and 2).

Moreover, the media in table 16.1A, column 2, and even more so in table 16.1A, column 3, attempt to maintain a degree of balance between liberal and conservative views, especially in their commentators and columnists; the *New York Times* op-ed page, for example, currently has regular columns by liberals Bob Herbert, Paul Krugman, and Maureen Dowd and by conservatives William Safire, David Brooks, and Thomas Friedman. (Frank Rich, a former op-ed page liberal, currently is writing in the Sunday arts section, with equally liberal views.) Table 16.1A, columns 2 and 3, are only occasionally open to either libertarian or left-of-liberal views. The *Los Angeles Times*’s former “Column Left/Column Right” was one of the few major op-ed sections in the country that regularly featured radical leftists like Alexander Cockburn, Robert Scheer, and feminist Ruth Rosen. Few of the conservative media in A-4 grant any regular time or space at all to liberal or left authors, though they do sometimes include libertarians.

These refinements indicate that there may be good reason for those on the far right to consider all the media to the left of them to be biased against their clearly articulated conservative position, and for those on the far left to feel the same way about all the other positions opposed to their own clear-cut position. (All of which

is to reiterate the value of having regular exposure to sources on the far left and far right, to gain understanding of their clear-cut viewpoints in contrast to the frequent muddle of opinions in the mainstream media.) Those on the far left and far right do, however, tend to ignore all the degrees of difference among and within the positions other than far left or far right. (Another axiom of rhetorical ethnocentrism is that we are all inclined to play up significant differences among those we are most familiar with, but to downplay differences among our opponents and to consider them a monolithic bloc.)

*Topics for Discussion and Writing*

As a collective exercise, conduct a survey within your class based on table 16.1B. Have every student add up the number of people in each of the four columns whom (1) they have heard of, (2) they remember seeing on TV, hearing on radio, or reading in newspapers and magazines. Collate the results and see if any inferences are warranted about which points on the spectrum are most favored by the media.

Discuss in class how valid everyone finds the placement of media figures in the four columns of table 16.1B as well as the breakdown of the columns themselves. Suggest alternatives, perhaps for more columns providing for finer distinctions among positions on the left or right.

Compare table 16.1 on the next page with the ad at the end of the Chapter (page 422) for a conservative media-criticism organization headed by David Horowitz, author of “The Intellectual Class War” in Chapter 15. The ad suggests a very similar spectrum but set up in a way that creates finer distinctions and some different placements. What is the central argument of the ad? How clearly and effectively is it made? How persuasive a case does it make that American media and politics are biased more to the left than suggested by table 16.1?

Table 16.1. American Media, Journalists, and Commentators from Left to Right

1. Left 2. Liberal	A. Media 3. Liberal-to-Conservative	4. Conservative
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*TheNation*  
*In These Times* *MotherJones*  
*Extra!*  
*TheProgressive* *ZMagazine*  
*Village Voice* *PacificaRadio*  
 Air America Radio | *LA Times*  
*NY Review*  
*Harper’s*  
*New Yorker*  
 PBS Documentaries *60Minutes*  
*New York Times* | *Time*

*Newsweek*  
*U.S. News & World Report*  
*WashingtonPost*  
*Atlantic*  
*NewRepublic*  
*Reason*  
 CBS news  
 NBC, ABC news

<i>LehrerNews Hour</i>	<i>ReadersDigest WeeklyStandard Wall St. Journal Commentary American Spectator NationalReview McLaughlin Group Washington Times Insight</i>
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Most newspapers, local TV & radio |

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## B. Journalists and Commentators

1. Left	2. Liberal	3. Libertarian	4. Conservative
Alexander Cockburn Molly Ivins			

Noam Chomsky Edward Herman Katrina vanden Heuvel Barbara Ehrenreich  
 Robert Scheer Jonathan Kozol Todd Gitlin  
 Jim Hightower Bob Herbert  
 Jeff Cohen Norman Solomon Gore Vidal  
 Julianne Malveaux Victor Navasky Roger Wilkins  
 Cornel West  
 Betty Friedan Ralph Nader Katha Pollit  
 Jesse Jackson Bernie Sanders Paul Wellstone Michael Moore Eric Alterman Michael  
 Lerner Lewis Lapham William Greider  
 Susan Sontag Barbara Kingsolver Arundhati Roy Bill Moyers  
 Holly Sklar]] | Dan Rather Tom Brokaw Ted Koppel Jim Lehrer Larry King Cokie  
 Roberts Oprah Winfrey Rosie O'Donnell  
 Bob Woodward Mark Shields Paul Krugman David Broder Michael Kinsley Frank  
 Rich Gloria Steinem Seymour Hersh David Halberstam  
 Carl Bernstein Donald Barlett  
 James Steele Naomi Wolf  
 John K. Galbraith James Carville

George Stephanopolous Cynthia Tucker

Al Franken

Martha Nussbaum Bill Maher

Arianna Huffington\* David Brock\*

Michael Lind

Former conservative | Virginia Postrel Stephen Moore Doug Bandow Debra Saunders  
Nat Hentoff James Pinkerton Jesse Ventura | Rush Limbaugh Pat Buchanan Jerry  
Falwell Pat Robertson William F. Buckley Paul Harvey Sam Donaldson George Will  
John McLaughlin Fred Barnes Paul Gigot

Charles Krauthammer William Safire Robert Novak Phyllis Schlafly John Leo

Cal Thomas Thomas Sowell Gordon Liddy Bob Grant Don Imus R. Emmett Tyrrell  
Laura Ingraham Mona Charen William Kristol Sean Hannity Michael Novak Norman  
Podhoretz John Podhoretz Milton Friedman Henry Kissinger Dinesh D'Souza Lynne  
Cheney Florence King Mary Matalin Christina Sommers Ann Coulter Jeff Jacoby  
Tucker Carlson Bill O'Reilly Bernard Goldberg Michael Savage David Horowitz\*]]  
Christopher Hitchens\*]] |

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Former leftist | Third Dimension: Diverse Influences in Media

When we read conservative views like the ones in the readings in this Chapter by Bernard Goldberg on journalism, the evidence they present of liberal bias seems overwhelming; yet when we read articles by leftists like Edward Herman on the same topic, their evidence for conservative bias seems equally persuasive. What, then, can we conclude from a comparative reading of the opposing sides? Perhaps that each side is using **selective vision, stacking the deck** by playing up every cause and instance of bias on the other side while downplaying every one of bias on its own? (This is a classic case of the “Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric” in Chapter 15.) Thus the most plausible answer to the question of whether the media have a liberal or a conservative bias is “both”—the bias is sometimes and in some ways liberal (though almost never explicitly socialistic) and at other times and in other ways conservative. This is not necessarily to imply that there is a 50-50 balance, only that we need to take an evenhanded overview of partisan viewpoints supporting the opposing camps, carefully weigh the evidence presented by opposing sources, and recognize more complexities in the issue than acknowledged by partisans on either side, in order to arrive at our own judgment of what the actual balance might be.

As anyone who has worked in commercial media (including myself) will attest, “the media” aren’t a monolithic entity but are organizations in which several opposing forces are jockeying for dominance every day. These forces include at least the following, in no fixed order of influence:

1. Employees: editors and writers in print media; producers, directors, newscasters, and performers in television, films, radio, concerts, and recordings
2. Owners and executives of media corporations (“management” as opposed to employees or “labor”)
3. Advertisers
4. Pressure groups, public relations agencies, and lobbyists, including those of government, public-policy foundations, and research institutes
5. Audiences

Among these groups, media scholars generally agree that the first includes the most liberals, at least relatively, in comparison to groups 2, 3, and 4. (Those select media employees who are “stars” tend to be an exception to the rule equating wealth with conservatism, their politics often being that of the Hollywood Democrat, limousine liberal, or Porsche populist variety, retaining the affiliation of most artists with the Democratic Party—see the table in Chapter 15, “Social Class and Political Attitudes.”) At the level of both national and local media, most individual or corporate owners of media corporations, their appointed top executives, and major advertisers are in the wealthiest stratum, and thus by definition most can be expected to be conservative, in the sense of supporting capitalism and a corporate social order; their party affiliation is more often Republican than Democratic. (Ted Turner, a liberal Democrat, would be a prominent exception to this rule, although multimillionaire Turner is far from an opponent of capitalism; David Horowitz’s article “The Intellectual Class War” in Chapter 15 also takes issue with this general point.) Likewise, most public relations agencies, lobbies, foundations, and research institutes that represent big business are conservative, while those that represent labor unions and citizen-advocacy groups like Common Cause, Public Citizen, and the Sierra Club are liberal. (See the readings in chapters 17 and 18.).

Various segments of government also employ public relations agents and researchers, and their politics will vary according to whether the particular agency employing them tends to be conservative (such as the Defense Department) or liberal (such as the Environmental Protection Agency), and according to the ideology of the party currently in office. As for audiences, they obviously contain the same proportion of liberals and conservatives that the electorate does at any particular time. To the extent that the media attempt to “give the people what they want,” some media try to target either the liberal or the conservative audience, while others try to work both sides of the street, with vague or mixed political messages.

All of the above forces try to impose their own viewpoint in the daily workings of the media; when the conservative forces prevail, we get a conservative bias, and when the liberal ones prevail, we get the opposite. None of these forces prevail all the time or without conflict and accommodation. Liberals argue that owners have ultimate control over media content through the power of the pocketbook, including the power to hire and fire employees, but conservatives point to many examples in which the employees’ views prevail over the owners’. Liberals also argue that owners and advertisers

attempt to control content in a manner calculated to maximize profits and create a pro-corporate and nationalistic agenda, while conservatives respond that if a leftist media production, writer, or performer, is popular enough, and if the liberal or left-of-liberal audience is large or affluent enough, owners and advertisers at least sometimes will subordinate their ideological preferences to the propagation of an opposing but more profitable message. In a prominent recent case, Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11* was dropped for distribution by Disney, allegedly under political pressure, but was picked up by Miramax and became enormously profitable. Leftists point to other instances where corporate ideology trumps popularity, such as that of Moore's *TV Nation*, a documentary series satirically criticizing corporations, which had high ratings on Fox but was canceled by right-wing billionaire Rupert Murdoch when he bought that network, or Jim Hightower's talk radio show, which was dropped by ABC when it bought up the network that was carrying it. So leftists see a **vicious circle**, in which prior restraint on leftist views precludes the theoretical possibility of their gaining a profitable audience.

Noncommercial public television and radio in America through most of the last half of the twentieth century presented many more leftist views than did commercial broadcasting, from which it can plausibly be inferred that commercial ownership and advertising do indeed tend to impose conservative economic views, and that funding by government and other noncorporate sources (e.g., audience contributors, colleges) does not necessarily lead to government control or censorship of content, which conservatives use as an **appeal to fear** against public broadcasting. Likewise for C-SPAN, which is noncommercial though funded as a public service by commercial broadcasters, and which presents congressional hearings, political speeches, extensive panels on public affairs, academic conferences, and book discussions, with a balance of liberal and conservative sources. (Most other democracies today have much more publicly funded broadcasting and some print media, and likewise tend to be more liberal than American commercial media.) In the past few decades, however, conservative politicians have tried to eliminate or drastically reduce government funding for public television and radio and to replace government support with corporate "underwriting" (often a euphemism for direct sponsorship and control of content in production), with the direct result of an increase in conservative views—for example. *Suze Orman: The Courage to Be Rich*.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Look at the reading in Chapter 18, the 60 Minutes transcript "Confessions of a Tobacco Lobbyist." Here is a report that clearly has a liberal viewpoint critical of the big business of tobacco. Although tobacco advertising is now banned on TV, the major tobacco companies form Part of larger conglomerates, such as RJRNabisco, that are large TV advertisers and are quite possibly represented on the networks' boards of directors (you might research this). To what extent, then, does this report provide evidence for the conservative argument that media content is controlled by liberal producers rather than advertisers or corporate management? In your memory of TV



news reports and magazine shows like 60 Minutes, would you judge that such strong criticism of the tobacco industry, big business in general, and its lobbying of politicians is the rule or the exception? Research stories about efforts by the tobacco industry to suppress negative media reports about it, including another 60 Minutes report on a cover-up by the tobacco industry of the addictive effects of nicotine. The popular Hollywood film *The Insider* was a thinly fictionalized account of this broadcast; study that film to analyze its viewpoint and possible bias.

Monitor print and broadcast coverage of strikes, protests against globalization of the economy and sweatshop labor, and other labor-management conflicts to see whether the coverage sympathizes with one side or the other. Look for positive or negative images of business executives and labor unions projected in both news and entertainment media. How much do you think ownership of media by unions rather than corporations would alter such coverage?

Monitor programming on PBS television or NPR radio for a week and compare it to programming on the commercial networks and local stations. What differences and similarities do you find, and what is their ideological significance? Note who “underwrote” programs and whether the underwriter’s influence is obvious. Discuss the positive and negative effects of the decline in public funding and increasing influence of corporate underwriters, and the question of how public broadcasting should differ from commercial media.

## **Fourth Dimension: Political Viewpoints and Levels of Education**

A comparison of columns 1 and 4 in both sections A and B of table 16.1 reveals a peculiarity of American media. Many of the media and personalities in column 4 are among the most widely circulated in the country—for example, *Reader’s Digest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The McLaughlin Group*, Rush Limbaugh, Pat Robertson, and Pat Buchanan, along with most regional newspapers, TV, and radio, which serve for the most part as boosters of local business interests and have less of a “wall” between editorial and ownership and advertising divisions than the national media. However, none of the media in table 16.1A, column 1, and few of the personalities in table 16.1B, column 1, have circulation anywhere comparable to those in table 16.1A, column 4, and table 16.1B, column 4. One reason for the large circulation of these media and individuals in column 4 (and of most other mass-circulation print and broadcast media) is that their rhetoric is aimed at the widest possible audience—that is, the majority of the public, with an average high-school-graduate literacy level. At the other end of the spectrum, all of the left-of-liberal media and most of the individuals in column 1 of tables 16.1A and 16.1B address a more limited audience, mainly at a collegegraduate level and advanced stage of cognitive development and critical thinking; their editors

and writers tend to have strong academic credentials in liberal education (many hold PhDs) and are clearly identifiable as intellectuals.

A major historical irony here is that leftism in the last few centuries was the politics of the proletarian masses and conservatism was that of upper-class elites, but over the course of the twentieth century, at least in the United States, the masses have moved toward the right and tended to align with the wealthy, so that conservative interests have preempted the **ethos** of populism, while the American left has shrunk to a constituency largely characterized by intellectuals (with exceptions including the remnants of militant labor unions, the poor, racial minorities, and immigrants), with the result that conservatives like Bernard Goldberg, David Horowitz, and William Bennett now stigmatize the left as the realm of “the cultural elite,” entrenched in liberal arts departments of universities, small-circulation journals of opinion, public television and radio, and other intellectual media and out of touch with the mainstream of American opinion. It is significant that PBS previously was the main TV and radio outlet for classical music, ballet, opera, and Broadway musicals, but as it has been taken over by corporate underwriters and producers, it has added more “lowbrow” music—pop, country, and rock—while NPR has added commentary on sports as well as pop music.

To be sure, some of the conservative media and individuals in column 4 are comparable to those in column 1 in their intellectual level. Journals of opinion like *Commentary*, the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, and *American Spectator*, and others like *American Enterprise* and *Policy Review* are edited and written by individuals, and are addressed to an audience, at the same, postcollegiate level. (To reiterate, that is why these journals make more credible conservative sources for college-level papers than mass-media conservatives like Rush Limbaugh.) So while there are intellectual media and spokespeople addressing an educated audience on the American right as well as the left, the *mass* media provide little voice for either the intellectual right or left, mainly because they limit expression to “sound bites” and oversimplifications, excluding the kind of extended, complex discourse that characterizes university-level teaching and writing. This contrast is clear in the exceptions like CSPAN, which regularly broadcasts university and research-institute conferences from both left and conservative sources, or what still remains of educational television and radio programming on public broadcasting stations.

Although the mass media tend to exclude intellectuals on both the right and the far left, leftists argue that the positions of the intellectual right do not differ as much from mainstream conservatism as those of the intellectual far left do from mainstream liberalism (intellectual leftists generally being more critical of the Democratic Party than intellectual rightists are of the Republicans). As a result, the far left is the one position on the American political spectrum with least access to mass media (other than the extreme right of neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and militias, which has few intellectually reputable representatives). The more fair-minded conservatives acknowledge this fact, though they tend to downplay the difference between leftists and liberals, or

else they speculate that in recent decades, ideas from the intellectual left have “trickled down” little by little into mainstream media, as Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman argue in *Watching America*:

Television thus stands at the end of a long chain of popularization that begins with the creation of ideas and issues in universities, think tanks, “public interest” groups, and the like. The process continues with their entry into what Herbert Gans calls “upper middle” popular culture via the prestige press and “quality” magazines like *Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*. The most simplified version reaches the mass public in TV movies, “realist” dramatic series, and socially conscious sitcoms. (297)

Be that as it may, the practical implication of this analysis is that to get a full range of informed opinions, you should familiarize yourself with the ideas of intellectual leftists on university faculties and in books and journals of opinion, because you are unlikely to see or hear much of their ideas *at first hand*, without their being watered down through the “chain of popularization,” in mass media.

Leftists argue that another reason their viewpoints do not receive an equal hearing in mass media is that most conservative ideas—such as patriotism, orthodox religion, family values, free enterprise, low taxes, commodity consumption, and strong support of the military, police, the right to bear arms, and “getting tough on criminals”—are not only more easily simplified and instinctively appealing to the mass audience but also are more congenial to wealthy media owners and advertisers with an interest in maximizing their profits and maintaining the status quo of consumer society. Leftists have long argued that “mass culture” in general has a conservative bias because it appeals to the lowest common denominator of cognitive development and to all the “conservative” blocks to critical thinking surveyed here previously—nationalistic ethnocentrism, authoritarianism and conformity, prejudice and stereotyping, rationalization of the status quo, and so on. (For a comprehensive survey of this line of argument, see *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives*, Donald Lazere, ed.) Another significant difference between left and right journals of opinion, which you can easily verify for yourself, is that the ones on the right have far more advertisers and funding (billionaires Rupert Murdoch and Richard Mellon Scaife funded the *Weekly Standard* and *American Spectator* respectively, and the Olin, Scaife, and Bradley foundations have funded others), and are more slickly produced, while all the left journals barely survive on low advertising and sales, supplemented by donations from subscribers and occasional wealthy “angels” acting out of conscience against their own class interests in supporting journals critical of the wealthy (although they may receive charitable tax deductions, as do the funders of conservative journals). Leftists argue that this creates **conflicts of interest** for the conservative journals.

A few of the individuals in column 1 of table 16.1B, such as Michael Moore, Ralph Nader, Molly Ivins, Jim Hightower, Will Durst, and Paula Poundstone, attempt to attain a populist appeal in their style and intended audience; Barbara Ehrenreich's columns sometimes appear in *Time* and the *New York Times*, but few of these commentators are allowed on the major TV discussion shows or have prominent roles in the Democratic Party (from which Nader has separated himself as an independent candidate for president), and none of the publications have reached the mass audience of *Reader's Digest*, Limbaugh, Robertson, or Buchanan (both Robertson and Buchanan have run for president as Republicans).

## Conclusion

This has been a sketchy survey of some of the issues to keep in mind as you read through the following selections (or other critiques from the left or right) and evaluate the authors' rhetoric. Pay close attention, then, to the extent to which the various authors take all these variables into account, their evenhandedness in weighing evidence on both sides, and the strength of their own support for the case that either conservative or leftist bias is prevalent on balance.

*The Illiberal Media*]

*By Edward S. Herman*

From *Z Magazine*, January 1997

Claims of a pervasive "liberal" or "left" media bias are heard repeatedly in the allegedly liberal/left media, but counterclaims of exceptional "illiberal" or "conservative" bias and power in the media are exceedingly rare. This is hardly a reflection of reality: there is a huge right-wing Christian radio and TV system; the right-wing Rupert Murdoch owns a TV network, movie studio, 132 newspapers, book publishers (including HarperCollins), and 25 magazines, among other holdings; Rush Limbaugh admires John Malone's TeleCommunications Inc. is the largest cable system in the United States (14 million subscribers) and has interests in 91 U.S. cable content services; the editorial page of the largest circulation national newspaper, the *Wall Street Journal*, is aggressively reactionary; the talk show on radio and TV is dominated by the likes of Robert Novak ("CrossFire," the "McLaughlin Group," and Rush Limbaugh and Limbaugh clones; even PBS is saturated with right-wing regulars (Buckley, Brown, McLaughlin, Wattenberg).

## The Pitiful Giant Syndrome

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) recently listed 52 national media figures of the right, from Roger Ailes to Walter Williams, most of whom have proclaimed the media's liberal bias while occupying positions of access and power vastly more

extensive than liberals could ever hope to attain. Leftists are an extinct species in the mainstream media; the firing of Jim Hightower by ABC, immediately following the Disney acquisition, was like the passing of the last carrier pigeon. This doesn't prevent the pundits, and even the media moguls, from making bitter complaints about the power of the "left." Rupert Murdoch started Fox News in order to combat the "left bias" of the media. The right-wing Canadian mogul Conrad Black, who owns more than half the daily newspapers in Canada and over 100 in this country (including the *Chicago Sun Times*) also whines about the liberal-left bias of the press.

The reason we only hear complaints of a "liberal" media is that the right-wing is so well entrenched and aggressive that its members can pretend that their own potent selves don't exist. Just as power allowed the rightwing and a complicit "liberal media" to label university dissidents a PC threat, while ignoring the massive right-wing attempt to impose its own political agenda on the university, so in the case of the media, views disapproved by the powerful are "liberal" or "left"—the views of the numerous right-wing moguls and pundits are implicitly unbiased or merely countering those of the omnipresent, subversive, but elusive "liberals." We can call this the "pitiful giant syndrome," harking back to Nixon era claims that the poor

U.S. was a pitiful giant being pushed around by Third World upstarts.

The pitiful moguls are, of course, in the supremely privileged position of being able to create their own right-wing news and commentary operations and exclude those that don't meet their political standards. Murdoch personally funded the new conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard*, and he has placed Roger Ailes in charge of his new cable news services—Ailes is the Republican specialist in media dirty tactics (famous for his role in the Willie Horton ploy in 1988), who came to the Murdoch news operation after a stint as Rush Limbaugh's producer. John Malone recently created his own talk-commentary program, "Damn Right!" hosted by David Asman, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page's noted apologist for state terrorism in Central America, along with another "citizen education" show, "The Race for the Presidency," under partisan Republican management. He has also welcomed to TCI cable Pat Robertson's Family Channel and the new, exclusively right-wing, Empowerment Channel. At the same time, Malone succeeded in killing the 90s Channel, that rare (and now approaching the extinct) entity called a "liberal" channel, by raising its entry rates to his cable system to prohibitive levels. The pitiful giant was exercising raw economic power in pursuit of his political agenda, but the liberal media didn't notice or complain. (The Clinton FCC, while sanctioning one giant monopoly power enhancing merger after another, refused to intervene.)

## Flabby Centrists & Aggressive Rightists

In the real world, the resurgent power of corporate and financial interests, an increasingly concentrated media ever more closely integrated with advertisers (now spending on the media over \$75 billion a year), the proliferation of corporate-funded think tanks

and the corporate “leasing the ivory tower,” has shifted political power and media opinion sharply to the right. At this point, “left” in the media is conservative, centrist, and in a defensive mode, accepting without question the premises of corporate capitalism and the imperial state, but weakly supporting the preservation of an eroding welfare state. The strong liberalism of L. T. Hobhouse (*Liberalism*), Louis Brandeis (*The Curse of Bigness*), and John Dewey (*Reconstruction in Philosophy*), with its powerful strain of equalitarianism and opposition to concentrated economic power, is still deeply rooted in the public, but is hard to find in mainstream politics or the media. The centrist-conservative media “left” is epitomized by David Broder, although Mark Shields, Roger Rosenblatt, or Jack Germond would do just as well. In the late 1980s, when a Central American activist asked the editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to identify his left columnist who offset Charles Krauthammer and George Will, the editor answered: David Broder. But Broder’s views are pure establishment; he evades tough issues, joins almost every establishment crusade (NAFTA, Persian Gulf war, Soviet Threat and military buildup, welfare and entitlements out of control), and devotes maximum attention to election horse-racing. He also never fights for principles against strong establishment opposition—thus, while disliking Reagan’s Central America wars, he simply abandoned the subject, giving the floor to Will, Krauthammer, and the administration. So Broder never bothers anybody important, adapts beautifully to class and imperial warfare, and is the ideal liberal for an era of counterrevolution.

Meanwhile, the right-wing opposition to Broder and company—Will, Krauthammer, Robert Bartley, Fred Barnes, Mona Charren, the Kristols, John Leo, and dozens more—are not conservatives, they are reactionary servants of the corporate community, which has been on the offensive for over 20 years, striving to remove all obstacles to its growth and profitability. These obstacles include the welfare state, regulation of corporate practices, and an organized labor movement. Removing these, and returning us to 19th century socio-economic conditions, is not a “conservative” project, it is reactionary. So is the support of the “strong state” in the Pinochet-Reagan-Thatcher modes, featuring ruthless law and order regimes, imperial aggressiveness, and military-industrial and prison-industrial complexes riding high.

## Right-Wing Echo Chamber

With centrists like Broder as the left, and even these in small numbers, the large array of aggressive right-wing pundits and editors like Robert Bartley (*Wall Street Journal*) can engineer agendas. In order to fix agendas, themes must be repeated, with passion, to make them seem important. The right wingers are sufficiently numerous to be able to constitute an “echo chamber,” in which the charges are repeated, each small elaboration used to keep the subject on the agenda, and the agenda pushed relentlessly. They are able to elevate sleazy trash with a suitable message (Gary Aldrich’s *Unlimited Access*) into national prominence and turn the relatively trivial “filegate” into the equivalent of Watergate (Jeff Cohen, “Filegate Equals Watergate: The Conservative

Echo Chamber Circulates a Myth,” *EXTRA!*, October 1996). They can even make a genuine contribution to war hysteria and the militarization of foreign policy, as in the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 (See Eric Alterman’s *Sound and Fury*).

The spineless political and media liberals not only don’t set agendas, they often get on the right-wing bandwagons themselves. They quickly swallowed the line of a Sandinista threat, and in the phony MIG crisis of 1984 competed with one another in urging an aggressive U.S. response. Liberal congressperson Lee Hamilton was notorious for caving in during the Iran-Contra investigation, in the interest of a “national unity” that the right-wing regularly ignores in attacking their enemies. David Broder followed Hamilton and his fellow Democrats in failing to press the attack on North, Reagan, and Bush despite their carrying out covert terrorist operations in violation of law and constitutional principles. Clinton refused to pursue the Bush administration’s involvement in the Banco Lavoro case and indirect funding of Saddam Hussein, and the media liberals followed in his wake. The 1995 testimony by former Reagan official Howard Teicher that the Reagan administration had “authorized, approved and assisted” delivery of cluster bombs to Iraq, among other massive arms support, was of no interest to the liberal media.

The right-wing media maintained a ferocious attack on Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, whose work was vastly more relevant to substantive issues than Kenneth Starr’s inquiries into Whitewater. The liberal media, which failed to defend Walsh and give his investigation major attention, have allowed the conservative echo chamber to elevate and honor Starr and the Whitewater investigation (see Robert Parry’s *Fooling America*, and his ongoing reports in his newsletter *The Consortium*).

While the right-wing echo chamber has been important in pushing numerous nasty policy trends, it should be recognized that this echo chamber is underwritten by big money and would not work without “liberal media” cooperation. The “McLaughlin Group” is funded by General Electric, many of the other right wingers are or have been supported by corporate funded think tanks, and a majority of them are carried as columnists by the liberal media. The liberal media have also regularly joined in right-wing propaganda campaigns—*Newsweek* and the *New York Times* were major participants in the PC propaganda wave; they all gave prominence to *The Bell Curve*, and supported the Reaganite arms race and wars of the 1980s; and they are virtually all now in the Concord Coalition camp elevating the threat of entitlement costs into a crisis and setting the stage for the further erosion of the welfare state.

## Proving Liberal Domination

Just as money and power allow the dominant illiberals to call the media liberal and left, so money and power allow them to study and “prove” media bias. S. Robert Lichter, Linda Lichter, and Stanley Rothman have been the most prominent rightists who have engaged in this “scientific” effort. The Lichters organized their Center for Media and Public Affairs in 1985, with accolades from Reagan and Pat Buchanan; Rothman

has had a chair at Smith College and generous right-wing foundation support. In a 1981 article on “Media and Business Elites” (*Public Opinion*), Lichter and Rothman (hereafter referred to as LR) tried to prove the liberal bias of the media by showing that the “media elite” votes

Democratic and has opinions more liberal than those of mainstream America.

The LR study violated every scientific standard you could name. They claimed to be studying a “media elite,” but actually sampled media personnel who had anything to do with media “content,” so most of them may be ordinary reporters (they failed to disclose the composition of their sample). LR compared their “media elite” with a sample of middle and upper levels of corporate management, not with comparable professionals like teachers, let alone non-professional “middle Americans.” Their questions were ambiguous and loaded (for a good analysis, see Herbert Gans, “Are U.S. Journalists Dangerously Liberal?,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, November-December 1985), making one wonder why anyone would participate in this survey. Ben Bradlee, the top editor of the *Washington Post*—one of the papers allegedly sampled by LR—claimed that he couldn’t locate a single employee who had participated in the LR survey.

One key technique of right-wing proofs of liberal bias is to focus on social issues, as the affluent and urban media journalists and editors tend to be more liberal than blue collar workers on issues like abortion/choice, gay rights, and the handling of drug problems, as are urban professionals across the board. On the other hand, on matters like government regulation, distrust of big business, income distribution, and jobs policies, “middle America” is to the left of the business and media elite. Right-wingers like LR handle this by bypassing the problematic areas and focusing on social issues, where they can score points.

Right-wing proofs of a liberal media also focus on voting patterns. The 1981 LR piece featured the pro-Democrat voting records of the media elite in the four elections between 1964 and 1976. In April 1996 a similar finding was published by the Roper Center and Gannett Freedom Forum; 89 percent of a sample of 139 Washington journalists allegedly voted for Clinton in 1992. The inference quickly drawn from this, as from the LR study, was that the media has a liberal bias. But the true media elite is the owners, who have legal control of the media companies, can hire, promote, and fire their employees, and can shape policy a la Malone and Murdoch. LR and their allies never poll owners.

There are other questions to be asked in regard to these conservative polls. Why don’t they compare the media elite’s views on NAFTA with the views of middle America? How can we explain the mainstream media’s failure to focus on the declining economic position and insecurity of middle Americans as an election issue? How can we explain the fact that a majority of newspapers came out editorially for Bob Dole with the “liberals” controlling the media? How can we explain the steady attacks on Clinton’s character and focus on Whitewater, and more cursory treatment of Iran-Contra and the Banco Lavoro case, in terms of a pro-Democrat bias? In what sense is Clinton a “liberal” anyway?



These and other questions can be answered by media analyses that focus on the control, funding, structure, and performance of the media, rather than reporter opinions and voting patterns. For example, the “propaganda model,” spelled out in my book *Manufacturing Consent* (co-authored with Noam Chomsky), describes the working of the mainstream media in terms of underlying structural factors and “filters” that define the parameters within which media underlings work. These constraints and filters include ownership and the financial pressures]]for bottom line performance; the need to adapt to the interests of advertisers, who pay the media bills; sourcing processes which cause journalists to depend heavily on government and business newsmakers; the threat of flak, which keeps the journalists under pressure and in line; and anticommunist and market-supportive premises that journalists internalize. The right-wing pundits and their echo chamber fit into this model quite nicely, which is why General Electric and the advertising community give them generous support.

It should be noted the FAIR, in its bimonthly publication *EXTRA!*, has provided numerous studies with compelling evidence of conservative domination of talk shows and public broadcasting. With the exception of their study of the huge bias in the selection of guests on “Nightline,” their efforts have been given much less attention in the mainstream media than right-wing “proofs” of liberal media bias as pronounced by Lichter and Rothman and the recent Roper-Gannett study. This is a reflection of genuine media bias, with the right-wing network always able to push congenial findings into the echo chamber, giving themselves and their principals a boost. But this publicity and neglect of the FAIR offerings are living proof that the claim of “liberal bias” is a lie and that the reality is one of illiberal domination.

*Networks Need a Reality Check]]*

*By Bernard Goldberg*

From *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*

New York, Regnery, 2001

There are a lot of reasons fewer people are watching network news, and one of them, I’m more convinced than ever, is that our viewers simply don’t trust us. And for good reason.

The old argument that the networks and other “media elites” have a liberal bias is so blatantly true that it’s hardly worth discussing anymore. No, we don’t sit around in dark corners and plan strategies on how we’re going to slant the news. We don’t have to. It comes naturally to most reporters.

Which brings us to a recent “Reality Check” on the *CBS Evening News*, reported by Eric Engberg, a longtime friend. His subject was Steve Forbes’s flat tax. It’s not just Democrats and some Republican presidential candidates who don’t like the flat tax—it’s also a lot of big-time reporters. The flat tax rubs them the wrong way. Which is fair enough—until their bias makes its way into their reporting. And Mr. Engberg’s report set new standards for bias.

He starts out saying: “Steve Forbes pitches his flat-tax scheme as an economic elixir, good for everything that ails us.” Sure, the words “scheme” and “elixir” are loaded, conjuring up images of Doctor Feelgood selling worthless junk out of the back of his wagon. But this is nothing more than a prelude—warm-up material to get us into the right frame of mind.

The report shows Mr. Forbes saying the U.S. economy can grow twice as fast if we remove “obstacles, starting with the tax code.” Mr. Forbes may be right or wrong about this, so Mr. Engberg lets us know which it is. “Time out” he shouts in his signature style. “Economists say nothing like that has ever actually happened.”

He then introduces us to William Gale of the Brookings Institution, who says “It doesn’t seem plausible to think that we’re going to have a whole new economy or economic Renaissance Age due to tax reform.”

CBS News instructs its reporters and producers to identify people in a way that will help the audience understand any political bias they might have. We are told, for example, to identify the Heritage Foundation as “a conservative think tank.” I have done this on more than one occasion, myself. It’s a good policy.

But where was the identification of the Brookings Institution as “a liberal think tank”? Might that influence Mr. Gale’s take on the flat tax? Instead, Mr. Gale was presented to America simply as an expert with no tax ax to grind.

Mr. Engberg then shows Mr. Forbes saying: “A flat tax would enable this economy to grow. That would mean more revenues for Washington.” To this, Mr. Engberg tells the audience: “That was called supply-side economics under President Reagan: Less taxes equal more revenue. It didn’t work out that way.” Immediately after this we hear Mr. Engberg ask this question of Mr. Gale: “Is it fair to say the last time we tried something like this, we ended up with these hideous deficits?” To which Gale obediently replies, “It’s perfectly fair to say that.”

Mr. Engberg continues: “And if we try it again, your fear is...” And Mr. Gale replies: “...that we end up with the same problem again.”

But haven’t other experts argued that we would up with “hideous deficits,” not because of the tax cut but because of increased spending? And to the best of my knowledge, neither Mr. Forbes nor any other flat-tax proponent is suggesting we increase spending.

( Part of the problem is that most reporters and editors—television and print—are total dunces when it comes to the economy. Most don’t know a capital gain from a mutual fund. This, as much as bias, in some cases leads to the kind of reporting we see on the flat tax and a lot of other economic issues.)

One thing to remember about network news is that it steals just about everything from print. So if the *New York Times* is against the flat tax, and the *Washington Post* is against the flat tax, the networks can’t, and won’t be far behind.

Mr. Engberg concludes his piece a la David Letterman by saying that “Forbes’s Number One Wackiest Flat-Tax Promise” is the candidate’s belief that it would give parents “more time to spend with their children and each other.”

Can you imagine, in your wildest dreams, a network news reporter calling Hillary Clinton's health care plan "wacky"? Can you imagine any editor allowing it?

Finally, Mr. Engberg says: "The fact remains: the flat tax is a giant, untested theory. One economist suggested, before we put it in, we should test it out someplace—like Albania."

"Reality Check" suggests the viewers are going to get the facts. And then they can make up their mind. As Mr. Engberg might put it: "Time out." You'd have a better chance of getting the facts someplace else—like Albania.

*Liberal Hate-Speech]]*

*By Bernard Goldberg*

From *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*

New York: Regnery, 2001

If arrogance were a crime, there wouldn't be enough jail cells in the entire United States to hold all the people in TV news.

A network correspondent told me that once, but when he found out I was writing a book he got amnesia. Not only couldn't he remember ever saying such a subversive thing, but if by some insane chance he had—which he hadn't, of course—he didn't want any credit for it.

No problem.

Except that when network news correspondents are afraid to say even something as harmless as that out loud, there's not much chance they'll take on more serious problems, which then leaves the field wide open to idiots like me or, more ominously, to the real pros . . . the conservative media watchdogs that monitor every second of network news in order to document every single example of liberal bias, real or imagined.

Such an organization is the Media Research Center, based in Alexandria, Virginia, right outside Washington, D.C. Every month or so MRC mails a newsletter to reporters and anchors and other sages in the big-time national media. "Notable Quotables," they call it, is chock-full of "the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media." They also put out a daily report online called CyberAlert, which MRC says tracks media bias.

You'd think this exposure, before your own colleagues no less, might cause a certain amount of embarrassment, especially when the example of bias is especially egregious. Dream on. Network correspondents don't embarrass easily.

It's easy to dismiss "Notable Quotables," because professional liberal bashers compile it. But the right-wing scoundrels at the Media Research Center have come up with some good stuff. What follows are some of the more noteworthy examples, from the last ten years or so, of how journalists on the Left see the world.

- “Some thoughts on those angry voters. Ask parents of any two-year-old and they can tell you about those temper tantrums: the stomping feet, the rolling eyes, the screaming Imagine a nation full of uncontrolled

two-year-old rage. The voters had a temper tantrum last week Parenting and governing don’t have to be dirty words: the nation can’t be run by an angry two-year-old.”— *ABC anchorman Peter Jennings in his radio commentary after the GOP won the House, November 14, 1994* •

- “It’s short of soap, so there are lice in the hospitals. It’s short of pantyhose, women’s legs go bare. It’s short of snowsuits, so babies stay home in the winter. Sometimes it’s short of cigarettes so millions of people stop smoking, involuntarily. It drives everybody crazy. The problem isn’t communism; no one even talked about communism this week. The problem is shortages.”—*NBC Nightly News commentator John Chancellor on the Soviet Union, August 21, 1991*
- “I would be happy to give him [Clinton] a blow job just to thank him for keeping abortion legal. I think American women should be lining up with their presidential kneepads on to show their gratitude for keeping the theocracy off our backs.”—*Time contributor and former reporter Nina Burleigh recalling what she told the Washington Post’s Howard Kurtz about her feeling toward Bill Clinton, as recounted by Burleigh in the July 20, 1998, New York Observer*^
- “The man is on the Court. You know, I hope his wife feeds him lots of eggs and butter and he dies early like many black men do, of heart disease. Well, that’s how I feel. He is an absolutely reprehensible person.”—*USA Today columnist and Pacifica Radio talk show host Julianne Malveaux on Justice Clarence Thomas, November 4, 1994, PBS, To the Contrary*
- Inside Washington (TV) host Tina Gulland: “I don’t think I have any Jesse Helms defenders here, Nina?”

Nina Totenberg: “Not me. I think he ought to be worried about what’s going on in the Good Lord’s mind, because if there is retributive justice, he’ll get AIDS from a transfusion, or one of his grandchildren will get it.”—*National Public Radio and ABC News reporter Nina Totenberg reacting to Senator Jesse Helms’s claim that the government spends too much on AIDS research, July 8, 1995*

- “Yes, the case is being fomented by rightwing nuts and yes, she is not a very credible witness, and it’s really not a law case at all. But Clinton has got a problem here. He has a history of womanizing that most people believe is a problem It leads to things like this, some sleazy woman with big hair coming out of the trailer parks.”—*Newsweek Washington bureau chief Evan Thomas on Paula Jones, May 7, 1994, Inside Washington*

- “In the plague years of the 1980s—that low decade of denial, indifference, hostility, opportunism, and idiocy—government fiddled and medicine diddled and the media were silent or hysterical. A gerontocratic Ronald Reagan took this [AIDS] plague less seriously than Gerald Ford had taken swine flu. After all, he didn’t need the ghettos and he didn’t want the gays.”—CBS Sunday Morning *TV critic John Leonard, September 5, 1993*
- “... Toni Morrison wrote in the *New Yorker* that Clinton was our first ‘black President,’ and I think, in a way, Clinton may be our first ‘woman President.’ And I think that may be one of the reasons why women identify, because he does have a lot of feminine qualities about him: The softness, the sensitivity, the vulnerability, that kind of thing.”—the Washington Post’s *Sally Quinn on CNN’s Larry King Live, March 10, 1999*
- “He [Ted Kaczynski] wasn’t a hypocrite. He lives as he wrote. His manifesto, and there are a lot of things in it that I would agree with and a lot of other people would, that industrialization and pollution are terrible things, but he carried it to an extreme, and obviously murder is something that is far beyond any political philosophy, but he had a bike. He didn’t have any plumbing, he didn’t have any electricity.”—Time *Washington reporter Elaine Shannon talking about the Unabomber, April 7, 1996, Sunday Journal*
- “I think liberalism lives—the notion that we don’t have to stay where we are as a society, we have promises to keep, and it is liberalism, whether people like it or not, which has animated all the years of my life. What on earth did conservatism accomplish for our country?”—*Charles Kuralt talking with Morley Safer on the CBS special One for the Road with Charles Kuralt, May 4, 1994*
- Linda Chavez, Center for Equal Opportunity: “If you’re someone like me, who lives out in a rural area—if someone breaks into my house and wants to murder or rape me or steal off of my property, it’ll take a half an hour for a policeman to get to me Thou

sands of lives are saved by people being able to protect themselves.”

Bonnie Erbe, host and former NBC Radio/ Mutual reporter: “And if you look at the statistics, I would bet that you have a greater chance of being struck by lightning, Linda, than living where you live, and at your age, being raped. Sorry.”—*PBS, To the Contrary, May 13, 2000*

- “I’m all news all the time. Full power, tall tower. I want to break in when news breaks out. That’s my agenda. Now respectfully, when you start talking about a liberal agenda and all the, quote, ‘liberal bias’ in the media, I quite frankly, and I say this respectfully but candidly to you, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”—*Dan Rather to Denver KOA Radio’s Mike Rosen, November 28, 1995*

In fairness to the media elites, these aren't really examples of *unethical* liberal bias. Dan Rather was giving his opinion on a radio talk show. Peter Jennings didn't liken the American voter to an angry two-year-old on the *World News Tonight*. He did it in a radio commentary, a place he's allowed to give his opinions. John Chancellor wasn't *reporting* the news when he made his absurd observation that the problem in the old Soviet Union wasn't communism, but shortages. He was doing *commentary*.

Liberals have as much right to be downright silly as anyone else. But I doubt Peter would have gone on a rant if liberal Democrats had been swept into office instead of conservative Republicans. I doubt he would have compared American voters to a bunch of babies having temper tantrums had they voted for people more to Peter's liking and the liking of his Manhattan pals.

But there is something interesting about how liberals in the media can get away with making certain observations that conservatives never could.

Nina Totenberg says, "[I]f there's retributive justice, he'll [Jesse Helms] get AIDS from a transfusion, or one of his grandchildren will get it," and she remains a member in good standing of the liberal media elites.

What if a conservative journalist such as Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard* had said, "*If there's any justice in this world, Teddy Kennedy will drive off a bridge late at night and kill himself. Or one or two of his kids.*"

He would rightly be considered a contemptible hatemonger whose every word on every subsequent subject would be scrutinized for traces of venom, and it wouldn't be long before other journalists would marginalize him.

*USA Today* columnist Julianne Malveaux says of Clarence Thomas, "I hope his wife feeds him lots of eggs and butter and he dies early like many black men do, of heart disease," and she gets invited back on TV talk shows all the time.

If Robert Novak, the conservative columnist and CNN commentator, had said, "I hope Jesse Jackson's wife feeds him lots of eggs and butter and he dies early like many black men do, of heart disease," he'd rightly be seen as a nasty right-wing nut and compared to the Grand Wizard of the KKK.

*Newsweek's* Evan Thomas cavalierly calls Paula Jones "some sleazy woman with big hair coming out of the trailer parks," and he's seen as a pundit instead of a liberal elitist snob.

Can anyone in his right mind really imagine a conservative journalist of Evan Thomas's stature ridiculing a not-too-sophisticated, not-too-educated, young black or Hispanic woman, as someone "*with big hair coming out of the ghetto*"?

Bonnie Erbe tells Linda Chavez on PBS that she's got a greater chance of being struck by lightning than being raped—at her age.

If Brit Hume had said something so incredibly insensitive and so downright stupid (which I know he never would), NOW would have screamed that, like so many men, he just doesn't get it, that rape is *not* about sex, but about *power and control*, and then, just to set an example, the president of NOW would have led a contingent to hang Brit Hume in effigy, or maybe in the flesh. They would have thrown a million pickets into

the crusade to get him off the air, and they'd all be marching around Fox headquarters in New York and Washington chanting "Brit's a Twit and He's Got to Go." Quicker than you can say "male chauvinist pig" Brit Hume would become an embarrassment to Fox and a pariah in the world of big-time journalism.

But when a liberal says it on PBS, no big deal. Chavez is a conservative after all—and the sin of all sins, she says things Hispanic women aren't supposed to say. White liberals hate it when minorities do that. So, ipso facto, she's fair game.

Why is it that when liberal media stars say nasty things they're merely sharing their thoughts with us and (even more important) their feelings, but when the same sentiment comes out of a conservative's mouth, it's seen as mean-spirited?

After Bill Clinton was impeached, *Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift ("Eleanor Rodham Clift," in some circles) said, "That herd of managers from the House, I mean, frankly, all they were missing was white sheets."

Likewise, the *Arkansas Times* editorialized that "Kenneth Starr is cunning, ruthless, and about as well-mannered as Heinrich Himmler."

On January 15, 1999—Martin Luther King's birthday—the *Los Angeles Times* published an op-ed by "frequent contributor" Karen Grigsby Bates who spewed the following:

"It is a totally visceral reaction, but whenever I hear [Republican Senate majority leader] Trent Lott speak, I immediately think of nooses decorating trees. Big trees, with black bodies swinging from the business end of the nooses."

This is vile. Maybe it went over big with what they like to call the "creative community" in Los Angeles, but it is vile hate speech no matter how you cut it.

And what of the *Los Angeles Times*, the newspaper that published it? The *Times* is nothing if not a monument to political correctness, so much so that an op-ed page editor yanked a line from a syndicated George Will column that said, "I think it is reasonable to believe that [Bill Clinton] was a rapist." This offended the sensibilities of the *Times* editor. Linking a United States senator to the likes of Ku Klux Klan murderers, however, apparently falls into the category of nothing to get worked up over.

The media elites, at the *Los Angeles Times* and everyplace else, can hear, even when the whispers of what they consider hate speech is fifty miles away—whether they imagine that it's coming from conservative talk show hosts or right-wing religious fundamentalists or just about anyone opposed to affirmative action. But they can't hear it dripping off their own nasty tongues . . . and probably think "liberal hate-speech" is an oxymoron.

It's a good thing arrogance isn't a crime.

## My Sports Right or

*By Fred Barnes*

From *The Weekly Standard*, January 27, 1997  
*Left*

I went to the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia last December, and I won't soon forget it. And not just the game, which Army won when a desperate drive by Navy fell short in the final seconds. What happened moments *after* the game was even more memorable. Veterans Stadium suddenly went silent. The heartbroken Navy team, having lost to Army for the fifth straight year, gathered itself in front of the full brigade of midshipmen, and together, football players and coaches and Middies sang the Naval Academy alma mater. Then, after a brief burst of noise, the crowd quieted again. Smoke from cannons fired to celebrate Army's victory hung over the section of the stands where the entire corps of cadets was standing. Once the Army players collected in front, the West Point alma mater was sung.

The whole episode lasted two, maybe three minutes. It was one of the strangest and most exhilarating moments I've experienced in years of attending sports events. And I think it's also fair to describe it as a conservative moment: a hard-hitting football game between traditional rivals, cadets and midshipmen (in uniform) standing throughout the game, the military brass in attendance, President Clinton seated for the first half on Navy's side, the second half on Army's. I loved it. Clinton, by the way, was politely but coolly received at the game.

Yes, there are conservative and liberal athletic events. Sports are either conservative (football, basketball, boxing) or liberal (soccer, jogging, baseball), and teams can be conservative (Dallas Cowboys, New York Yankees) or liberal (Washington Redskins, Atlanta Braves) as well. The same is true for big games. I don't think anyone would dispute that the Army-Navy game is a conservative event. And it's no coincidence that Army and Navy are better teams now that we're in a conservative era. In the liberal '60s and '70s, serious athletes boycotted the service academies. It got so bad that *Sports Illustrated* a few years back urged West Point and Annapolis to drop big-time football. Last fall, *SI* changed its mind.

What makes a sports event conservative or liberal? I've got four criteria. The first is the sport itself. Boxing, for instance, is conservative because it's so violent, individualistic, and masculine. The second criterion is the crowd: You don't find many liberals at football games. The third is the nature of the event. Does winning matter to the exclusion of practically everything else? Is it southern? Is it tradition-bound? If the answer is yes to these, it's a conservative event. Thus, the Masters golf tournament at a stuffy country club in Augusta, Georgia, in April is very, very conservative. The fourth measure: How much commercialism is associated with the event? There's nothing wrong, from the conservative standpoint, with commercialism in sports, mixing Adam Smith and Edmund Burke. What's repugnant and definitely not conservative is glitz, such as when a halfnaked Michael Jackson sang during halftime at the Super Bowl.



Still, the Super Bowl is the summit of conservative sports. It's the biggest football game of the season. The crowd at the game consists of rich folks, high rollers, and moderately well-heeled fans of the two teams involved. It's an event where winning is everything. The Buffalo Bills have played in four Super Bowls, yet they're the laughingstock of football because they lost all four. The Super Bowl has become traditional. The game on January 26 is the 31st—sorry, I mean the XXXIst. Okay, it's a relatively *new* tradition, but let's not get picky. As for commercialism, it's got plenty. The TV ads during the game are a media story all by themselves. The star of the Super Bowl used to be paid to declare he's going to Disney World right after the game. I miss that. Anyway, it's liberals who hate commerce. Conservatives loathe glitz, the Super Bowl's chief drawback. Who's performing at halftime this year? Siegfried and Roy?

There are other, lesser conservative sports events. The World Series is one. Baseball is a liberal sport, so boring it's adored by liberals. But the series is steeped in tradition, and the crowd is a downscale version of the Super Bowl throng. Winning matters. After the Boston Red Sox lost ignominiously to the New York Mets in 1986, I was so crushed I lost interest in baseball for several years. Both the NBA championship and the NBA All-Star weekend are conservative. The emphasis is chiefly on individual players like Michael Jordan and Hakeem Olajuwon, the true entrepreneurs of the sporting world. Sometimes a sandlot hustler pulls himself up by his bootstraps, as Tim Legler of the Washington Bullets did by winning the 3-point shooting contest in 1996. Oh, yes, the World Cup is conservative, though soccer as a sport isn't. The cup generates fervent nationalistic feelings, which is fine. Losing the World Cup is death. When Italy lost in 1994 on Roberto Baggio's missed penalty kick, Baggio fell to the ground like a man who'd been shot. He understood what losing meant.

Now for the liberal sports events. The NCAA basketball Final Four is at the top of the list. Why? It's a great event that I never miss (on TV), but winning the championship isn't all that significant anymore. It's getting to the Final Four itself that produces bragging rights. Notice how good college teams are often described as having been to the Final Four *x* number of times in the past decade or two. That's not a conservative yardstick. It reminds me of the defense of affirmative action: Those rewarded are always said to be "qualified," but never the "most qualified" or the "best." Winning doesn't matter in the baseball All-Star game either. Who remembers who won last year, the AL or the NL? And who cares? Still, individual performances are important, which makes the All-Star game neo-liberal.

What's sad to see is a conservative event that turns liberal. This has happened to the college football bowl games. They used to be very traditional (and very exciting): Big 10 versus Pac 10 in the Rose Bowl, the Big 8 champ in the Orange Bowl, etc. Now the major bowls have become part of a playoff system. It doesn't matter which bowl you go to. Worse, there are dozens of bowls. Mediocre teams get invited. California, a 6-5 team, played in the Aloha Bowl. After losing to Navy, Cal wound up 6-6 for the year—but with bragging rights about having been a bowl team. Rewarding a

mediocre or losing performance is a liberal practice. Liberal soccer parents in my neck of the woods, for example, think every player on every team should get a trophy, even if they lost every game. Good for self-esteem, you know. Conservatives see things differently. Rather than rewarded, losers should be spurred to play harder next time in hopes of winning a trophy. The Cal football team should have stayed home.

A few weeks after the Army-Navy game, I got a letter from an Army fan, the wife of a West Pointer and the mother of a cadet. (She'd seen me at the game.) "Wasn't that a wonderful game?" she wrote. "At halftime [with Navy ahead] my spirits were very low and I was wet and miserable." Her son came by to cheer her up. "Don't worry, Mom," he told her. "We'll come back." Army did. It wasn't like those "shameful seasons" Army had in the early '70s, she wrote. "Those were the days of Vietnam, Nixon, and silly hippie girls throwing flowers at the cadets and calling them 'baby killers.'" Nope, it wasn't like that at all.

## Outfoxed Tweaks Rupert Murdoch's Mayhem-isphere

*By Susan Gerhard*

*From San Francisco Guardian, August 4, 2004*

If the United States took a survey of the TV habits of its visitors to emergency rooms, you have to wonder, what kind of patterns might emerge? How many bleeding ulcers and broken limbs have been triggered by viewing a segment of The O'Reilly Factor? Sean Hannity takes on a guest and how many eyeballs are pulled from their sockets? Somewhere in TV land's pixelated global theater—where a tap on the remote can bring you Amish in the City or Wildboyz fondling a giant dead squid—lives a 24-hour news channel that, in its zeal to reinvent the news in the image of its creator, has merged all the credibility of professional wrestling with the subtlety of a New York Post headline. With no wink and no nod, but huge three-dimensional graphics sewn together by Betsy Ross, it markets itself under the slogan "fair and balanced."

So abused, the phrase "fair and balanced"—like the words "justice system"—is, by now, its own warning. We know enough to avoid it. But Robert Greenwald, director of the new documentary *Outfoxed*, does what no other informed American would even consider: he takes Fox News at its word. As in his journey back to one sad day in the land of "fair," when O'Reilly Factor host Bill O'Reilly brought on Jeremy Glick, the son of a man who died in one of the World Trade Center towers on Sept. 11. Glick was on the show because he'd signed the Not in Our Name petition against the war in Iraq. Unfortunately for O'Reilly, Glick had done his homework; he'd actually timed with a stopwatch just how long it generally took O'Reilly to shut down his uncooperative guests. He'd practiced his delivery with the hope of getting out a message: a full subject-predicate sentence. That he managed to clearly enunciate through O'Reilly's

repeated interruptions sent the host into a full volcanic fury, which ended in all manner of “shut ups” and even one unfortunate reference to Glick’s grieving, widowed mother.

O’Reilly’s tirade, it turns out, wasn’t just for the cameras, as Glick relates to the makers of *Outfoxed*, who—in scrutinizing and tracking vast quantities of Fox News footage looking for patterns of behavior—closely paralleled Glick’s strategy. Glick tells them the host called security to take him away, but as the Sept. 11 survivor attempted to drink one last sip of liquid in the green room, more handlers told him he’d better get out of the building before O’Reilly did something that would land him in jail. When Glick turned on Factor the next day, he heard O’Reilly retell the story a whole different way, saying Glick was “out of control.” O’Reilly repeated that and other false assertions so many times that Glick asked a lawyer whether he might be able to sue the host for libel. No, he was advised, everything O’Reilly says is so outrageous, it would be difficult to claim O’Reilly knew he was telling a lie.

The nature of Fox network’s news reporting changed the course of history. Election night 2000, duly vilified in the more entertaining and trenchant political doc of the season, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, all came down to a call made by Fox News’s election desk, which had Bush cousin John Ellis working on it— and he’d been in contact with his pals Jeb and George W. just that evening. Even though the Associated Press held out and said the election was too close to call, Fox News rushed to judgment and gave it to Bush. And the rest of the free TV press? In a kooky totalitarian reversal of the “Dewey Defeats Truman” gaffe or even the New York Post’s “Dem picks Gephardt as VP candidate” one, they shamefully jumped on board within minutes. Fox News chair Roger Ailes, former media strategist for Nixon, Reagan, and Bush

Sr., later testified to a nation that wasn’t really listening anymore that “we gave our audience bad information It will not happen again.”

There’s no shortage of non-innovatively filmed talking heads in *Outfoxed*, including Walter Cronkite and the always on-point Robert McChesney, to explain the ongoing harm caused by Rupert Murdoch’s ownership of a media empire, a collection of 9 TV satellites, 175 newspapers, 40 book imprints, 100 cable stations, 40 TV stations, and one movie studio, reaching a total 4.7 billion people, which is about three-fourths of the people on the Earth. And it’s no surprise that the empire’s flagship news channel supports the Republicans who help Murdoch stay on top of the dirt pile.

What is a surprise are the smoking guns Greenwald digs up to show just how it’s done. Fox’s fires and escapees—producers, contributors, and newscasters—speak, sometimes under duress, about tortured tenures in Murdoch’s mad, mad media world. Greenwald savors the memos from the office of John Moody, a Fox News senior vice president—perhaps a little too heavilyhandedly with a demonic-sounding voiceover reading—as they give the day’s instructions on tone and even word choice. “Let’s refer to the U.S. Marines we see in the foreground as ‘sharpshooters’ not ‘snipers,’ which carries a negative connotation,” one such memo notes. A former contributor recalls the top-down instruction to rename “suicide bombings” as “homicide bombings.” The film

dissects some of the strategies for merging “news” and “opinion” and eliminating the middleman—sources—by, for example, using the phrase “some people say.” And in its most entertaining sequences—and you have to admit, “entertainment” isn’t a primary goal of this extremely sober doc—the film pastes together varieties of Fox News’s worst habits, its echo-chamber repetition of the Republican message of the day, be it John Kerry’s purported “flip-flop” voting record or Richard Clarke’s supposed hopes of being Part of the Kerry cabinet.

It’s all so ridiculous, it calls out for the kind of domineering shaming only a Michael Moore can pull off. A back-them-into-a-corner-and-stab technique, or at the very least, a slightly hipper use of music than laying Don Henley’s “Dirty Laundry” over the credits. I mean, kick ‘em when they’re up. But maybe it’s unfortunate that this guerrilla-produced, grassroots-distributed sleeper doc hit is being compared with more theatrically minded projects of this supercharged election year. It is, itself, journalism—meant for the moment, not for the archives—and on those terms it succeeds. There are even some of the best comic scenes of the year, as it smacks down O’Reilly with a “shut up” montage. But as the film ridicules Fox News’s use of aggressive graphics and short-attention-span crawls, you can’t help noticing that *Outfoxed* is itself, in some way, being outFoxed—falling victim to the idea that images of reasonable people speaking about relevant political issues should be enough to carry a nonfiction essay. No sophisticated audiovisuals or artful, cinematic pre-thinking required.

Which brings up the obvious: why do TV viewers like Fox News? Probably the scariest, most important question the film could have answered remained unasked. Surveys conducted by the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks show viewers of Fox News are up to five times more ignorant about key political issues than audiences of PBS and NPR. Fox News, by keeping its audience misinformed and baiting anger from all sides, has extended TV news’s reach from our minds into our guts. It doesn’t gather facts; it collects emotion, then empties it safely into the trash.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing on Readings*

Synthesize the survey in this Chapter of the multiple factors involved in media bias and write a comparative analysis and evaluation of the articles by Edward Herman and Bernard Goldberg. Drawing from Rogerian argument or Believers and Doubters, try to write the most evenhanded account you can, delineating aspects and examples of both liberal/left and conservative bias in media, as documented in these articles and other sources.

Herman’s article appeared in *Z Magazine*, which has a left-of-liberal or socialist viewpoint, and Herman with his frequent coauthor Noam Chomsky is a prominent spokesperson for that viewpoint. He and Chomsky devote much of their writing to criticizing what they perceive as conservative bias in reputedly liberal media like the *New York Times* and PBS. The fact that they are rarely allowed to express themselves in mainstream print or broadcast media is itself cited by leftists as evidence of

those media's conservative bias. Where in his article does Herman criticize mainstream Democrats and "liberal" media from the left, and how does his criticism of them differ from Goldberg's? Do you think Herman's viewpoint here deserves wider media circulation, or would you dismiss him, as David Horowitz does Chomsky in "The Intellectual Class War" in Chapter 15, as "an America-loathing crank"?

The two selections by Bernard Goldberg are from his best-selling book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*. See the review of this book by Jonathan Chait in the *New Republic*, March 18, 2002, which raises many of the same issues that this Chapter does, while suggesting that Goldberg presents a one-sided viewpoint. Also see the exchange between Goldberg and Chait in the letters section of the *New Republic*, April 29, 2002. See also Geoffrey Nunberg, "Label Whores: Bernard Goldberg's Bias Points in the Wrong Direction," in the *American Prospect*, May 6, 2002, 32-35. Nunberg did an Internet search for news media labeling of conservatives and liberals, which led to the conclusion that liberals were in fact labeled more often than conservatives. He directs readers to his results at [www.csli.Stanford.edu/nunberg/table.html](http://www.csli.Stanford.edu/nunberg/table.html).

The tone of "My Sports Right or Left" by Fred Barnes is semihumorous, but do you think the notion that sports embodies political values is valid? Write your own analysis surveying implicit conservative and liberal elements in American sports. Barnes is an editor of the conservative *Weekly Standard*, where this article appeared. Is he expressing a conservative viewpoint here? Where?

Susan Gerhard's review of *Outfoxed*, a documentary film criticizing the conservative bias of Fox News, agrees with the film that Fox differs significantly from the "liberal" media that Fox claims it is merely counterbalancing. The charge is that, in contrast to other media whose owners are at least ostensibly dedicated to gathering and reporting news in a professional and independent manner, without political party affiliation—in spite of the biases that occur in their individual personnel, on individual occasions—the "news" and opinion on Fox (and in several other conservative media) are deliberately controlled and slanted to follow the Republican Party line, with which its owner, Rupert Murdoch, and its top editors and executives are directly allied. In this respect, Fox is more like a print journal of opinion than a news medium, except that rather than admitting this, it claims to be "fair and balanced." Rent or buy *Outfoxed* (the VHS and DVD versions are available online from [Moveon.org](http://Moveon.org)) to evaluate how persuasively it supports this case. How do you think Bernard Goldberg would reply to this case?

## Assignment for a Paper

Write a thousand-word (three or four typewritten pages) review of a recent issue of a leftwing journal of opinion and a right-wing one. Get these from the periodical room at your campus or public library, from the Internet, or from a newsstand or bookstore.

Recommended right-wing journals: *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *American Spectator*, *Washington Times Weekly*, *Human Events*, *Reason* (libertarian); left-wing ones: the *Nation*, *In These Times*, the *Progressive*, *Z Magazine*, *Extra!*, *Mother Jones*.

Read through all the articles, ads, and cartoons in both journals and, in about half the paper, summarize the scope of articles (and ads) in both, indicating to what extent the general range of topics and viewpoints reflects the left or right positions and patterns of rhetoric in Chapter 15, "Thinking Critically about Political Rhetoric." (Remark on any notable exceptions.) Then focus on one article in each that you find interesting and that expresses a left or right position particularly clearly or effectively, and summarize how it does so in as much detail as space allows. Also try to figure out whether the leftist magazine in general, and in your specific article, is liberal or socialist/left-of-liberal (i.e., does it criticize the Democrats from the left?), and whether the one on the right is mainstream Republican Party conservative or libertarian conservative (i.e., does it criticize the Republicans on libertarian terms?).

It might make it more interesting for you if you can find articles in the two journals on the same subject, so that you can note the opposing lines of argument. This is not essential, though, and do not try to get into a point-by-point comparison of the opposing lines, since this would make the paper too long.

The purpose of this assignment is to give you practice in understanding how the general rhetorical patterns of opposition between the left and right come out on particular current issues. Therefore, limit yourself to identifying these patterns objectively, *without expressing your opinions about the quality of the magazine or about particular articles and their arguments*. Do comment briefly, however, on whether either journal and article gave you a clearer understanding of the viewpoint it expresses than you had before, and in what way.

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The Way We See It

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HE ABILITY TO DEFINE AN OPPONENT IS UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED AS A DECISIVE EDGE IN POLITICS. In America, liberals have come to possess that ability through their pervasive influence in the culture. As a result, the political spectrum runs the gamut from "liberal" to "moderate" to "conservative" and then "right," without the balance of a political "left." No

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one—not the *New York Times*, nor the *Washington Post*, nor the Republican leaders of the House—refers to Minority Whip David Bonior or Black Caucus chair Maxine Waters as leftists. But everyone refers to Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott as men of the right.

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IS THERE A LEFT IN AMERICA? Liberals regularly deny it. But fifty-eight Democratic members of the House (including Bonior and Waters) have formed the Congressional Progressive Caucus to work on a left-wing political agenda.

**IT IS TIME TO RE-EXAMINE THE LABELS THAT DEFINE AMERICAN POLITICS.**

It is too late to restore the term “liberal” to neo-conservatives or Goldwater Republicans, where it belongs. But it is not too late to stop calling people who are actually leftists, liberal. That’s the way we see it at *Frontpage*

**LEFT**

**RIGHT**

*FAR LEFT*

Noam Oomsky

Malcolm X

Jane Fonda Haydn (Kis) Jane Fonda Wm<(90i)

Kwame Ture

Catharine MacKinnon

/Magazine

*Covert Acton*

Pacifica Radio

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LEFT LIB- ERAL	MODERATE <i>UBERAL</i>	MODERATE <i>CONSER- VATIVE</i>	CONSERVATIVE	RIGHT	FAR RIGHT
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Martin Luther King Eleanor Of	Gene Mc- Carthy	Richard N xon	John F Kennedy	Barry Goldwa- ter	George Wallace
	Jane Fonda Vadm (’60s]	Jane Fc- nda Fonda (’50s,●	Bill Ben- nett	G. Gor- don Lddy	Jared Tay- lor
Sen. Ted Kennedy	Sen. Tom Oasch’e	Preben! George Bush	Newt Gmgnc	Gary Bauer	Lou Shel- don
Donna Shalala New Yer* Times	Geraldine Ferraro The New AflxOic	Elizabeth Dote <i>Thetconomol</i>	Lynne Ch- eney <i>American Spectator</i>	Phyllis Schlafly <i>Human Events</i>	Marge Schott M<CWe American News
WasA/ igfan <i>Post</i>	WSJ Feature Pages	<i>KtuOe/s’ Otgesl</i>	ASJEd- tonai page	<i>Chronicles</i>	American fienassaxe
CNN	ABC. CBS NBC	Fox	<i>firing bne</i>	Most talk radio	Radio Free Idaho
Major Quimby Democratic Party	Marge Simpson OsMtntc leMssW Cmoi	Homer Simpson American Reform Party	Bart Simpson GOP	Ned Flan- ders US Tai- payers Party	Sideshow Bob Freemen
Urban In- stitute	Brookings Institu- tion	Hoover In- stitution	Heritage Founda- tion	Rock’ord Institute	John Birch Sooety
Ford Founda- tion	Carnegie Endow- ment	Nixon Li- brary	Bradley Founda- tion	Von Mises Institute	liberty Lobby
9A ol Bom Pub- lishers	The Free Press	Yale Uni- versity Press	Regnery	Spence	Barricade Books
Political Science Pulitzer Prue	languages	Business	Physics	Football	Eugenes
	Human.tas Awards	4H Club Badge 545	Templeton Prue	Edmund Burke Award	Burning Cross
Spike lee	waium Rasp- berry	Shelby Steele	Ward Connerfy	Regge White	Louis Far- rakhan

View the whole list or make your contributions to the list by logging on to

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This ad for a conservative media-criticism organization headed by David Horowitz is the subject for discussion and comparison in topic 3 on page 401.

## **Part 4. Deception Detection**

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Chapter  
17

# Chapter 19. Special Interests, Conflict of Interest, Special Pleading

The significance of the terms *special interests*, *conflict of interest*, and *special pleading* in argumentative rhetoric hinges on definitions of both the words *interest* and *special* that differ from everyday usage. When we say that someone is “an interested party” in a dispute, that “it is in her interest to support this policy,” or that “his argument is self-interested,” we do not mean that the person simply is interested in the subject; “to have an interest” here refers to having an investment or stake (financial or otherwise) in the outcome, some personal benefit. The term *disinterested*, as in “disinterested research,” refers approvingly to the neutral, objective rhetorical stance of a speaker or writer who has no personal stake in an issue. (Note that *disinterested* is not synonymous with *uninterested*, though it is often misused that way.)

Likewise, *special* here is synonymous with a private, often selfish motive for support of a public policy. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* defines *special interest* as “a person or group having an interest [as in *investment*] in a particular Part of the economy and receiving or seeking special advantages therein often to the detriment of the general public.” Special pleading, then, refers to people arguing for a position that they present as being in the public’s benefit when it is secretly for the benefit of special interests. So special pleading typically uses the one-sided tactics of **propaganda** and **stacking the deck** to conceal the fact that the speaker or writer is presenting only the side of an issue that favors the interests being served. Most advertising, public relations, and lobbying messages are obvious forms of special pleading.

Conflict of interest is a financial investment or some kind of affiliation that is likely to bias the views of a speaker or writer. (Note that this concept differs from the simple term *conflict* in the sense of a disagreement, so be careful not to confuse them in your usage.) The classic conflict of interest situation is that of a government official who either stands to benefit personally from particular legislation or who is closely associated with someone who does, such as a campaign contributor. For example, the Whitewater scandal in President Bill Clinton’s administration dated back to events when as governor of Arkansas, Clinton was alleged to have shown governmental favoritism toward companies in which he and his friends had financial investments and which were represented by his wife’s law firm. Conflict of interest becomes a rhetorical

issue when it leads to special pleading, as when a legislator who has a personal financial investment benefited by pending legislation conceals that fact and makes a speech falsely arguing that the legislation is in the public interest. When you use statements by public officials as sources, you should try to find out what conflicts of interests might be biasing the views presented.

Other sources of information that you may draw on in researching papers are also subject to conflicts of interest. Journalistic sources may have conflicts involving owners', advertisers', or reporters' financial interests in issues reported on. The findings of journalists' or scholars' research might benefit or be harmful to special interests affiliated with the foundation or research institute subsidizing the research, in which case there might be explicit or tacit pressure on the researcher that taints the findings. Professors sometimes have investments in, or are paid consultants for, businesses that their research benefits—a situation that may also taint their teaching or published findings and conflict with university faculties' code of ethical disinterestedness. In one such recent case, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Tobacco companies financed the work of several university scientists who published research and offered testimony that minimized the dangers of smoking" (<http://chronicle.com>, December 19, 1997). (Also see the article "Secrecy and Financial Conflicts," by Mildred Cho, in this chapter.) Teachers—including myself—in public schools and universities have an obvious conflict of interest when they teach the pros and cons of increased taxes and spending for education, and if they belong to a teacher's union, they have a similar conflict in teaching about labor issues.

There are several other forms of conflict of interest beyond financial ones. In another scandal of the Clinton administration, involving charges of illegal solicitation of campaign contributions by the president and vice president, Republicans put pressure on Attorney General Janet Reno to appoint an independent prosecutor because the office of attorney general is a political appointment by the president, so the person holding that office has a conflict of interest in matters concerning lawbreaking by the president. Nepotism (favor toward relatives) and cronyism (favor toward friends) are also possible sources of conflicts of interest in many areas of public life, as we saw in Chapter 5 concerning Rush Limbaugh's friendship with Clarence Thomas.

Journalistic reviews of books, films, recordings and concerts, restaurants, and other cultural topics are susceptible to distinctive kinds of conflict of interest. Advertising in a journal is often a trade-off for a review of the product, especially a positive one; many newspapers promise restaurants that they will be reviewed, usually with approval, in return for advertising. When the same corporation owns the medium in which the review appears as well as the book publisher or film or recording company producing the work reviewed, there may be pressure from management for a favorable review. Journalist John Podhoretz, writing in the *Weekly Standard* (December 8, 1997), used impudent humor to deal with such a situation. After praising a film produced by Rupert Murdoch's Twentieth Century Fox, he made this "obligatory disclosure: Twentieth

Century Fox is owned by News Corporation, which owns the *Weekly Standard* as well as the *New York Post*, my current employer. Now drop dead" (39).

Reviewers of books are subject to a variety of possible conflicts of interest, and the choice of assignments to freelance reviewers presents a constant test of the fair-mindedness of the editors of supplements such as the Sunday *New York Times Book Review* or the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, in terms of conflicts of interest as well as ideological bias and avoiding assignments to either friends or enemies of the author. Editors' own biases can be discerned if they consistently solicit reviewers who they know in advance will be either favorably or unfavorably disposed toward a certain book. When I was chosen to review an anthology of articles for one such Sunday supplement, the editor would not allow me to say anything about one article because it quoted approvingly from a book of mine. Under a different editor, though, the same supplement later allowed a writer to defend certain research institutes criticized for political bias in the book he was reviewing, even though his own research had been subsidized by those institutes. (If he had admitted to this conflict of interest in the review, he would have been less subject to criticism, but he did not.) The author of a review in the *New England Journal of Medicine* panning a book alleging that environmental chemicals are contributing to an epidemic of cancer was later revealed to be the medical director at chemical producer W. R. Grace & Co. This incident occurred in spite of the journal's stated policy that "rather than simply requiring authors to disclose potential conflicts of interest, it would not accept reviews or editorials from anyone connected to firms with a financial stake in the drug or device being discussed" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 27, 1997, A3).

Questions concerning special interests, special pleading, and conflict of interest can be highly complex and disputable. Just to determine in a given circumstance what does or does not constitute special pleading or conflict of interest can be a difficult judgment call. Nearly everyone is motivated to some extent by self-interest, and anyone who speaks or writes publicly is likely to have one degree or another of conflict of interest, so the degree of gravity in any particular conflict needs to be evaluated. As a general rule, people should not be criticized as being selfish for arguing in defense of their (or their group's) own right to life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, equality under the law, a living income, or reasonable profit. People *are* subject to criticism, however, (1) if the policy they are arguing for results in them or interests they are speaking for receiving a disproportionate, unfair benefit at the expense of others or of the public interest, or (2) if they cover up or play down their selfinterest, pretending to be arguing *disinterestedly* or *impartially* for the public benefits of a policy from which they or their associates will personally benefit.

The **ad hominem** fallacy is a real danger in these matters; that is, you should be careful not to dismiss the substance of someone's arguments *only* because they may be self-interested. Most speakers and writers sincerely believe that what benefits their

own group is also in the public interest and that their familiarity with the subject in question qualifies them as authorities; their arguments and evidence always need to be evaluated on their own merits. If special pleading or conflicts of interest are clearly present, however, that should alert you to being extra certain to check out the evidence carefully. It is perfectly legitimate in your writing to point out *possible* conflicts of interest and special pleading in your sources, as one factor among others in evaluating their arguments.

The most honest way of dealing with an unavoidable conflict of interest is to declare it openly and honestly and to deal with it as scrupulously as possible. When President George H. W. Bush was making cabinet appointments, he urged nominees to be forthright in avoiding not just actual conflicts but also “any *appearance* of conflict of interest.” Judges will sometimes “recuse,” or excuse, themselves from sitting in a case in which they have a conflict; legislators will decline to debate or vote on bills involving their own interests; and government appointees will make a full financial disclosure statement. In a controversial case during the administration of President George W. Bush, the Supreme Court was considering a suit filed against Vice President Richard Cheney to make public the records of his private meetings with energy company and foreign oil executives for an energy task force. While this suit was pending, Justice Antonin Scalia flew in Cheney’s private plane with him on a duck-hunting trip in Louisiana. However, Scalia refused to recuse himself, scoffing at the suggestion that this trip constituted a conflict of interest. The court ruled in favor of Cheney.

As in many semantic issues, even the definition of “special interests” is largely subjective and partisan. Historically, the term has been applied to a few wealthy individuals or businesses trying to buy government favoritism to increase their profits, or to “pork-barrel legislation” designed only to benefit some local constituency. In recent years, the original meaning has been dissipated by application of the term (mainly by conservative business interests against their liberal opponents) to any constituency or lobby, no matter how large, and even if not motivated by financial investments. Many advocacy groups are concerned solely with the public good as they view it in principle, without selfish motives, whether on the conservative side like the Christian Coalition and right-to-life groups or on the liberal side like environmentalists, feminists, and pro-choice groups. A second category, including groups like AARP (formerly the

American Association of Retired Persons), which ranks second in the following *Fortune* magazine list of most-powerful Washington lobbies, and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) certainly represent the special interests of their constituents, but they include millions of diverse members and can generally make a strong case that what is in their interest is also in the public interest. (However, see Rush Limbaugh’s attack on groups like the NAACP in Chapter 5 for allegedly representing only a narrow segment of African Americans and for its **partisan** Democratic ties, which in the 2004 election prompted a lawsuit challenging its tax-exempt status as a non-partisan organization.)



Conservatives sometimes try to discredit the officials of liberal nonprofit organizations of environmentalists, feminists, consumer advocates, and civil rights activists by claiming that they are in it only for the money they receive in executive salary. However, this line of argument often comes across as *ad hominem* because those who make it rarely can present any concrete evidence to support it, and they also tend to apply it with **selective vision** that fails to make the same charges against conservative advocacy groups or against corporate executives, lobbyists, advertising and PR agents, many of whom make a lot more money. (The tax reports of nonprofit organizations are on the public record, so you can research liberal and conservative ones to compare their executive salaries.)

Labor unions, several of which are on *Fortune's* list, are a somewhat more ambiguous case; they undoubtedly lobby for their own financial interests, but they also represent millions of constituents. Critics of unions, though, often accuse their officials of acting in only their own interests, not those of their rank-and-file members. Conservative defenders of business lobbies argue that the owners and executives of corporations likewise represent all their stockholders and employees, as well as the public interest. The credibility of this line of argument was tarnished in the early years of this century with corporate scandals like that of Enron, whose executives fraudulently inflated the value of company stock, took multimillion-dollar salaries, and sold their stock just before the company went bankrupt, leaving employees (who had been encouraged to buy and hold company stock within Enron's retirement plan) and small stockholders devastated. In a famous episode of the 1950s, President Dwight Eisenhower's nominee for secretary of defense was the president of General Motors (GM), Charles Wilson, whose confirmation was challenged because of conflicts of interest concerning GM as a major military contractor. He testified that there was no conflict because "What's good for General Motors is good for America."

Another kind of borderline case is the National Rifle Association (NRA), number one on *Fortune's* list of most powerful lobbies. Officially it is a civil rights organization defending the perceived constitutional rights of its millions of rank-and-file members to bear arms, but it also receives a substantial Part of its funding and administration from gun manufacturers and dealers. A skeptical view of NRA's opposition to gun control suggests that manufacturers' and dealers' profits may be a stronger motive than principled defense of Second Amendment rights.

In recent decades, conservatives have defined teachers, media employees, and other professionals and intellectuals as members of a "new class" that allegedly advocate liberal policies primarily because they serve the selfish interests of that class. **[Reader Advisory: I hereby declare a conflict of interest, as an employee of a public university and member of a teachers' union, in writing about issues of education funding and labor in this book.]**

Many of the above topics are illustrated in the following two articles, published the same day, as Column Right (Hubbard) and Column Left (Waxman) on the op-ed page of the *Los Angeles Times*. The issue here involved a short-lived Council on

Competitiveness initiated around 1990 by President George H. W. Bush and chaired by Vice President Dan Quayle. Although this particular issue and cast of characters is dated, the columns maintain their interest as classic expressions of the predictable patterns of political rhetoric between conservative Republicans like Hubbard and liberal Democrats like Waxman.

"IRON TRIANGLE" WOULD QUASH COMPETITIVENESS ALLAN B. HUBBARD 429

*"Iron Triangle" Would Quash]] Competitiveness*

*By Allan B. Hubbard*

*From The Los Angeles Times, December 23, 1991*

The Bush Administration has been hearing ideas from all over the country about how to generate jobs and economic growth to restart our stagnant economy. Most involve difficult choices or trade-offs. But one idea is so clearly correct that there shouldn't be any debate about it: We have to get government bureaucrats off the back of our economy, reducing red tape so that businessmen can invest, workers can work and consumers can make choices.

This philosophy is what has allowed the U.S. economy to grow and become the envy of the world. Yet our attempts to reinvigorate these principles are viewed as a subversive challenge to business as usual in Washington. The President's Council on Competitiveness, chaired by Vice President Dan Quayle, is seen in some quarters as the source of all evil. The "iron triangle," that potent mix of unelected congressional staff, special interests and government bureaucrats, is mobilized to stop the council in any way possible.

The basic problem is easy to describe. Real gains against excessive regulation were made during the Reagan Administration. But there is constant pressure for re-regulation from the iron triangle, and without strong leadership from the President, the growth of red tape, needless litigation and counterproductive rules would quickly return to Carter Administration levels. Two years ago, President Bush asked Quayle to make certain that this didn't happen.

Each year, the government spews out 2,200 brand-new regulations that are published in 53,000 pages of fine print in a publication called The Federal Register. On top of this, Americans are required to fill out thousands of different forms annually. It's estimated that Americans spend 5.2 billion hours to fill out all those forms. That's the equivalent of 2.6 million employees working full-time, year-round.

This is why the Competitiveness Council has focused on eliminating red tape and cutting back on needless, wasteful litigation. We want to get America moving again by giving people control over their own lives, their businesses and their jobs. Then the entrepreneurial engine of our economy will be freed to work its miracles.

Here's an overview of the council's work:

*Speeding up the drug approval process.* We've identified 11 specific reforms to cut in half the time it takes to get drugs for lifethreatening illnesses to market. The initiative offers renewed hope to sufferers of AIDS, cystic fibrosis, cancer, Alzheimer's and other deadly or incurable diseases.

*Eliminating excessive litigation.* We put forward 50 specific proposals to reduce costs in our civil justice system, which sometimes seems designed to benefit only the lawyers involved.

*Biotechnology development.* We've reduced red tape for this 21st-century industry that promises so many breakthroughs in food production, environmental protection and other areas.

*Clean Air Act.* While pledged to achieve the very strict air quality standards written into this Bush Administration initiative, we are making certain that its regulations are promulgated at the least possible cost to the economy.

*Private property rights.* Former Communist countries have learned the hard way that without private property, prosperity is impossible. In the United States, the threat to private property comes from government takeover without compensation. In 1989, the federal bureaucracy attempted one of the largest land grabs in modern times, removing nearly 100 million acres of dry land from possible development by issuing a new definition of "wetlands." We are in the process of unraveling the resulting chaos even while honoring then-Vice President Bush's 1988 pledge of "no net loss of wetlands."

One example highlights the difficulties we face. The very day that we announced our drug-approval initiative, the Food and Drug Administration received a threatening letter signed by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Los Angeles) demanding an indefinite delay in implementing these life-saving ideas. The main reason seemed to be that these members of Congress have a vested interest in the status quo and resist any changes, even ones that will save lives.

In our actions, we have insisted that the regulatory process be accountable to the President, who is elected to direct the executive branch. This is threatening to the iron triangle, which was elected by nobody. We of the Competitiveness Council are determined to oppose those special interests and continue our work for the American people.

## Quayle Group Meddles With Our Safeguards

*By Henry A. Waxman*

*From The Los Angeles Times* December 23, 1991

Vice President Dan Quayle's advisers think that his image will be enhanced by his efforts to weaken the Clean Air Act because "you can't be a lightweight and a national menace at the same time."

They're wrong: the vice president's reckless and sloppy interference with the law looks foolish and is dangerous.

Here's what's happened. When Congress debated the new Clean Air Act last year, big polluters and the Bush Administration advocated the weakest control options in nearly every section of the bill. Congress rejected most of these proposals and passed a tougher bill than the President wanted.

Bush, to his credit, chose to sign rather than veto the act, and it became law.

Under our Constitution, the President must "faithfully" execute a law once it's enacted. An administrative agency—in this case the Environmental Protection Agency—is charged with implementing and enforcing the law's provisions.

For the past year, the House subcommittee on health and the environment has been investigating the EPA's implementation of the Clean Air Act. Part of what we found was expected: Polluters who lost legislative battles in Congress have asked the EPA for special consideration. In most cases, the agency has said *no*.

What's troubling, however, is that the EPA's position means little. Disappointed lobbyists merely take their case to Quayle's Council on Competitiveness. There they have found friendly ears willing to reverse the EPA's decisions, although the only thing the council knows is what the polluters have told it.

The council wants to be a super-regulatory body, but it refuses to comply with the laws and rules that all federal regulators must live by. Although the council regularly invited industry lobbyists to voice their objections to agency regulations, those messages remain private, in violation of the principles of open government. This secrecy breeds all

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of the problems that our administrative and ethics laws were designed to overcome—conflict of interest, political favoritism and lawlessness.

In a recent subcommittee hearing, four of the nation's leading legal experts agreed that the council was illegally trampling on important laws and procedures.

First, by quashing an EPA recycling regulation that affected his family's newspaper business, Quayle violated the most minimal ethical standards. One expert bluntly described the vice president's actions as "the common alley-cat breed of conflict of interest."

Second, Quayle was wrong—legally and ethically—to give his chief deputy at the council, Allan B. Hubbard, who owns a chemical company, a blanket waiver from our conflict-of-interest laws. This waiver allows Hubbard to participate in clean-air regulatory decisions that directly affect his financial interest.

Third, Hubbard has acted inappropriately—and probably illegally—in making regulatory decisions that affect his financial holdings.

Finally, the council's secret meetings, *ex parte* contacts with dissatisfied private interests and refusal to keep any records are an illegal intrusion into the regulatory process. The council's conduct goes far beyond anything in the Keating Five scandal; it doesn't merely advocate special-interest fixes, it dictates them.

The council has already met with EPA officials on the Clean Air Act at least 50 times. In one case, a council proposal for a major loophole, which the EPA was strong-armed into adopting, was so egregious that the agency's chief lawyer took the unprecedented step of concluding in writing that the regulation was likely to be rejected if challenged in court.

Federal law requires fair and open administrative proceedings, in which each interested party can read and rebut the other's comments and none has private access to the decision-makers. In this, as in conflict-of-interest questions, it's essential that the public's trust in the impartiality of federal decision-makers be honored. Ethics can never take a back seat to political expediency or ideological zeal.

At a minimum, Quayle and his staff have ineptly hindered measures that protect the public, failed to meet ethical standards and evaded public accountability.

Bush pledged that "the threshold for judging ethical conduct in government is not, should not and will not be whether an appointee has committed a criminal offense, but whether that individual has exercised honest, unbiased judgment and scrupulously avoided any appearance of impropriety or conflict of interest."

Quayle and his staff fail this test. It's time for Bush to demand that the council's arrogance of ethics and perversion of law and the regulatory process be stopped.

*Letter to Dr. David Kessler]], Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration*  
November 13, 1991

Dear Commissioner Kessler: today by the Vice President's Council on

We have reviewed a summary of the reCompetitiveness, and we are writing to export on the drug approval process issued press our serious concerns.

We strongly support steps to expedite the approval of drugs for AIDS, and other lifethreatening diseases and serious conditions. To the extent that the Council recommends expediting decisions on the approvals of these drugs while preserving the statutory requirement that there be substantial evidence of a drug's safety and efficacy, we would enthusiastically support those recommendations.

Three proposals, however, raise particularly troubling questions. They are the proposals: (1) to allow private contractors to review the safety and efficacy of drugs proposed for FDA approval; (2) to move toward permitting the United States to accept foreign government approvals of drugs; and (3) to use private review boards in place of the FDA to evaluate animal studies before allowing an experimental drug to be used in the first stage of human testing.

In our view, under these proposals, the FDA appears to be abdicating its statutory responsibility to make key decisions on the safety and efficacy of drugs. These proposals appear to be directed largely towards the development of drugs that are not designed to treat life-threatening diseases or other serious conditions. Unfortunately, they do not adequately account for the fact that the use of any prescription drug entails a risk of lifethreatening adverse reactions. These risks will be compounded if decisions about safety and efficacy are delegated to private contractors or foreign governments.

Respected experts are concerned that the proposals to use private contractors, foreign governments, and private review boards to make critical decisions currently made by the FDA are thinly veiled efforts to weaken the agency and would undermine the very purpose for which it was created and that it is uniquely qualified to fulfill—the protection of the American public from unsafe and ineffective drugs. We are concerned, at a minimum, that the proposals will lead to inconsistent and uncertain standards for review and could permit commercial interests to override the objectivity that is essential in evaluating drugs.

The proposals are particularly troubling in light of the Administration's historic refusal to request adequate funding for the FDA. In our view, the Administration should seek greater resources for the FDA rather than attempting to supplant it with less credible alternatives.

We intend to make a thorough review and evaluation of the proposals as expeditiously as possible. While we are undertaking that evaluation, we respectfully request that you not take any action to implement the three recommendations that we have identified as being of particular concern.

We look forward to receiving your prompt response to our request.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Chairman, Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resource

JOHN D. DINGELL

Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

HENRY A. WAXMAN

Chairman, House Subcommittee on health and the Environment

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Identify passages that indicate Hubbard's and Waxman's general ideological positions in relation to pertinent points in the guide to political terms and positions and the list of predictable patterns of political rhetoric in Chapter 15.

Apply the "Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" to both articles, selecting the most relevant points. Make a list of each author's most prominent "cleans" and "dirties," and evaluate how well they are supported and justified by the

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evidence each presents. Is either author, or are both, suppressing significant facts raised by the other?

In the course of applying the Semantic Calculator, explain how and where the concepts of special interests and conflict of interest come into each article. Exactly what do Hubbard and Waxman accuse each other of on these subjects, and what concrete evidence does each present for his accusation? How do the two authors differ on their implicit definitions of what groups do or do not constitute a special interest?

What are the denotation and the connotation of Hubbard's metaphor "the iron triangle"? In reference to the discussion of figures of speech in Chapter 9, evaluate whether the metaphor serves to clarify the objects of discussion or simply serves as an appeal to fear. Is there a comparable "iron triangle" that Waxman might visualize on the conservative side?

What information in Waxman's column indicates that the title "Competitiveness Council" might be a "clean"-sounding term calculated as a euphemism for a "dirty" reality? Explain.

The columns are followed by what Hubbard calls "a threatening letter" from Waxman, Senator Ted Kennedy, and Representative John Dingell. How accurate a characterization do you find this? Research cases in which drugs and foods have been found harmful and taken off the market.

*Corporate Funding Taints Public Debate*]

*By Jim Mann*

From *The Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1997

WASHINGTON—With Congress' fund-raising hearings in their August recess, it is a good time to raise the larger questions of which they are a small part:

Is discussion of U.S. foreign policy these days being increasingly beset with conflicts of interest? Is America drifting into an era where the only money available to support public debate comes from those American companies or foreign governments with a direct financial stake in the outcome?

Such questions were occasioned by a recent conference at Georgetown University on America's relations with Indonesia. The daylong session brought together the country's leading scholars and public officials working on Indonesia, including senior State and Defense Department officials.

Prominently on display at the conference and in its written materials was the following notice: "This program has been made possible by the generous support of FreeportMcMoran Copper and Gold, General Electric Company, Mobil Corporation, Motorola Inc., and UNOCAL Corp."

In other words, the session was sponsored by American corporations that tend to have a financial stake in promoting close ties between the United States and the au-

thoritarian Indonesian government of President Suharto, and in minimizing complaints about Indonesia by human rights groups.

The point is not necessarily that these American companies were doing wrong by paying for the conference. Rather, the question is whether the sponsors of the conference should have relied for funding on companies with such a clear interest in what American policy toward Indonesia should be.

To take the most obvious example, Freeport-McMoran operates one of the world's largest gold mines on the Indonesian island of Irian Jaya. The environmental problems caused by its mining operations were serious enough so that two years ago, the Overseas Private Investment Corp., a federal agency, canceled the company's risk insurance for several months before restoring it.

At one point, Freeport-McMoran tried to persuade the U.S. Agency for International Development to cut off funding to the Indonesian environmental group that had been criticizing the company's operations. U.S. officials refused.

In other words, Freeport-McMoran has its own interests in Indonesia, and they do not coincide with those of the U.S. government. A conference funded by such a company inevitably raises the question of whether the discussion, agenda or conclusions are being skewed to please private interests.

There was nothing particularly unusual about this Indonesia conference. It serves merely as a small example of a larger problem.

Increasingly these days, American universities and think tanks that engage in area studies—that is, scholarship about particular countries or regions of the world—are raising their money either from foreign governments and companies, or from the American firms that do business in these countries.

In Asian studies, leading American universities are relying ever more on grants from foundations like the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, originally set up with money from Taiwan's ruling party, or the Korea Foundation, with ties to the South Korean government.

As for think tanks, take as an example the Heritage Foundation, one of the pillar institutions of Washington's conservative movement. It received grants totaling \$300,000 to \$500,000 a year—a significant portion of the \$1.7 million it spends each year on foreign-policy and defense studies—from three Taiwan companies, a spokesman said this week. Small wonder that Taiwan figures very prominently in Heritage's view of the world.

The scholars and institutions that accept these funds usually advance two arguments for doing so. The first is that the money does not dictate or compromise anyone's views. The second is that there is no place else from which to raise the money.

The first claim is dubious at best. The corporations or foreign governments giving money for scholarship and conferences often say in public they are not trying to influence American foreign policy. But do they say the same thing internally? How do the companies justify these donations to their shareholders?



The second argument is more substantial. It points to a serious problem. Ideally, universities and think tanks ought to be able to raise their money from sources that do not have blatant *conflicts of interest*: independent American foundations, the philanthropy of private individuals or government entities comparable to the National Science Foundation, which supports scientific research.

The congressional fund-raising hearings have concentrated on an eye-catching allegation: that China tried to steer money to politicians to influence the outcome of an election. That's certainly a claim worthy of investigation.

But the broader phenomenon is that our very discussion and scholarship about the rest of the world these days are increasingly being funded by the foreign governments and American corporations that have an interest in shaping U.S. foreign policy. That's a problem no one wants to address.

*The Historic Power of Special Interests]]*

*By Bruce J. Schulman*

From *The Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1999

The machinery of American democracy ground to a halt recently. Despite overwhelming public support for new restrictions on firearms, the National Rifle Assn. and its allies again stymied gun-control legislation on Capitol Hill. In the past, cataclysmic events and national crises allowed the nation to surmount organized interests and enact much-needed, much-demanded reform. But even after the massacre in Colorado and school shootings in Georgia, the majority appears powerless against the money and influence of the gun lobby. The stalemate has flummoxed even Vice President Al Gore; on the campaign trail he wondered how he might rouse "the 80% of the electorate" who favor safer gun laws.

Of course, the gun lobby is hardly the only special interest to squeeze Capitol Hill in a chokehold. Nor is it the first to paralyze Washington by diverting attention from effective reform onto other, vaguer issues like violent videos, creepy Internet chat rooms and schools that do not prominently display the Ten Commandments. But the lessons of history and the astonishing intractability of the current Congress, even in the face of national uproar over schoolyard violence, raise serious questions about the ability of cynical, well-heeled minorities to suffocate the will of the majority.

After World War II, President Harry S. Truman introduced a national health insurance plan. Truman's proposal, especially medical coverage for the elderly, enjoyed broad popular support in the United States. At that time, every other industrial democracy in the world was adopting a similar policy.

But fearing a loss of income and prestige for doctors, the American Medical Assn. launched a relentless effort to spike the plan. The AMA lobbied Congress and ran a vicious advertising campaign against the bill. It even fabricated a quotation from Vladimir I. Lenin, purporting that the architect of Soviet communism had called national health insurance "the keystone to the arch of the Soviet state." The AMA tri-

umphed, and the United States remained the only Western democracy not to provide its citizens with guaranteed medical care.

A generation later, amid the double-digit inflation of the 1970s, the federal government maintained price supports and import quotas to protect Big Sugar. The program benefited a handful of sugar producers but pummeled millions of U.S. consumers already victimized by skyrocketing food prices. Asked to defend the sugar supports, President Jimmy Carter's inflation czar, economist Alfred E. Kahn, remained speechless. Although everyone understood, he could not confess before a congressional committee that the Carter administration dared not offend the sugar lobby. After a long, awkward pause, Kahn replied, "Let the record show an embarrassed silence." Sugar subsidies survived.

But not just economic interests have derailed popular reforms. Party organizations, religious groups and fraternal societies have also maintained strangleholds on the political process. They have subverted the general welfare to their narrow, parochial aims.

During the 1880s, Americans became increasingly disenchanted with corruption in public office. A decade of high-profile scandals, reminiscent of today's campaign-finance imbroglios, convinced many that the excesses of the spoils system needed to be tamed. The nation could no longer condone the rewarding of political supporters with sinecures and lucrative contracts or the practice of requiring public employees to kick back Part of their salaries to the machines that had provided their jobs. Still, the party organizations, particularly the national Republican party, which controlled the White House and its rich stores of patronage, repeatedly blocked civil-service reform. The spoils system remained intact until a disappointed office seeker assassinated President James A. Garfield. Then clamor for action finally became irresistible and Congress passed the Pendleton Civil Service Act in 1883. This "Magna Carta of civil-service reform" forbade mandatory kickbacks and awarded many public offices by competitive examination rather than cronyism. Still, civil-service reform proved a rare and partial victory.

During the late 19th century, however, no issues so exercised the electorate as moral reform—temperance, Sabbatarianism, birth control. Most parts of the nation enacted Sunday "blue laws," closing shops and offices on the Sabbath, and enforced restrictions on the sale and use of contraceptives. However popular these measures were during the Gilded Age, they were outmoded by the 1960s. But while vast majorities of Americans opposed these restrictions, a committed vocal minority kept them on the books.

For example, when Massachusetts scientists conducted clinical tests for the birth-control pill, contraception was still illegal in that state. Legislators simply would not risk the wrath of churches and other religious organizations, despite the wishes of constituents. Only after the Supreme Court invalidated bans on contraceptives in 1965 and the cultural turmoil of the '60s eroded support for blue laws, did Congress and the state legislatures begin to retire these relics of the Gilded Age.

Half a century ago, Americans first surveyed the alarming rise of special interests like the NRA and the AMA. Analysts like John Kenneth Galbraith and David Reis-

man conceded the U.S. voters possessed little real influence on the political process. Policymaking had become so arcane and complex that ordinary citizens could barely keep track of deliberations in Washington, much less surmount the power of organized interests.

But 1950s observers remained confident about the resilience of American democracy. In their minds, the opposing interest groups seemed to counteract each other: Labor checked business, veterans groups balanced professional organizations, civil-rights lobbies monitored church groups. A democracy of interest groups flourished in the modern United States, even if citizen voices grew faint. In the last analysis, in times of crisis—a presidential assassination, an international incident, a cultural rebellion—Americans would break through the gridlock that stalled legislative action.

Recent events cast doubt on that sanguine view. The interests do not cancel each other out and produce a harmonious, functioning democracy. After Littleton, it seems that even a national disaster cannot pry a congressional majority free from the tentacles of a well-financed, well-organized lobby.

The failure of gun control raises issues more fundamental than the fate of firearms restrictions or even the country's ability to prevent juvenile violence. It asks whether this nation can any longer find the resolve and the unity of purpose to cast aside the lobbyists, their slick ads and their fat checkbooks. It asks whether American democracy or any other so stymied and dominated by selfish interests can long endure. In the current crisis, the answers are by no means certain. democracy, as PACs, corporations and pressure groups vie to influence elections and ultimately the votes of the candidates they support. We're shocked, shocked. Everywhere the cry goes up for campaign-finance reform.

## When Money Talks

*By John Brain*

From *The Baltimore Sun*, March 6, 1997

MONEY TALKS, the saying goes, and most people think that in politics it talks out of

turn. Influencing elections with campaign contributions is denounced as corrupting. But wait a minute.

The democratic ideal has always been just that, a pleasant fiction of popular government by the people for the people and of the people. In practice, democratic government has always been controlled by dominant elites occasionally subject to the consent of a carefully screened electorate. From a realistic perspective, democracy is largely a PR stratagem for engineering the consent of the governed.

## **Patrician aristocrats**

In America today the power elite is drawn not from a governing class of patrician aristocrats, as in the 18th century, but from a pool of ambitious leaders who own or manage the nation's mammoth organizations: corporations, trade and professional associations, unions, ethnic and religious groups, the PACs, and of course government itself at all levels. These are the real players on the political scene, and their power is expressed in terms of money.

Some see this process as a corruption of democracy, but only if we accept the democratic ideal in all its naivete. Those who urge campaign-finance reform would do well to ponder whether the government of a complex modern nation is best controlled by a majority of ignorant voters, or by an aristocratic elite, or by major business corporations, or by ethnic or religious groups, or by the defense establishment, or whatever.

## **A role to play**

Clearly all have a role to play as stakeholders, and maybe PAC contributions are as good a way as any to introduce reality into the democratic ideal.

A government sensitive to pressure groups is not "corrupt," but rather balanced and functional. We are naive if we believe that legislation springs from the creative imaginations of inspired legislators.

Most legislation results from the advocacy of pressure groups, and quite often is actually written by their lobbyists.

## **Countervailing pressure**

At the same time, it is often opposed by pressure groups and lobbyists on the other side of the issue, and the outcome is workable legislation.

In America today citizens can vote at infrequent intervals and do influence elections, but if they want to exercise hands-on influence, they must join and support organizations which mobilize voting blocs and raise money to lobby legislators.

Our current laws relating to the handicapped, the environment, endangered species, employment security, education and other subjects were spearheaded by citizens who organized, raised money and advocated change.

At the same time, industry groups had their own agendas, but legitimately represented the profit motive and the interests of corporations.

## **A balance of interests**

Pragmatically, this "corrupt democracy" produces a balance between the interests of ordinary citizens and their desire for clean air, clean water, pure food, a safe workplace

and so on, and the interest of those who manage businesses and have to make a profit to survive, and all the other stakeholders in society.

We don't want to return to the bad old days of Boss Tweed and the Robber Barons. So we should admit that General Motors and Microsoft and Boeing, *et al.*, deserve a place at the table along with John Q. Citizen.

In theory, a system might be devised whereby all these players had blocks of votes to cast depending on their importance to society, but it would be unmanageable and no one would agree on the evaluation.

Instead, we allow organizations to have influence in proportion to the money they contribute to political parties—a rough and ready expedient, but better than outright bribery.

Powerful interest groups are going to make their influence felt in the political arena one way or another, whatever reforms are made. The best we can hope for is a working compromise, beginning with full disclosure. That will have to do, until genetic research enables us to come up with a breed of philosopher kings.

## Secrecy and Financial Conflicts in University-Industry Research Must Get Closer Scrutiny

*By Mildred K. Cho*

*From The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 1, 1997*

Concern about faculty members' conflicts of interest has grown with the increasing number of research ties between academe and industry. This is especially true for scholars involved in biomedical research, for which private industry is now the major source of funds in the United States.

According to Alicia Dustira, a former senior policy analyst at the U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy, industry's share of financial support for U.S. biomedical research and development rose from 31 per cent in 1980 to 46 per cent in 1990, while the share borne by the National Institutes of Health dropped from 40 per cent to 32 per cent.

One major reason for concern is that if faculty members are profiting financially from their research either through royalties from, or as investors in, companies that market products based on their discoveries, the outcome or direction of their work may be affected. They might, for instance, be tempted (consciously or unconsciously) to design studies that are more likely than not to have an outcome favorable to the product. Another cause for alarm is that conflicts of interest may limit the dissemination of biomedical knowledge, because of companies' desire to protect research results that could affect their finances or results that they want to keep secret from competitors.

We have several years of experience now with university-industry partnerships. It is time to assess how these relationships are working and their actual, as well as theoretical, effects on the production and dissemination of biomedical knowledge. A national commission is needed to examine all aspects of conflicts of interest in university-industry agreements and then suggest guidelines on how to manage such conflicts. Like the Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments, created by President Clinton in 1994 to examine possible past and current abuses of research subjects, this commission should collect and analyze empirical data, as well as evaluate the moral obligations of universities and researchers. It should also act quickly, to try to prevent further erosion of public trust in scientists.

In a 1996 study of leading journals in biology and medicine, Sheldon Krimsky, a professor of urban and environmental policy at Tufts University, and his colleagues found that in a third of the articles they sampled, the first author listed had a financial conflict of interest, such as being listed as an inventor on a patent or patent application closely related to the work, or being a major shareholder in at least one company connected to the research that the article described. Can researchers with such strong ties to industry report the results of their research accurately, or will their reports inevitably be biased, perhaps unconsciously, by their ties to the for-profit sector?

In fact, evidence indicates not only that the potential for financial gain is leading to changes in researchers' behavior, but also that industry is consciously trying to alter the timing and content of reports of scientific research. Steven Rosenberg, a prominent cancer researcher at the N.I.H. wrote last year in *The New England Journal of Medicine* about his encounters with secrecy in collaborations between industry and academe. For example, he described one company's refusal to reveal to researchers appropriate dosage or toxicity information for a drug supplied for a research project using human patients, unless the researchers agreed to keep the information confidential—to prevent a competing company from learning too much about the drug.

A study by David Blumenthal and his colleagues in the department of health-care policy at Harvard University's medical school, recently published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, suggests that Dr. Rosenberg's experiences are not unusual. The study found that, over all, nearly a tenth of university researchers in the biological sciences reported withholding research results from other university scientists, and a fifth reported delaying the publication of results for more than six months, to protect their scientific leads over competitors or to allow time to apply for or negotiate a patent. Especially significant is the fact that professors who engaged in industry-supported research with commercial applications were more than three times as likely to delay publication as those who had no industry support.

Ties between industry and academe clearly have great potential benefits as government funds for scientific research become more scarce. Small concessions to the needs of business, such as short delays in publishing research results to allow time to apply for patents, might be an appropriate compromise between the goals of industry and those of academic institutions. Secrecy of the degree suggested by the Blumenthal study,

however, is a serious threat to the basis of the scientific process—the free exchange of information. Although the competitive nature of science and scientists has always meant that some information was kept secret, at least for a time, the Blumenthal study indicates that scientists with ties to industry are significantly less likely to exchange information fully and promptly than are colleagues without such ties.

In another study, Lisa Bero, an associate professor of pharmacy at the University of California at San Francisco, and I analyzed reports of research on new drug therapies published in peer-reviewed biomedical journals. We found that 98 per cent of the studies supported by the pharmaceutical industry reported that new therapies were more effective than standard drugs. In comparison, only 79 per cent of studies without industry financing found that the new drug was more effective. Perhaps industry-sponsored studies that do not support the effectiveness of the industry's new product are simply never published.

A long battle between the University of California at San Francisco and Knoll Pharmaceutical Company illustrates the problem. In 1987, a Knoll (then Boots Pharmaceuticals Inc.) gave a grant to a U.C.S.F. researcher to compare Synthroid, the company's brandname, synthetic version of the hormone thyroxine, with generic forms of the same synthetic hormone. Both drugs are used to treat patients whose thyroids have been damaged or removed. The study, which found that Synthroid was no more effective than the much-less-expensive generic versions, was accepted for publication in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. But the researcher—against university policy—had signed a contract with the company that granted it the right to approve publication.

The company refused to permit publication of the results in 1995 and threatened U.C.S.F. with a lawsuit to suppress the study permanently. Only after *The Wall Street Journal* published an article on the saga a year ago did Knoll agree to let the study appear in print. It was finally published in *JAMA* this spring. Meanwhile, 8 million Americans with thyroid conditions may have been spending up to \$356-million per year for a brand name drug when a less-expensive generic might have worked just as well.

The Department of Health and Human Services and the National Science Foundation jointly instituted regulations on financial conflicts of interest in 1995 that require certain actions from institutions applying to them for grants. Institutions must collect and review faculty members' disclosures of their financial holdings. When an institution receives a grant from H.H.S. or N.S.F., it must tell the agency about any conflicts of interest that are relevant to the project, such as financial interests that a researcher in the study has in a company doing related research. Institutions also must monitor those conflicts or persuade the faculty members to eliminate them.

When faculty members apply to these agencies for funds, they must disclose their financial holdings to their institutions. This includes any salary, consulting fees, honoraria, stock holdings, or intellectual-property rights valued at \$10,000 or more per year that the researcher receives from for-profit entities, as well as any ownership of

more than 5 per cent in such entities. It then is up to the institutions, not the faculty members themselves, to decide which of these interests constitute conflicts, and which should be reported to the agencies.

In response to intense criticism of early drafts of the regulations that barred some types of relationships between universities and companies, the final rules are extremely limited. They apply only to financial conflicts and don't ban any specific ones; they merely require disclosure of particular types of conflicts and specify when and to whom they must be revealed. Universities are left to decide for themselves how to manage them. This means that, although most academic collaborations with industry are similar in nature, the policies of individual academic institutions will probably continue to differ. For example, some institutions now forbid a faculty member to have any equity interest in a company sponsoring that faculty member's research, while other institutions have no such restrictions.

Although some differences among institutions are appropriate, we need enough uniformity so that faculty members interested in collaborating with industry are not discouraged from working at institutions with more-restrictive rules. Colleges and universities routinely face important questions about the extent to which conflicts of interest are affecting research, but they have very little empirical evidence to help them determine what the soundest policy would be.

Institutions need to reach some common understanding about definitions and management of conflicts of interest to protect their primary missions—the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge, along with education—without arbitrarily squelching collaboration that might benefit the public, universities, and industry. To do this, they need answers to some important questions: To what extent should faculty members be allowed to make commitments to parties other than the university that might damage the credibility and integrity of university research? How much is “too much” of an interest for a faculty member to hold in a company? Should employees of universities be allowed to hold managerial or other fiduciary roles in a company that supports their research? How much information with commercial value should universities be willing to allow researchers to withhold in their publications?

Professional groups—including the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Association of Academic Health Centers, and the American Medical Association—have provided guidelines for identifying and managing conflicts of interest. But we need to reexamine current policies in light of the recent federal policies and the apparent increase in the adverse effects of such conflicts.

Other issues need to be dealt with as well. Institutions also gain from collaborating with industry. Does the desire for money from business lead university administrators to pressure their institutional-review boards to approve industry-sponsored research using human subjects? Do most institutions take no action beyond requiring faculty members to disclose conflicts of interest, because university officials fear that stronger measures would discourage industry from sponsoring campus research?



The commission that I believe is needed to scrutinize our experience with universityindustry relationships should issue its findings within a year. As a first step, the commission should collect basic information, such as what the typical conflict-of-interest policy is at major research universities. It also should investigate how differences in policies, and different kinds of conflicts, affect the direction and outcome of faculty research.

To insure the relevance of its findings, this commission should solicit comments from representatives of industry, although its primary focus should be on the academic mission of universities, not the needs of industry. The group should include basic scientists, medical researchers, experts in]]technology transfer, ethicists, university administrators with expertise in managing conflict-of-interest policies, and representatives of government agencies and businesses that provide financial support for research.

If the academic community does not take steps soon to deal with the issues raised by conflicts of interest and to act on our experience to date, the problem could get out of hand. Universities can only suffer if the public and lawmakers come to believe that their scientists' independence or integrity has been compromised. The prospect of hastily formulated, poorly thought-out policies being imposed on universities by outsiders should spur us to act decisively *now*.

*Fat and Happy in D.C.]]*

*By Jeffrey H. Birnbaum*

From *Fortune*, May 28, 2001

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National Rifle Association	1	2	Nat'l Education Association	14	9
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Association of Trial Lawyers	5	6	Nat'l Right to Life Committee	18	8
AFL-CIO	6	5	Health Insurance Association	19	25
Chamber of Commerce	7	7	Nat'l Restaurant Association	20	10
Nat'l Beer Wholesalers Assoc.	8	19	Nat'l Governors' Association	21	12
Nat'l Assoc. of Realtors	9	15	Recording Industry Assoc.	22	40
Nat'l Assoc. of Manufacturers	10	14	Am. Bankers Association	23	11
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Maybe it's a coincidence, but Washington is gorging on red meat. Carnivores have stormed the capital, and this city is nothing if not adaptive. From Smith & Wollensky to Nick & Stef's, from Angelo & Maxie's to the Caucus Room, new steak houses have

popped up faster than a politician can pocket a campaign contribution. There are other changes too, like the reappearance of men in boots and women in pearls. But the biggest change is that the Republican party controls every lever of power in town: the Oval Office, the Senate, the House, the Cabinet. The Democrats? Let 'em eat crumbs!

Although the Grand Old Party isn't about to get everything it wants, a new establishment has taken hold with George W. Bush. This year's Power 25 survey—*Fortune's* list of Washington's most powerful lobbying groups—reflects the turn. Republican organizations are notably on the rise, while Democratic ones are waning. For the first time in four years, the Power 25 has a new No. 1. The heavily Republican National Rifle Association has replaced the nonpartisan American Association of Retired Persons as the group with the most clout in the capital. *Fortune's* survey was conducted by mail in March and April by the Mellman Group, a Democratic polling firm, and by Public Opinion Strategies, a GOP firm. (See [fortune.com](http://fortune.com) for the complete list of lobbying groups, a separate ranking of lobbying companies, and an explanation of our polling methods.)

Although city slickers might be aghast at the ascendancy of the NRA, this is a highly focused, well-financed organization. Despite high-profile school shootings and unrelenting pressure from gun-control advocates, the NRA has held gun-control legislation at bay. How? By electing its supporters to Congress and, last year, to the White House. In particular, the NRA was pivotal in defeating Al Gore in Arkansas, Tennessee, and West Virginia—all states that usually vote Democratic. If Gore had won just one of them, he would now be President.

Nothing inspires zealotry like a threat, and few people feel more threatened than gun owners, more and more of whom are finding comfort in the NRA. It has 43 million members, up one million since last year, and two million since 1998. Its budget increased from \$180 million to \$200 million last year, including \$35 million for political campaigns. The money supports a state-of-the-art lobbying machine with its own national newscast, one million precinct-level political organizers, and an in-house telemarketing department. The NRA's preelection rallies in 25 cities last year drew 5,000 to 9,000 people each—often more than Gore drew.

At No. 2 on the Power 25, AARP is not exactly a has-been. Its budget last year was a staggering \$542 million. No lawmaker or President would dare to propose changes in Social Security or Medicare without consulting this 34.8-million-member behemoth. But AARP is also a house divided. Half of its membership is under age 65 (people become eligible to join at 50). It even publishes a magazine called *My Generation* to appeal to baby-boomers, the oldest of whom turn 55 this year. AARP may have difficulty deciding which group to represent: retirees or the soon-to-retire. Retirees, for example, tend to favor keeping Social Security just as it is. Boomers generally support changes to ensure that the program will be there when they retire.

Another reason for AARP's slide may be its political neutrality. GOP-friendly groups excelled in 2001. Republican bastions like the National Beer Wholesalers Asso-

ciation (No. 8) moved up strongly. Pro-business groups, including the National Association of Realtors (No. 9), the National Association of Manufacturers (No. 10), and the National Association of Home Builders (No. 11), also advanced. The Business Roundtable, whose members are CEOs, went from No. 37 to No. 26.

By contrast, two mostly Democratic labor unions, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (No. 27) and the United Auto Workers (No. 33), fell off the Power 25. The National Education Association, a teachers' union, dipped from No. 9 to No. 14. The AFL-CIO dropped a slot, from No. 5 to No. 6. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters barely clung to the bottom of the list at No. 25.

Some of the changes had nothing to do with partisan politics. For beating back Napster, the Internet music-swapping service, the Recording Industry Association jumped from No. 40 to No. 22. Two groups joined the list after successfully lobbying for an increase in Medicare reimbursements—the American Hospital Association (No. 13) and the Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America (No. 24). The Health Insurance Association of America rose from No. 25 to No. 19 by helping delay a vote on the Patients' Bill of Rights. The Power 25 poll reflects the divergent views of lawmakers and other insiders, but on one issue there's consensus. A former highflier has been laid low; the Christian Coalition, No. 7 in 1997 and No. 35 in 1999, fell to No. 65 this year. It has never recovered from the departure of its charismatic director Ralph Reed.

But the overall story of the list is the triumph of the GOP. Lobbying companies followed the same pattern as the lobbying organizations. The new No. 1 firm is Barbour Griffith & Rogers, led by Haley Barbour, former chairman of the Republican National Committee. His company replaces Verner Lipfert Bernhard McPherson & Hand (No. 3), which has a stellar but painstakingly bipartisan roster of marquee partners (Bob Dole, George Mitchell). Another company, Podesta & Mattoon, rose from No. 14 to No. 9 partly by adding a Republican partner, Dan Mattoon, and making him Part of the name alongside Democrat Tony Podesta. Similarly, the law firm Greenberg Traugott zoomed from

No. 40 to No. 21 after it hired a slew of former GOP leadership aides. In contrast, OBC Group (No. 23) fell out of the top ten after its big-name GOP partner, Nick Calio, quit to direct the White House lobbying efforts.

This is no time to short Republicans.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Based on the readings, discuss what kind of conflicts of interest might bear on the topics you study in your major subject.

Monitor television or radio broadcasts and newspapers in your area for possible conflicts of interest stemming from ownership or advertising.

In relation to Mildred Cho's "Secrecy and Financial Conflicts in University-Industry Research Must Get Closer Scrutiny" and Jim Mann's "Corporate Funding Taints Public

Debate,” if your college or university has an office of research, interview the director and some faculty members conducting sponsored research and ask them what their policy is for dealing with possible conflicts of interest.

If there are any nonuniversity research institutes in your area, interview their administrators and researchers to pose the same question as in number 3.

In Jeffrey Birnbaum’s “Fat & Happy in D.C.,” which lobbies are liberal and which conservative, and how large and democratic a constituency does each represent? Use this list as a point of reference for the readings throughout this book that argue that liberal or conservative special interests exert the most power. The two biggest lobbies are the NRA and the AARP. To what extent are these two analogous in terms of representing special interests, in the sense of direct financial profits at stake?

Do a close comparison of the arguments in Bruce Schulman’s article “The Historic Power of Special Interests” and John Brain’s “When Money Talks.” For example: Brain: “Pragmatically, this ‘corrupt democracy’ produces a balance between the interests of ordinary citizens and their desire for clean air, clean water, pure food, a safe workplace and so on, and the interest of those who manage businesses and have to make a profit to survive, and all the other stakeholders in society.” Schulman: “The interests do not cancel each other out and produce a harmonious, functioning democracy. After Littleton, it seems that even a national disaster cannot pry a congressional majority free from the tentacles of a well-financed, well-organized lobby [the NRA].”

Does one writer or the other provide sufficient evidence to refute the other? What evidence does the Hubbard-Waxman debate provide on this issue? Evaluate Schulman’s “tentacles” metaphor in terms of connotation and denotative accuracy.

Brain says, “From a realistic perspective, democracy is largely a PR stratagem for engineering the consent of the governed.” Would you describe this view as skeptical or cynical? Does Brain draw liberal or conservative conclusions from this premise? Do you think Brain’s justification for the power of special interests outweighs the evidence of abuses by special interests in the other readings in this Chapter and Chapter 18? If so, defend this opinion.

## Chapter 20. Varieties of Propaganda

"Propaganda" is one of those semantically ambiguous words, with multiple **denotations** and **connotations**. Although it usually has a strongly negative connotation, it has one definition that is connotatively neutral, which is simply the propagation of any ideology or viewpoint; in this sense, it is close in meaning to "rhetoric," in the broad sense of persuasion. So in this neutral sense, any individual or group that tries to persuade an audience to its views engages in propaganda, and cannot be faulted for doing so.

In the more common, negative sense of the word, propaganda is usually the product of a political or commercial organization that hires professionals to propagate its messages; sometimes one individual who is powerful or wealthy enough to hire others through media ownership or a political organization is the source. It is reasonable to assume that such professionals are not acting primarily out of their own convictions but are flacking for their employers, as a job. (A "flack" in insider slang is a public relations agent; the term connotes someone who will do anything for money.) When we are evaluating the arguments presented by hired propagandists, it is not necessarily an **ad hominem** or **poisoning the well** fallacy to point out that they are being paid for making the arguments they do, and therefore that we should be rather skeptical about their validity; at the very least, we need to carefully check out their data and reasoning. Sometimes, however, certain individuals known as **ideologues** freely choose to be propagandists for a cause or organization out of their own convictions rather than for pay. This situation constitutes a borderline case between the two definitions of propaganda; in such cases, the key question is whether or not these individuals show the other negative traits of propagandists.

These negative traits include those identified by Aldous Huxley in his essay "Propaganda under a Dictatorship," which speaks of "the slogans, the unqualified assertions and sweeping generalizations which are the propagandist's stock in trade."

"All effective propaganda," Hitler wrote, "must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas." These stereotyped formulas must be constantly repeated, for "only constant repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea upon the memory of a crowd." . . . The demagogic propagandist must therefore be consistently dogmatic. All his statements are made without qualification. There are no grays in his picture of the world; everything is either diabolically black or celestially white. In Hitler's words, the propagandist should adopt "a systematically

one-sided attitude towards every problem that has to be dealt with. He must never admit that he might be wrong or that people with a different point of view might be even partially right.” (36)

Hitler was an extreme case, but his prescription for propaganda remains depressingly reminiscent of the quadrennial Democratic and Republican nominating conventions and other campaign rallies, TV spectacles stage-managed by entertainment professionals and featuring masses of the faithful chanting platitudinous slogans in much the same manner as Hitler’s infamous Nazi Party mass rallies or the brainwashed crowds in Orwell’s *1984*. Huxley, incidentally, notes that Hitler claimed to have modeled his rallies on the quasi-militaristic passions stirred up in the spectators at American football games.

One item in propagandists’ stock in trade is a mode of **compartmentalization** and **selective vision** whereby they will predictably accuse their opponents or victims of employing all these traits of one-sided rhetoric that they themselves are employing (while denying that they themselves are using them), in an attempt to obscure the truth by reversing the roles of the honest truth seekers and the propagandists. Watch for examples of this trick in your reading, listening, and viewing of news and opinion media; when you find an example, you can legitimately fault its perpetrator for committing the **tu quoque** (“you too”) fallacy—accusing someone else of doing what you yourself are also, or solely, doing. It does sometimes happen, however, that someone *will* use propaganda dishonestly in the course of accusing opponents of using propaganda. This was the charge made by many critics of Michael Moore’s documentary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which caused a great deal of controversy in the election year 2004 for its allegations that the administration of President George W. Bush used propaganda and deceit. (That film, incidentally, was a prime example of the influence that writers and artists can have as voices of political dissent, as discussed in Chapter 1.) The film’s defenders pointed out that, at the very least, Moore’s film highlighted some important facts that had been suppressed by mainstream media—such as the closeness of the Bush family and business enterprises to the Saudi royal family, American support of Saddam Hussein through much of his bloody reign, the influence on Bush’s and earlier presidents’ foreign policy of corporations like the Carlyle Group and Halliburton Industries, and the expressed enthusiasm of their and other corporate executives on the prospect of profiting from the impending Iraq war. Moore’s critics, however, claimed that he himself falsified facts and drew dubious, conspiratorial **inferences**, though he claimed to be able to support all his allegations. This controversy was the subject of Manohla Dargis’s “The Truth, Moore or Less” in the readings here.

## Invective, Smearing, Disinformation

In Chapter 11, a distinction was made between **polemics** and **invective**. A polemic is a heatedly **partisan** argument (“polemics” is the name for this genre of argument

and is used as either a singular or plural noun); that is to say, it argues for one side in a dispute, with strong **emotional appeal**, usually appealing to, or expressing, fear of or anger against the other side. Polemics, then, are often propagandistically invective in tone, but as noted previously, they need not be, if they are responsibly reasoned and supported and if they follow the ground rules for polemicists in Chapter 11. Disregard for such rules, however, is the mark of propagandistic motives and the invective tone—abusive and insulting, name-calling (without sufficient evidence for the names), **hyperbolically** indignant, simplistically one-sided, and ideologically dogmatic or even fanatic, seething with **primary certitude**. (A related adjective is “tendentious,” referring to an argument that is presented as being nonpartisan and even-handed but that is really pushing a one-sided case or ideological “tendency.”) Think Al Franken, Michael Moore, and Molly Ivins versus Ann Coulter, Bill O’Reilly, and Rush Limbaugh. Turning the positive ground rules into their negative forms produces the following characteristics of propaganda, invective, and tendentiousness.

- Not applying the same standards to yourself and your allies that you do to your opponents.
- Not identifying your ideological viewpoint and how it might bias your arguments. Approaching the other side’s actions and writings with a closed mind and malice aforethought. Not conceding the other side’s valid arguments, or tacking them on grudgingly in inconspicuous phrasing. Not acknowledging points on which you agree at least partially and might be able to cooperate.
- Not summarizing the other side’s case fully and fairly, in an account that its proponents would accept, rather than refuting a **straw man** version of it. Presenting it through the most outlandish statements of its lunatic fringe and through your own paraphrases rather than direct, documented quotations. Putting the worst light on opponents’ statements rather than the most generous interpretation.
- Taking opponents’ quotes out of context in a way that distorts the meaning or tone of the longer passages in which they appear.
- Repeating a second-hand account of events unfavorable to the opposing side as though you were there and can vouch for its accuracy. Not citing your source and taking account of its author’s possible biases, especially if the author is your ally.
- In any account that you use to illustrate the opponents’ misbehavior, not granting that there may be another side to the story and taking pains to find out what it is. If opponents claim that they have been misrepresented, not giving them their say and the benefit of the doubt.



- Being unwilling to acknowledge misconduct, errors, and fallacious arguments by your own allies, and not trying scrupulously to establish an accurate proportion and sense of reciprocity between those faults and those you criticize in your opponents. Playing up the fields and extent of the other side's power while denying or downplaying your own side's.
- Not responding forthrightly to opponents' criticisms of your own or your side's previous arguments, and evading their strongest arguments. Not admitting it when they make criticisms that you cannot refute. Continuing to repeat the same claims over and over again, even after they have been refuted ("staying on message," in political consultants' jargon).
- Substituting derision and name-calling for reasoned argument and substantive evidence.
- Accusing the other side of committing all of these rhetorical abuses, without showing any evidence that they have done so.

The calculated use of such unscrupulous rhetorical methods by political or other organizations to discredit an opponent, often accompanied by outright malicious lies, is known as "smearing" or "a smear campaign." (A frequent, and ugly, variety of smearing in the twentieth century, and one still resorted to by some right-wing polemicists today, was known as "redbaiting"—lumping liberals, democratic socialists, or social democrats together with Communists in **guilt by association**, or discrediting any leftist policy as "communistic." Rush Limbaugh does it in the passage quoted in Chapter 5 equating American civil rights leaders with Soviet Communist rulers.) In the reading at the end of this chapter, "Confessions of a Tobacco Lobbyist," Victor Crawford reveals how he devised a smear campaign against opponents of smoking in which they were labeled "the health Nazis." In an example like Rush Limbaugh's and June Jordan's opposing articles on Anita Hill versus Clarence Thomas in Chapter 5, of course, each side accuses the other of conducting a smear campaign against its champion; in such cases it takes careful study and judgment to determine what is in fact a smear campaign and what is a justifiable body of criticism against an opponent.

A form of smear campaign that has become increasingly prominent in recent decades is political campaign "attack ads," usually on TV and radio. These make malicious accusations, often falsehoods or **half-truths**, against the opposing candidate or position on an initiative and are most effectively timed just before the election, when it is too late for the attacked party to refute them. The political consultants who devise attack ads and other forms of negative campaigning frequently will work for candidates and issues of any party or ideological persuasion, and these consultants have become a class of celebrities in their own right, renowned for their "dirty tricks." They include the late Lee Atwater, who devised the infamous Willy Horton ads for George Bush against

Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential campaign; Dick Morris, who has represented prominent Republicans as well as President Bill Clinton; and Mary Matalin and James Carville, she a Republican operative and he a Democratic one, married to each other. (See their book *All's Fair* for an entertaining account of political strategizing.)

Since the 1970s, the terms “disinformation” and “dark propaganda” have been coined to describe smear campaigns devised mainly by government intelligence agencies like the American CIA and the Russian KGB in the Cold War. In this technique, false stories designed to make the other side look bad are fabricated and circulated through government officials and friendly journalistic media. Verified examples during the seventies and eighties included the fabrication by the CIA of stories about alleged Russian control of a worldwide terrorist network and of a plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II (see Edward Herman and Gerry O’Sullivan, *The “Terrorism” Industry* 171-73). Another involved CIA-initiated smears in the Chilean press against President Salvador Allende in the early seventies designed to undermine his democratically elected socialist government (Herman and Sullivan 82-83). Conservative American defenders of Allende’s opponent, General Augusto Pinochet, who led a coup violently overthrowing Allende and established a brutal military dictatorship, of course charged that the stories about such a smear campaign were themselves a smear campaign devised by Communist-aligned disinformation agencies.

## Lobbying and Public Relations

By the earlier definition of propaganda as one-sided information produced by paid professionals, much, if not most, political lobbying and professionally produced public relations are forms of propaganda, although of course there is a wide range in the legitimacy of the interests represented and the validity of the claims made. A vast number of organizations, internationally, nationally, and locally, hire lobbyists and PR representatives: individual corporations and industrial associations (like those representing energy and automobile producers, or more broadly the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce), professional associations (like the American Medical Association, American Bar Association, and National Education Association), government agencies, foreign governments, trade and public employee unions, and advocacy groups across the political spectrum—environmentalists, the National Rifle Association, religious denominations, retirees, organizations for civil rights and women’s rights, and groups for or against abortion, and so on. Making judgments about these diverse groups’ motives, methods, and rhetoric calls for nuanced thought, as was indicated in Chapter 17 with respect to the ambiguity of the definition of a “special interest group.”

In all corporate and industrial-association lobbies, however, the factor of the profit motive creates a different rhetorical situation from that of nonprofit groups. Both defenders and critics of capitalism agree that the primary purpose of capitalism and

corporations is to return maximum profits to stockholders. If this is considered as the first **premise** in a **deductive argument**, and if the second premise is that the means of maximizing profits are sometimes contrary to the public interest (e.g., in effects on the environment, workers, consumers, health and safety, or public services like education and communication media), then the **conclusion** is that at least some corporations are apt to put the quest for profits ahead of the public interest. Corporate executives will rarely admit publicly that they are doing this; however, so much of the lobbying and PR efforts of corporations must consist of propagandistic disguising of selfish interests as public interests, as in the case of Allen Hubbard's defense of the Competitiveness Council critiqued by Henry Waxman in Chapter 17, or that of "Confessions of a Tobacco Lobbyist" below.

Another distinguishing factor of corporate lobbying and PR is that large corporations and individuals whose wealth has derived from corporations, whether on the local, national, or international level, generally have more disposable money to spend on PR and advertising than any other interest groups, both on ads for particular products and on advocacy ads promoting their ideological interests; in fact they far outspend all other interest or advocacy groups in this area as well as in political action committees' (PACs') campaign contributions. The only comparable groups are a few unions with the largest membership (see Jeffrey Birnbaum's "Fat and Happy in DC" in Chapter 17). According to Steve Brouwer's "If We Decided to Tax the Rich" in Chapter 15, "In 1996, all labor associations together collected \$6 billion in dues, as compared with the \$4 trillion in revenues and \$360 billion in profits gathered by corporations." Although the degree of generalization is difficult to call here ("all," "most," "some"?), the combination of the motive to put profits above the public welfare and the wealth to overwhelm opposing interest groups in hiring PR servants is sufficient cause to predict that a substantial quotient of corporate rhetoric will be propagandistically slanted.

## Government Public Relations; the Militaryindustrial Complex

Various segments of the federal and local governments also have researchers and public relations divisions, which are subsidized by our tax dollars. Much, perhaps most, of their activity is conducted in the public interest, simply to collect and convey useful information, and is free of propagandistic motives. In some cases this activity will have an ideological viewpoint that varies according to whether the particular agency tends to be conservative (such as the Defense Department) or liberal (such as the Environmental Protection Agency), and according to the ideology of the party currently in office.

In several ways, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), also known by the **metonym** the Pentagon, presents a unique case, along with those areas of the

executive branch, primarily the presidency and the Department of State, and of Congress that are closely tied to the DOD. (George Orwell pointed out in his 1947 essay "Politics and the English Language" that the very term "Department of Defense" is a **euphemism**, since all major world powers, even the most militaristic, had recently adopted that **clean** name instead of the earlier **dirty** one, "Department of War.") On the one hand, nearly everyone agrees that strong military defense is in the public interest. On the other hand, military spending entails several potential **conflicts of interest** that no other major area of government spending does. First, the defense industry is one of the largest and most profitable in the American private sector, but virtually its only client is the federal government, so military manufacturers maintain wellfinanced lobbies to win government contracts and maintain their profit levels; this is a prime example of what critics call "corporate welfare" or "socialism for the rich." They are also major campaign contributors, and there is a "revolving door" for executives between the industry and the Defense Department, in what President Eisenhower, a conservative Republican, termed in 1960 (warning against the danger of its growing influence) "the military-industrial complex." Thus there have been periodic scandals concerning bribery in military contracts and grossly inflated DOD expenses, with taxpayers footing the padded bills for items like \$900 toilet seats and \$100 monkey wrenches. The Iraq war in 2003 was strongly advocated by Vice President Richard Cheney, who had previously been CEO of Halliburton Industries, which became one of the largest military contractors and beneficiaries in that war and which came under attack for gaining contracts with no competitive bidding and for cost overruns and other excess profiteering. Many foreign governments—such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel, South Korea, and Taiwan—also have well-financed lobbies in Washington to acquire or maintain American military support, which in turn entails profits for the private companies supplying that support.

Another source of potential conflict of interest lies in reporting on American military activity by commercial media that are Part of corporate conglomerates including major defense contractors. A prime example was when in the 1991 Gulf War, NBC broadcast glowing reports (subsequently revealed to be false) on the successes of the Patriot missile. Neither NBC nor any other major media mentioned that the electronic components of the missile were manufactured by General Electric, NBC's parent corporation, as Bret Watson notes in "How to Watch the Next War" in the readings here.

One more area of potential conflict of interest has to do with the **paradox** that much military spending is necessarily invested in costly weapons and personnel that may never be used in a war; the weapons that are never used usually can serve no other purpose and rapidly become obsolete. To a certain extent, this paradox is a necessary evil in maintaining up-to-date weaponry, but a real danger is that the need for the military industry to maintain its profits through constant turnover in weapons, or

“planned obsolescence,” and for the armed forces to maintain their size and influence, may lead to “the tail wagging the dog,” in **special pleading** by these interests for going to war or at least **appealing to fear** of war for self-serving motives; most of us are highly susceptible to this particular appeal to fear, because as lay people we are dependent on military and political authorities’ word that their policies are effective in combating foreign threats. With the end of the Cold War, we might have expected to see a large reduction in American military spending; one possible reason that this did not occur was lobbying by the military industry and DOD to avert having their budgets and profits cut. A central plank in conservatives’ ideological platform is opposition to excessive size, bureaucracy, cost, and corruption in federal government agencies. But conservatives are vulnerable to charges of a **double standard** and compartmentalized thinking in their tendency toward promoting constant growth in spending for the Department of Defense without expressing concern about inefficiency there. The key to this inconsistency might be that defense spending also is beneficial to corporate profits—perhaps the highest priority on the conservative ideological agenda, dear to both Republicans and Democrats dependent on campaign contributions from military contractors.

These are all reasons for remaining aware of the danger that public relations and lobbying by the military-industrial complex may on occasion cross the line from disinterested advocacy in the public interest to propagandistic special pleading and deception. Most governments in most wars through history have tried to cover up their military blunders and atrocities or have fabricated accounts of ones by their enemies. The selling of the Vietnam War to Americans was a prominent example of deception by the government and military brass in our time. More recent examples are found here in Watson’s “How to Watch the Next War” and Joel Bleifuss’s “Flack Attack.” Bleifuss says, “By the time Reagan left office, 3,000 public relations officers were busy spending \$100 million of taxpayers’ money annually to manipulate the public’s impressions of the military-industrial complex.” Some of the more questionable uses of this money are pointed out by both Bleifuss and Watson in examples from the Gulf War in 1991. A classic propaganda campaign described by Bleifuss concerns the Washington PR firm Hill and Knowlton, which worked for both the Bush administration and the Kuwaiti royal family (lobbying for American military intervention against Iraq’s invasion) to devise a fraudulent atrocity story about Iraqi soldiers pulling babies out of incubators in Kuwait hospitals. This story was highly effective in rallying Americans to war against Saddam Hussein, and when its falsity was revealed, long after the war, no action was taken against its perpetrators. An incident based on this one was depicted in the 1998 film *Wag the Dog*, which satirized a Clintonesque president who starts a phony war to distract public attention from a sex scandal. The film presented a not-veryexaggerated account of the sophistication with which PR consultants can now sell wars like advertisers do soap flakes, tugging on the public’s heartstrings with fabricated tales of atrocities by the enemy and heroism by “our boys.” Again, this is not to **imply** cynically that reports of American heroism and enemy atrocities are not

sometimes truthful—just that they are not *always* true and that a dose of skepticism cannot hurt you.

Watson's 1993 "How to Watch the Next War" provided useful predictions for watching the next war, in Iraq in 2003 (and it will remain worth keeping at hand for the next war after that one, whenever and wherever it may take place). Hill and Knowlton was again the PR agency of choice for the Bush White House. Stories emerged about a proposed DOD "psychological operations" unit whose job would include disseminating false stories, a plan that was retracted when it became public. (Also see *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq*, by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber.) At least three prominent stories about propaganda in the Iraq war have come to light at this writing. In one, American news media all showed footage of jubilant Iraqis pulling down a statue of Saddam Hussein in April 2003. According to a report by David Zucchino in the *Los Angeles Times* (July 3, 2004), that episode was staged by American military officials for the benefit of TV coverage. "A Marine recovery vehicle toppled the statue with a chain, but the effort appeared to be Iraqi-inspired because the psychological team had managed to pack the vehicle with cheering Iraqi children."

A second story was generated by highly publicized news footage, immediately after the initial conquest of Baghdad in spring 2003, of President Bush, dressed in Navy flight gear, landing on an aircraft carrier beneath a banner reading "Mission Accomplished." Viewers might well have assumed the carrier was in the Persian Gulf, but in fact it was in San Diego. Few media pundits bothered to ask what purpose was achieved by the president flying from Washington to San Diego, other than a propaganda photo op. This episode turned into an embarrassment for Bush after militant resistance to the American occupation escalated.

The third episode concerned Private Jessica Lynch, whose unit in Iraq was ambushed and who was subsequently rescued by U.S. troops from an Iraqi hospital. Initial reports released by the Pentagon included claims that she had been stabbed and shot in hand-to-hand combat, that she was abused in the hospital, and that her rescuers shot their way in against armed resistance. Subsequent revelations cast doubt on all these claims. According to critics of the Pentagon's version, she had not been in combat and her wound resulted from falling from her vehicle, she was well cared for and treated in the hospital, and her rescue was staged as a photo op, with unnecessary gunfire against nonexistent enemy fire. (A BBC reporter called this "one of the most stunning pieces of news management ever conceived.") This was a classic case of "which side are you going to believe?" *People* magazine (June 16, 2003), the source of the BBC quotation, presented an unusually balanced report simply summarizing the opposing accounts. No one doubted the heroism and suffering of Private Lynch, but she herself, when she had recovered enough to speak publicly, was extremely modest and expressed embarrassment over the exaggerated, propagandistic uses that had been made of her ordeal.

*Propaganda Under A Dictatorship*]]

*By Aldous Huxley*

*From Brave New World Revisited, 1958*

Let us see what Hitler thought of the masses he moved and how he did the moving. The first principle from which he started was a value judgment: the masses are utterly contemptible. They are incapable of abstract thinking and uninterested in any fact outside the circle of their immediate experience. Their behavior is determined, not by knowledge and reason, but by feelings and unconscious drives. It is in these drives and feelings that "the roots of their positive as well as their negative attitudes are implanted." To be successful a propagandist must learn how to manipulate these instincts and emotions. "The driving force which has brought about the most tremendous revolutions on this earth has never been a body of scientific teaching which has gained power over the masses, but always a devotion which has inspired them, and often a kind of hysteria which has urged them into action. Whoever wishes to win over the masses must know the key that will open the door of their hearts." . . . In post-Freudian jargon, of their unconscious.

Hitler made his strongest appeal to those members of the lower middle classes who had been ruined by the inflation of 1923, and then ruined all over again by the depression of 1929 and the following years. "The masses" of whom he speaks were these bewildered, frustrated and chronically anxious millions. To make them more masslike, more homogeneously subhuman, he assembled them, by the thousands and the tens of thousands in vast halls and arenas, where individuals could lose their personal identity, even their elementary humanity, and be merged with the crowd. A man or woman makes direct contact with society in two ways: as a member of some familial, professional or religious group, or as a member of a crowd. Groups are capable of being as moral and intelligent as the individuals who form them; a crowd is chaotic, has no purpose of its own and is capable of anything except intelligent action and realistic thinking. Assembled in a crowd, people lose their powers of reasoning and their capacity for moral choice. Their suggestibility is increased to the point where they cease to have any judgment or will of their own. They become very excitable, they lose all sense of individual or collective responsibility, they are subject to sudden accesses of rage, enthusiasm and panic. In a word, a man in a crowd behaves as though he had swallowed a large dose of some powerful intoxicant. He is a victim of what I have called "herd-poisoning." Like alcohol, herd-poison is an active, extraverted drug. The crowd-intoxicated individual escapes from responsibility, intelligence and morality into a kind of frantic, animal mindlessness.

During his long career as an agitator, Hitler had studied the effects of herd-poison and had learned how to exploit it for his own purposes. He had discovered that the orator can appeal to those "hidden forces" which motivate men's actions, much more effectively than can the writer. Reading is a private, not a collective activity. The writer speaks only to individuals, sitting by themselves in a state of normal sobriety. The orator speaks to masses of individuals, already well primed with herd-poison. They

are at his mercy, and, if he knows his business, he can do what he likes with them. As an orator, Hitler knew his business supremely well. He was able, in his own words, "to follow the lead of the great mass in such a way that from the living emotion of his hearers the apt word which he needed would be suggested to him and in its turn this would go straight to the heart of his hearers." Otto Strasser called him "a loud-speaker, proclaiming the most secret desires, the least admissible instincts, the sufferings and personal revolts of a whole nation." Twenty years before Madison Avenue embarked upon "Motivational Research," Hitler was systematically exploring and exploiting the secret fears and hopes, the cravings, anxieties and frustrations of the German masses. It is by manipulating "hidden forces" that the advertising experts induce us to buy their wares— a toothpaste, a brand of cigarettes, a political candidate. And it is by appealing to the same hidden forces—and to others too dangerous for Madison Avenue to meddle with— that Hitler induced the German masses to buy themselves a Fuehrer, an insane philosophy and the Second World War.

Unlike the masses, intellectuals have a taste for rationality and an interest in facts. Their critical habit of mind makes them resistant to the kind of propaganda that works so well on the majority. Among the masses "instinct is supreme, and from instinct comes faith . . . While the healthy common folk instinctively close their ranks to form a community of the people" (under a Leader, it goes without saying) "intellectuals run this way and that, like hens in a poultry yard. With them one cannot make history; they cannot be used as elements composing a community." Intellectuals are the kind of people who demand evidence and are shocked by logical inconsistencies and fallacies. They regard over-simplification as the original sin of the mind and have no use for the slogans, the unqualified assertions and sweeping generalizations which are the propagandist's stock in trade. "All effective propaganda," Hitler wrote, "must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas." These stereotyped formulas must be constantly repeated, for "only constant repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea upon the memory of a crowd." Philosophy teaches us to feel uncertain about the things that seem to us self-evident. Propaganda, on the other hand, teaches us to accept as self-evident matters about which it would be reasonable to suspend our judgment or to feel doubt. The aim of the demagogue is to create social coherence under his own leadership. But, as Bertrand Russell has pointed out, "systems of dogma without empirical foundations, such as scholasticism, Marxism and fascism, have the advantage of producing a great deal of social coherence among their disciples." The demagogic propagandist must therefore be consistently dogmatic. All his statements are made without qualification. There are no grays in his picture of the world; everything is either diabolically black or celestially white. In Hitler's words, the propagandist should adopt "a systematically one-sided attitude towards every problem that has to be dealt with." He must never admit that he might be wrong or that people with a different point of view might be even partially right. Opponents should not be argued with; they should be attacked, shouted down, or, if they become too much of a nuisance, liquidated. The morally squeamish intellectual



may be shocked by this kind of thing. But the masses are always convinced that “right is on the side of the active aggressor.”

Such, then, was Hitler’s opinion of humanity in the mass. It was a very low opinion. Was it also an incorrect opinion? The tree is known by its fruits, and a theory of human nature which inspired the kind of techniques that proved so horribly effective must contain at least an element of truth. Virtue and intelligence belong to human beings as individuals freely associating with other individuals in small groups. So do sin and stupidity. But the subhuman mindlessness to which the demagogue makes his appeal, the moral imbecility on which he relies when he goads his victims into action, are characteristic not of men and women as individuals, but of men and women in masses. Mindlessness and moral idiocy are not characteristically human attributes; they are symptoms of herd-poisoning. In all the world’s higher religions, salvation and enlightenment are for individuals. The kingdom of heaven is within the mind of a person, not within the collective mindlessness of a crowd. Christ promised to be present where two or three are gathered together. He did not say anything about being present where thousands are intoxicating one another with herd-poison. Under the Nazis enormous numbers of people were compelled to spend an enormous amount of time marching in serried ranks from point A to point B and back again to point A. “This keeping of the whole population on the march seemed to be a senseless waste of time and energy. Only much later,” adds Hermann Rauschning, “was there revealed in it a subtle intention based on a well-judged adjustment of ends and means. Marching diverts men’s thoughts. Marching kills thought. Marching makes an end of individuality. Marching is the indispensable magic stroke performed in order to accustom the people to a mechanical, quasi-ritualistic activity until it becomes second nature.”

From his point of view and at the level where he had chosen to do his dreadful work, Hitler was perfectly correct in his estimate of human nature. To those of us who look at men and women as individuals rather than as members of crowds, or of regimented collectives, he seems hideously wrong. In an age of accelerating over-population, of accelerating over-organization and ever more efficient means of mass communication, how can we preserve the integrity and reassert the value of the human individual? This is a question that can still be asked and perhaps effectively answered. A generation from now it may be too late to find an answer and perhaps impossible, in the stifling collective climate of that future time, even to ask the question.

*How To Watch the Next War]]: Learning from the Things We Didn’t See in the Persian Gulf*

*By Bret Watson*

*From The Cable Guide, April 1993*

The more TV a person watched during the Gulf War, the less he or she knew about the conflict. This was one of the findings of a 1991 poll, which also reported that people who watched TV at least three hours a day were more likely to support the war yet less likely to be well-informed about it. With results like these, can TV news claim to deliver an accurate, complete picture of war?

Television is, after all, predominantly a medium for entertainment. As such, it is susceptible to two forces that impede our grasp of war:

1. We all crave a good drama.
2. We all long to be Part of something larger than ourselves.

If you want to understand TV coverage of war and attain a more accurate picture, you have to weigh the forces that drive military, media and viewer alike.

The most important fact to remember is that war news is fragmentary and incomplete—yet TV conveys a powerful illusion of being accurate and comprehensive. A viewer has to ask repeatedly, What am I not seeing?

Here are five influences on war news that help make the picture incomplete:

## **Rhetoric and Storytelling**

Leaders build support for a war by using simplistic rhetoric to tell a compelling story.

President Bush tried to turn Saddam Hussein into a stereotypical villain, particularly by using overblown comparisons to Hitler. The media described Hussein's use of bombs as desperate and barbaric, but when the United States used the same bombs they were called "tools" (which had such inspiring names as Patriot missiles and smart bombs). We all became accustomed to referring to battles as if they are athletic contests. As one pilot exclaimed after a bombing run, "We scored a touchdown!" It's hard to describe the reality of war when we speak the language of football.

## **Limited Access**

The military supposedly learned from Vietnam that it should limit media access to the horrors of war, for fear the news might soften resolve at home. The press willingly agreed to restrictions imposed on it during the Gulf War and even argued for the necessity of such restrictions. (The reporter's dilemma is that his stories depend on access, not just to the front but also to officials, so there's strong incentive for a newshound to stay on the leash.) As a result, reporters become only mouthpieces for the Pentagon. Kept away from combat, cameras missed the reality of the estimated 50,000 soldiers and civilians killed by the 88,500 tons of explosives the United States and its allies dropped on Iraq and Kuwait.

## Technology as Star

Gulf War reports conveyed the impression that, thanks to our miraculous missiles, war was now surgical, safe, clean, easy. The few scenes of bombs in action, in films provided by the military, showed no loss of life and implied all our missiles could pinpoint a chimney—when in fact 70 percent of bombs dropped on Iraq missed their targets.

## Point of View

During a war, contrary points of view seem to vanish. It's worth remembering who controls television: the networks, the advertisers and the government that licenses access to the airwaves. GE, one of the largest weapons producers, also owns NBC, Westinghouse, a major defense contractor, owns one of the largest broadcast groups. Advertisers such as AT&T, Dupont, IBM and ITT all have defense interests. How thoroughly do the networks depict the failures—or frightful successes—of defense technology?

Points of view against the Gulf War were even harder to find. From the day troops were deployed in the gulf till January 3, 1991, television provided 2,855 minutes of coverage—only 29 of which were devoted to opposition to the buildup. You also didn't hear much talk about peaceful alternatives. And the ultimate opposing point of view, that of the enemy, was virtually nonexistent. Access to the enemy is extremely difficult, of course, but most people would rather think of the enemy as nothing but monsters anyway.

## The Avoidance of Appearing Disloyal

In wartime our desire to band together makes it almost impossible to bear bad news and opposing opinions. As a result, we approve of military censorship, we buy into the rhetoric, we exult the technology, and we shut our naysayers and sympathy for the victims of our wrath. TV networks certainly don't want to lose viewers—or advertisers—by seemingly pessimistic, disloyal or even traitorous. TV, by its commercial nature, tends to follow, not lead. Networks “censor” themselves with policies against showing graphic images of the horrors of war, for fear of offending viewers, even though seeing the results of our bombs and bullets might give us a more visceral understanding of the wages of war.

But truth is the first casualty of war. When we have been convinced that justice and our welfare are at stake, we have little interest in ambiguity and doubt. We just want to win. As philosopher Sam Keen has said, “We have to beware of thinking we're too smart to have the wool pulled over our eyes.” More than that, we must beware of pulling the wool over our eyes ourselves.

*Flack Attack]]—Public relations is shaping public life in ways we're not supposed to notice*

*By Joel Bleifuss*

From *In These Times*, September 6-October 4, 1993

The Founding Fathers didn't have public relations (PR) firms to package their revolution. They wrote their own sound bites: "Give me liberty or give me death." Media events like the Boston Tea Party were carried off without the help of corporate sponsors like Celestial Seasonings.

Today, something as momentous as a national revolution could not happen without an army of corporate PR mercenaries churning out the information, telling the media how to interpret the events, and putting forward hired experts to shoot down opposing views.

The public relations industry is often overlooked as a force in contemporary U.S. politics. PR professionals, serving the needs of their corporate clients, define the subjects of public debate and then frame the limits of that debate. As media critic Morris Wolfe has observed, "It is easier and less costly to change the way people think about reality than it is to change reality."

Manipulating the public's perceptions of reality takes special skills. Younger professionals in the field of "communications" earn PR degrees from journalism schools. Others get their start in government service and then, contacts in hand, cash in their experience with a high-paying job in the PR industry. But what the best in the business have in common is that they have rotated through a revolving door of government, journalism, and PR until their identities and allegiances have been blurred beyond recognition.

One of the most successful broad-based PR efforts of the '80s accompanied the Reagan administration's budget-busting military buildup. The growth in Pentagon spending under President Reagan went hand in hand with a blossoming Defense Department PR staff. By the time Reagan left office, 3,000 public relations officers were busy spending \$100 million of taxpayer money annually to manipulate the public's impressions of the military-industrial complex.

*O'Dwyer's Public Relations Services Report*, the PR industry's trade journal, observes, "Over the next few years the Pentagon will be asked to take major 'hits' in its budget due to the end of the Cold War, putting pressure on military spokespeople to justify the need for costly programs." But the Defense Department and the PR firms that represent military industries have come up with a program to deflect the "hits."

"A key weapon the military has in its arsenal," *O'Dwyer's* reports, "is an intern program in which top military PR people learn the tricks of the trade at leading PR firms." In other words, the Pentagon PR flacks will learn the most up-to-date techniques for congressional apple polishing and public propagandizing.

A number of firms are involved in the Pentagon's PR internship program, including the infamous Hill and Knowlton, which during the Gulf War operated as an annex

of the Bush White House. (One of the company's greatest Gulf War coups was congressional testimony by a young Kuwaiti "war victim," later exposed as a Washington resident, the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador. For its efforts the company was paid \$10 million by the Kuwaiti royal family.)

The man in charge of the sheik's fifth column was Hill and Knowlton CEO Craig Fuller, friend and former chief of staff of President Bush. Fuller was appointed to his new Hill and Knowlton post the day before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. He is now the top flack at Philip Morris, where he is promoting the fortunes of a real killer—the tobacco industry.

Susan Trento, author of a book about Hill and Knowlton, *The Power House*, writes that in the Gulf War truth wasn't the only casualty. The integrity of constitutional government suffered too. "Something has changed in Washington. Boundaries no longer exist," writes Trento. "The triangle—the media, the government, and the lobbying and PR firms—protect each other."

Relations between points on this triangle are not always friendly, as is shown in the PR battle being waged over Bill Clinton's health care proposal. Last summer, *Jack O'Dwyer's Newsletter* (another O'Dwyer publication that tracks the industry) reported that the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), headed by former Ohio Republican representative Bill Gradison, was advertising for a PR firm that would tell the HIAA "how best to influence the debate on Capitol Hill." The job description included getting the proper spokespeople on morning network TV shows, *Crossfire*, *This Week with David Brinkley*, and *Larry King Live*. Further, the association wants to attend "editorial board meetings" at the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

While the HIAA gets its act together, other corporate players in the health care debate have no doubt contracted to buy the cutting-edge tool of the PR industry, the video news release (VNR).

You've seen VNRs, but you just don't know it. Earlier this year, David Lieberman reported in *TV Guide* that a Nielson Media Research survey of 92 TV newsrooms revealed that all use these canned "news stories" in their broadcasts, often passing off the VNR as independent reporting and not packaged PR. This raises troubling questions about the integrity of television news reporting—the primary source of news for more than 90 percent of the U.S. public.

On VNRs, today's network news reporter can become tomorrow's flack. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon write in *Unreliable Sources*. "On one video news release [produced by the American Chemical Society and broadcast on ABC], Sam Donaldson was heard introducing a segment on airport security systems that featured a new chemical-sensing device for detecting plastic explosives."

To get a VNR on a news network like ABC, the PR professional needs to know the right people. Mary Ofiara, a former TV news producer who works at KEF Media Associates, told *O'Dwyer's*, "We're finding it easier to place client VNRs with the

major news feeds and networks because we know who our friends are within the news decisionmaking process.”

PR professionals also need to know who their enemies are, or rather who the enemies of their corporate clients are. To that end the industry has appropriated the covert arts of the intelligence community. On the cutting edge of this phenomenon of flack as political spy are the 14 PR professionals who work at the Washington firm Mongoven, Biscoe and Duchin (MBD).

MBD was founded in 1988 by the firm’s current president, John Mongoven. From 1978 to 1981, Mongoven served as deputy director of communications for the Republican National Committee. From there, he went to work for Nestle, defending the company’s marketing of infant formula—a sales strategy that indirectly resulted in the death of an untold number of Third World babies.

MBD publicly describes itself as a company “specializing in the resolution of public policy conflicts between corporations and activist groups.” MBD marketing literature, however, reveals that what the company really provides is “issue intelligence” for corporate America.

“We understand the role of activism in the public policy process,” MBD boasts, adding that the company helps clients prepare “comprehensive strategic plans” to counter “organizations which seek policy changes in opposition to our client’s interests.” To that end, MBD “maintains extensive files on organizations and their leadership,” paying particular attention to leaders who “would affect the client’s interest adversely.”

The company routinely “monitors” 66 subjects, including “the South African issue/all phases,” “polystyrene,” and “consumer groups.” MBD’s promotional package lists 20 tasks that the company performs. These include reviewing lists of those registered to attend annual stockholders’ meetings, suggesting particular “individuals from the environmental community as candidates for corporate boards of directors” and “analyz[ing] grant proposals from public interest groups to corporate foundations.” In short, MBD’s PR professionals, files in hand, sort through the public policy community, cultivating those who pose no threat and weeding out those who “would affect [the client’s] interests adversely.”

MBD co-founder and vice president Ronald Duchin is particularly concerned about the adverse effects of the more than 11,000 grassroots environmental organizations that he says operate in the United States. According to Duchin, many of these groups have a “commitment to a radical change in the way America governs itself.”

In 1991 Duchin gave a speech to the National Cattlemen’s Association convention titled “Take an Activist A Part and What Do You Have?” In Duchin’s world there are four kinds of activists: opportunists, idealists, realists, and radicals.

*Opportunists* “exploit for their own personal agenda,” he explained. *Idealists* “apply an ethical and moral standard” and are usually “naive.” *Realists*, though, are “not interested in radical change” and are “willing to work within the system.” The *radicals*, by contrast, “see multinational corporations as inherently evil” and “want to change the system.” The best way to deal with radicals, Duchin contended, is to form an

alliance with the realists and co-opt the idealists. Then the opportunists will jump on board, leaving the radicals isolated. This tactic works best between the time that “a radical group begins to push an issue and when the issue becomes accepted by credible groups.” If corporations wait too long, Duchin warned, they will lose control over how the issue is framed and wind up facing legislation they do not like.

MBD spent last summer trying to “control” public policy decisions regarding the biotech drug bovine growth hormone, which is administered to dairy cows to pump up milk production. The chemical company Monsanto and the tobacco-food conglomerate Philip Morris/Kraft General Foods have both hired MBD to help ensure that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) puts its stamp of approval on this controversial drug, whose safety to consumers is being questioned by health professionals, animal rights activists, and farmers. FDA approval of bovine growth hormone would mean higher profits for Monsanto, which has spent untold millions developing the drug. The use of the hormone would also greatly increase the supply of milk, thereby leading to lower milk prices that would benefit Philip Morris/Kraft, which buys or sells about half the cheese produced in the United States. These lower milk prices would force many smallscale family dairy farms out of business.

MBD memos, leaked by industry sources, include an eight-page intelligence report about a May 8 FDA hearing on bovine growth hormone, in which an MBD spy quoted from conversations between FDA panelists that had been “overheard.” In one such exchange, panel members who favored labeling milk that had been treated with bovine growth hormone alluded to their chief worry, the legal hassles surrounding labeling. Awareness of such concerns allows MBD and other PR firms to pinpoint opponents’ vulnerabilities when crafting counterattacks.

MBD staffer Kara Zeigler talked about the growth hormone issue with Francis Goodman, a Wisconsin dairy farmer activist (who was under the impression that Zeigler was a writer for *Z Magazine*), Michael Hansen, a scientist at Consumers Union (who thought she was a friend of Goodman), and an aide to U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold (who didn’t know whom Zeigler was representing). MBD was concerned about Feingold’s successful attempts to add language to the 1994 budget bill that would mandate a moratorium on bovine growth hormone sales during a 90day period that would begin upon FDA approval of the drug.

Sometimes a PR campaign tries to influence lawmakers covertly, by manufacturing and packaging “grassroots” expressions of civic outrage and then delivering those messages from the public to elected officials. Flacks have adopted the tactics of grassroots organizers, but use them to benefit their corporate clients. This is known as astroturf organizing.

William Greider, *Rolling Stone* political affairs columnist, has detailed, in his book *Who Will Tell the People*, how the auto industry hired a PR firm to put a halt on clean-air legislation that would have mandated that Detroit build cars with better fuel efficiency.

The brakeman for this effort was Jack Bonner of Bonner and Associates, a Washington-based PR firm that has perfected the technique of fishing through computerized membership lists of special interest organizations to target citizens sympathetic to a client's cause. They then phone and coach that person on the finer points of the issue, and then put the call through to a congressional office. The legislator's staff has no way of knowing that the call is not a spontaneous expression of concern.

Bonner told Greider how he puts together a corporate political campaign: "We sit down with the lobbyists and ask: How much heat do you want on these guys? Do you want 10 local groups or 200 groups? Do you want 100 phone calls from constituents or 1,000 calls? Obviously, you target senators inclined to go your way but who need some additional cover. They need to be able to say they've heard from people back home on this issue."

He also told Greider, "On the clean-air bill, we bring to the table a third party—'white hat' groups who have no financial interest. It's not the auto industry trying to protect its financial stake. Now it's senior citizens worried about getting out of small cars with walkers. Easter Seal, Multiple Sclerosis—a lot of these people have braces, wheelchairs, walkers. It's farm groups worrying about small trucks. It's people who need station wagons to drive kids to Little League games. There are groups with political juice and they're white hat."

Peter Stone reports in the *National Journal* that in addition to manufacturing grassroots mail and phone campaigns, the company engages in the more upscale form of astroturf organizing known as "grass-tops." For a price of \$350 to \$500 dollars per letter, Bonner and Associates will get "community leaders" or friends of members of Congress to write letters to any member of Congress. For \$5,000 to \$9,000, Bonner will arrange a personal meeting between supportive community leaders and a lawmaker.

Corporate-sponsored grassroots campaigns are known to have helped defeat a range of legislative and administrative policy proposals, including President Bush's proposed tax on profits from life insurance annuities and President Clinton's proposed energy tax. The success of Bonner and Associates is shown on an office wall adorned with framed letters of appreciation from the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, the Smokeless Tobacco Council, and the American Bankers Association.

Among those who have helped me recognize the dangers posed by an out-of-control PR industry is John Stauber of Madison, Wisconsin. Stauber is the editor and publisher of *PR Watch*, a new quarterly devoted to exposing the machinations of the PR industry. "Bonner is on the cutting edge," Stauber says. "It is critical that people fighting for change realize that this is not 1970, when you are up against a corporation and its PR spokesperson. This is 1993 and we're up against a coalition of the most powerful and well-funded international PR firms in existence. Typically, a Fortune 500 firm will employ half a dozen PR firms at any one time. And the growing trend is one-stop shopping—lobbying, public relations, political consulting, a legal team and a counteractivism grassroots campaign all under one roof."



PR firms like Bonner and Associates are changing the nature of politics. The full effect of this corporate propaganda apparatus will never be fully known. It is most successful when the PR professionals leave no tracks near the scene of a winning campaign. The losers in this charade are citizens who still hold on to the notion that they can make a difference—in other words, to the democratic process.

*Confessions of a Tobacco Lobbyist]]*

*60 Minutes*, March 19, 1995

LESLEY STAHL, co-host: Despite court decisions that individuals can sue tobacco companies for their smoking addiction and states can sue for rising health costs, cigarettes are still a \$50 billion a year industry. It's been 30 years since the US surgeon general first linked smoking with cancer, and for a while smoking rates did drop. But now they're on the rise again and so, it seems, is the influence of tobacco lobbyists who work the halls of Congress and every state legislature to head off anti-smoking laws. Now, for the first time, one of them, a former state legislator-turnedlobbyist for The Tobacco Institute, goes public. His name: Victor Crawford.

You yourself said it wasn't addictive when you were smoking and knew it was addictive. MR. VICTOR CRAWFORD (*Former Tobacco Lobbyist*): Sure it's not a crime because I wasn't under oath. It wasn't perjury. And it was what I was being paid to do.

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) Victor Crawford was paid to make smoking seem OK.

MR. CRAWFORD: Was I lying? Yes. STAHL: Yes.

MR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

STAHL: You took my question right out . . . MR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Yeah.

STAHL: And you knew it?

MR. CRAWFORD: Of course.

STAHL: And there were no tugs on your conscience, no second-guessing yourself? No going to bed saying . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: Mm-mm.

STAHL: . . . "I hate what I'm doing. I feel dirty"? MR. CRAWFORD: Mm-mm. My job was to win.

STAHL: Even if you're going out there and lying about a product that could hurt kids? MR. CRAWFORD: Even if you're going out lying about a product that's going to hurt kids. Your job is to win.

(*Footage of Crawford*)

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) Crawford says the tobacco lobbyists, often lawyers from the top firms, call themselves 'the black hats.' So you took on a black hat. Why did you . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: Money.

STAHL: . . . do that?

MR. CRAWFORD: Big money.

STAHL: You . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: The big money—unfortunately, the—the other groups are not in a position to pay—to pay the big bucks, which is necessary to hire the best people.  
(*Footage of Crawford on the phone*)

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) To lobby the state Legislature in Maryland, who better than a former state senator?

MR. CRAWFORD: I could make a phone call and get the speaker of the House of Delegates out of his bathtub at home to come to the phone. STAHL: So you were . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: Not many people could

...

STAHL: . . . a plum?

MR. CRAWFORD: Of course. My job was to defeat legislation that was going to hurt the industry. If I couldn't defeat it, then the job was to wound it to the point where it wouldn't fly.

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) And how would he do that? Well, Crawford says he would use evidence he didn't even believe in.

MR. CRAWFORD: We used to bring a scientist out of the woodwork and have this particular lab do this, and we'd have a poll pulled by some cockamamy pollster saying this, that or the other.

STAHL: You're walking around with a study, and you're thinking to yourself. This study's totally bull . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, sure.

STAHL: . . . but I'm going to give it to this guy anyway?"

MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, sure. Just to show them that the jury's still out, that you shouldn't take away anybody's civil rights until you're absolutely sure what you're doing. How can you be absolutely sure when this—this X-Y-Z laboratory, world-famous laboratory—why . . .

STAHL: I . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: . . . is it world famous? Because I said it is, and nobody's checked. STAHL: I have to tell you, it's shameful.

MR. CRAWFORD: It happens. It happens every day. It happens in every—in every legislature.

STAHL: It's what's going on with—with the lobbyists out there today?

MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, sure.

(*Footage from the Tobacco Institute, people smoking, group of demonstrators*)

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) One of Crawford's first assignments as a lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute was to head off a local ordinance in Maryland to ban smoking in bars, taverns and restaurants. He thought a rally for smokers' rights would be a good idea. And how do you arrange a pro-smoking rally? Well, the name of just about every smoker who's ever filled out a cigarette coupon or questionnaire goes right into some computer somewhere.

MR. CRAWFORD: And in some cases, even the brands they smoke. And no . . .

STAHL: Every smoker?

MR. CRAWFORD: . . . how they—of course. STAHL: Of course”?

MR. CRAWFORD: They send out the . . . STAHL: Well, wait.

MR. CRAWFORD: . . . cards and . . .

STAHL: People are going to be surprised to know that if they’re a smoker—just because they’re a smoker, their name’s on some computer.

MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, sure. How do you think—how do you think all of a sudden, in 24 hours’ notice, I was able to turn out a big display, ‘Smokers for equal rights,’ waving signs? Where do you think that—all that information comes from?

STAHL: Well, how . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: You pick up a phone . . . STAHL: How did you get those people

. . .

MR. CRAWFORD: Pick up a phone, call down, say, ‘Hey, I need a demonstration; you’d better get all the troops alerted.’ And next thing you know, most of them show up. (*Footage of Crawford and Stahl*)

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) But the demonstration against the proposed ban didn’t work, so Crawford tried a new tactic. He denounced the ban’s backers as ‘health Nazis,’ a term he coined. What did you mean when you first used it?

MR. CRAWFORD: I attacked the messenger on the grounds that they were trying to destroy civil liberties; that what they were trying to do was put their values upon the general public and try to impose it upon the working man, who wants a glass of beer and a pack of cigarettes, and destroys his freedom of choice.

STAHL: I’ve heard that argument myself. MR. CRAWFORD: That’s right. If you’ve got good people arguing for you, you can turn the issue away from the message. That’s what I’m saying. Get them away from the focus—because you can’t . . .

STAHL: You know, you are describing . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: . . . defend it—and attack the messenger.

STAHL: . . . the most cold-hearted, cynical, destructive set of values—I’m sorry—because these were your values: MR. CRAWFORD: They were.

STAHL: And you’re just telling it to us as if ‘Sure.’

MR. CRAWFORD: It’s the American way.

(*Footage of Stahl and Crawford*)

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) Why is Victor Crawford turning on his former tobacco teammates? After a lifetime of smoking—he started when he was 13—he got throat cancer, which spread first to his lungs and now to his hip. You don’t smoke anymore?

MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, God, no.

STAHL: But . . .

MR. CRAWFORD: I still miss it.

STAHL: You still miss it?

MR. CRAWFORD: Yeah. Oh yeah.

STAHL: Come on.

MR. CRAWFORD: I can still remember how great it was in the morning with that cup of coffee and a cigarette. I mean, I—even now. STAHL: You have a look of—close to ecstasy on your face.

MR. CRAWFORD: If—if it wasn't for this—the cancer, I'd be smoking. I'm an addict. If you can—statistically, if you can hook people like me in their teens, they always stay hooked.

*(Footage of teen smoking: meeting)*

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* And that may be the great hope of the cigarette makers: teenagers. Former chief of the Federal Trade Commission Michael Pertschuk now heads the antismoking Advocacy Institute.

MR. MICHAEL PERTSCHUK *(Advocacy Institute)*: The most serious problem in smoking in this country today is the increasing numbers of young girls who are taking up smoking.

STAHL: Because they want to be thin.

MR. PERTSCHUK: If you poll young girls, the single most important reason many of them will give for smoking is that it keeps them thin, and being thin is something they want desperately to be. So that—you let—you tell me. If you've designed a cigarette called Virginia Slims and the models are slim, what are you saying to—what are you saying to young girls?

*(Footage of Marlboro exhibit)*

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* What about this Marlboro Miles? Have you heard about this?

MR. PERTSCHUK: *(Voiceover)* One of the things that's happened with the industry is they've moved into promotion, into sponsoring events, into sponsoring things like the Marlboro Miles, where you get premiums, where you get T-shirts, where you get gear. STAHL: *(Voiceover)* The tobacco industry insists it's not targeting teenagers. Makes you wonder when you see the Marlboro gear and who likes it.

*(Footage of Marlboro race car; baseball park; tennis match)*

Announcer #1: *(Voiceover)* Here's Al Unser Jr. in the pit lane . . .

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* Despite the television ban on cigarette advertising, whether it's auto racing or baseball or tennis, there is no shortage of cigarette brand names on TV.

*(Footage from auto races with close-ups of Marlboro logos)*

Announcer #2: *(Voiceover)* Sit down and strap in. The Indy car season is about to begin. STAHL: *(Voiceover)* So who needs ads anyway? I mean, they are on television in every major sports event. Now how is this possible?

MR. PERTSCHUK: One thing you learn about the tobacco industry is that no matter how clever anyone is in developing a regulation or legislation, they will get around it. (Excerpts from "Die Hard", "Pulp Fiction") STAHL: *(Voiceover)* Tobacco keeps winning. MR. BRUCE WILLIS *(Actor)*: *(From movie)* Do you smoke?

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* If you doubt it, consider Bruce Willis in "Die Hard" or almost anyone in "Pulp Fiction" . . .

Unidentified Actress: *(From movie)* So dance good.

MR. JOHN TRAVOLTA (*Actor*): (*From movie*) All right (*Footage from "True Romance"*) STAHL: . . . or take a look at hip Hollywood stars like Patricia Arquette and Christian Slater in "True Romance."

MS. PATRICIA ARQUETTE (*Actress*): (*From movie*) You mind if I smoke?

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) In the movies, it's cool again to smoke. It's dangerous and rebellious. Would you say that we are in an era where we're seeing the comeback of the tobacco lobby?

MR. PERTSCHUK: Well, I'm afraid that's true. I mean, I think that up until this last election, the tobacco lobby was really on the run. (*Footage from congressional hearings*) STAHL: (*Voiceover*) Last spring, the tobacco industry was facing an investigation by a hostile Congress. But that was before the Republicans swept Capitol Hill. Now Richmond, Virginia, Congressman Tom Bliley is in charge of the committee, where tobacco company executives were accused of manipulating or spiking their cigarettes with nicotine to make them addictive. And what did Chairman Bliley think of that? He told our CBS affiliate in Richmond.

Representative TOM BLILEY (*Republican, Virginia*): There was a-a kangaroo court-type operation in which the chairman brought them in and swore these executives in and treated them rather shabbily, and they testified and—under oath that they did not spike their cigarettes, and they don't (*Footage of Philip Morris headquarters*) STAHL: (*Voiceover*) Bliley, by the way, represents the Virginia district that includes the headquarters of Philip Morris, maker of

Marlboro, the world's best-selling cigarette.

Rep. BLILEY: As far as I'm concerned, we have enough laws on the books regulating the sale of tobacco already.

MR. CRAWFORD: They have—the chairman of the committee makes no bones he's from Richmond; that—that he's financed by—by Philip Morris.

STAHL: Mr. Bliley?

MR. CRAWFORD: Yeah.

STAHL and MR. CRAWFORD: (*In unison*) He makes no bones.

MR. CRAWFORD: . . . about—no. He makes no bones about it. There's no question about it. And he says no bill will ever get out of his committee.

STAHL: Are you saying he's owned by the tobacco lobby?

MR. CRAWFORD: I—owned? I—I would certainly say he's controlled by it. If he's—if he's going to stand up and say that 'No tobacco bill will ever pass my committee.' that's a pretty clear indication where he's coming from and who's—who's pulling his strings. MR. PERTSCHUK: And in every key congressional district, Philip Morris hires a particular lobbyist.

STAHL: Every single district?

MR. PERTSCHUK: Well, every single key district where they—where there's a key chairman or a key—key member of Congress that they need to get. They hire a lobbyist with one purpose: to lobby one member of Congress. (*Footage of the Tobacco Institute; the Capitol*) STAHL: (*Voiceover*) And now they're having more success than they've

had in years. The tobacco companies have taken the lead in lobbying for legislation that would freeze government regulations and put a cap on product liability claims, bills that sailed through the House as Part of the Republicans' Contract with America.

Are they different from other lobbies or . . . MR. PERTSCHUK: Only.

STAHL: . . . is this just . . .

MR. PERTSCHUK: Well, they're different from other lobbies in two ways. First of all, they have more serious problems than any lobby in the country because they kill people. Their product kills hundreds of thousands of people, and—that's a great big elephant sitting there that they've got to make people not see. And secondly, they hire more people because they have more money than anybody else.

*(Footage of Pertschuk and Crawford)*

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* Victor Crawford once called Michael Pertschuk a 'health Nazi.' But then, 18 months ago, these two opponents in the battle over smoking met, fittingly, through the yin and yang of t'ai chi, the Chinese art of moving meditation.

*(Footage from Chinese meditation class)*

MR. PERTSCHUK: *(Voiceover)* Now I didn't know Victor. And I had seen this guy over the years. I mean, he was . . .

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* But you didn't know who he was.

MR. PERTSCHUK: No. Not only didn't I know who he was, but I didn't like him.

I mean, he did this t'ai chi in a way that was sort of—well, something of a show-off, is what I thought.

MR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know who he was, and we were sitting around having breakfast after my t'ai chi. I was still taking t'ai chi—I still am—for 30 years.

MR. PERTSCHUK: And we introduce ourselves around, and he says, 'My name is Victor Crawford. I used to be a tobacco lobbyist, and now I've got throat cancer. I guess I've got my just desserts.' Just like that *(Footage of Pertschuk and Crawford, Crawford's treatment, at Maryland Statehouse)*

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* They became friends. Pertschuk was the one who convinced Crawford to speak out. Now, dying of cancer, Crawford goes to the hospital every day for radiation treatments. And a few weeks ago he went back to the Maryland Statehouse to lobby one last time. But on this occasion, he was fighting the tobacco industry.

MR. CRAWFORD: Governor, how are you doing?

Governor PARRIS GLENDENING *(Maryland)*: Fine, Victor.

MR. CRAWFORD: Thank you very much for seeing me.

Gov. GLENDENING: Good to see you.

STAHL: *(Voiceover)* Two days later, Maryland Governor Parris Glendening announced the toughest ban on indoor smoking in the nation, thanks in large Part to the lobbying of Victor Crawford.

MR. CRAWFORD: I didn't expect this.

STAHL: Right after the announcement, the tobacco lobby went into action, flooding the governor's office with protest calls.

And as far as you know, he's the first tobacco lobbyist to crack, to—to go public.

MR. PERTSCHUK: Nobody's been willing to be public.

(*Footage of Crawford*)

STAHL: (*Voiceover*) So why is Victor Crawford saying what he's saying?

MR. PERTSCHUK: (*Voiceover*) Victor really doesn't give a damn.

Victor's really thinking about how he can make some use of the rest of his life.

STAHL: Have you heard from your old colleagues?

MR. CRAWFORD: I have received word back by the grapevine that they—they feel I'm not exactly kosher to bite the hand that fed me, and they have a good point. That's exactly what I'm doing. There's nothing they can do to me. Like I told them—the person that called me, I said, 'What are you going to do? G—g—give me cancer?' Ha.

STAHL: You might ask, 'Where is the other side of this issue?' Well, no one on the other side would talk to us, not Congressman Bliley, not anyone from Philip Morris or RJR or American Brands or Lorillard or even Victor Crawford's former employer, The Tobacco Institute.

## Truth, Moore or Less: Fahrenheit 9/11

*By Manohla Dargis*

From *The Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2004

In George Orwell's dystopian classic "1984," a disembodied voice transmits streams of government-generated information from a surveillance apparatus that can never be turned off and allows the Thought Police to keep close tabs on the populace. From his window, the novel's doomed hero, Winston Smith, can see the three slogans of the ruling party—"War Is Peace," "Freedom Is Slavery," "Ignorance Is Strength"—emblazoned on the cruelly named Ministry of Truth. Everywhere he turns, Big Brother keeps watch.

In Orwell's novel, power begets reality begets truth. The "party" dictates not just how individuals live and love, but how they perceive the world. In this world, reality isn't simply *there*—a truth that can be grasped by an individual consciousness—it's there because the Party says it's there, again and again. Repeated enough and with enough pressure the Party's propaganda becomes Winston's reality and, finally, his truth. In Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11"—the title is borrowed from Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel "Fahrenheit 451"—the filmmaker argues that the Bush administration has become an Orwellian nightmare, a wellspring of Newspeak, a ministry of fear.

For many moviegoers, the veracity of Moore's take on the Bush administration will largely depend on their political bent. For others, however, the film's effectiveness may ironically hinge on its effectiveness as propaganda. The propaganda label may displease Moore partisans (a fierce lot, in my experience), who may be loath to admit

that this subjective, unapologetically left-leaning film is anything less than objectively true. That's too bad because whatever else it accomplishes, "Fahrenheit 9/11" raises fascinating questions about propaganda and documentary, suggesting that the divide between the two is not always as vast as filmmakers and audiences sometimes imagine.

The word propaganda originated in the 17th century with a committee of Catholic cardinals that oversaw foreign missions— *congregatio de propaganda fide* or congregation for propagating the faith. Since then the word has come to mean the systematic promotion of specific ideas and images to either advance your cause or damage that of an opponent. By this definition, propaganda includes: Dziga Vertov's Soviet-funded ode to filmmaking and revolutionary ideals, "The Man With a Movie Camera" (1929); Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi-commissioned panegyric to Adolf Hitler, "Triumph of the Will" (1935); Emile de Antonio's chronicle of the Vietnam War, "In the Year of the Pig" (1969); the rightwing video "The Clinton Chronicles" (1994)—along with World War II-era U.S. government-produced films, federally funded anti-drug commercials and that sexeducation short that freaked you out in school.

Vertov wasn't the first filmmaker to bend filmed documents to instrumental ends. In 1897, Albert E. Smith and J. Stuart Blackton traveled from New York City to Cuba to record the Spanish-American War. They shot a lot of footage, but somehow missed the pivotal Battle of Santiago Bay. Smith later explained how he and Blackton used photographic cutouts of American and Spanish ships, billows of cigar and cigarette smoke and dashes of gunpowder to re-create the missing battle. They then edited this sleight of hand in with their existing footage and unleashed the subterfuge in two separate films. "Almost every newspaper in New York," wrote Smith, "carried an account of the showings, commenting on Vitagraph's remarkable feat in obtaining onthe-spot pictures of these two historic events."

## The art form matures

In the century to follow, documentary filmmakers continued to shape the truth through a variety of styles and with an even wider range of intentions. In the early 1920s, Robert Flaherty transformed an Inuit named Nanook into an icon of Natural Man by turning a cut-away igloo into a stage. Three years after Riefenstahl helped spit-shine Hitler's public image, Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens watched fascist planes bomb Spanish civilians, an event he and cameraman John Ferno caught on film for the 1937 anti-fascist documentary "The Spanish Earth." Ivens later added the sound of broken glass to the soundtrack and "the slight crunching of it" to accompany the image of two children killed by Nazi artillery in Madrid. ("Fortune" magazine editor Archibald MacLeish helped raise the funds; Ernest Hemingway wrote and recited the narration.)

The introduction of lightweight cameras and sound recorders in the early 1960s changed documentary, introducing a new approach called *cinema verite*. Known in somewhat different form as direct cinema in the U.S. and Canada, and observational



cinema in Britain, the method introduced a new host of ethical questions because of its nominal transparency. Yet as in Flaherty's time, everything still depended on who held the camera and why, whether the filmmakers revealed their intentions, and how the footage was edited. Writing about one of his early documentaries, the direct-cinema classic "Primary" (1960), Richard Leacock declared, "we made a film that captured the labor, the guts of what was happening. No interviews. No re-enactments . . . We were in fact developing a new grammar which was entirely different from that of silent filmmaking and of fiction filmmaking."

From the 1960s through the 1970s, direct cinema became a dominant documentary style in the U.S., epitomized by the likes of Leacock, Albert Maysles and his late brother, David ("Grey Gardens"), D.A. Pennebaker ("The War Room") and the brilliant Frederick Wiseman ("Hospital"). Loosely, direct cinema's method of "fly on the wall" filmmaking is defined by hand-held cinematography, synchronous sound and a sense of immediacy and intimacy. That feeling of intimacy made direct cinema perfect for television, a principal funding source and a primary distribution channel. In 1973, TV viewers received a big, bitter taste of this style with the PBS series "An American Family," which introduced us to a Santa Barbara family, the Louds, that was falling apart at the seams.

Since then, wobbly camera work and a sense that "you are there" filmmaking have become pop culture clichés, most evident now in the unending tsunami of so-called reality television shows. When Leacock declared that he and his fellow documentarists were developing a new film grammar it's unlikely he imagined that their radical innovations would eventually spawn bread-and-circus entertainments such as "Survivor," "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" and the nitwit adventures of Paris Hilton. The rise of reality TV hasn't wholly undermined the ideals and integrity of the direct cinema pioneers. But the fact that direct cinema's "grammar," or more accurately its clichés, have been successfully co-opted by the entertainment industry does suggest that documentary's fly on the wall has become a fly in the ointment.

## **The air of authenticity**

One of the hallmarks of direct cinema (the real stuff, not Paris Hilton) is that it obscures its artifice and promotes a sense of objectivity. In the mid-1960s, David Maysles admitted "there is no such things as being strictly objective in anything that is at all artistic. The objectivity is just a personal integrity." De Antonio, a Marxist who disdained direct cinema, put it more succinctly: "With any cut at all, objectivity fades away." In the years since, in part because of the overlap between documentary film and broadcast journalism, documentaries have come to enjoy a privileged position vis-à-vis "the truth." Pure direct cinema has become uncommon—these days, most docs are a hybrid of styles and techniques—but the idea that "what you see is what you get" when you watch a documentary remains intact, almost inviolate.

Enter Michael Moore—cameras, politics and mouth blazing. In 1989, Moore crashed the somnolent U.S. documentary scene with “Roger & Me,” a satirical look at General Motors and its effect on the filmmaker’s hometown of Flint, Mich. The documentary and its makers became critical lightning rods, even for liberals—Pauline Kael and Film Comment raked Moore over the coals—but it was a box office sensation. More hit movies and bestselling books followed, transforming Moore into the most famous leftist in the country and a populist star, albeit one who lives in a reported \$1-million-plus New York City pad. And, whether by coincidence or design, a swell of politically partisan documentaries followed in Moore’s agit-doc wake, typified recently by “Super Size Me,” “The Corporation” and “The Hunting of the President.”

To a large extent what makes Moore such a contentious figure for conservatives and liberals alike—beyond the not-insignificant fact that he’s a leftist—is that he doesn’t hide his politics under a cloak of objectivity. He’s a polemicist, a master at agitprop, a threering circus of one. True, he makes mistakes—though seemingly less in “Fahrenheit 9/11” than in his last feature, “Bowling for Columbine”—but so does everyone with a pulse. More to the point, Moore doesn’t claim to be a journalist. Even so, ever since the release of “Roger & Me” he has often been held to a higher standard of truth than most documentary filmmakers or even journalists. Few documentaries are subjected to as rigorous scrutiny, much less the tsk-tsking of film critics and pundits.

For the most part, Moore drives conservatives crazy because they hate what he says; he drives liberals crazy too, though often because of the *way* he says it. Loud, pushy, a shameless showboat and master of the cheap shot, he combines the muckraker’s outrage with the aw-shucks hokum of a Will Rogers. He targets those on the political right, but he also goes after the media, Democratic politicians and the country’s economic system. (He also thinks recycling is dumb.) In “Fahrenheit 9/11,” Moore attempts to show how meaning is manufactured, where money flows and how power functions, using propaganda to fight propaganda. He points fingers

in many directions and if like the Scarecrow in “The Wizard of Oz” he sometimes points in two directions at once, there’s no mistaking the ferocity of his convictions.

Moore closes “Fahrenheit 9/11” with some lines from a section in “1984” titled “War Is Peace.” “The war,” Moore says in a voice drained of its familiar jocular irony, “is waged by each ruling group against its own subjects, and the object of the war is not to make or prevent conquests of territory, but to keep the structure of society intact.” Orwell wrote his novel in the shadow of World War II in reaction to Nazi and Stalinist state terror, prompting psychologist Erich Fromm to describe it as “an expression of a mood” and a warning. It was also a declaration of conscience and a great work of art. “Fahrenheit 9/11” is hardly equal to the novel on the level of art, but there’s no doubt it is its equal in political passion.

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Look for examples in the readings in this book—and in the author’s text itself— or elsewhere of written or spoken arguments that display the negative traits listed here as characterizing propaganda and invective.

Debate the extent to which it is valid to identify some features in American public discourse and culture as bearing some resemblance to the traits Huxley described in “Propaganda under a Dictatorship.”

Compare some of the positive and negative reviews of Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*. For a lengthy, detailed **refutation** of the film’s arguments, see “The Lies of Michael Moore,” by Christopher Hitchens, a British socialist who has become increasingly critical of leftists like Moore since September 11, 2001, on Salon.com June 21, 2004. For Moore’s defense, see his own website, [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com).

Did any of the specific examples in “How to Watch the Next War” and “Flack Attack” particularly surprise you or inform you of significant information of which you were unaware before? To what extent do you think the difficulty in gaining access to such information negates the concepts of “the free market of ideas” and the pluralistic exchange of views by opposing interests in an open society? Bleifuss says, “By the time Reagan left office, 3,000 public relations officers were busy spending \$100 million of taxpayers’ money annually to manipulate the public’s impressions of the military-industrial complex.” Research the uses of this Pentagon PR budget to determine the extent to which it is or is not a justifiable use of taxpayers’ money. Research the factual accuracy of these three articles and possible opposing views to them.

“Flack Attack” appeared in *In These Times*, a small-circulation, left-of-liberal journal of opinion that appears on few newsstands. It was reprinted in the *Utne Reader*, a digest of left and liberal journals that has a slightly wider circulation. Neither journal has much advertising except for other liberal, nonprofit organizations, which limits financing for wider circulation. To what extent does the scarce coverage of stories like these in the mainstream, commercial media suggest that advertisers have the power to censor news that puts them in a bad light? And to what extent does this form of conservative bias refute conservative claims of liberal bias in mass media, such as those expressed by Bernard Goldberg in Chapter 16?

In “Flack Attack,” Bleifuss quotes the author of a book about Hill and Knowlton’s publicity campaigns for the White House: “The triangle—the media, the government, and the lobbying and PR firms—protect each other.” Compare this with Allan Hubbard’s account in “‘Iron Triangle’ Would Quash Competitiveness” (Chapter 17) of “[t]he ‘iron triangle,’ that potent mix of unelected Congressional staff, special interests and government bureaucrats.” Evaluate the evidence that these opposing authors, and others, present for the relative power of these two very different “triangles.” Speculate on why Hubbard does not include any examples from the Department of Defense among his “special interests” and “government bureaucrats.”

In “Confessions of a Tobacco Lobbyist,” what were some of the rhetorical tactics Victor Crawford devised to legitimate the tobacco industry and to smear liberal public

interest groups opposing it? Compare his phrase “the health Nazis” to Rush Limbaugh’s “feminazis” and other conservative invective against public interest groups.

## Chapter

### *Advertising and]] Hype*

Advertising is such a constant presence in our **cultural conditioning**, virtually from birth to death, that it is hard for us to view it objectively or critically, and particularly to think of it as a form of propaganda. As with public relations and lobbying, there is of course a huge diversity of sources and motives for advertising. Much advertising, especially on the local level or by nonprofit groups, is straightforwardly informational and honest, and many ads sell products that have a limited target market and features that legitimately distinguish them from their competitors. However, the advertising to which we are most frequently exposed is typically produced to maintain a constant profit level for big businesses that have large, long-range production and sales quotas that depend on artificial stimulation of demand. This kind is produced by hired professional agencies, transmitted through mass media, and characterized by the traits of propaganda identified in Aldous Huxley’s account of Hitler’s methods: “the systematically one-sided attitude . . . the slogans, the unqualified assertions . . . confined to a few bare necessities and . . . expressed in a few stereotyped formulas.”

In Hitler’s formula, “only constant repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea upon the memory of a crowd.” This principle of constant repetition explains what seems to be the senseless, annoying repetition of some television or radio commercials every few minutes. This and every other aspect of such commercials (as well as many feature films and TV programs) are meticulously calculated through market research, applying the principles of depth psychology, playing on test audiences’ subconscious responses; this research has found that when audiences find a commercial annoying, it nevertheless implants the product’s name in their minds and they tend to buy it. (Two standard books on psychological manipulation in ads are Vance Packard’s book *The Hidden Persuaders*, 1957 and Wilson Key’s *Subliminal Seduction*, 1974.)

Much of this kind of mass-media advertising is also designed for markets in which there are many competing products that do not differ significantly from one another. As a result many ads cannot tell us anything that really distinguishes the product from others; instead, they employ diverse methods to create a fallacious impression of distinctiveness. Among the most common techniques are:

- Emotional, pictorial, or **figurative** associations, like the ads set amid rustic greenery or the Wild West (“the Marlboro Man” and “Like a Rock”).
- The slogan: “Fly the Friendly Skies,” “Nobody Does It Like You.”
- The dramatized pseudo-debate (“Tastes great.” “No, it’s less filling.”).
- The corporate image that gives the illusion of a friendly, personal identity to impersonal corporations (Betty Crocker, Colonel Sanders, “the Microsoft Family,”

nationwide restaurant chains like Cracker Barrel that imitate the old-fashioned, local country restaurant).

- The celebrity endorsement, which implies that the authority of some sports or entertainment star who has no special knowledge about the field of the endorsed product, and who is being paid a large amount to endorse it, should make you want to buy this brand rather than another.

Perhaps the most influential means of creating the illusion of difference between essentially indistinguishable products is the prestige accorded to brand names themselves. The **culturally conditioned assumption** is that the familiar brand is likely to be superior to the unfamiliar one. Does the familiarity of brand names, however, mean anything more than that the corporations producing them can afford to spend a great deal of money to establish that familiarity? “As Seen on TV” on a package just means that the manufacturer has paid to advertise the product. So reliance on brand names is a case of the **causal fallacy** that social critic and historian Daniel Boorstin, in his 1961 book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, calls a “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Boorstin argues that celebrity is a form of selffulfilling prophecy because “the celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness” (57), without regard for the quality of whatever achievement has brought him or her public recognition. Likewise, advertised brands are famous mainly *because they are advertised*. Celebrities themselves become products, their fame marketed by advertising and public relations agencies.

Maybe we are better off buying a brand that we know is an established one rather than one that we’ve never heard of and that might be a fly-by-night product. By the same token, however, brand-name manufacturers have been known to market shoddy products, either through complacency over public trust in their brands or through exploitation of that trust. Brand-name products are also likely to be more expensive than nonbranded ones, because the expense of advertising is added to the sale price. Generic products exactly the same as brand-name ones are now widely available for a lower price.

One defense of commercial sponsorship of radio and television programs is that the revenue it provides gives us free access to the programs. Still, the money that this system costs us in the additional price we pay for advertised products might conceivably, as in some other countries, go into a tax that would fund public, commercial-free broadcasting, thus also removing control by sponsors over programming.

## Are You Taken in by Ads?

You might firmly believe that you are not “taken in” by advertising, or media messages in general, but how do you know that you do not unconsciously absorb many culturally conditioned assumptions through the media, and particularly the inescapable

flooding of consciousness by millions of ads—many of them calculated for subconscious influence? Consider the article “Road to Ruin” by Robin Andersen at the end of this chapter, about the irrational appeals through which sports utility vehicles have been popularized. Or consider the universal phenomenon of young people, many of whom doubtless claim they aren’t influenced by advertising, wearing clothes that are not only the most-advertised name brands but also prominently display the manufacturer’s logo. Isn’t it a strange culturally conditioned assumption that we should pay money to turn ourselves into a free, walking ad for Nike or Tommy Hilfiger?

A contrary view that has received a lot of attention in recent media scholarship cites evidence that audiences are often capable of seeing through and resisting the ideological messages sent out by the media or of reappropriating those messages to their own purposes. Conservatives have traditionally made this argument in defense of “the free market of ideas” and consumers’ “freedom to choose,” and they point to instances in which high-powered advertising campaigns have failed. (A contrary argument is that advertising is obviously successful in enough instances to warrant companies’ investing constantly increasing billions in it every year.) Some critics with liberal-populist views have also made the same argument to show the power of the common people to resist corporate manipulation. This is always a lively topic for writing or class discussion; can you and your classmates think of more examples in which you, and the public in general, have been swayed by advertising, or in which advertising has been resisted?

## Advertising Sells More Than Products

In several ways the social influence of advertising extends beyond the influence of this or that ad for this or that product. The propagandistic, “systematically one-sided attitude,” as Huxley puts it, in ads consists of their telling us only positive things about both the product and the company manufacturing it while suppressing anything negative about either. In this sense, the huge portion of mass communication dominated by corporate advertising can be considered detrimental to the constitutional principle of freedom of the press. Consider how different our thinking about advertised products might be if print and broadcast media allowed free equal time for critics of every product advertised to point out its possibly unhealthy, unsafe, or environmentally destructive aspects—along the lines of Andersen’s “Road to Ruin,” Joan Ryan’s “Children Now Facing Adult Health Issues,” and “Ten Most Unhealthy Foods”—or to examine its manufacturer’s political, labor, and financial practices, for example, its lobbying and campaign contributions, use of sweatshops, or union busting.

While every product ad is also an indirect form of propaganda for the manufacturer, other varieties of ads are direct forms of corporate propaganda. One is institutional ads designed as public relations for a company, such as those familiar to viewers of the *News Hour with Jim Lehrer* on PBS for “Archer-Daniels-Midland, Supermarket to the World,” an agricultural-chemical and ethanol manufacturer that has been convicted

of price-fixing and charged with buying political influence through lavish campaign contributions. Other forms of corporate propaganda include public service announcements (PSAs), designed as statements in the public interest, which do not serve the immediate interest of the sponsor but do promote its public relations, and advocacy ads representing the interests of a single company or association of companies on public issues, such as those on energy or environmental policies that are sponsored by oil companies or consortiums of energy producers.

Critics of these practices do not deny that corporations have the right to engage in all of them. The cause for criticism is that big businesses are able to exert inequitable influence on public discourse because their available funds for advertising and public relations far exceed those of all other interest groups such as unions and nonprofit consumer-advocacy and environmentalist organizations like Public Citizen, Common Cause, People for the American Way, and the Sierra Club. These groups do sponsor some advertising and public relations for their own causes, but much less than corporations because nonprofits derive income primarily from dues and contributions from members; their budgets are quite small in comparison to major corporations' profit-derived advertising, lobbying, and PR budgets.

The basic fact that the media are owned by corporations for commercial purposes works against their receptivity to messages critical of corporations or capitalism. To imagine some degree of parity with commercial media, we would need to envision a TV or radio network or weekly magazine with the circulation of *Time* devoted to the viewpoint of labor unions, consumer-advocacy and environmentalist groups, or socialists. Why do you think no such media exist?

In a **predictable pattern of political rhetoric**, Rush Limbaugh and other conservatives employ an *ad hominem* line of argument charging that officials of consumer and environmentalist nonprofit groups (along with civil rights organizations) are selfishly motivated in counteracting corporate advertising because of their executive salaries and the power they exert in the Democratic Party (see Limbaugh, "The Attempt to Destroy Clarence Thomas" in chapters 5 and 9, and Allan Hubbard, "'Iron Triangle' Would Quash Competitiveness" in Chapter 17). A line of **refutation** to this argument is that it entails **selective vision** because conservatives **play up** selfish motives on the part of these groups (motives for which concrete evidence is lacking) while **downplaying** the visible evidence of their unselfish motives—concern for the environment, consumer rights, public safety and health, and so on. At the same time, conservatives also downplay the far greater amount of money made by many corporate executives and large stockholders—whose *primary*, admitted motivation is maximum profit—and the power *they* exercise in both the Republican and Democratic parties.

Another sense in which ads sell more than particular products is that the whole system of commercial advertising promotes consumerism and materialism, a value system in which people are conditioned to regard consuming commodities as one of the most important things in their lives—more important, say, than their role as citizens or virtuous individuals. (Note that this sense of the word "consumerism" is different,

indeed opposite, from the sense of the word identified with consumer advocacy.) The culturally conditioned assumption is that our social identity should be primarily that of passive, uncritical consumers (of both products and politics), not that of active, critical citizens.

Finally, every commercial ad is also, implicitly, an ad for the whole system of commercial advertising and its essential role in the capitalist economy. So the millions of ads that inundate us all enforce the culturally conditioned assumptions of the free enterprise system, as opposed to socialism or a social-democratic mixed economy.

## Political Advertising

In recent decades, political advertising has become the tail that wags the dog of American politics. The amount spent on advertising, primarily on television, has escalated so much that it has taken up the largest share of campaign contributions and given an ever greater advantage to wealthy candidates and to corporate and other wealthy contributors, who in return are likely to expect favorable legislation from the candidates they have backed. Most other democratic countries restrict the amount of television advertising allowed and money spent on it and in some cases have required that free equal time be made available to opponents.

The main rhetorical issue involved in restricting political advertising is whether, as conservatives argue, advertising and particularly political advertising are constitutionally protected modes of free speech. (Conservatives make a similar argument in opposition to limiting campaign contributions.) The liberal **rebuttal** is that the First Amendment guarantee of free speech was intended to protect minority and unpopular views not only against government censorship but also against powerful interests that have the potential to monopolize public opinion, as Abraham Lincoln warned (in the passage cited in Chapter 6):

"The money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed." For the wealthiest, most powerful forces in the country to resort to an **appeal to pity** in arguing that their freedom of speech would be crushed by restricting their near monopoly on advertising might be considered a classic case of Orwellian **doublethink**.

## Hype

How many times have you looked forward keenly to a movie or TV program, a sports event, a concert or recording, a restaurant meal, or a travel experience, then felt let down afterwards, asking yourself, in the refrain of an old popular song, "Is that all there is?" Advertising and public relations agents use the noun *hype* or the verb *to*



*hype* as synonyms for a sales or publicity promotion, especially in show business, but the phrase also often implies **hyperbolic** exaggeration or the buildup of “extravagant expectations,” in the words of Daniel Boorstin in the selection from *The Image* in this chapter.

Hype exploits our wishes that our life can be like the fantasy world depicted in the media, where everyone is young, beautiful and slender and leads a carefree lifestyle (and it implicitly tells us that we can attain that world by buying the expensive commodities advertised in the media). Travel hype entices us with pictures of glamorous resorts and cruises, isolated tropical beaches, and youthful, romantic couples hugging beneath warm waterfalls. But when we get to our dream destination we are likely to find the resorts and cruises populated mainly by elderly retirees, the beaches mobbed with fellow tourists blaring loud music, the waterfalls inaccessible except by helicopter or filled with sharp, slippery rocks and their water too cold to bear.

To further understand the reasons for hype in mass culture, it is necessary to realize that, for example, television and radio stations broadcast virtually all day every day, newspapers and magazines need to publish at about the same length every issue, and each medium must come up with enough material to fill the time or space between the advertisements they have sold and to attract the audience to the ads, which provide most of their revenue. Consequently, much of their content is just filler, and they are constantly building up excessive expectations of what we will be getting out of their productions, the commodities their advertisers are selling, and, indeed, life in general. This kind of hype has accelerated more than ever with the expansion of cable television broadcasts, especially full-time news channels like CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News and sports channels like ESPN. The news channels compete with one another in sensation seeking, blowing trivial events out of proportion, and in constant, superficial “analysis” by hammy performer-pundits (while evading the in-depth analysis of serious issues that such expansion could facilitate).

In TV sports coverage, think about how little air time is devoted to actual depiction of play and how much time to redundant play-by-play narration (a holdover from the age of radio when the audience couldn’t see the action), hysteria-pitched commentary, dramatic musical overlays, interviews with athletes laboring the obvious (the essence of sports, after all, is performance, not analysis of that performance), and the ever proliferating commercials. Even actual sports events like major league baseball games are now hyped up with high-decibel music between innings, electronically prompted cheers, and high-tech scoreboard spectacles.

The word *hype* comes from the prefix *hyper-*, meaning “above” or “excessive,” as in **hyperbole** and hyperactivity. (An older slang usage associated it with a hypodermic needle.) In the same way that drug addicts need ever-escalating fixes as their system becomes accustomed to the previous level, audience members are perceived by media producers to become saturated with a certain level of coverage and so to need ever-increasing doses in order to keep ratings from falling. Another major cause for media hype is the constant escalation

of corporate advertising, which necessitates accompanying increases in TV programming. Take for example the expansion of professional sports teams and seasons over recent decades, driven mainly by advertisers' quest for bigger audiences and by broadcasters' quest for increased advertising revenue. In baseball, the American and National leagues used to contain eight teams each; the 154-game season ended in September, with a one-game playoff in case of a tie, followed by the World Series the first week in October. Little by little the leagues have expanded (at last count) to three five-team divisions in each league. The season is now 162 games, followed by two sets of play-offs before the World Series (including second-place "wildcard" teams), and even the play-offs have expanded from one to three to five to seven games, so that the season stretches nearly to November, overlapping with football and basketball to create a mind-numbing overload of sports and attendant hype.

*Extravagant Expectations*]]

By Daniel Boorstin

From *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*

New York: Vintage, 1992. Original edition, 1961.

In this book I describe the world of our making; how we have used our wealth, our literacy, our technology, and our progress, to create the thickest of unreality which stands between us and the facts of life. I recount historical forces which have given us this unprecedented opportunity to deceive ourselves and to befog our experience.

Of course, America has provided the landscape and has given us the resources and the opportunity for this feat of national selfhypnosis. But each of us individually provides the market and the demand for the illusions which flood our experience.

We want and we believe these illusions because we suffer from extravagant expectations. We expect too much of the world. Our expectations are extravagant in the precise dictionary sense of the word—"going beyond the limits of reason or moderation." They are excessive.

When we pick up our newspaper at breakfast, we expect—we even demand—that it bring us momentous events since the night before. We turn on the car radio as we drive to work and expect "news" to have occurred since the morning newspaper went to press. Returning in the evening, we expect our house not only to shelter us, to keep us warm in winter and cool in summer, but to relax us, to dignify us, to encompass us with soft music and interesting hobbies, to be a playground, a theater, and a bar. We expect our two-week vacation to be romantic, exotic, cheap, and effortless. We expect a faraway atmosphere if we go to a nearby place; and we expect everything to be relaxing, sanitary, and Americanized if we go to a faraway place. We expect new heroes every season, a literary masterpiece every month, a dramatic spectacular every week, a rare sensation every night. We expect everybody to feel free to disagree, yet

we expect everybody to be loyal, not to rock the boat or take the Fifth Amendment. We expect everybody to believe deeply in his religion, yet not to think less of others for not believing. We expect our nation to be strong and great and vast and varied and prepared for every challenge; yet we expect our “national purpose” to be clear and simple, something that gives direction to the lives of nearly two hundred million people and yet can be bought in a paperback at the corner drugstore for a dollar.

We expect anything and everything. We expect the contradictory and the impossible. We expect compact cars which are spacious; luxurious cars which are economical. We expect to be rich and charitable, powerful and merciful, active and reflective, kind and competitive. We expect to be inspired by mediocre appeals for “excellence,” to be made literate by illiterate appeals for literacy. We expect to eat and stay thin, to be constantly on the move and ever more neighborly, to go to a “church of our choice” and yet feel its guiding power over us, to revere God and to be God.

Never have people been more the masters of their environment. yet never has a people felt more deceived and disappointed. For never has a people expected so much more than the world could offer.

We are ruled by extravagant expectations:

(1) *Of what the world holds.* Of how much news there is, how many heroes there are, how often masterpieces are made, how exotic the nearby can be, how familiar the exotic can become. Of the closeness of places and the farness of places.

(2) Of our power to shape the world. Of our ability to create events when there are none, to make heroes when they don't exist, to be somewhere else when we haven't left home. Of our ability to make art forms suit our convenience, to transform a novel into a movie and vice versa, to turn a symphony into mood-conditioning. To fabricate national purpose when we lack them, to pursue these purposes after we have fabricated them. To invent our standards and then to respect them as if they had been revealed or discovered.

By harboring, nourishing, and ever enlarging our extravagant expectations we create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves. And which we pay others to make to deceive us.

The making of the illusions which flood our experience has become the business of America, some of its most honest and most necessary and most respectable business. I am thinking not only of advertising and public relations and political rhetoric, but of all the activities which purport to inform and comfort and improve and educate and elevate us: the work of our best journalists, our most enterprising book publishers, our most successful entertainers, our best guides to world travel, and our most influential leaders in foreign relations. Our every effort to satisfy our extravagant expectations simply makes them more extravagant and makes our illusions more attractive. The story of the making of our illusions—“the news behind the news”—has become the most appealing news of the world.

We tyrannize and frustrate ourselves by expecting more than the world can give us or than we can make of the world. We demand that everyone who talks to us, or writes

for us, or takes pictures for us, or makes merchandise for us, should live in our world of extravagant expectations. We expect this even of the peoples of foreign countries. We have become so accustomed to our illusions that we mistake them for reality. We demand them. And we demand that there be always more of them, bigger and better and more vivid. They are the world of our making: the world of the image.

Nowadays everybody tells us that what we need is more belief, a strong and deeper and more encompassing faith. A faith in America and in what we are doing. That may be true in the long run. What we need first and now is to disillusion ourselves. What ails us most is not what we have done with America, but what we have substituted for America. We suffer primarily not from our vices or our weaknesses, but from our illusions. We are haunted, not by reality, but by those images we have put in place of reality.

To discover our illusions will not solve the problems of our world. But if we do not discover them, we will never discover our real problems. To dispel the ghosts which populate the world of our making will not give us the power to conquer the real enemies of the real world or to remake the real world. But it may help us discover that we cannot make the world in our image. It will liberate us and sharpen our vision. It will clear away the fog so we can face the world we share with all mankind.

*10 Food Secrets You Should Know!]]*

*By Center for Science in the Public Interest, 1996*

#### 1 QUAKER 100% NATURAL OATS, HONEY & RAISIN GRANOLA

Does Mother Nature want you eating half a cup of oats coated with three teaspoons of sugar and laden with nearly as much artery-clogging fat as you'd get in a regular McDonald's hamburger? No doubt she'd prefer low-fat, low-sugar, whole-grain cereals like Grape-Nuts, Wheaties, shredded wheat, oatmeal, or Wheatena. If you're stuck on granola (and sugar), at least choose a product like Health Valley Fat-Free Granola, Kellogg's Low-Fat Granola, or Quaker 100% Natural Low Fat.

#### 2 GWALTNEY CHICKEN FRANKS

Think "chicken" or "turkey" on the label means less fat in the frank? Not necessarily. Companies like Gwaltney, Grillmaster, or Mr. Turkey make chicken or turkey dogs with 11 grams of fat each. But Butterball, Healthy Choice, Hormel, Oscar Mayer, and Yves Veggie Cuisine make pork, beef, turkey, or tofu franks with zero to 1 1/2 grams of fat. Now if they would only cut the salt. (Yves Fat-Free Veggie Wieners have half the sodium.)

#### 3 ENTENMANN'S RICH FROSTED DONUT (Variety Pack size)

How can one doughnut have as much artery-clogging saturated fat (8 grams) and as many calories as a McDonald's Quarter Pounder? That's what happens when you completely cover a doughnut in chocolate. Try Entenmann's 50% Less Fat Donuts instead. With anywhere from six to nine grams of fat per doughnut, they're not low fat. But if you've got to have a doughnut, they taste like the real thing.

**4 NISSIN CUP NOODLES WITH SHRIMP** What could be wrong with a cup of steaming hot, high-carbohydrate noodles? Let's just say you'd be better off with a one-ounce bag of 14-or-so potato chips. That's because, like the chips, the noodles are pre-fried and salted. And Nissin compounds the problem by frying in artery-clogging palm oil and dumping on 19 times more sodium (1,550 mg) than the chips. Try Fantastic Foods Chicken Free Ramen Noodles instead.

#### **5 MOVIE-THEATER POPCORN POPPED IN COCONUT OIL**

A large bucket of unbuttered popcorn at theaters (like United Artists) that pop in coconut oil has almost three days' worth of artery-clogging fat! Add the fake "butter" and you'll boost the cholesterol-raising fat to almost four days' worth. That's like eating *eight* McDonald's Big Macs. Even a small bucket contains almost a day's worth of saturated fat. What to do? Choose a theater that uses air-popped popcorn, or at least one that pops its corn in a heart-healthier oil like corn or sunflower.

#### **6 OSCAR MAYER LUNCHABLES**

It would be hard to invent a worse food than these combos of heavily processed meat, artery-clogging cheese, and mostly-white-flour crackers. The line averages 6 teaspoons of fat (that's 60 percent of calories) and 1,707 mg of sodium. The Lean Smoked White Turkey & Monterey Jack cheese on seven halfdollarsized "wheat" crackers has more saturated fat than a McDonald's Quarter Pounder . . . and more than twice as much sodium. As for Oscar Mayer's Low Fat Lunchables, they may have about half the fat of regular Lunchables, but they're still a junk food. Instead, try seven Reduced Fat Triscuits (they're whole wheat) and two slices of Louis Rich Oven Roasted Fat Free Breast of Turkey.

#### **7 HAAGEN-DAZS ICE CREAM**

Regular ice cream wasn't fatty enough? Haagen-Dazs has managed to squeeze in more than twice the fat of regular ice cream, like Breyers. Eat a cup of Butter Pecan and you've downed 48 grams of fat . . . about as much as half a stick of butter. And a cup of Chocolate Chocolate Chip has as much artery-clogging saturated fat (24 grams) as three McDonald's Quarter Pounders! That's more than a whole day's quota. A cup of Mattus' Lowfat Ice Cream, on the other hand, has just six grams of fat, four of them saturated. But the taste is as rich as full-fat Haagen-Dazs.

#### **8 CAMPBELL'S REGULAR SOUPS**

They're brimming with salt. Half a can averages 1,000 mg of sodium. That's about half your ideal quota for an entire day. If you're looking for more than salty water, check out Pritikin Soups. An equal-size serving averages 280 mg of sodium and one gram of fat. That's a bit less fat—and far less sodium— than you'll find in Campbell's Healthy Request or ConAgra's Healthy Choice soups.

**9 RICE-A-RONI CHICKEN & VEGETABLES** One cup—a mere side dish—has 1,470 mg of sodium (more than half your day's limit). As for the vegetables, the two people who share the two-cup box will have to fight over the nine peas, teaspoon and a half of carrot slivers, teaspoon of tomato particles, and even less chicken. "Rice &

Salt” would have been a more honest name. Marrakesh Express CousCous or Terrazza Pasta & Beans cuts out about 90 percent of the sodium.

#### 10 CONTADINA ALFREDO SAUCE

Why not melt a third of a stick of butter on each cup of your pasta? You might as well if you fall for Contadina’s refrigerated Alfredo. The company’s Pesto and Four Cheeses flavors aren’t much better. On the other hand, you could choose Classico’s Spicy Red Pepper, DiGiorno Fat Free Chunky Tomato with Basil, Muir Glen Organic Fat Free Sweet Pepper & Onion, or Mama Rizzo’s Primavera Vegetali with Pepper spaghetti sauces instead. All are lower in everything but taste.

## Children Now Facing

### Adult Health Issues

*By Joan Ryan*

From *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 30, 2002

Some facts: About \$12 billion a year is spent on advertising targeted at children. Children watching television during Saturday mornings view more than twice as many advertisements for unhealthy foods as adults see during programs aired after 9 p.m.

Nearly half of all the foods advertised during children’s programming are cakes and candies. The average American child sees 10,000 food advertisements each year. Ninety-five percent are for fast food, sugary cereals, soft drinks and candy.

The National Cancer Institute spends \$1 million per year on advertising the five-a-day program to encourage people to eat fruits and vegetables. That’s \$1 million. In 1998, McDonald’s spent just more than \$1 billion on advertising.

The entire government budget for nutrition education is one-fifth the annual advertising budget for Altoids mints.

Supermarkets alone sold \$10 billion in children’s foods and drinks in 1998, with sales expected to reach \$12 billion by 2003. The baker of Hostess products, Interstate Bakeries Corp., has a Web site, called Planet Twinkie, featuring interactive games for children ages 7 to 11.

On the site, children see a raccoon character familiar to them from Hostess television commercials. The raccoon, gliding on skis, attempts to eat as many Twinkies as it can.

Keebler’s sends instant messages to children surfing the Internet. There are educational books that use M&M’s Reese’s Pieces and other candy to teach counting. Teletubbies, a wholesome show on PBS, engaged in toy promotions of McDonald’s and Burger King.

Child psychologists regularly help consumer researchers ascertain what will attract children to a product. This research led recently, for example, to Cheetos producing its Mystery Colorz Snacks. The high-calorie snacks, neon-orange in color, turn a child’s tongue blue or green.

Children directly influenced more than \$170 billion spent on food purchases in 2001. The number of severely overweight children in the United States has doubled since 1980.

Between 1986 and 1998, obesity among African-American and Hispanic children increased by more than 120 percent; among white children by about 50 percent. A third of children from lower-income households are obese.

Nationally, hospital costs related to childhood obesity have more than tripled in the past 20 years to \$127 million, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overweight children are showing up in doctors' offices with adult health problems such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and Type II diabetes. Some show early warning signs of heart disease.

The U.S. surgeon general in January declared childhood obesity a national epidemic. Those are the facts.

Here is the question.

Why don't we ban corporations from using the public airwaves to manipulate our children into craving products that, like tobacco, are harmful to their health?

The precedent is there: We banned tobacco advertising from television when smoking-related diseases became a public health crisis.

So First Amendment issues have been resolved. What else still stands in the way of banning junk-food advertisements during children's TV programming and on children's Web sites?

"It took 40 years to get where we are today with the fight against tobacco," Dr. Kelley Brownell of Yale's Center for Eating and Weight Disorders said during a Senate hearing on childhood obesity last week. "And the industry stalled, ignored the data, denied the data and did all the things that are well known now. You can just see it coming with the food companies."

Sweden and Norway have already banned junk-food advertising to children. Great Britain is considering the same. In the United States, we can continue to let the food industry turn our children into junk-food junkies. Or we can ground all flights to Planet Twinkie.

## **Road to Ruin: Sport Utility Vehicles and the Greening of Environmental Destruction**

*By Robin Andersen*

From *Extra!* September-October 1998

The Toyota 4runner sits off-road in the middle of a fern-laden forest. The ad copy proclaims:

THE ANSWERING MACHINE FOR THE CALL OF THE WILD

From a rugged mountain vista to deep in the plush forest, nature calls out for us. And the 1997 Toyota 4-wheel drive is one of the only machines capable of answering that challenge. With a powerful 183-hp V6 engine and the highest ground clearance in its class, you'll be able to handle almost anything nature may throw at you. And with 4Runner's roomy interior and available leather seats, civilization is never really far away.

Since the late 1980s, sales of "light trucks," the vehicular classification that includes sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and minivans, have risen at double the pace of cars. In 1975, light trucks accounted for 2 percent of all light vehicles sold. But with high profits, cheap gas and one of the most aggressive marketing campaigns in American history, light trucks now claim 50 percent of market share.

Over the last decade, trucks have been transformed from a blue-collar need to a mass-market want. Luxury interiors and image marketing provide the comfort that allows consumers to make personality statements in SUVs,

Public desire for these vehicles is driven by a relentless advertising campaign that promises the wonders of nature will be yours by sitting high above the ground in an SUV. This powerful, persuasive association between SUVs and the environment is communicated through some of the most stunning visual imagery of the natural world ever seen in American advertising. In this visually enhanced promotional media environment, every few minutes a Jeep or a Nissan Pathfinder is charging through Africa, surrounded by endangered species; a Ford Explorer is perched atop the spire of an awesome natural formation in the middle of a desert, or on a coastal ridge above the pounding surf; or one of them is bouncing through a wilderness forest.

Studies demonstrate the effectiveness of advertising's claim that SUVs are compatible with the environment: Truck buyers conceive of themselves as practical, flexible, nonconformist and *environmentally conscious* (**Business Week**, 12/5/94). But depictions of the natural world in SUV ads contain a highly contradictory set of messages about nature and how we should treat the environment. While nature is depicted as beautiful, stunning and awe-inspiring, it is also threatening, a force to be reckoned with, a world to be conquered in your SUV.

## Security through Domination

As one analyst explained (**Business Week**, 12/5/94): "It doesn't matter what nature throws at the people. You turn that key and you feel you're in total control of the environment." The loss of mastery over a menacing world has been deflected onto a fantasy of mastery over the environment. "Trucks give drivers a feeling of mastery over an uncertain and threatening world," **Business Week** remarked. As the Blazer ad promises, a little security in an insecure world."

Sport utility vehicles have less to do with utility than with psychological comfort: We seem no longer able to rule our lives, but we can rule the road. Truck advertising gives symbolic form to a variety of psycho-social fears. Often personified as female,



nature is dangerous—one truck ad threatens, “She will freeze you, she will burn you, she will try to blow you away”—and trucks are the vehicles that will triumph over that threat. With images of mud, dirt and water spraying out from under the tires as 4x4s tear up wilderness areas, SUV advertisements assure buyers that the best way to relate to nature is to run over it.

The actual negative effects these vehicles have on the environment are buried under advertising’s appropriation of the wondrous benefits drivers experience when they have a vehicle that will “go farther” and take them “off road” to wilderness areas. Often driving alongside any number of running mammals, from wolves to giraffes, SUVs are naturalized within the landscape. In fact, 13 percent of 4x4s are used off-road, where their intense soil disruption causes a disastrous combination of erosion and compaction, killing plants and destroying animal habitats (Dan Wright, *The Road Ripper’s Guide to Off-Road Vehicles*).

But while some drivers play out such fantasy encounters with nature, these “station wagons of the 90s” are mostly being used to run errands in urban and suburban settings. While doing so, they also help destroy the environment so stunningly depicted in the ads.

## Gas Guzzlers

Sport Utilities are notably less fuel efficient than the cars they are replacing. In the midst of the country’s Bronco fever, the **New York Times** discovered that the demand for gasoline had increased dramatically by 1995, up 5 percent from the year before. As one car salesman observed (**New York Times**, 6/25/ 95), when customers shop for a vehicle like the Chevy Tahoe, they don’t even look at the sticker that says it gets 12 miles per gallon in city driving: “They don’t ask about the mileage. It’s irrelevant to most of them.” The **Times** article noted: “Many owners of less fuel-efficient vehicles say they gladly pay more for the pleasure of sitting high above the traffic and knowing they have four-wheel drive.” This pleasure is made affordable by a gas-pricing system that does not incorporate environmental destruction within its calculations.

Because the light truck category is not subject to the same federal regulations for emissions standards, safety equipment and fuel efficiency, the industry can continue to make them bigger, heavier and less fuel efficient. Industry lobbyists claim that the engines have to be bigger to do all that hauling, yet few of them are used for work. And while only 13 percent of them go off-road, they are designed for very high ground clearance to get over rocky, rutted, unpaved roads. The height that makes their drivers feel powerful and in control also makes them deadly.

## Deadly Pleasures

Even though there are still about twice as many cars on the road as light trucks, and car to car accidents remain more common, more Americans now die in crashes

involving a car and a light truck than in crashes involving two cars (**New York Times**, 3/19/ 97). When cars and light trucks collide, the person in the car is four times more likely to die than the person in the truck. And if a car is hit in the side, that brings the odds to 27 to 1.

Cars are designed to meet federal crash standards that test a car's ability to "withstand a collision with a similarly shaped vehicle within 500 pounds of its own weight" (**New York Times**, 3/19/97). yet a light truck outweighs an average car by at least half a ton. The high-riding, stiff steel-framed underbodies of light trucks tend to hit cars in places not designed to take the impact. The structurally weak light-weight steel of a car's unibody shell is no match for 5,000 pounds of belligerent force bearing down on you, looking for something to dominate.

SUV purchases are now being made as "defensive buys." With the proliferation of intimidating trucks on the road, who wants to own an anonymous econo-box that's going to be on the losing end of that Tahoe? And as SUVs now target the female market share, advertising exalts the safety features of the vehicles; in fact, SUV drivers are two and a half times more likely to die in a rollover crash than car drivers. In addition, the steel frame has a deadly effect when the driver runs into a stationary object.

## Commercialized Media

While the **New York Times**, other papers and broadcast news magazines have publicized some safety issues surrounding the SUVs—"fleet incompatibility" and other research released by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety—broader environmental issues associated with SUVs' role in global warming and ecological destruction are underreported. With the auto industry paying a good portion of media revenues, wouldbe truck buyers are seldom going to hear about the environmental impact of the overextraction of fossil fuels, the mass environmental destruction caused by roads (especially on public land so lovingly depicted in the ads) or the greenhouse gases building up from emissions.

The symbolic geography of advertising eclipses the operative cultural awareness that SUVs do damage to the Earth. This advertising-dominated media terrain buries the stories of loss and destruction that would collide with the symbolic fantasies of power and control.

They won't hear much about Shell Oil's exploitation of Ogoniland in Nigeria, a story chosen by **Project Censored** as one of the top censored stories of 1997—or about the nine Nigerian environmentalists executed by their country's dictator after protesting the oil company's devastation of their farms and homes. (Major media organizations refused to print ads by Amnesty International exposing Shell's destruction and involvement in the military repression of Nigerian activists.) Texaco's devastation of the Ecuadorian rainforest was similarly downplayed.

The proliferation of car and truck advertising, and direct industry influence, blocks the discussion of environmental issues surrounding automobiles and of transportation

alternatives. As advertising exalts the wilderness, it promotes an ideology and practice that destroy it. Ads reassure buyers that the worst excesses of car culture can coexist with the yearning to preserve what's left of the natural world.

We can have it all: oil exploration, drilling and dangerous transport, the wholesale slaughter of wildlife and their habitats through road-building and the extraction of natural resources—all this and still find spiritual communion with a sanctified earth.

*Robin Anderson is associate professor of communication and media studies at Fordham University. This article is a companion to the Paper Tiger video, Road to Ruin: The Real Dirt on Sport Utility Vehicles.*

### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Watch an hour or so of TV commercials and decide how many of them tell you anything concrete about the product that substantially distinguishes it from competing brands. Evaluate the general quality of the reasoning in the various ads. Are any of them selling something beyond the product itself, as described in this chapter? Write counter-commercials for any that you find deceptive about the product, the company manufacturing it, or the broader ideas it promotes.

In “Ten Food Secrets You Should Know,” “Children Now Facing Adult Health Issues,” and “Road to Ruin,” what significant facts did you learn about these advertised products, and how much did they alter your attitude toward the products? To what extent does the lack of public knowledge about such facts refute arguments that consumers are free to “take or leave” advertised products or that advertising is just Part of the free exchange of ideas under the constitutional principle of freedom of speech? How different do you think consumer attitudes would be if commercials and print ads were regularly followed by information like this? Discuss why this would or would not be feasible. How many of your classmates have taken courses in high school or college that provide this kind of consumer information? Debate why there should or should not be more such courses.

See if you can find information refuting “Road to Ruin” by conservative sources defending sports utility vehicles or contradicting Andersen’s assertions about environmental destruction.

“Ten Food Secrets You Should Know” itself appeared in a mail ad for the Center for Science in the Public Interest soliciting membership and subscriptions for the newsletter of this nonprofit, liberal research institute, a Naderite consumer-advocacy organization. Is advertising for such a purpose substantially different from the commercial advertising it is meant to counteract in the motives of its sponsors, writers, publishers, or broadcasters?

In “Children Now Facing Adult Health Issues,” Joan Ryan uses the **analogy** of cigarette advertising having been banned on TV and radio in arguing that junkfood advertising for children should also be banned. Is this a sound or a **false analogy**? What arguments for and against banning cigarette advertising in broadcast and other

media can be made? In citing other countries that have banned junk-food advertising for children, is Ryan committing a **bandwagon** or *ad populum* fallacy, or is this valid evidence that such action can be democratically legislated and have beneficial effects? Is there a possible **slippery slope** fallacy involved in these arguments? Once certain kinds of advertising are banned, can we **draw the line** about what others should be?

Other democracies place stricter limits on televised political advertising on TV and radio than the United States does, because their expense favors wealthier parties and candidates. Debate the pros and cons of the constitutional and practical issues here, and do some research on other countries' policies.

What examples in current culture can you think of that illustrate Boorstin's terms "extravagant expectations," "pseudo-events," and "self-fulfilling prophecies"? Debate whether the constant expansion of sports leagues and seasons, for the primary purpose of increased television broadcasting and advertising revenue, has been a good or a bad thing for sports.

In spite of Boorstin's criticisms of corporate hype, his position is ultimately conservative, to the extent that he places blame for "extravagant expectations" not on businesses that create them in the pursuit of profits but on "we" as consumers. Might this be a case of the fallacy of **what do you mean "we"**? Weigh his position against that of the several readings in this book that are more inclined to blame commercial hype and related social ills on the profit imperatives of capitalism.

## **Part 5. Putting It All Together in a Long Paper**

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# Chapter 20. A Case Study: The Rich, the Poor, and the Middle Class

One of the most important areas of debate in recent decades between conservatives and liberals concerns the extent to which economic inequalities, and especially the gap between the rich and the middle class and poor, have been increasing in the United States. This debate also involves the consequences for economic inequality of tax cuts and cutbacks in government regulation of business. These policies were justified by “supply-side economics,” or “Reaganomics,” during the presidential administration of Ronald Reagan (1980-1988) and again revived by President George W. Bush. The advent of Reaganomics was preceded in 1978 in California by the passage by referendum of Proposition 13, which instituted a drastic cut in property taxes. Conservative and liberal positions on these issues are more fully developed in “An Outline of Conservative and Leftist Arguments . . .” at the end of this chapter, and it would be helpful for you to read through them now as background for the following discussion of statistical evidence presented by the opposing sides in support of their general lines of argument. Please keep in mind that these are not just abstract matters of economics but crucial facts of life for you and every individual, directly pertinent to your own financial future. These facts include the availability and cost to students of tax-funded, public secondary, college, and graduate education (and of student financial aid), what jobs will be available to you after graduation and how much they pay, what your tax burden will be in relation to that of wealthy people and corporations, how much government deficits resulting from tax shortfalls cost you in taxes, whether Social Security will still be funded when you are old enough to receive it, and whether national health insurance would be a possibility if priorities in taxation and areas of government spending were changed.

The main points of dispute involve shifts in recent decades in the relative share of national income and net worth held by individuals (and corporations) in different income brackets, the amount of taxes paid by those individuals and corporations, the amount of savings they have received from Reaganomic tax cuts, and what they have done with those savings. Liberals argue that the gap in income, net worth, and corporate ownership has grossly increased between the wealthiest individuals and the rest of Americans, whose wages have declined and who have had to work ever more hours

to keep up with the cost of living; they further argue that the rich have benefited far more than the middle class or poor from tax cuts pushed by Republicans from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush. Conservatives attempt to **refute** each of these liberal lines.

## Sklar Versus Weicher

Many of the rhetorical and statistical problems involved in these issues can be approached through studying a few opposing articles on them, beginning with “Let Them Eat Cake,” by Holly Sklar in the November 1998 issue of the left-of-liberal *Z Magazine*, and “Wealth Gap Claptrap,” by John Weicher, in the July 1, 1996, issue of the conservative *Weekly Standard*, which is a **rebuttal** to earlier versions of arguments like Sklar’s. (Some of the statistics in this Chapter are somewhat dated; however, the economic trends studied have tended to remain consistent. For example, in the 2004 edition of *Forbes* magazine’s 400 richest Americans, the number of billionaires had increased to 313, and Bill Gates’s wealth was \$48 billion. And the opposing rhetorical patterns between authors on the left and right repeat themselves decade after decade, as you can verify for yourself.) In the biographical notes with these articles, Sklar is identified only as the author of a book on economics published by South End Press, one of the leftist presses identified in Chapter 15, while Weicher is identified as a fellow at a conservative think tank also mentioned in Chapter 15, the Hudson Institute, and as “chief economist at OMB [Office of Management and Budget] in the Reagan Administration,” the agency that implemented supply-side policies.

### Let Them Eat Cake

*By Holly Sklar*

From *Z Magazine*, November 1998

Last year Bill Gates was worth more than the combined Gross National Products of Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the other five countries of Central America. Now, he’s worth more than the GNP’s of Central America plus Jamaica and Bolivia. He temporarily lost Costa Rica between July 17, when the stock market peaked, and August 31, when it dropped more than 500 points.

Gates is number one again in the *Forbes* 400 of richest Americans, which now has an entry level of \$500 million—up from \$475 million last year. Remember when being a billionaire was something really special? Back in 1982, when *Forbes* inaugurated the 400, there were only 13 people in the billionaires club, including various Hunts and Besses. Well, the

*Forbes* 400 now has 189 billionaires—19 more than last year. Ten people have net worth over \$10 billion, including investment king Warren Buffet, Microsoft co-founder



Paul Allen, Dell Computer founder Michael Dell, and five heirs to Wal-Mart founder Sam Watson.

Gates ranks number five on the *American Heritage* list of the 40 richest Americans ever, right behind John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and John Jacob Astor. Gates makes the Robber Barons look good when it comes to philanthropy. Gates increased his net worth over the past year by more than \$2 million an hour. Bill and Melinda Gates are number 12 on the *Slate* 60 largest American charitable contributions for the first half of 1998, with a total of nearly \$30.7 million to the University of Washington, Planned Parenthood, and others. Sound like a lot? Well, gee, at \$2 million an hour of added net worth, that's about 15 hours. If Bill Gates was earning an average worker's salary of \$25,000, 15 hours would come to about \$180.

Let's put Gate's wealth—plus or minus \$60 billion depending on what day you look—in further perspective. The United Nations Development Program's 1998 *Human Development Report* estimates that for the “developing” countries, “the additional cost of achieving and maintaining universal access to basic education for all, basic health care for all, reproductive health care for all women, adequate food for all and safe water and sanitation for all is roughly \$40 billion a year. This is less than 4 percent of the combined wealth of the 225 richest people in the world.” Gates alone could lay the foundation with first-year funding and still have \$20 billion left over.

According to the UN report, “The world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over \$1 trillion, equal to the annual income of the poorest 47 percent of the world's people (2.5 billion) The three richest people have

assets that exceed the combined GDP [Gross Domestic Product] of the 48 least developed countries.” Meanwhile, some 1.3 billion people still live on less than \$1 a day and almost 3 billion live on less than \$2 a day. “In about 100 countries incomes today are lower in real terms than they were a decade or more ago,” the UN report tells us. “In 70 countries with nearly a billion people consumption today is lower than it was 25 years ago.” The average African household consumes 20 percent less today than it did 25 years ago.

## View From the Top

*Forbes* ran the numbers on the 400 richest Americans at the unhappy market close on September 1. The market partly rebounded later in the month, led by tech stocks such as Microsoft. The combined net worth of the Forbes 400 was \$738 billion on September 1, up from \$624 billion in 1997. “In short, the creation of wealth continues apace in America even without an ebullient stock market,” said *Forbes*.

The long bull market was so “ebullient” that *Fortune* ran a series of articles by Brian O'Reilly (9/7/98) titled “Spoils of a Pig Market.” We learn that Ferraris and Range Rovers are hot, “yacht sales have climbed 143 percent since 1993,” and “the luxury watch business is phenomenal.” Did you know that “the real purpose of an expensive watch is to let other people know how rich you are”? You can flash your watch where

you can't flash your Ferrari. Why, with a good maitre d', "A good watch can even help you get a seat in a sold-out restaurant."

"As we all know, however, any boob can buy a \$100,000 wristwatch," writes O'Reilly. "If you really want the world to know you've arrived, you simply must find a peaceful, remote village, long populated by quiet old money [like the Hamptons], buy a nice old house, tear it down, and put up a blimp-hanger-sized mansion in its place."

Unlike the Forbes 400, most Americans have seen their net worth stagnate or fall—and not just temporarily. The real net worth (assets minus debts) of the American household in the middle was nearly 11 percent lower in 1995—when it was \$45,630 including home equity—than in 1983, according to economist Edward Wolff. Only the top 5 percent of households increased their wealth between 1983 and 1995; the top 1 percent of households gained 17 percent. The net worth of the bottom 40 percent of households was an astounding 80 percent less in 1995 than in 1983.

Though stock ownership is growing, more than half of all households still own none, directly or indirectly. Fewer than one-third of households have more than \$5,000 in stock. The wealthiest 10 percent of households reaped 85 percent of the stock market gains from 1989 until the end of 1997, according to Wolff. For the rich, it's the Roaring Twenties, with 39 percent of American wealth in the hands of the top 1 percent of households. The top 1 percent have about the same amount of wealth as the bottom 95 percent.

## View From Below

Looking at the poverty rates you wouldn't know that the last recession officially ended in March 1991. Young families, headed by persons under age 30, have been hit hard by falling wages and rising inequality. The poverty rate of two-parent young families more than doubled between 1973 and 1994. "If the fruits of economic growth had been shared equally among all families between 1973 and 1994," says the Children's Defense Fund, "then the median young family with children would have seen its income rise by 15 percent instead of falling by 33 percent," adjusting for inflation.

By official count, one out of five children (19.9 percent) in the United States were below the poverty line in 1997. One out of seven (14.4 percent) were in 1973, when the poverty line was less divorced from reality than it is today.

The poverty thresholds for 1997 are set ridiculously low at \$8,183 for one person, \$11,062 for a 2-person family with one adult and one child under 18; \$12,919 for a 3-person family with one child; and \$16,276 for a 4-person family with 2 adults and 2 children. Many analysts advocate raising the poverty line by at least 50 percent.

Nearly one-third of all officially poor people had no health insurance in 1997. Reporting on the Census Bureau's latest health insurance data, the *New York Times* (9/26/98) said, "Despite the booming economy, the number of people without health insurance rose sharply last year, to 43.4 million, and the proportion of Americans lacking coverage reached the highest level in a decade, 16.1 percent." Employers are cutting

back coverage for employees and their dependents and “Medicaid rolls are down as stringent new laws prod people to move from welfare to work and the low-paying jobs they find often do not offer health benefits.” Lack of health insurance is associated with a 25 percent higher risk of death.

## Working Longer for Less

Did you know that average workers are earning less now than they did when Nixon was president? While the wealthy worry about whether 1998 will end on a stock market down, after years of record gains, workers are still trying to catch up with 1973.

Hourly wages for average workers in 1997 were about 9 percent below 1973, adjusting for inflation. According to John E. Schwarz (*Atlantic Monthly*, October 1998), “since 1973 the hourly compensation of workers would have to have grown by 24 percent more . . . (amounting to an increase in wages for the average full-time worker of more than \$6,000 a year) just to match the gains that have taken place in worker productivity.”

The minimum wage has become a poverty wage. Even with recent overdue raises, it’s still about 17 percent less than it was in 1967, adjusted for inflation. The minimum wage used to bring a family of three, with a full-time worker, above the official poverty line. Now it doesn’t bring a full-time worker with one child above the poverty line.

Union jobs typically provide much better wages and benefits than nonunion ones. The median weekly wage of a full-time worker who belonged to a union in 1997 was \$640, compared with \$478 for those who did not. That’s a wage differential of \$8,424 over 52 weeks, not including better health, pension, and other benefits paid to union members.

But union jobs have been disappearing under the onslaught of downsizing, globalization, and union-busting. As *Business Week* put it in 1994, “Over the past dozen years, in fact, U.S. industry has conducted one of the most successful antiunion wars ever, illegally firing thousands of workers for exercising their right to organize.” Only 14 percent of workers are union members, down from nearly 25 percent in 1973.

Workers have been working longer hours and running up debt in an effort to keep up living standards and send their kids to college. Between 1979 and 1997, middle-income families increased their annual hours of work by 315 hours (equivalent to nearly 8 weeks of full-time work), according to the Economic Policy Institute. If not for the extra work load of women, middle-income families would be far worse off.

Just looking at the period between 1989 and 1997, work hours increased by 129 hours. While work hours increased 4 percent between 1989 and 1997, median family income (adjusting for inflation) only grew 0.6 percent, or \$284, to reach \$44,568. That added \$284 translates into \$2.20 for every hour of extra work. In the same period, reports the Economic Policy Institute, productivity went up 9.7 percent.

Companies have been taking money from workers and giving it to CEOs and shareholders. The average CEO in *Business Week*’s annual survey made 326 times the pay

of factory workers in 1997. That's way up from 1980, when CEOs made 42 times as much.

Newspapers have been running sad stories about CEO fortunes declining with the stock market—at least on paper. But CEOs shouldn't have had all those stock options to begin with. This year's *Wall Street Journal* feature on executive compensation was called "Pay for No Performance." Now CEOs want to continue enjoying the lion's share of the gain and none of the pain by "repricing" unexercised options that are "underwater" (worth less than the current value of the stock), getting new stock grants, and pocketing bigger cash bonuses.

Many company stocks were boosted through short-sighted measures such as downsizing, low wages, and speculation. At this time of global turmoil, Wall Street is more dependent on the buying power of American consumers. But rising real wages and full employment are the keys to future economic growth—not rising inequality and an unsustainable increase in overtime and debt.

*Wealth-Gap Claptrap]]*

*By John C. Weicher*

From *The Weekly Standard*, July 1, 1996

Remember all the news stories and columns from last year about how the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer? Well, you can forget about them—it isn't so.

New research from the Federal Reserve Board finds that the distribution of wealth did not change over the last business cycle (or, from late 1982, when the economy hit bottom, to the spring of 1991, when it hit bottom again). In 1983, the richest 1 percent of American households owned about 31 percent of the country's total wealth; in 1992, they owned about 30 percent. So the distribution in 1992 was virtually the same as in 1983—and, for that matter, the same as in 1963, when the richest 1 percent owned about 32 percent of the wealth.

The interesting figure is the one from 1992. Until recently, the latest data had been for 1989, and these indicated a more unequal

distribution. In 1989, the richest 1 percent owned about 36 percent of the wealth—which sparked that spate of stories blaming Ronald Reagan for a growing "wealth gap." This concern is now out of date, and it may never have been valid. Even if inequality did increase during the long Reagan boom of 1983-89—and that's a big "if"—the increase was completely erased during the mild recession that followed.

About that "if": Every few years, the Fed conducts surveys to determine household assets and liabilities. To discern national patterns, analysts must extrapolate information about 85-95 million households from a sample of 3,000-4,000 households. For 1983 and 1989, they used several methods. The increase from 32 percent to 36 percent—the one so widely reported—was one of the largest that could have been calculated. By most of the methods

available, the change in distribution was not statistically significant; by some, the distribution actually became more equal. The broadest measures reveal a clear pattern:

a small increase in inequality during the boom, reversed during the recession. The notion of a growing wealth gap, really, is wrong.

This comes as a surprise to many people. Mention wealth, and the first thing they are apt to think of is the stock market. There was certainly a stock-market boom in the 1980s, and everyone knows that rich people own most of the stock in this country. So why didn't the distribution of wealth become more unequal? Because stock ownership became more diffuse during that vigorous decade. The non-rich increased their holdings. In 1983, the richest 1 percent of households owned 57 percent of publicly traded stock; in 1989, they owned just under 50 percent; by 1992, they owned less than 40 percent.

What rich people do own, more than anything else, is their own businesses. This accounts for about 40 percent of their wealth. Next in importance is real estate—apartment buildings, office buildings, other commercial property—which comprises about 20 percent of their wealth. Stocks are a distant third, at about 12 percent. The way to wealth, it seems, is to make it, then take care of it yourself.

The distribution of wealth may have remained unchanged during the business cycle, but the amount of wealth did not. The total wealth of American households increased by over \$4 trillion between 1983 and 1992, from \$15.6 trillion to \$19.8 trillion (both measured in today's dollars)—more than 25 percent in nine years. Average wealth per household increased by about 11 percent, from \$185,000 to \$206,000. These are substantial, and statistically significant, gains in a short period of time.

But press attention to these numbers has been muted. The purported increase in inequality under Reagan got front-page attention, but the recent evidence about wealth has been banished to more obscure pages, or ignored altogether. Also front-page news was last week's Census Bureau report about household income. The headlines blared that the income gap (as distinct from the wealth gap) continued to grow in 1993-94, even though this is just Part of a trend that started back in 1968.

In one way, it's fun to observe the reaction of liberals to the latest news about inequality. Those who happily blamed the Reagan tax cuts and social-program reforms for the widening income and wealth gaps in the 1980s now are trying to explain why the wealth gap was reversed under Bush, and why the income gap continued to increase in the era of Clinton tax and spending increases, before the Republicans gained control of Congress.

But in another way, it's disappointing that only bad news about economic inequality makes the front pages. What's more, it is a disservice to the public, because the distribution of wealth goes to the heart of what we think about our society. Americans have always believed that they live in a land of upward mobility, where everyone has a chance to succeed. And if we become convinced that this is nonsense—that the rich just get richer, while the poor are permanently barred from improving their lot—then this altered self-image is likely to have unwelcome consequences for our society and public policy.

Thus, the facts—and their dissemination—are important. Yes, the rich are getting richer. And the poor are getting richer. And they're doing it more or less equally.

An initial reading of the two articles makes very clear their general lines of opposition, although it is worth reading them more closely to note all the specific points on which they contradict each other, or points on which one presents information neglected by the other. How can we judge which is more credible? Applying our general guidelines for rhetorical analysis, we might begin with the level and quality of documentation for the statistics on which both articles are based. Since both are published in general-circulation journals of opinion, we cannot expect the level of detailed citations (direct quotation from sources, with page references) that we would in a scholarly journal or book, but we can expect clear enough identification of sources that we can look them up ourselves to verify the statistics. Weicher's article, being much shorter than Sklar's, is at a disadvantage here; his documentation might have been cut by the editor, and it is possible that this is an abstract of more thorough studies he did elsewhere, which you might locate by doing an author search for Weicher or the Hudson Institute, or by contacting either directly. As it stands, however, Weicher tells us that his main source is the Federal Reserve Board, but he does not cite exact reports that we could look up to check the accuracy of his account of them, which we are left to assume provisionally, pending possible information to the contrary. He also refers to "last week's Census Bureau report about household income," which should be easy enough to locate in a 1996 news index.

Sklar's article is obviously more fully documented on most points, although you should check carefully for any that are not documented. Note, however, that several of her sources are predictably liberal or leftist ones whose credibility conservatives would probably question—Edward Wolff, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, the Economic Policy Institute, the Children's Defense Fund—although she also cites some conservative sources like *Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *Business Week*, as well as nonpartisan ones like the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the United Nations Development Program.

When it comes to comparing the substance of the opposing arguments, here and with conflicting sources in general we need to zero in on the extent to which both authors are addressing the same issues. Unless the sources have been selected because one directly refutes the other, they may seem on close inspection to be addressing somewhat different issues, so that apples and oranges are being compared. In the case of Weicher and Sklar, it seems clear that they are both addressing the percentage of total wealth owned by the top 1 percent of Americans from about 1983 to 1992 in Weicher and 1997 in Sklar. How significant are the differences in their figures for that period?

Weicher also obliquely addresses another gap, in yearly *income*, from 1968 to 1993/1994, which Sklar discusses more directly. Weicher seems to concede that this gap has widened under both Democratic and Republican administrations (a point agreed on by left-of-liberal critics like Sklar, who find no great differences between the

economic policies of Democrats and Republicans). Beyond that, however, Weicher brings in other factors that Sklar does not address, and vice versa, so it is up to the critical reader to decide the relevance of those factors and the extent to which they damage the case made by the author who does not address them; for example, compare the two analyses of measures of gains and losses by the middle class and poor in comparison to the rich, and the supporting evidence on the two sides.

## Hinderaker and Johnson Versus Barlett and Steele

In another contrast of sources, both dealing with changes in yearly income rather than in net worth, we find a more direct rebuttal, by a team of authors in the conservative *National Review*, of passages in two best-selling books by another team of reporters who support the liberal case.

### George Bush's Tax Return

*By John H. Hinderaker and Scott W. Johnson*

From *National Review*, May 30, 1994

DONALD BARLETT and James Steele are two of the most successful journalists in the United States. As reporters for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, they have won two Pulitzer Prizes. Their gargantuan nine- Part series, "America: What Went Wrong?," was published in 1992 and reprinted in numerous newspapers. The series became an immediate best-seller when it was turned into the book of the same name.

Barlett and Steele's new book, *America: Who Really Pays the Taxes?*, has now been excerpted, syndicated, and run as a series in newspapers throughout the United States. It is undoubtedly destined for the same bestseller status.

The authors' answer to the question posed in the new book's title is—not surprisingly, in light of their earlier work—that the tax system is rigged against average Americans, who pay more than their fair share of income taxes while higher-income Americans pay less. This thesis is demonstrably false. Although average Americans are indeed overburdened by taxes, upper-income taxpayers are even more so.

Furthermore, although Barlett and Steele have described themselves as supplying "detailed information" that their readers "can get nowhere else," their economic journalism constitutes little more than slanted anecdotes mixed with statistical sleight-of-hand.

### Who Really Pays the Taxes?

EVERY YEAR, the Internal Revenue Service analyzes tax returns and publishes data showing how much income was reported and how much tax paid by taxpayers in

various income groups. These IRS figures are widely distributed, and no one writing an entire book on the subject could possibly be unaware of them. Barlett and Steele's avoidance of these hard data is easy to understand, however, because the IRS figures destroy their thesis.

In 1991, the most recent year for which the figures have been compiled, the top 1 per cent of tax filers reported 13 per cent of the nation's total adjusted gross income (i.e., before most deductions), but paid 24.6 per cent of all federal income taxes. The top 5 per cent of taxpayers reported 26.8 per cent of the income, but paid 43.4 per cent of the taxes. And the top 10 per cent—those earning over \$61,952—reported 38.2 per cent of the income, but paid 55.3 per cent of the taxes. The bottom 50 per cent of tax filers, by contrast, reported 15.1 per cent of the income, but paid only 5.5 per cent of the taxes, leaving 94.5 per cent of the tax bill to be paid by those with above-average incomes.

Barlett and Steele contrast the present day with what they view as the golden era of the 1950s, when the top individual and corporate tax rates were higher than they are today. They argue that in recent years higher-income taxpayers have successfully pushed tax burdens onto those who are less well off. What Barlett and Steele fail to mention, however, is that the tax code of the 1950s was so riddled with loopholes that those top rates collected virtually no revenue because hardly anyone paid them.

IRS data show that the share of the total tax burden borne by upper-income individuals grew steadily from 1981 to 1991. It is particularly noteworthy that since 1982, when marginal tax rates were cut across the board, the proportion of taxes paid by upper-income people has *increased*. The share paid by the top 1 per cent of tax filers rose from 17.6 per cent in 1981 to 24.6 per cent in 1991; the share paid by the top 5 per cent went from 35.1 to 43.4 per cent; the share paid by the top 10 per cent rose from 48.0 to 55.3 per cent.

It is clear, therefore, that the central theme of Barlett and Steele's book is simply false. Upper-income Americans pay a disproportionate and growing share of the total tax bill. If middle-income Americans are overtaxed—and they are—it is not because those above them on the economic scale are getting a free ride.

## The Bushes' Tax Return

SHODDY and uninformed economic analysis is bad enough, but Barlett and Steele's portrayal of George and Barbara Bush's taxpaying record can only be described as maliciously misleading.

The authors argue that there are "two separate and distinct tax systems," one for the "the rich and powerful!" and one for "everyone else." The centerpiece of their argument is a comparison of the 1991 taxes paid by the Bushes and those paid by an Oregon resident named Jacques Cotton.

Under the rubric of "The Privileged Person's Tax Law," they report that George and Barbara Bush earned \$1,324,456 in 1991 and paid a total of \$239,063—18.1 per cent of



their adjusted gross income in taxes. They report that Mr. Cotton, on the other hand, paid a total of \$6,618 in state, federal, and Social Security taxes on a gross income of \$33,499. Barlett and Steele calculate that these tax payments add up to 19.8 per cent of Mr. Cotton's income, a slightly higher percentage than the Bushes paid. This calculation is set forth under the heading "The Common Person's Tax law."

Barlett and Steele conclude from this comparison that the American tax system "responds to the appeals of the powerful and influential and ignores the needs of the powerless." That's a rather sweeping conclusion to draw from a comparison of two out of millions of tax returns. But is the comparison a fair one to start with?

It didn't take much investigation to find out that it isn't. The Bushes' 1991 tax return was made public when it was filed, and a number of news stories were written about it at the time. That return was newsworthy because the couple's income that year was three times as high as in any other year of Bush's Presidency.

Why? Because Barbara Bush earned \$889,176 in royalties on *Millie's Book*, a humorous look at White House life written from the point of view of the family dog. And why were the Bushes' taxes relatively low, compared to their income? Because Barbara Bush donated substantially all of the proceeds of *Millie's Book* to charity—\$818,803, or 62 per cent of the couple's income that year. They contributed to 49 different charities, everything from Ducks Unlimited to the United Negro College Fund, but the main beneficiary was the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, which received \$789,176. After giving away more than 60 per cent of their income to charity, George and Barbara Bush had \$505,653 left, of which they paid \$239,063—47 per cent—in taxes.

Barlett and Steele must have known these facts, yet chose to mislead their readers by portraying George Bush as a greedy, taxdodging rich person. We wondered why. In fact, we tried to find out why. We left numerous messages for Barlett and Steele, but they declined to return our calls. We faxed a letter to them asking a number of questions, including why they failed to disclose the *Millie's Book* income and the Bushes' extraordinarily generous charitable contributions. But they declined to respond. We also asked them for copies of *their* 1991 tax returns. Needless to say, we did not get them. But we think it highly unlikely that these tireless campaigners against greed have ever donated 62 per cent of their very large incomes to charity.

Hinderaker and Johnson challenge what they claim is Donald Barlett and James Steele's false thesis in *America: Who Really Pays the Taxes?* that "in recent years higher-income taxpayers have successfully pushed tax burdens onto those who are less well off." Hinderaker and Johnson assert that in fact those in the upper brackets are paying *more* in taxes since rates were lowered in 1981 than in earlier decades. By contrast, Barlett and Steele write in their earlier book, *America: What Went Wrong?*:

Between 1980 and 1989, the number of people reporting incomes of more than a half-million dollars rocketed from 16,882 to 183,240—an increase of 985 per cent. That represented the largest percentage increase in this century

Because of the dramatic increase in their numbers, the over-\$500,000 group is accounting for a larger share of overall income tax collections at a time when their individual payments have fallen off sharply. In 1980, they paid \$8.1 billion in taxes, or 3 percent of total individual income taxes. In 1989, they paid \$59.4 billion, or 14 percent of the total.

If this trend continues, those at the top will pay an ever-increasing share of the taxes. But that is because everyone else will be falling further behind. Consequently, they will have less income to be taxed. (4-5)

Careful analysis of these two sources indicates that the disagreements are not so much matters of contradictory statistics or **inductive reasoning** as of **deductive reasoning** and rhetorical issues like **causal analysis**, **selective vision**, and **semantic** slanting. Both sets of authors, along with most liberal and conservative economists, agree with what seems to be the **paradox** that although income tax rates went down for the upper brackets after 1981, people in those brackets subsequently paid more in taxes. What logical possibilities might account for this paradox? Hinderaker and Johnson's causal analysis is that Reagan's tax reforms eliminated earlier loopholes, which supports a Part of Reaganomic theory that lower tax rates would encourage people to invest in areas producing taxable income rather than, as previously, investing in tax shelters. Barlett and Steele, however, see the main cause as vast increases of *income* among the wealthy, at everyone else's expense, in Part as a consequence of Reaganomics.

Each set of authors here provides one **hypothesis** that supports their ideological position but ignores the hypothesis that supports the other. In fact, both hypotheses (closed loopholes, more rich people) might be true, and it is likely that each side is committing a **reductive fallacy** (there are also probably several other, broader factors involved in such economic trends). An evenhanded approach would need to cite empirical research on how much of the higher taxes paid by the rich resulted from each cause. There is, in fact, a third hypothesis that could partially explain increasing taxes paid by the rich: Barlett and Steele attribute the increase to growing *numbers* of the rich, but they do not clearly indicate whether this also involves a large increase in the per capita income of—and subsequently the taxes paid by—wealthy *individuals*, whether or not their numbers have dramatically increased. Now, it is quite possible that both of these hypotheses (along with Hinderaker and Johnson's) are true, especially considering the evidence of other sources like Sklar about the escalation of individual wealth; although Barlett and Steele do not emphasize this factor, it does seem to be implicit in their statistics.

Barlett and Steele also say, however, that the wealthy *as a group* are gaining far more income and paying a larger proportion of income taxes "at a time when their individual payments have fallen off sharply." Barlett and Steele support the last phrase with evidence that new loopholes for the rich and corporations have replaced the ones Hinderaker and Johnson say were closed after 1981, that other taxes previously hitting the rich hardest, such as those on corporate profits, capital gains,

and inheritance, were reduced in the eighties, while less publicized increases in taxes other than on income since 1981, such as Social Security and Medicare, sales, gasoline, and real estate taxes, have hit the poor and middle class harder than the rich, since these taxes (along with those on income) consume a far greater share of their disposable income (defined as income remaining after taxes and basic expenses) and their net worth, individually and collectively, than for the rich (5). In 1989, Barlett and Steele say, for a Philadelphia family with an income of \$30,000 to \$40,000- about the national median- this middle-class family's "overall tax burden rises to about one-third of family income, up from 17.8 percent in 1970" (5). Another likelihood is that much of what the wealthy have saved in lower rates on income and other taxes itself becomes a factor in widening the income/wealth gap as it is reinvested for further profits-an advantage unavailable to those at a subsistence level.

If we hypothesize that Barlett and Steele (and Sklar) are basically correct, then we can see some semantic slanting in the wording of Hinderaker and Johnson (as in that of many other conservatives) on this point: "The share of the total tax burden borne by upperincome individuals grew steadily from 1981 to 1991." First, they are **playing up** income tax payments while **downplaying** the trends in other forms of taxation that Barlett and Steele say have produced gains for the rich and losses for the middle class and poor. Second, the word *burden* is **dirty, connoting** that the wealthy are suffering and have been forced to shoulder the cost of supporting society's slackers; other conservatives claim that high taxes on the rich "penalize" incentive and success. Liberals reply that the group that is making the most income, individually and collectively, will always pay the most income taxes (even under a flat tax system like the one proposed by Steve Forbes) and that, as Barlett and Steele say, this will be doubly true if their relative share of income is constantly increasing while that of the middle class and poor is decreasing. (If Bill Gates made all the income in America, he'd also be paying all the income taxes. Would this be a "burden" and a "penalty"?) Note also that Hinderaker and Johnson present the figures for both income and taxes for the one year of 1991, and they trace the growing share of taxes paid by the rich from 1981 to 1991 but without also tracing the growing share of *income* at the top, as Barlett and Steele do. How would Hinderaker and Johnson's argument be affected if they told us that the relative income for the upper bracket increased as much as, or more than, their tax share in the decade ending in 1991?

The policy of progressive taxation, which is central to liberal economic ideology, means that as your income increases, you must pay a larger percentage of tax on it (as opposed to a flat rate, by which you would pay the same percentage as someone in a lower bracket, even though the dollar amount of your payment would be higher). The justifications for progressive taxation are (1) that those in the highest bracket can afford to pay higher taxes because their after-tax income and net worth are still far above their basic living expenses, in contrast to the middle class and poor, for whom taxes

come out of income that is barely, if at all, sufficient to meet basic expenses, (2) that progressive taxes also help to keep the gap in wealth—and, more importantly, power—between the rich and everyone else from growing ever wider, and (3) that it is the rich, not the lower-class recipients of welfare and other “entitlements,” who benefit most from government spending, e.g., defense and aerospace contracts, “corporate welfare,” and the millions spent by public agencies for private-sector equipment, construction, and services. Likewise for the services funded by taxes like public education, which trains the corporate workforce and enables workers to earn enough money to buy commodities, thus keeping up the level of corporate profits, and law enforcement, which protects the wealthy from theft or physical attack and maintains the social stability that allows prosperity. The economy would probably collapse if it were not for the employment, spending, and education provided by the public sector. These arguments tend to be suppressed by conservative polemicists, who for the past quarter century have waged an unrelenting campaign against government spending (except for the military), which, according to liberal *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, they call “starve the beast.” In *The Great Unraveling*, Krugman quotes Republican strategist Grover Norquist as saying he wants to shrink government “‘down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub’” (xxi-xxii).

Conservatives counterrefute one of Barlett and Steele’s arguments by saying that the increasing number of the wealthy since 1981 in fact is evidence of the success of Reaganomics, since it means that more Americans are moving up the socioeconomic ladder. This would be a strong argument if it were supported by evidence (1) that the new rich have jumped to that status from the middle class and (2) that all levels of the middle class and poor increased their financial standing in proportion to the increase among the wealthy. Elizabeth Carnell’s article here, “Why Try Holly Sklar’s Socialist Plans for Economy When United States Is Doing Just Fine?” makes some of these arguments and others against Sklar. According to Carnell, for instance, “An astounding 80 percent of those in the bottom 20 percent in 1975 were in the top 60 percent in 1991, while 29 percent had risen to the top fifth of wage earners.” There is a direct contradiction in facts and figures here between Carnell and leftists like Barlett and Steele and Sklar, whose thesis is that the economic status of most of the middle class and poor declined while the growing numbers of the wealthy were mostly not cases of rags to riches but of millionaires becoming multimillionaires primarily through appreciation of the value of their stocks, bonds, and real estate. Barlett and Steele cite a 985 percent increase in the number of those making over \$500,000 a year between 1980 and 1989, and Sklar reports that the number of billionaires increased from 13 in 1982 to 189 in 1998. In 2004, *Forbes* magazine’s annual report on the four hundred richest Americans listed 313 billionaires.

Now let us look at Hinderaker and Johnson’s second main charge against Barlett and Steele, concerning the tax returns of the first President Bush and his wife for 1991. A check of the pertinent section in *America: Who Really Pays the Taxes*, on pages 17-20, confirms that Barlett and Steele are guilty as charged here of the **half-truth**

of indicating the Bushes' low tax rate but not telling us that it resulted primarily from a large charitable deduction. Hinderaker and Johnson themselves cheat a little in telling us that the Bushes paid \$239,083 in taxes, which is 47 percent of their \$505,653 income beyond the \$818,803 given to charity; in contrast Barlett and Steele say that the \$239,083 constituted an 18.1 percent rate on their income, including the Part given to charity; Hinderaker and Johnson do not tell us, however, that the \$239,083 payment according to Barlett and Steele included not only the Bushes' federal income tax but also "Social Security tax, state and local income tax, personal property tax, and real estate tax" (18), not all of which are calculated on yearly income. How significantly does this omission by Hinderaker and Johnson alter their argument that Barlett and Steele made the percentage of taxes paid by the Bushes seem much lower than it actually was?

If we conclude that the larger fault here is with Barlett and Steele, how much does this instance damage their overall line of argument and general credibility? The case of the Bushes is one of many that Barlett and Steele present to make the point that the wealthy have colluded with both Democratic and Republican legislators to create numerous tax preferences unavailable to the middle class and poor—including the deduction for charitable contributions, which does not just reduce taxable income but also can put large donors in a lower tax bracket (i.e., it reduces the rate at which their income is taxed), so that the money they give to charity actually costs them little or nothing, while giving them a favorable public image. (Conservatives might respond that this is a case of **heads I win, tails you lose**, since liberals criticize the rich whether they are charitable or not!)

If conservative critics and general readers like us were able to find a repeated, significant pattern of inaccuracy or deception throughout the six-hundred-some pages of Barlett and Steele's two books, that would certainly destroy their credibility. However, if the case of the Bushes is an exception rather than the rule and most of Barlett and Steele's evidence and reasoning is more solid, we can simply draw the conclusion that most researchers (including Hinderaker and Johnson) working with a large amount of data, especially if they have a thesis to prove, sometimes slip up. So once again, the lesson is never to assume that any source, whether on the other side or your own, is accurate but to double-check each, see what refutations you can find in opposing sources, and make your own balanced judgment about the overall credibility of each.

## Applications in Student Papers

Here are portions from the main bodies of two student papers addressing these and related issues and authors, with their analysis of similar argumentative fallacies. The first deals with the dispute over the income gap between the eighties and the present.

## Section of Paper One

Conservatives argue that there is no absolute proof that Reaganomics policies created a huge income disparity gap, and they present their evidence to the contrary. In an article for the *Weekly Standard*, “Wealth Gap Claptrap,” John Weicher, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and chief economist at the Office of Management and Budget during the Reagan administration, uses Federal Reserve Board statistics to show that the distribution of wealth changed very little over the last business cycle. He claims, based on these statistics, that in 1983 the richest one percent of American households owned about thirty-one percent of the wealth. In 1992 they owned about thirty percent. He also claims that the distribution may have remained unchanged during the last business cycle but that, “The total wealth of American households increased by over \$4 trillion between 1983 and 1992 Average wealth per household increased

by about 11 percent” (14). He claims that the liberal rhetoric just pushes the income gap myth in order to gain support for unneeded increased taxes and spending. He ends his argument by saying that the rich are getting richer and so are the poor and that they are doing so about equally.

Another conservative writer, Ed Rubenstein, uses the same sort of argument to show that the liberals are wrong to claim that Reaganomics increased income disparity. The main point of his article “Reaganomics Revisited” (*National Review*, February 3, 1992, 44) is that the rich did get richer but their doing so made others richer as well. He uses statistics from the Department of Commerce to demonstrate that “the real average income of the wealthiest twenty percent of American households increased 22 percent between the years 1980 and 1989, while the real average income of the middle three quintiles [brackets of twenty percent] rose by an average of 8-19 percent.”

A careful reading reveals several possible fallacies in the claims by Weicher and Rubenstein that all classes are getting wealthier at about an equal rate. Most obviously, when Rubenstein says that average yearly income has increased at about the same rate in the upper and middle classes, he downplays what this means in individual terms. Let’s say a family in the middle class, with income of \$30,000, and a family in the upper bracket, with an income of \$3 million, both increased their income in the last decade by a total of 22%. That means a gain of \$6,600 for the first family (\$660 a year for ten years), but one of \$660,000 (\$66,000 a year) for the second. Did both gain equally, for all practical purposes?

More arguments along these lines appear in *Peddling Prosperity*, a rebuttal by economist Paul Krugman of defenses of Reaganomics. Krugman points out that after adjusting for the business cycle the growth of income was virtually the same before and after Reagan took office. What changed drastically was the distribution of wealth. Looking back on the years 1947-1973, there was a period of real broad-based

prosperity, where income rose at all income levels at the same pace of 2.5 percent a year. Then between the years 1973-1979 as the economy slowed down, due to the oil shock and low productivity, income growth became much more slow and uneven.

Finally, after 1979 a new pattern emerged: generally slow growth that was tilted so that income for those at the top end of the distribution grew more rapidly than those in the middle, and those at the bottom actually saw a decline (Krugman 132).

Krugman presents a graph from the Congressional Budget Office that shows the estimates for the gains in income at different levels. The data are from the years 1977-1989. The graph is drawn to show the changes in income for families lying at the bottom and the top of each quintile, or 20 percent. The graph shows huge income gains for those at the top, particularly those in the very top one percent. (Other authors like Barlett and Steele extend their studies still higher to find about the same curve of disproportionate gains even from the bottom to the top of that one percent.) So for those at the very top, the 1980's were great. But the graph also shows the rate of growth for the two bottom quintiles in the negative numbers, meaning that they saw their income go down over the twelve-year period. Compared with the statistics provided by Rubenstein and Weicher, these statistics allow us to see farther up and down the income scale and give us a more accurate picture of what is happening both at lower levels and at the very top. (Note that Rubenstein provides figures for the top 20% and the next 60%, but suppresses those for the bottom 20% and combines the next lowest quintile with the one above it to disguise its loss.)

Krugman also provides means to rebut Rubenstein's and Weicher's claim that growth of income and wealth in the eighties was not as different between the rich and other classes as liberals claim. Krugman points out the difference between *average* and *median* income or wealth. Average income or wealth is calculated by adding up all the family incomes or net worths and then dividing the total by the number of families. (If you average Bill Gates's wealth and that of a homeless street person, it would look like the latter is a multimillionaire.) Median income or wealth, a much more meaningful measure, is the one at the middle, in the sense that there are the same number of families above and below it. Krugman has the same figures as Weicher that from 1979 to 1989 average family income rose 11 percent, but asserts, "70% of the rise in average family income went to the top 1%," while "the median family income rose only 4 percent" (13738). In light of Krugman's figures, Weicher's claim about the *total* national growth of wealth also means little, because the small percentage at the top accounted for most of the growth, just as it skewed average income and wealth upward.

## Section of Paper Two

In tax policy, liberals argue for highly progressive rates—which is to say that the percentage rate you are taxed goes up more sharply the more you make, while conservatives favor pretty much the same rate for all income levels, which they say is the most fair policy. The same differences apply in conservatives' call for lowering taxes by the same rate for all classes, versus liberals' call for lowering taxes for the middle class and poor but raising them on the rich. Here is a letter to the editor in the *Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 18, 1986) after President Reagan's tax cuts:

Why doesn't Congress have the guts to make the budget cuts that President Reagan has submitted to them? Their only answer is tax, tax, tax, and spend, spend, spend—but not for defense.

As a tax preparer, I get nauseous hearing over and over again how the Reagan tax cut only benefited the wealthy and that the working man got “nothing.” I just finished doing an income tax return for a married couple with two dependent children. They had a taxable income of \$25,252 for 1985 and their tax on this amount is \$3,534. They rent an apartment, so they do not itemize deductions.

On this same income in 1981, this family would have paid \$5,252 in federal income tax, a difference of \$1,728 or \$144 per month for all of 1995 that they had clear to spend on things other than our federal bureaucracy. To me, this 33% decrease in federal taxes over the past four years is sizable—and I do not consider that these people are wealthy by any stretch of the imagination.

Frank Loftus

Santa Monica, CA

Let's look at how much was saved by the couple the author discusses—I'll call them Mr. and Mrs. Loftus—compared to a much wealthier family. Reagan's cuts reduced the rate in the Loftuses' income bracket by about 33%, from 21% to 14%, saving them roughly \$1,700 a year (from \$5,200 in 1980 to \$3,500 in 1985), and leaving them \$21,500 after taxes, compared to \$19,800 in 1980. Now let's hypothesize one of the hundred or so billionaires in America at that time, who might have gained an average annual return on their investments of 10%—or \$100 million. Under the 1980 rates, the top marginal tax bracket was 70%. That doesn't mean they were taxed at that rate on their entire income, just the portion over about \$200,000—and this doesn't account for the large deductions available to the rich—but for simplicity let's overstate their total bill at \$70 million, leaving them \$30 million after taxes. By 1985, their rate was reduced by the same 33%, from 70% to about 47%. This means that in 1985, they would have paid \$47 million—\$23 million dollars less in tax than in 1980, and would have \$53 million left after taxes. (In 1986, the top rate was further reduced to 27%, while lower brackets stayed at about the same rate.)

Next, just for fun, let's extend this hypothetical analysis to a flat tax system like that proposed by Steve Forbes. At the same rate on all brackets, like 10%, the Loftuses would pay \$2,500 on their \$25,000 income, leaving them \$22,500 after taxes—a saving of \$2,700 over their 1980 rate. The couple with \$100 million income, though, would now pay only \$10 million and be left with \$90 million—a \$60 million saving over their 1980 rate! (Considering that Steve Forbes happens to be the publisher of *Forbes* magazine, as well as a regular among its 400 richest Americans, might his flat tax proposal have been a case of special pleading?)

So did the rich and middle class really gain equally from Reagan's tax cuts? Sure, in percentage terms, but not in practical terms. Mr. Loftus is right to say that the middle class couple gained a couple of thousand dollars to help make ends meet. But



as a defense of Reagan's policies this might be an either-or fallacy—either tax rates for all classes remain at the 1980 rate, or they have to be cut by the same rate for all classes. This false dilemma leaves out the liberal alternative of cutting taxes *even more* for the middle and lower class while raising them back to at least the 1980 top rate for the rich.

Conservatives of course point out that rich individuals contribute immensely more to the government than lower-income individuals do. And liberals of course refute this point by arguing that it is only fair for those who make the most money to pay the most taxes. People with tens of millions or more in net worth to begin with can well afford to pay a large chunk of their additional yearly income in taxes without skimping on the bare necessities, as the middle class and poor have to do even if they pay at a lower rate. For the wealthy, the millions they save on tax cuts can be used to buy luxuries, or more importantly, to reinvest and increase their wealth, and the gap between them and everyone else, ever farther.

Even more importantly, liberals argue, the huge gains by the wealthy from Reaganomic tax cuts and other supply-side policies contribute to all the forms of *power* that money can buy—running for office; gaining governmental favoritism through campaign contributions to politicians and parties; hiring lobbying, public relations, and law firms; monopolizing ownership of corporations and media; being able to set prices and wages to their advantage; etc., etc. I have not been able to find any conservative sources that have a real rebuttal to this argument, the strongest one in support of the case that there has been a scarily increasing gap of wealth and power in America.

## Summary of Suspicious Statistical Arguments

In conclusion, we always need to keep in mind the implications of economic statistics for each individual, not just abstract social aggregates, and to be on guard against arguments that overwhelm us with compilations of statistics that may look impressive but that obscure individual realities. The following is a summary of some patterns of rhetorically suspicious statistical arguments of the kind we have surveyed here (in addition to simple suppression of relevant information, such as Barlett and Steele practiced with the Bushes' charitable deductions).

1. Arguments that play up the large amount of taxes paid by the wealthy (and the relatively small amount paid by the middle class or poor) in a single year, or a growing amount over a period of years, without also comparing income and net worth among the classes being compared.

2. Arguments that play up a total or average (as opposed to median) increase in income or net worth in the entire society or within one broad bracket, without factoring in large increases at the very top of the society or bracket that might skew upward

the total or average, and that consequently downplay relative losses for those in the middle and lower sectors.

3. Arguments that play up the same percentage change in different brackets of income, net worth, or tax reductions as alleged evidence of equitable results in all groups, while downplaying the large differences in dollar amounts among the groups resulting from an equal percentage change in each.

4. Arguments that play up the benefits of one Part of a policy change (e.g., reduction of income taxes) while downplaying the negative effects of another Part of that change (e.g., increase in Social Security or other taxes); or conversely, arguments that play up the negative effects (e.g., more people becoming wealthy at other classes' expense under Reaganomics) while downplaying the positive effects (closing of prior loopholes, resulting in more tax revenue).

## **An Outline of Conservative and Leftist arguments on the Rich, the Poor, and the Middle Class**

The following is an outline of the broad points of opposition between conservatives and leftists on the topics in this Chapter and throughout much of the rest of this book. In keeping with good semantic principles, the outline is meant to be open-ended. The facts that the leftist arguments get the last word here and are more numerous (a reflection of the weight of evidence accumulated throughout the book) should simply serve as a challenge to you and your classmates to use this as a point of departure, seeing what effective conservative rebuttals you can find. So “the last word” in this outline, this chapter, and this book is, “ETC., ETC., ETC.”

### **The Conservative Position**

The basic position of Presidents Reagan, both Presidents Bush, and their conservative supporters is that American government has been overloaded trying to provide for the public welfare in programs like education, Social Security, Medicare, welfare, unemployment insurance, minimum wage laws, and so on. Moreover, excessive taxation and bureaucratic government regulation of business (especially for environmental protection) have stifled the productive power of free enterprise. This overload on government has led to inflation, deficit spending, and dependency of beneficiaries of programs like welfare on “handouts.” Therefore, if government spending on domestic programs is reduced and taxes cut by equal percentage rates across all income lines (with the largest savings going to wealthy individuals and corporations), private enterprise will be freed to function more effectively; it will be more efficient than government and the public sector of the economy in generating jobs, producing more tax revenue, and filling other public needs. The reason these beneficial “Reaganomic” policies haven’t been fully effective is that they haven’t been given an adequate chance to work, their

full implementation having been blocked by Democrats in Congress and other leftist bureaucrats and special interest groups purely because of their partisan and selfish motives. Deficit spending has increased only because Democrats in Congress rejected every effort by President Reagan and both Presidents Bush to reduce the budget.

Conservatives also argue that:

1. Budget and tax cuts in the federal government under Reagan and both Bushes, and in states like California since Proposition 13, have just trimmed the fat, eliminating unnecessary programs and administrative waste and leaving intact essential programs and the “safety net” of support for the truly needy.

2. Flat-rate taxes and tax cuts are fairer than progressive taxes because all income levels pay and benefit from cuts at the same rate.

3. Government spending in many areas such as education and welfare can be more properly and efficiently handled by states and localities than by the federal government; the funding burden should be shifted to them.

4. Much of the overload on government has resulted from selfish, excessive demands for “entitlements” from special interests like welfare recipients, minorities, the elderly, veterans, teachers, and students. These groups have become dependent on handouts and have lost their incentive to work.

5. Individual initiative, not government programs, is the best solution to social problems. Conservatives believe in equality of opportunity, not an inaccessible equality of outcome as liberals do, and believe that all Americans *do* have equal opportunity to succeed. Everyone who tries hard enough can get a good job and be financially successful. It is usually a person’s own fault if he or she is poor or unemployed. The poor should just try harder and be more virtuous.

6. Spending on national defense is an exception to the need to cut government because increases in the eighties were necessary to defeat Russia in the arms race (Communism’s collapse vindicated Reagan’s hard-line policies); a strong defense is still necessary because of terrorism and other potential threats, like Saddam Hussein, to American security.

7. The most effective way to reduce poverty and unemployment is to permit the rich to get richer—the trickle-down theory or supply-side economics—because their increased spending trickles down to benefit all other segments of society proportionately. The concentration of wealth at the top is not a zero-sum game, in which the gains of the rich come at the expense of the middle class or poor.

8. Wealthy individuals and corporate executives can be trusted to use their increased benefits for the public welfare because in order to attain and maintain their position they have to be exceptionally intelligent, hardworking, honest, and civic-minded.

9. Most rich people have worked hard for their money and have risked their investments, so they shouldn’t be penalized by high taxes and government regulations that stifle their incentive to work and to invest. Executives’ high salaries are proportionate to the profits they have produced for their companies.

10. Minimum-wage laws, high corporate or individual taxes, and excessive regulations—especially in environmental, safety, and health issues—force industries to move their operations to lower-cost locations in the United States or to other countries. Such increased expenses are also passed on to consumers in higher prices, so they are selfdefeating.

11. The rich are generous in sharing their wealth; the more money they are allowed to keep, the more they give to charities.

12. Wealth is compatible with religious, and especially Christian, morality. Many wealthy people like Nelson Bunker Hunt use their wealth to support religious organizations and causes.

13. Leftist criticisms of Reagan, George W. Bush, and the rich often consist of “sour grapes” rationalizations by government bureaucrats, intellectuals, teachers, journalists, or public employees who are just unwilling or unable to make it themselves in the private sector and who are jealous of those who do. These “bleeding hearts” sentimentalize the poor.

14. Leftist teachers’ and other public employees’ arguments may reflect ethnocentric bias, conflict of interest, or special pleading, since members of these groups benefit personally from higher taxation and the resulting increases in government spending. Likewise, arguments by leftist intellectuals may be self-interested, concealing their drive to replace the rich as the new ruling class.

15. History has shown that, in spite of all its faults, capitalism or free enterprise is a more efficient and humane economic system than any form of socialism or mixed economy.

16. Statistically based arguments: Empirical evidence that Reaganomics worked includes the facts that the 1980s saw a reduction in inflation and the longest period of steady growth in the American economy since World War II; millions of new jobs were created; the rich paid higher dollar amounts and an increased percentage of tax revenues, and total tax revenues increased. Liberal-leftist claims of a growing gap between the rich and the middle class and poor are based on faulty statistical analyses. There has been much more socioeconomic mobility in recent decades than liberals want to admit, with many people moving out of poverty into the middle class, and many others dropping out of the upper income brackets.

## **The Leftist Position**

Democracy in America is being destroyed and replaced by plutocracy—rule by and for the rich. Reagan and both Bushes have been agents of plutocratic special interests, as are most Republican and Democratic politicians, including Presidents Kennedy and Clinton. These politicians appeal to liberal constituencies to get elected but then sell them out on many if not most issues. Reaganomic policies have had the effect, intentionally or unintentionally, of entrenching plutocracy by making the rich richer and the middle class and the poor poorer and by eliminating needed welfare

programs and productive areas of public spending and employment. Government spending primes the pump when the economy slumps and provides services not offered by the private sector, while progressive taxation serves to reduce the gap of wealth and power between the rich and the rest of the population (Keynesian economics). The conservative line of argument against Keynesian economics is largely a propaganda program engineered by wealthy special interests to rationalize their own greed. In fact, Reagan and both Bushes consistently proposed budgets that were higher (mainly because of defense increases) than those passed by Congress, but their budget increases amounted to “Keynesian” socialism for the rich, free enterprise for the poor.

Leftists also make the following arguments. The numbers in parentheses refer to refuted conservative arguments.

1. American cultural conditioning favors the rich by fostering common blocks to clear thinking like authoritarian awe and sentimentality toward the rich, the ethnocentrism and wishful thinking of middle-class people hoping to become rich, and favorable stereotypes of the rich and prejudiced ones of the working class and poor.

2. (9) There is often little correlation between how hard people work or how much risk they take and how much money they make. Many of those who make the most money don’t make it through work at all but through investments (often inherited) and speculation, while many of those who work the hardest and at the greatest risk (e.g., farmworkers, coal miners, police, firefighters) make the least. Corporate executive salaries have gotten totally out of proportion to performance—in many cases, CEOs have received vastly increased income even when their companies have lost money—partly because of conflicts of interest between CEOs and boards of directors who determine their compensation.

3. (5) Conservative “try harder” arguments fail to recognize the basic inequities structured into a capitalist economy and the external economic forces—national and worldwide economic trends, inflation, recession, and so on—that often make individual effort futile. In a free-enterprise economy, there is no certainty of full employment, of a job being available for everyone who needs one, or of a minimum wage above poverty level. Conservatives have constructed a straw-man leftist who demands nothing less than total equality of outcome from social policies, but most liberals and leftists simply believe that present-day America is far from presenting equal opportunity for all, so that their policies are only aimed at bringing about that *opportunity*.

4. (7) There is no conclusive evidence that the trickle-down theory has ever worked in practice or ever will. Contrary to conservative claims that supply-side tax cuts would actually increase tax revenues, federal and local revenues have been lower than they would have been under previous progressive rates, and huge deficits have resulted at both the national and local levels. Much of what the rich get back in tax cuts is often invested not in job-producing enterprises but in personal luxuries, tax dodges, hedges against inflation, speculation, corporate takeovers resulting in monopoly and inflated

prices for consumers and lost jobs for workers, or investments in foreign countries that exploit cheap labor there while taking jobs and money out of the United States.

5. (7, 8, 10) Outlandish corporate profits and gaps between executives and employees in recent decades belie conservatives' claims that the rich getting richer benefits everyone, as well as their appeals to pity for overtaxed, overregulated corporations. Businesses often use these appeals to pity and the appeal to fear of their relocating within the United States or abroad as blackmail to get their way. Globalization and outsourcing of jobs simply exploit the absence in poorer countries of minimum-wage laws, labor unions, and environmental, safety, and health regulations. Corporate relocation abroad, motivated by greed, has devastated American workers and contradicts conservative claims that capitalists are virtuous and patriotic.

6. While much money spent in the private sector does not trickle down to the rest of society, virtually all money spent in the public sector "trickles up" back into the private sector. Spending on education, public health, welfare, and so on is a good investment by society that pays off in higher productivity. Spending by tax-funded public agencies (e.g., universities) creates jobs and subsidizes private-sector contractors for construction, equipment, and services. Corporate interests want (and depend on) these subsidies without wanting to pay the taxes needed to fund them.

7. The private sector is just as wasteful and inefficient as the public sector, and the most waste in both occurs at the executive levels, where spending is administered (primarily in administrators' own interests). Thus budget cuts resulting from laws like Proposition 13 in California have left governmental administrative "fat" intact while bankrupting local governments, causing layoffs of rank-and-file public employees and harmful cuts in essential services like education and law enforcement. The conservative belief that there is a vast amount of fat that can be trimmed from government agencies at the rank-and-file level is often just wishful thinking or rationalization of conservatives' politically motivated desire to squeeze out liberal constituencies served by government spending.

8. (3) As a result of local tax cuts like Proposition 13, state and local governments are even more hard-pressed financially than the federal government, so conservative claims that funding responsibilities are better handled at the local level are simply rationalizations or passing the buck.

9. (9) Those who can afford to pay the most taxes and who benefit most from a prosperous society—that is, the rich—should be expected to pay the most. Flat-rate tax cuts disproportionately benefit the rich and widen the gap in wealth and ownership of income-producing holdings like stocks, bonds, real estate, and farms, enabling the rich to increase their power in all of the following ways.

10. The rich can buy political influence with both the Republican and Democratic parties and government officials, causing legislation to be passed in their interest and against that of the middle class and poor, particularly in tax policies, such as regressive cuts in income, corporation, inheritance, and property taxes that in recent decades have sharply reduced the burden on the rich.

11. As a result of 10, the tax burden has shifted increasingly from the rich to the middle class, especially in tax increases for Social Security and Medicare and, at the local and state levels, in sales taxes. As a further result, members of the overtaxed middle class vote to support cuts in public services that harm themselves and society as a whole but not the rich, who don't depend on these services, such as public education, Social Security, public health insurance, welfare, law enforcement, public libraries, and public transportation. Middle class people rationalize these cuts by turning the poor, "big government," and public employees into scapegoats, blaming them instead of the rich for the financial squeeze on themselves.

12. The rich can use the power of hiring and firing to force workers and students (as future workers) into compliance with pro-rich attitudes; because we have to cater to them to get or keep a job, we tend to fall into doublethink compartmentalized thinking to rationalize our servitude to them.

13. The rich are able to create a favorable public image of themselves through ownership or sponsorship of news and entertainment media, advertising, and public relations. They exert a large degree of control over education as donors or university trustees and by sponsoring research in both universities and private think tanks that supports their interests.

14. (8) Many rich people and corporations get away with criminal or unethical activity that causes relatively little public indignation or opposition from law enforcement agencies, compared to actions by lower-class criminals or "leeches." The middle class tends to have a double standard or selective vision in playing down misconduct by the rich and playing up that by the poor. How can we expect poor people to respect the law or act morally when those at the top of society set such a poor example?

15. It is often affluent conservative businesspeople who benefit most from the government subsidies that conservatives claim they oppose (compartmentalized thinking): subsidies to farmers (including for food stamps); to insurance companies, doctors, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and sellers of health insurance; to bankers for student loans; to bondholders for government debts, and so on.

16. (6) Wealthy people and corporations control the defense industry, which receives the biggest government subsidy of all and whose only customer is the government. Spending on weapons that are only intended to be destroyed or replaced by more advanced ones is disastrous for the national economy. (But the defense industry is exempt from conservative attacks on government bureaucracy and waste, because it produces big corporate profits and campaign contributions.) More and more of our national income has been eaten up by this wasteful spending, which is a major cause of inflation and deficit spending and which has squeezed out spending on more productive domestic programs like education and employment for public works. During the Cold War, the military-industrial complex and its wealthy executives became the tail that wagged the dog of defense policy in their own self-interest, artificially perpetuating tensions with Russia to bolster their profits and power (mirroring the military estab-

lishment in Russia that was similarly self-interested). The main reason Communism collapsed was not the American arms buildup but the inept, dictatorial bureaucrats who were running the Soviet Union's government and economy. But because American conservatives are always partial to militarism, they tend to be blind to the military as a special interest and to fraud and waste in military spending, which has accelerated again after September 11 and the Iraq war, rationalized by appeals to fear of terrorism.

17. The rich can influence foreign policy to protect their foreign investments, markets, and sources of natural resources and cheap labor. International competition for markets has frequently been the cause of wars throughout history.

18. The wealthy profit from wars that are conducted in their class interests and that consume weapons that they produce, but they and their children rarely risk their own lives fighting in those wars. Any business interest that profits from a war should be expected to pay increased taxes to finance it.

19. (11) Rich people on the whole do not give a great amount to charity, relative to their income or net worth, and they benefit from what they give through tax deductions, trusteeships, and a favorable public image as philanthropists or supporters of religion.

20. (12) Attempts to reconcile wealth with Christianity amount to hypocritical rationalizations, since they are completely contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

21. (15) Some semisocialist countries (e.g., Denmark, Sweden) have surpassed America in per capita income, quality of life, and well-functioning democracy, while some capitalist countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, South Africa under apartheid, Chile under Pinochet, El Salvador under Duarte, the Philippines under Marcos) are plutocratic, right-wing dictatorships, and Americans' prosperity and freedom are paid for at the expense of poor people in those countries, which are in effect colonies of American corporations.

22. (16) Statistically based arguments: Since the 1980s, the income of the richest 1 percent of Americans has skyrocketed, and the gap between the rich, middle class, and poor has become greater than at any time since the 1920s. The rich obviously are paying more in taxes because their *income* is greater in relation to everyone else's, thanks to Reaganomic subsidies, and their after-tax savings have increasingly outstripped everyone else's. Inflation has been reduced mainly through reduction of real income for the majority of workers, largely through outsourcing of jobs to Third World sweatshops. Economic growth since the eighties has been slower than in previous decades, and the jobs created have been mostly low-wage ones. The main reason more people are working is that two or more people in the same household have been forced to work in order to make the real income previously earned by one; most Americans now have to work more hours to make the same real income they did thirty years ago.

## **The CEO Makes What? Return of a Fair-Pay Debate**

*By David R. Francis*

*The Christian Science Monitor*, March 27, 2000



It's proxy time for corporate America. That means companies must reveal the earnings of their top executives. Those numbers can be startling.

The new issue of *Forbes* magazine has an article headlined: "The Age of the \$100 million CEO." It profiles a dozen chief executives recruited with salaries, bonuses, plus stock options worth from \$130 million to \$1.8 billion over a few years.

It lists 50 bosses with total 1999 incomes that range from \$3.3 million to \$650 million.

## **Are they worth it?**

Pro-capitalist *Forbes* argues that it is the free market which sets the pay of executives, especially those newly recruited, and that the handsome pay packages do not represent manipulation of semi-helpless corporate boards.

In other words, compensation committees of corporate boards choose optimal pay contracts to give CEOs incentives to maximize shareholder wealth—make firms thrive.

But to Scott Klinger, the astounding rise in executive pay in the 1990s is "a problem of corporate governance."

A boss appoints the members of the boards that set his or her own pay, says Mr.

Klinger, co-director of Responsible Wealth, in Boston. This is a network of 450 highly affluent people concerned about "economic inequality" in the United States.

Company directors, Klinger continues, are often CEO friends from other companies. Some are subordinates. Those found to be tough on executive salaries, aren't likely to get appointed to other boards.

This executive-pay debate revives each spring as the financial press fills with reports from proxies on fancy executive pay.

One new element is a just-published academic study for the National Bureau of Economic Research by economists Marianne Bertrand of Princeton University in New Jersey, and Sendhil Mullainathan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass.

The two find that executive-pay gains are often as much due to "luck" as they are to performance, that is, a reward for making companies prosper.

## **A bit of background:**

In recent years, companies have to a much larger extent compensated executives by giving them options on company stock on top of a salary, bonuses, and other benefits.

One advantage is that options duck a law passed by Congress in 1994 which says that straight salaries beyond \$1 million will not be tax deductible as an expense by the company paying them. There is a loophole in the law for compensation based on performance, and that includes options. If the stock of a company rises in price, it is assumed that the company CEO and other top execs are responsible. So it is justified that their options are now worth millions.

Another advantage, notes Professor Bertrand, is that many people don't understand options. So if a CEO wants "to steal or skim [corporate assets], it is a much better, clever way to do it with options."

That advantage is fading as the public's grasp of options grows. The AFL-CIO maintains a Web site ([www.paywatch.org](http://www.paywatch.org)) which notes that in 1998 the average CEO made a "staggering" 419 times the pay (including options) of a typical American factory worker. This compares with a multiple of 42 in 1980. Options and soaring stocks largely explain that escalation.

The trade federation Web site gets some 3.3 million visitors a year, allowing corporate employees to compare their own wages with that of their CEOs.

Back to the Bertrand-Mullainathan paper. It uses three different measure of "luck" that a CEO cannot influence.

One is the price of oil. This is set by the market, as influenced by OPEC production constraints. If the price of oil goes up, the price of oil companies' stocks go up and its executives with their options get more "lucky dollars." Another is the foreign-exchange rate of the US dollar, relevant to firms heavily into trade. The third looks at yearly average performance in specific industries.

In all three cases, CEO pay (salary and bonuses as well as options) goes up from luck as much as from performance.

And Bertrand and Mullainathan find that the representation of large shareholders (say in a pension fund) on a company board reduces the extent of CEO pay arising from luck by as much as a third. Presumably the big shareholders insist on pay packages that help shareholders.

Klinger is pushing shareholder resolutions at several firms to make CEO pay more reasonable. One at Allied Signal, for instance, would limit CEO pay to an unspecified multiple of the average worker. It won't pass.

## **Left Watch: Why Try Holly Sklar's Socialist Plans for Economy When United States Is Doing Just Fine?**

*By Elizabeth Carnell*

LeftWatch.com, September 1, 1999

Are American workers steadily losing ground economically? Will this be the first generation to do worse than its predecessors?

Left-wing writer Holly Sklar spoke at Western Michigan University a couple weeks ago arguing that America workers were on the brink of abject poverty and only by adopting her mix of socialist reforms can the nation be saved.

It's a shame that the level of intellectual inquiry on both the right and left has degenerated to the point where people like Sklar, and her counterparts on the right such as Pat Buchanan, are allowed to perpetuate this myth.

The truth is Americans are much better off today than they were even 20 years ago, and the United States still enjoys the highest standard of living in the world.

To make her case, Sklar cited common statistics that real median wages have declined over the last 20 years, that one in four children are born into poverty, and that income inequality is growing due to corporate greed.

Income statistics are essentially useless in and of themselves. First, they exclude Americans who are self-employed and take their wages directly from their businesses.

Second, they ignore income transfers from government programs such as welfare or financial aid.

Most importantly, though, they ignore non-cash benefits. Benefits have a distinct advantage over cash for compensation—benefits aren't taxable. In 1965 noncash benefits made up only 25 percent of employee compensation, while today such benefits constitute almost 44 percent of total compensation.

If almost half a worker's compensation is omitted from an analysis, of course the illusion created is that workers are headed into abject poverty. Add those benefits in, however, and the picture looks quite different.

Sklar's confusion about the trend in income leads directly to her other errors in discussing poverty. She complained, for example, that official government statistics vastly undercount poverty rates and as a measure of poverty, prefer to define it as anything less than 155 percent of the official threshold.

After digging around at official poverty statistics, one thing becomes clear—they vastly underestimate the income and wealth of those counted as being in poverty. In fact, Census Bureau studies have shown significant numbers of those in poverty own their own homes, cars and other consumer goods. Studies consistently show those listed in poverty eat just as well, and in a few areas actually better, than their wealthier counterparts.

This odd result is explained in the problems inherent in measuring income. The Census Bureau reports that people in poverty spend \$1.94 for every \$1 in income they report.

An additional problem with poverty statistics is they count income only during a single year rather than over the lifetime of individuals. This ends up including people who are relatively well off, but have made short term choices which lower their income temporarily.

College students are the obvious example. Many college students end up living off of financial aid and maybe a part-time job, deferring income now for potentially higher incomes later. Many college students, however, are included in poverty statistics. The same phenomenon occurs with elderly retirees who may have hundreds of thousands of dollars in assets, but relatively low incomes.

By not tracking income over the life of an individual, poverty statistics distort the number of people who are truly needy.

The upshot is that welfare and other assistance programs end up wastefully targeting not only those who truly need it, but also millions who don't.

When income over the life of individuals is examined, the results are startling—very few people remain at the very top or very bottom of income levels for very long.

The University of Michigan's Panel Survey on Income Dynamics is the longest-running study examining this area. It studied 50,915 Michigan residents of all age groups and incomes from 1968 to 1991 and confirms that economic mobility is large indeed.

For example, of those people who were in the bottom 20 percent of wage earners in 1975, only 5 percent were still in that income group in 1991. Only 1 percent of those actually stayed in the bottom 20 percent every year during the study. An astounding 80 percent of those in the bottom 20 percent in 1975 were in the top 60 percent in 1991, while 29 percent had risen to the top fifth of wage earners.

As economist Michael Cox notes, "The evidence suggests that holding low-income jobs is largely a transitory stage for people with little work experience."

The results of this study are backed up by a 1992 Treasury Department study which analyzed tax returns from 14,351 households. In that study, 86 percent of those in the bottom 20 percent of wage earners in 1979 had moved to a higher group by 1988. Fifteen percent of those individuals made it to the top fifth of income earners.

To cure this incredible level of economic opportunity and high living standards, Sklar and her ilk would adopt the failed policies]]of European nations which have led to declining living standards and more than a decade of double digit unemployment.

We can only hope Americans will reject this snake oil prescription of socialism and instead strengthen the free market principles which have made our nation the most prosperous in the history of the world.

### *What's Behind Income Disparity]]*

*By George Will*

From The Washington Post Writers Group September 27, 1993

A monk asks a superior if it is permissible to smoke while praying. The superior says certainly not. Next day the monk asks the superior if it is permissible to pray while smoking. That, says the superior, is not merely permissible, it is admirable. The moral of the story is that much depends on how a thing is presented.

Consider, for example, this lead paragraph from a *New York Times* news story: "New studies on the growing concentration of American wealth and income challenge a cherished Part of the country's self-image: They show that rather than being an egalitarian society, the United States has become the most economically stratified of industrial nations." But the same data could be reported as demonstrating that the United States, more than any other industrial nation, values equality, sensibly understood.

The studies purportedly show that the wealthiest 1 percent and wealthiest 20 percent of American households have a larger portion of the nation's wealth than they used to have, and a larger portion than the wealthiest households in other industrial

nations have. Furthermore, the least wealthy 20 percent of Americans have a smaller portion of

the nation's wealth than the bottom 20 percent have in other industrial nations.

The data, even if accurate, need not compel the essentially political judgment expressed in the *Times* paragraph above.

In it, note the word "egalitarian." What the country's self-image actually celebrates is broad if imperfect equal opportunity for striving. Americans have never been egalitarian in emphasizing equality of outcomes.

A society that values individualism, enterprise and a market economy is neither surprised nor scandalized when the unequal distribution of marketable skills produces large disparities in the distribution of wealth. This does not mean that social justice must be defined as whatever distribution of wealth the market produces. But it does mean that there is a presumption in favor of respecting the market's version of distributive justice. Certainly there is today no *prima facie* case against the moral acceptability of increasingly large disparities of wealth.

This century's experience with government attempts to use progressive taxation to influence the distribution of income suggests the weakness of that instrument and the primacy of social and cultural forces in determining the

distribution of wealth. Consider three things that might conduce to a smaller gap between the most and least affluent households. Stopping immigration would reduce downward pressure on wages. A stock market crash would devalue the portfolios of the wealthy. And curtailing access to college and postgraduate education would limit the disparities in the marketable skills that increasingly account for income disparities.

But to suggest such "solutions" is to understand that the problem of increasing inequalities of wealth is not a problem we will pay just any price to remedy, and may not be a problem at all.

In today's deregulated global economy, with highly mobile capital and an abundance of cheap labor, the long-term prosperity of an advanced nation is a function of a high rate of savings—the deferral of gratification that makes possible high rates of investment in capital, research and development and education. All these forms of social capital are good for society as a whole and are encouraged by high rewards for those who accept the discipline. That is why promoting more equal distribution of wealth might not be essential to, or even compatible with, promoting a more equitable society. And why increasingly unequal social rewards can conduce to a more truly egalitarian society, one that offers upward mobility equally to all who accept its rewarding disciplines.

#### *Topics for Discussion and Writing*

Compare Holly Sklar's "Let Them Eat Cake" and David Francis's "The CEO Makes What?" with John Weicher's "Wealth Gap Claptrap," George Will's "What's Behind Income Inequality," Elizabeth Carnell's "Why Try Holly Sklar's Socialist Plans?" and P. J. O'Rourke's "Closing the Wealth Gap" in Chapter 11. Outline Weicher's, Will's, Cantrell's, and O'Rourke's main arguments and calculate to what extent and how per-

suasively you find they speak to the particular aspects of income inequality discussed in the text and by Sklar, Francis, and the left lines of argument outlined in this chapter. To what extent do the latter, liberal arguments evade the conservative ones?

Do you think Sklar's analysis and proposals here are accurately described by Carnell as "socialist"? What in them is distinctively socialistic, by the definitions in Chapter 15, as opposed to liberal?

How does Carnell's analysis of mobility among the rich and poor compare with your experience or that of others you know? Debate her argument against including in poverty statistics "people who are relatively well off, but have made short-term choices which lower their income temporarily College students

are the obvious example. Many college students end up living off of financial aid and maybe a part-time job, deferring income now for potentially higher incomes later."

In "The CEO Makes What?" Francis asserts, "A boss appoints the members of the boards that set his or her own pay." Research this assertion's truth. If it is true, does this situation represent a serious **conflict of interest**? To whom are corporate executives and boards of directors accountable? *Should* they be accountable, say, to government regulation? What solutions do you think that liberals, conservatives, libertarians, and socialists, respectively, would propose to resolve these problems? Research the governance of corporations, the influence of small stockholders, and so on. How strong a case can be made that this situation calls for increased government regulation on corporations?

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING 511

Conservatives argue that executive pay is a direct reward for the company's performance and that executives deserve whatever they get. How strong a rebuttal is presented by the figures about skyrocketing executive compensation (in many cases, quite out of proportion to company profits and assets) in America over the past few decades, and in comparison to every other democratic country, and the drastically increased gap between CEOs and workers? Debate what a reasonable differential between executives and rank-and-file workers should be.

Francis cites as his source "Responsible Wealth, . . . a network of 450 highly affluent people concerned about 'economic inequality' in the United States." Highly affluent people benefit from economic inequality, so this group would seem to be advocating policies against their own selfish interests. Does this tend to make them a credible, relatively unbiased source on this subject?

Use "An Outline of Conservative and Leftist Arguments on the Rich, the Poor, and the Middle Class" as a point of departure for individual or group study toward a research paper, looking for conservative rebuttals of the liberal and leftist lines of argument.

# Chapter 21. Collecting and Evaluating Opposing Sources: Writing the Research Paper

The foregoing study units might culminate in an assignment, for the preliminary stages of a term paper, of an annotated bibliography and working outline, described below and designed to teach you how to locate and analyze articles and books with opposing partisan viewpoints on the chosen topic. These exercises are intended to help prevent you from simply picking *American Spectator* or *In These Times*, a book published by Regnery Press or South End Press, a report from American Enterprise Institute or the Institute for Policy Studies, off the library shelf to use as a source and quoting it as gospel, without a critical understanding of the sponsor's habitual viewpoint. Following the procedure illustrated here should enable you to avoid assertions in your papers like "Reaganomics was hugely successful" or "Reaganomics was a total disaster," and instead to use phrasing like "Holly Sklar, writing in the leftist *Z Magazine*, presents a socialist argument that Reaganomics vastly widened the gap between the rich and poor in the United States"; or, "Ed Rubenstein, in the conservative *National Review*, refutes statistics presented by leftists like Sklar claiming that Reaganomic policies have widened the gap between the rich and poor." You can then go on to explain how the source's general ideological viewpoint applies to the particular issue in question, analyze the rhetorical/semantic patterns accordingly, and evaluate the source's arguments against opposing ones. In this way you can get beyond the **parochial** mentality of those who read and listen only to sources that confirm their preconceptions while deluding themselves that these sources impartially present a full range of information.

Lest this approach be misconstrued as an invitation to total relativity or skepticism, in the conclusion to your term paper you should try, not to make a final and absolute judgment on which side is right and wrong, but to make a balanced summary of the strong and weak points made by each of the limited number of sources you have studied, and then to make—and support—your judgment about which sources have presented the best-reasoned case and the most thorough refutation of the other side's arguments. Your instructor should then be able to grade you for the paper and the course on the quality of your support for your conclusion—regardless of what that conclusion may be.

# Assignment for an Annotated Bibliography and Working Outline

Turn in a set number of bibliographical entries, determined by your teacher, on an equal number of leftist and rightist sources, including at least one magazine article and one book or monograph report from the left-wing publishers and one article and book or report from the right-wing publishers in Chapter 15. Then annotate them according to the following guidelines and develop them into a detailed working outline keyed to citations of these entries.

1. Identify the author's political position, using clues from affiliation with a particular research institute, book publisher, journal of opinion, party, or organization, and—more importantly—from arguments she or he presents that exemplify the glossary terms and the particular patterns of political rhetoric outlined in Chapter 15; give enough quotes (or highlighted photocopies) to support your identification. In cases where the author is not arguing from an identifiable position but is only reporting facts, indicate which position the reported facts support and explain how. (Note: some newspapers, magazines, and other publications have an identifiable political viewpoint in general, in their news and op-ed orientation, but also attempt to present other views at least some of the time; e.g., the *New York Times* is predominantly liberal, but it often carries conservative op-ed columns, letters, and so on. You shouldn't assume that any article appearing in such a periodical will automatically share its predominant viewpoint; look for other identity clues.)

2. Apply to each source the "Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric" ( Chapter 5) and "Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric" ( Chapter 15) along with the more general principles of rhetorical analysis throughout this book.

## Sample Working Outline, Annotated Bibliography Entry, and Term Paper

### Working Outline: Reaganomics Rides Yet Again

**Peter Hammond**

#### I. Introduction

A. Present financial crisis in Tennessee and University of Tennessee, due to tax-revenue deficit. Various types of tax plans now before state legislature. Popularity of flat taxes over progressive ones divides conservatives and liberals. Trace this division to "Reaganomics" in 1980s.

B. Briefly explain supply-side economics and opposition of conservative vs. liberal views on it.



C. My viewpoint and bias: conservative parents, upbringing, and major; acknowledge validity of liberal arguments, but in transition to main body, mention Ponnuru and Carnell (and Roberts if space allows) here as best conservative rebuttal of them.

## II. Main Body

A. Definitions and justifications of Reaganomics; contrast to Keynesian economics. (Synthesize from Bartlett and Roth, Evans, Phillips, Roberts)

B. Liberal arguments claiming negative consequences of Reaganomics

1. Income gap grew between rich, middle class, and poor. (Barlett and Steele, Krugman, Phillips, Sklar, Giroux)

2. Concentration in ownership of corporations grew, squeezing out small businesses. (Barlett and Steele, Alterman)

3. Tax revenue reductions resulted in unprecedented increase in deficits and national debt. (Stockman, Brinkley, Krugman, Fram)

4. Cuts in income, property, capital gains, corporate, and inheritance taxes favored the rich, while increases in Social Security and sales taxes hurt the middle class and poor. (Barlett and Steele, Krugman)

5. Instead of spending their savings from tax cuts, etc., on productive industrial investment creating jobs, many wealthy individuals spent it on personal luxuries, exorbitant executive salaries and expense accounts, corporate takeovers and downsizing, movement of operations to cheaper labor markets overseas, lobbying and campaign contributions controlling government in favor of the rich. (Barlett and Steele).

6. Deregulation of industries like savings and loans and energy resulted in gigantic frauds, leaving taxpayers to pay the bill. (Barlett and Steele, Enron case)

7. The “hidden agenda” of Reaganomics was not economic but political—to create deficits that would block funding of public services favored by and favoring liberals: “Starve the beast.” (Brinkley, Krugman)

8. Reagan administration reduced the high inflation of the Carter years, but at the expense of lowered wages, increasing poverty, and reduced tax revenues. (Stockman—note that he was Reagan’s Director of Management and Budget who helped engineer Reaganomics, hence a believable source.) [Cut 8. if necessary for length] C. Rhetorical analysis of liberal sources

1. Most are generally well reasoned and supported.

2. No visible possible conflicts of interest or special pleading: most sources are journalists and scholars in social sciences, though they have the Democratic liberal pro-labor bias of employees or pro-tax bias of public employees.

D. Conservative rebuttals other than Roberts, Ponnuru, and Carnell

Some of these were written during or soon after the Reagan administration, so sound great in theory, but without having been tested in practice. More recent ones mostly either evade responding to the strongest liberal arguments or else fall into common sneaky defenses of Reaganomics, like how much more the rich are paying in taxes (without telling how much more they’re making than everyone else), presenting statistics about the rise in average national income or equal percentage gains for each

income bracket in income or tax cuts (without discussing how much greater the gains have been for the rich in *dollar* amounts).

E. Paul Craig Roberts, "What Everyone 'Knows' About Reaganomics," *Commentary*, 1991.

1. Who is he, and what is his viewpoint? Author of *The Supply-Side Revolution*, published by Harvard U. Press, a top-rank scholarly publisher. Major theorist and planner of supply-side economics in Reagan administration; associated with Republican-allied foundation think tank (CSIS), magazine (*Commentary*), and financier William E. Simon. All this gives him an authoritative viewpoint, but also motives for possible special pleading and rationalization to excuse Reaganomics' failures.

2. His strongest and weakest arguments. Weakest arguments are those in the category of D1 above. Also that Democrats in Congress "busted" Reagan's attempts to cut budget (contrary evidence in Stockman and Grossman in *The Nation*). Strongest arguments are based on analysis of statistics indicating that liberals are wrong about (1) increases in deficit spending and national debt under Reagan, (2) American debts to foreign creditors, (3) drops in investment and productivity, (4) decline in wages and income for middle class, and rise of poverty among poor.

3. Bottom line of conflicting causal analyses: liberals believe Reaganomics was unsuccessful because it pushed a shaky theory too far, while Roberts believes it was highly successful and that its only failures resulted from not being pushed far and long enough.

F. Ramesh Ponnuru, "Time's Terrible Two."

1. Substantive rebuttal to Barlett and Steele on corporate debt, junk bonds, deregulation, corporate pension funds.

2. Some questionable arguments in today's perspective, but generally impressive.

G. Elizabeth Carnell, "Why Try Holly Sklar's Socialist Plans for Economy When United States Is Doing Just Fine?"

1. Main arguments:

a. "The truth is Americans are much better off today than they were even 20 years ago, and the United States still enjoys the highest standard of living in the world."

b. Liberals' statistics about high unemployment and poverty are skewed because they exclude self-employment, government welfare and financial aid (like to college students), and noncash benefits, as well as deceptively excluding people like college students who choose to be unemployed temporarily in order to improve their long-range prospects.

c. Liberals' statistics "vastly underestimate the income and wealth of those counted as being in poverty" (2), according to Census Bureau studies.

d. "When income over the life of individuals is examined, the results are startling: very few people remain at the very top or very bottom of income levels for very long" (2). She cites various statistical studies showing much more mobility out of poverty into the middle class and even into "the top fifth of wage earners" (2) than liberals acknowledge.

2. Points liberals would dispute

III. Conclusion. Where does this leave me as a citizen and voter? What have I learned from this assignment?

A. Beware of politicians' and talk radio shows' oversimplifications and deceptive statistics on these issues.

B. Take some courses in statistics and political economy.

C. Start regularly reading journalistic and scholarly books and journals of opinion with differing viewpoints, to keep up with ongoing debates over these issues.

## Annotated Bibliography Sample Entry

Paul Craig Roberts, "What Everyone 'Knows' About Reaganomics," *Commentary*, February 1991, 25-30.

Who is he, and what is his viewpoint? According to bio note, author of *The SupplySide Revolution*, published by Harvard U. Press, a top-rank scholarly publisher. Major theorist and planner of supply-side economics in Reagan administration; associated with Republican-allied foundation (Olin, through its head William Simon, a Forbes 400 savings and loan entrepreneur), think tank (Center For Strategic and International Studies), and magazine (*Commentary*). All this gives him an authoritative viewpoint, but also motives for possible special pleading and rationalization to excuse Reaganomics' failures.

Weakest arguments are common ones used by conservatives to downplay the negative effects of Reaganomics, like how much more the rich are paying in taxes (without telling how much more they're making than everyone else), presenting statistics about the rise in average national income or equal percentage gains for each income bracket in income or tax cuts (without discussing how much greater the gains have been for the rich in *dollar* amounts). Also that Democrats in Congress "busted" Reagan's attempts to cut budget (contrary evidence in Stockman and Grossman in *The Nation*).

Strongest arguments are based on analysis of statistics indicating that liberals are wrong about (1) increases in deficit spending and national debt under Reagan, (2) American debts to foreign creditors, (3) drops in investment and productivity, (4) decline in wages and income for middle class, and rise of poverty among poor. If his statistical analysis is accurate (I can't be sure it is, and need to check out his data), then liberals are wrong on these points.

## A Model Student Research Paper (Using Mla Style)

Peter Hammond

English 255, Public Writing 10 August 2004

## Reaganomics Rides Yet Again

When I first enrolled as an undergraduate at the University of Tennessee, in summer 2002, the state treasury of Tennessee was just about bankrupt from a massive deficit. Because a budget had not passed for the next fiscal year by the July 1 deadline, the government shut down for several days and many state employees were temporarily laid off without pay, before a desperation budget was finally passed. The functioning of the state university was curtailed—the summer session that many students needed to graduate was nearly canceled. Every year we have been hit with tuition increases that have shifted the cost of college education steadily away from taxpayers and onto students. This and other increases in the costs of getting a college degree have coincided with a long-term decline in federal financial support for college students, forcing those like me to work at outside jobs for twenty to forty hours a week while carrying a full course load to avoid prolonging this whole expensive ordeal of getting the degree we need for a good job. A recent editorial in the *New York Times* titled “Public Colleges, Broken Promises” addressed this problem sympathetically, but otherwise there has not been a lot of concern voiced about it in our national media or politics.

The main source of Tennessee’s financial crisis is that the state does not have an income tax, and revenues from the existing sales, property, and other taxes have fallen far short of expenses. Liberal advocates of an income tax have been fighting for years

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to get one enacted, but have met fierce opposition from conservative legislators, lobbyists, talk show hosts and their followers, and the majority of the public, who seem to be dead set against being taxed any more, in spite of living in a state whose total tax burden is among the lowest in the country. Conservatives’ main line of argument is that the state government has plenty enough money, but that the problem is bureaucratic waste. They say that “tax and spend liberals” who claimed the government and university were about to shut down were just using scare tactics. (The state and university did keep running after 2002, although with reductions in services.)

The various proposals competing in the legislature include increases in sales, gas, and tobacco taxes, as well as progressive and flat-rate income taxes. Polls show that the majority of the public favors sales taxes over income taxes and, if an income tax is inevitable, a flat one over a progressive one. (In a flat tax, everyone pays at the same rate regardless of their income or how much they buy; in a progressive tax, people pay a progressively higher percentage as their income or cost of purchases increases, as in a luxury tax. So flat taxes are also called “regressive,” not with a negative connotation but just denoting the absence of progressivity in rate increases.)

I never gave much thought to taxes before, but now I can see how tax policies directly affect my life, so I’ve developed an interest in studying the subject. The weirdest thing I’ve found is that many people in Tennessee, and elsewhere in America, believe that flat taxes are the most fair because everyone pays at the same rate. But if they would just do a little simple math, they would find out otherwise. The *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, a

conservative newspaper, recently published a set of tables projecting how a progressive, or graduated, income tax would affect Tennesseans, compared to the current sales tax, as a percentage of income. The tables show clearly that the income tax would cost the poor and middle class less money than current flat sales taxes do, and would cost the rich more, especially since the sales tax costs the poor and middle class a larger percentage of their subsistence income than it does the rich. So why do the majority, most of whom are not rich, continue to favor flat taxes?

On the national level, one of President George W. Bush's first priorities when he was elected in 2000 was to enact, with the support of the Republican majority in Congress, an across-the-board (or flat) income tax cut, even though flat tax cuts, like flat rates, give the biggest benefit to the rich. Liberals like Molly Ivins argued that 42.5 percent of the savings went to the top 1 percent of taxpayers. What's more, the tax cuts came at a time of recession, when the federal government was sinking into deficit spending after nearly a decade of surpluses under President Clinton. President Bush and the Republicans also tried to abolish the inheritance tax, from which the first \$675,000 of value—twice that for couples—was exempt. (According to Krugman's *The Great Unraveling*, this one was sold by appeals to pity about fictitious middleclass victims confiscated of their inheritance by "the death tax.") Bush kept pushing for more tax cuts even when September 11, 2001, and the war on terror added billions of dollars to the national budget, leading to record-breaking deficits. Our generation will be saddled with the interest payments on this debt, which is owed largely to foreign financial interests, and future tax increases are probably in store for us to pay it.

Why then is there such widespread support for tax policies that cause deficits and seem to benefit mainly the rich, and what is the historical origin of this support? My research suggests an answer in one word: "Reaganomics." This is a popular term for the economic policies, technically known as "supply-side economics," applied by Ronald Reagan in his term as president from 1980 to 1988. According to whether you read conservative or liberal sources, Reaganomics was either the greatest thing for America since Wonder Bread, or a total disaster that has messed up my generation's economic prospects for the rest of our lives. Belief in Reaganomics has remained almost a religion for American conservatives like President George W. Bush and for tax-cutting advocates in Tennessee and elsewhere throughout America.

I should preface my summary of arguments by saying I approached this research project with a pretty strong bias, since I was raised in a Republican family of Reagan fans and am in a conservative major, Business. I want to graduate and earn the kind of high income Reaganomics encourages. So I have never been seriously exposed to the leftist arguments I encountered in my research here, and I have to say that I found many of them more persuasive than the conservative sources I found—with three exceptions, with which I will conclude my paper.

From what I have read about supply-side economics, the main idea is that economic prosperity for everyone can be stimulated by cutting government spending while cutting taxes, which have been oppressively high, equally for all income levels (that is,

making taxes less progressive), cutting back regulation of business, and providing other incentives for private investment. The biggest share of savings goes to wealthy individuals (the income tax rate for the highest bracket of income, over about \$300,000, was reduced from 70% in 1980 to a historic low of 27% in 1986) and to corporations paying corporate taxes. Conservatives believe those in the private, or corporate, sector can manage economic activity more efficiently than government and will place their tax savings, etc., in the “supply side” of the economy, making profitable investments, creating new jobs and increased profits, that in turn produce enough additional tax revenue to offset the original cuts. The sources I have read defending supply-side economics include Bruce Bartlett and Timothy Roth, Robert Bartley, Elizabeth Carnell, Michael Evans, Jack Kemp, Rush Limbaugh, Ramesh Ponnuru, Ed Rubenstein, Thomas Sowell, and John C. Weicher.

This theory is the opposite of liberal, “Keynesian” economics, named for an English economist whose policies formed the basis for Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal

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and for current European “social democracies,” whose democratic governmental and economic policies are a kind of halfway house between pure free enterprise and pure socialistic central management of the economy. In the Keynesian model, the government spends a lot and taxes a lot (with progressively higher taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations), especially during periods of economic recession, in order to “prime the pump” of the economy and provide, in the public sector, full employment and services that the private sector has failed to provide sufficiently (like education, law enforcement, and highways, as well as welfare, unemployment insurance, and Social Security providing a safety net against poverty). This policy, combined with a large amount of government regulation on business, also serves to curb the economic and political power of rich individuals and corporations, which isn’t a problem that bothers conservative supply-siders, since they mainly don’t like government power—except in the military.

Now, I have also been reading several books and articles by liberals and leftists that trash the results of Reaganomics, and even one book, *The Triumph of Politics*, by David Stockman, who was one of the conservative engineers of supply-side economics when he was Director of Management and Budget for President Reagan after his election in 1980, but who confessed in his book that Reaganomics was so misguided that it not only screwed up the economy in the 1980s but has left later generations like ours in debt for life because of the financial deficits it created. My main sources on this side are Donald Barlett and James Steele, Alan Brinkley, Steve Brouwer, Susan Searles Giroux, Jerome Grossman, Molly Ivins, Paul Krugman, and Holly Sklar. I will summarize the case these sources make against Reaganomics, then concentrate on two conservative sources that refute this case.

Here are some of the negative consequences cited by the critics of Reaganomics:

- A sharply increasing gap has grown in income and net worth privileging wealthy individuals and corporations over the middle class, the poor, and small businesses (Barlett and Steele 4-10). Even George Will, a staunch conservative admits this. Furthermore, Susan Searles Giroux asserts:

The pay gap between top executives and production workers grew from 42:1 in 1980 to a staggering 419:1 in 1998 (excluding the value of stock options), according to *Business Week's* "Forty-ninth Annual Executive Pay Survey." The same report notes that "Had the typical worker's pay risen in tandem with executive pay, the average production worker would now earn \$110,000 a year and the minimum wage would be \$22.08" instead of the current wage of \$5.15. And how does this wage figure in terms of yearly salary? A 40-hour week at \$5.15 per hour "nets a pre-tax annual income of \$10,300, or about \$6,355 below the official 1998 poverty line for a family of four." In contrast to these poverty wages, "the average large company chief executive was paid \$10.6 million, a 36 percent jump over 1997." (971)

- Corporate ownership has become monopolized in fewer and fewer hands, so that a handful of giant corporations control the majority of business activity nationally and locally, squeezing out small independents (Barlett and Steele 11-36). Among the most prominent areas of concentration are news and entertainment media, where in the past twenty years, according to Eric Alterman's *What Liberal Media*, the major companies have been reduced from fifty to six, thus creating a virtual monopoly on control of information available to the public, along with countless conflicts of interest between media owners and their other corporate holdings that they report on in the news or plug as entertainment.
- The large tax cuts beginning in 1981 resulted in revenue shortfalls creating the biggest deficits in American history and increasing the national debt from \$1 trillion when Reagan took office (which had resulted from slow accumulation all through previous American history) to \$3 trillion in 1991 (Brinkley). In President Clinton's eight years, income taxes were raised and the budget was not only balanced but produced a surplus. (This was a decade of a booming economy, and no one claims that Clinton's policies were the main cause of the surplus, but they did prove that raising taxes does not in itself curb economic growth.) When George W. Bush took office, he started slashing taxes again, and continued even after September 11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq added unpredicted tens of billions to the budget, whereas most previous wars had been financed by tax *increases*. By Bush's fourth year in office, the White House predicted a \$445 billion deficit, the largest in history (Fram).
- The reduction in income taxes for individuals favored mainly the rich, and was exceeded by tax breaks for corporations, capital gains, and inheritance, while other taxes shouldered mainly by the middle class and poor, like ones on Social

Security, Medicare, and sales, were increased, with little publicity, so that the total tax burden for most individuals except for the rich actually *increased* (Barlett and Steele, Krugman *The Great*).

- Instead of using the savings they got from tax breaks, deregulation, and other favors from the Reagan and both Bush administrations to create economic growth and new jobs in America, many rich individuals and businesses took the money and ran. Among their scams were outlandish executive salaries, expense accounts and bonuses, investment abroad taking jobs out of America and exploiting cheap foreign labor, and corporate mergers or takeovers resulting in downsizing and layoffs of rank-and-file employees. Another important result of concentration of wealth at the top has been the growing control of the rich over government policies through campaign contributions, lobbying, and rich people themselves running ever more highly financed campaigns for election, like Ross Perot and Steve Forbes (Barlett and Steele 189-211).
- In the 1980s, deregulation of industries like savings and loans resulted in gigantic frauds by many executives and the bankruptcy of their companies, leaving taxpayers with a multi-billion-dollar bill to cover government guarantees to those citizens whose money was deposited in S & Ls that invested deposits in boom-and-bust “junk bonds” (Barlett and Steele, 106-23). In a more recent episode, deregulation of public utilities in the 1990s, most prominently in California, led to energy companies like Enron swindling the public by artificially creating electrical shortages in order to jack up prices. Deregulation of the financial industry was also a factor in the recent scandals involving corporations including Enron and its accounting firm Arthur Andersen, in which assets and profits were fraudulently inflated to drive up the price of company stock and executive compensation.
- A 1995 article by Alan Brinkley in the *New York Times Magazine*, titled “Reagan’s Revenge, as Invented by Howard Jarvis,” argued that a trial run for Reaganomics was Proposition 13, the 1978 California initiative sponsored by real estate lobbyist Howard Jarvis, which sharply reduced property taxes. It was sold as tax relief for the average homeowner, but it sneakily also included business property, and it was a flat-tax reduction, so that the biggest beneficiaries were the wealthiest corporations and homeowners. The resulting shortfall in tax revenue produced long-range deterioration of state and local public services. A 1997 op-ed by Brent Staples in the *New York Times* titled “How California Betrayed Its Schools” confirmed that Proposition 13 “fractured the civic structure and savaged support for California’s universities, libraries, children’s programs and, most tragically, its public schools It now ranks 43<sup>rd</sup>

nationally in education spending.” (Right down there at the bottom with Tennessee!) Similar waves of state and local tax cuts throughout the country, inspired by Propo-



sition 13, have (in combination with loss of federal support for localities caused by Reaganomic tax and budget cuts) resulted in bankrupting local governments and starving public services. These measures have all been sold with strong emotional appeal about how overtaxed Americans are, but even a conservative economist like former secretary of commerce Peter G. Peterson acknowledges that, “Of all 27 developed countries . . . the United States is roughly tied with Japan as the least taxed as a share of GDP [Gross Domestic Product],” and that today’s total tax revenues nationally are lower than at any time since 1968 (45). Basically, middle class taxpayers, being squeezed out by the rich who are outside their power, take out their frustration by blaming their losses on government and voting to cut taxes and government spending, which in turn deprives them of government benefits.

- According to Brinkley, the “hidden agenda” of both Proposition 13 and of Reaganomics was not economic but political—to cripple areas of government spending that benefit liberal groups like minorities, the poor, labor, teachers, university faculties, and students, and to open the door to privatization of institutions like schools and Social Security, which could then be run for profit by businesses. So Brinkley hypothesized that the deficits and debts run up under Reagan in effect served to handcuff Bill Clinton when he was elected in 1992 from implementing the spending programs he had planned in national health insurance, education and job training, raising the minimum wage, rebuilding national infrastructure, and so on (Brinkley 32-36). Brinkley’s hypothesis has been updated by *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, an economist who has been one of the most outspoken critics of Reaganomics and Bushonomics; Krugman cites (in order to criticize it) a recent Republican strategy called “starve the beast”:

To starve the beast, you must not only deny funds to the government; you must make voters hate the government. There’s a danger that working-class families might see government as their friend: because their incomes are low, they don’t pay much in taxes, while they benefit from public spending. You must *raise* taxes on working

class Americans in order, as The [Wall Street] Journal said, to get their “blood boiling with tax rage.” (“Tax Cut Con” 57)

Most of the sources I read making the case against Reaganomics were written by reputable journalists and scholars, with no apparent conflicts of interest or reasons for special pleading or stacking the deck; none of them were officials in the Democratic Party, though that is probably their political affiliation. David Stockman was a specially credible source, because he was speaking as a Republican insider who came to realize that Reaganomics was a huge mistake. These writings were also well documented and reasoned, with no gross fallacies I could find.

Most of the conservative sources I read are also reputable journalists, scholars, and government officials (except for Rush Limbaugh, who is fun to read but not very reliable!), although many have been Republican officials or affiliated with corporate-funded

research institutes and media that have a vested interest in making the rich look good. They made a persuasive sounding case for Reaganomics in theory; however, they failed to respond to many of the liberal charges listed above. Many of the conservatives also used some sneaky rhetorical tricks, especially in using statistics. For example, they all like to play up the fact that the rich are paying more of the tax burden since Reagan's tax cuts, but they downplay the main reason, that the rich are making much more income and controlling more ownership and wealth than anyone else. They also play up the increase in average income among all Americans since the eighties, but downplay the obvious truth that the average is skewed upward by the huge gains at the top. Another area of sneaky use of average figures is the tax savings

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provided by Reagan's and Bush II's cuts. President Bush's first round of cuts in 2001 was sold with the claim, "'92 million Americans will receive an average tax cut of \$1,083'" (Krugman, "Tax Cut Con" 61). Bush appeared on TV in a photo op with a couple and their two children who were said to have an income of \$40,000, displaying a blow-up of their refund check for \$1,600. I wonder why Bush didn't appear with Bill Gates displaying his refund check for several million dollars. In the 2004 election, Republicans accused Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry of wanting to raise taxes on the middle class, but Kerry insisted that he would maintain Bush's cuts for the middle class while only raising taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations.

But as I said earlier, a couple of conservative sources I read present stronger arguments than any of the others. One was an article in *National Review* in 2000 by Ramesh Ponnuru (who is not identified by a biographical note), titled "*Time's* Terrible Two: The Perils of Barlett and Steele." This is a rebuttal to the book *America: What Went Wrong* and a series of articles in *Time* by liberal journalists Donald Barlett and James Steele. Ponnuru applies a lot of sneering invective toward B & S, but he also presents some substantial arguments against them and in defense of Reaganomics. For example, discussing the series of articles in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on which *America: What Went Wrong* was based, he says:

The 1991 series recycled every Democratic cliché about Reaganomics. According to Barlett and Steele—let's call them B & S for short—the country was de-industrializing. The only new jobs were in hamburger-flipping. Corporate debt was rising, thanks to junk bonds. So was the trade deficit. Companies were dismantling their pension guarantees. Deregulation had been a disaster for everyone but the rich. The middle class was vanishing. The solution was for the government to raise taxes on business and the rich, prohibit "corporate raids," cap executive salaries, and direct investment toward strategic industries.

If all this was untenable then, it seems downright quaint today. Almost everybody now sees that the debt-financed restructuring of corporate America in the '80s left it much more able to succeed in the '90s. "Junk bonds," no longer demonized, are simply called "high yield bonds." Deregulation clearly cut the cost of transportation; only by ignoring inflation were B & S able to obscure this fact. The rise of services created not

only dislocations, but opportunities. People prefer their 401(k)s to yesterday's pensions for the simple reason that the newer accounts have higher yields. And by participating in capital markets, these accounts direct resources to promising industries far more efficiently than governments could. (24)

As a conservative business major, of course I am biased in favor of Ponnuru's positions, although just off-hand, I can see some possible holes in his arguments. A recent article in *Consumer Reports* ("Deregulation") contradicts his claim about the benefits of deregulation in air travel and elsewhere, and the financial scandals during the administration of President Bush II prompted calls for a new wave of corporate regulation. The Enron employees who invested their 401k pensions in that company, and who lost everything when it went bankrupt, might not be thrilled with Ponnuru's praise of such corporate pension plans. Ponnuru's glowing picture of the American economy in 2000 didn't look so rosy after the stock market crashed soon afterwards. But then, I've learned that arguments that look very persuasive when they're published, whether on the right or the left, can look pretty foolish a year or so later.

Another impressive conservative source was Elizabeth Carnell's "Why Try Holly Sklar's Socialist Plans for Economy When United States Is Doing Just Fine?" posted on the conservative Left Watch website in 1999. Carnell takes Sklar's use of statistics in her many journalistic writings as typical of liberal and leftist groundless "myths" about American workers' loss of ground economically in the two decades since Reaganomics was first implemented. "The truth is Americans are much better off today than they were even 20 years ago, and the United States still enjoys the highest standard of living in the world." Among Carnell's other arguments are the following:

- Liberals' statistics about high unemployment and poverty are skewed because they exclude income from self-employment, government welfare and financial aid (like to college students), and noncash benefits, as well as deceptively excluding people like college students who choose to be unemployed temporarily in order to improve their long-range prospects.
- Liberals' statistics "vastly underestimate the income and wealth of those counted as being in poverty" (2), according to Census Bureau studies.
- "When income over the life of individuals is examined, the results are startling—very few people remain at the very top or very bottom of income levels for very long" (2). She cites various statistical studies showing much more mobility out of poverty into the middle class and even into "the top fifth of wage earners" (2) than liberals acknowledge.

Carnell's figures and arguments seem pretty solid. I can again, however, see some possible flaws in them. When she asserts that "Americans" are much better off than twenty years ago and enjoy the highest standard of living in the world, she doesn't identify her sources or the standard of measurement. This might be another case of

misleading use of average figures, if that is what she is using. Krugman points out that this kind of averaging simply means the extravagant wealth of the few at the top makes it appear like that wealth extends to the entire population, whereas in fact the

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majority of Americans have lower incomes than those in several other democracies, in addition to lacking the tax-funded national health insurance, free access to higher education, more unemployment insurance, and other benefits available to everyone in social democracies (“For Richer” 76). As for Carnell’s figures on socioeconomic mobility, I have seen refutations of some of the studies on which they were based in liberal sources such as Steve Brouwer’s *Sharing The Pie* and Kevin Phillips’s *Wealth and Democracy* (Phillips is another former Republican strategist, like Stockman, who has been increasingly critical of the aftermath of Reaganomics in the growing gap between the rich and the middle class and poor). I wonder what Carnell would say about Giroux’s figures on the incredible incomes that top executives are piling up while their employees are falling ever farther behind. What are the odds that Bill Gates, with his net worth of \$42 billion in 2002, or Cendant CEO Henry Silverman, who made \$54.4 million, plus \$287 million accumulated in stock options in 2003 (Sklar, “Outsource”), will fall back into the middle class? Or that one of their minimum-wage employees making \$10,300 will make it into the Forbes 400 wealthiest Americans, whose lowest net worth is \$600 million? And does Carnell think the current minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour is too high? Still, Carnell does present some statistics that effectively refute Sklar and other liberals or leftists.

This course has made me aware, though, that many of the statistics presented by both conservatives and liberals or leftists in sources like those I’ve studied here are not documented fully enough for students to check out their sources, and that even if the statistics are accurate, the authors’ interpretation of them might not be. In addition, some of these arguments are at a level of economic theory that is too difficult for me, or most non-specialists, to evaluate—as far as I know, they might be brilliant or pure BS. I have now read enough rebuttals on both sides to know that whatever facts and figures are presented by one will be trashed by the other.

So there’s really no way for me to be absolutely sure right now which side is more believable on these important issues. And I still don’t have an answer to the question of why the majority of voters in Tennessee and elsewhere continue to favor regressive tax policies over the progressive ones that seem to be more to their advantage. Maybe one explanation is that people get mad about the income tax because it requires filling out lengthy forms and sending in a check, while people don’t have to exert themselves for the taxes they are charged every day on Social Security, sales taxes, gasoline, etc., and might not even think about them. So politicians can get away with raising the latter taxes without opposition, and few middle-class people understand that if income tax were raised on the rich and corporations, they themselves could get a reduction in both income tax and in Social Security, Medicare, and regressive sales taxes. Also,

I guess everyone in America is culturally conditioned to want to be a millionaire, and to believe that *they* are going to win the lottery, so they've been

persuaded that taxing the rich is killing the golden goose, or that what benefits the rich will trickle down equitably to everyone else—even though from what I've read, there are a lot of holes in the trickle-down theory.

Where does all this leave me as a citizen, now that I have to vote between candidates in presidential and Tennessee elections who take opposing sides on budget and tax cuts, or when I hear talk radio “experts” like Rush Limbaugh or Al Franken spouting impressive-sounding economic statistics? Well, first of all, I will now be aware that politicians and talk jockeys tend to present issues in a grossly oversimplified, one-sided, and undocumented way, so I will take whatever they say with more than a grain of salt. Second, I have become curious enough about who's telling the truth in these debates that I want to take some courses in statistics and political economy that will increase my understanding of economic problems and the rhetoric of arguments about them. And finally, I have gotten tuned into reading journalistic and scholarly books and journals of opinion on the opposing sides that will enable me to keep up with, and take an active Part in, the never-ending give-and-take over these issues.

Now I just pray that the University of Tennessee's courses and libraries are not shut down by tax shortages before I have a chance to pursue these studies!

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# Chapter 22. Documentation

## Citations in Your Text

The recommended documentation style for college papers varies among academic disciplines and instructors; however, the standard style for most English and other humanities courses is based on the Modern Language Association's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (2003). Instead of older, cumbersome styles of footnotes and bibliographies, the current MLA system uses streamlined, brief notes with page references in parentheses following citations, along with a "Works Cited" section at the end providing full bibliographical data.

The student paper in Chapter 21, "Reaganomics Rides Yet Again," by Peter Hammond, illustrates this style.

The basic rule for documentation is to use common sense in providing readers whatever they need to know about who your sources are throughout the course of your paper, in providing enough bibliographical information in your list of works cited for them to look up the sources themselves, and in making perfectly clear which ideas in the paper are your own and which ones you are attributing to sources ("According to," "In So-and-so's opinion"). Failing to make the latter distinction at any point in your paper can amount to plagiarism.

Whenever you directly or indirectly cite outside sources, you should identify authors with full name and any pertinent identifying information in introducing the quotation, although after the first reference you can just use last names. You might also give the name of the work in introducing it if you think it is useful for readers, as this saves them time in having to look ahead to the works cited section, and you can abbreviate long titles to a word or two. If you discuss a work by one author at length, alternating quotations that have various page numbers and your own text, and it is clear that all quotations refer to the same work, you needn't repeat the author's name each time you give a page reference. If you come back to a previously cited work after others have intervened, put the author's last name in the parenthetical reference, for example, (Roberts 25). If you cite more than one source by an author, include a shortened version of the title of the work you're citing within the parenthetical reference, for example, (Krugman, *Peddling* 24). Readings from a textbook like this one should be cited in their original source publication when possible. Otherwise, the quotation should be cited in this form: (Morse, as quoted in Lazere 1). Lazere should then be included in the works cited, as indicated in that section below.

## Style of Parenthetical References

Parenthetical page references are placed at the end of the last sentence quoted, after the quotation marks but before the final period or question mark, with spacing as follows:

”. . . Italy’s was four times larger” (29).

Page references need not use “p.” or “pp.” or be preceded by a comma—for example, (Barlett and Steele 11-36).

Dates for periodicals cited in your text can follow either the form (2 July 1999) or (July 2, 1999). If there is no day, there should be no comma between month and year (July 1999). The *MLA Handbook* recommends spelling out the full name of months in your text but abbreviating those with more than four letters in your works cited section.

## Indented Quotations

Quotations longer than four lines should be introduced by a colon, set off from the introductory text with a double space, and indented ten spaces from the left margin and another five spaces for paragraph beginnings. Do not use quotation marks with indented quotations, since the setoff style itself signals a quotation. In this style, the parenthetical reference goes after the last sentence and after the period:

. . . the facts tell an entirely different story. (29)

## Works Cited Section

In MLA style, all sources cited throughout the text are fully documented in a works cited section at the end. (If you want to include works that you have consulted without citing them in the paper, title this section “Works Cited and Consulted.”) Sources are listed with last names first, in alphabetical order. Entries for which the author is not identified are alphabetized by title. Entries are double-spaced with no extra space between lines. If an entry runs longer than one line, additional lines are indented five spaces, using a “hanging indent” word-processing command. Main elements are separated by periods. Publication information is written in one sentence, in this order: New York: Basic Books, 1986.

## Sample Entries

### Books

*Book by One Author.* The author’s last name is followed by a comma, the first name, and a period. The title comes next, italicized (underlined if the paper is handwritten or typed on a typewriter), followed by a period. Next is the city of publication, followed



by a colon, then the name of the press, comma, and year of publication. If the city of publication is not one of the major publishing centers and its state is perhaps unknown to readers, include a standard abbreviation for the state after the city name.

Schrag, Peter. *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future*. New York: New Press, 1998.

Barton, David. *The Myth of Separation*. 4th Edition. Plano, TX: Wallbuilder Press, 1991.

*Book by Two or Three Authors*. List the names of all authors, reversing the first and last name of only the first author.

Barlett, Donald, and James Steele. *America: What Went Wrong?* Kansas City: Andrews McNeel, 1992.

*Book by Four or More Authors*. List only the first author's name, followed by a comma and et al. (Latin, "and others").

Belenky, Mary Field, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic Books, 1986.

*Two or More Works by the Same Author*. Arrange the works alphabetically by title (not counting "The" or "A"). After giving the author's name in the first entry, begin subsequent entries with three hyphens and a period.

Krugman, Paul. *The Great Unraveling*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004.

———. *Peddling Prosperity*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1994.

*Chapter in a Single-Author Book*. Begin with author and Chapter title (in quotation marks), followed by period, then book title. Page numbers for the selection follow the publication date after a period.

Kozol, Jonathan. "Other People's Children." *Savage Inequalities*. New York: Crown, 1991. 40-82.

*Book or Anthology with an Editor*. Begin entry with author's name, followed by comma and "ed."

Aufderheide, Patricia, ed. *Beyond PC: Toward a Politics of Understanding*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 1992.

*Chapter in an Anthology*. Begin with author and title of the selection (in quotation marks), followed by the anthology title, editor's name, publisher and date, followed after a period by page numbers of the article.

D'Souza, Dinesh. "The Visigoths in Tweed." *Beyond PC: Toward a Politics of Understanding*. Ed. Patricia Aufderheide, Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 1992. 11-22.

## Periodicals

For signed articles, start with author's name (alphabetized by last name), article title in quotation marks, periodical name italicized, and date (abbreviate months longer than four letters), followed by a colon and page number. For unsigned articles or editorials, alphabetize by title.

## Article in a Newspaper.

Ivins, Molly. "Tax Cut Redistributes Wealth in Wrong Direction." *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 14 Feb. 2001: A12.

## Article in a Weekly or Biweekly Magazine.

Grossman, Jerome. "Blame Game." *The Nation*, 26 Oct. 1992: 457.

## Article in a Monthly or Bimonthly Magazine.

Roberts, Paul Craig. "What Everyone 'Knows' About Reaganomics." *Commentary*, Feb. 1991: 25-30.

## Personal Interviews

Hansley, Dr. Phillip, Associate Chancellor, University of Tennessee. Personal interview. 28 June 2002.

## Sources on the World Wide Web

Carnell, Elizabeth. "Why Try Holly Sklar's Socialist Plans for the Economy When the United States Is Doing Just Fine?" Left Watch 1 Sept. 1999 <[http://www.leftwatch.com/holly\\_sklar/sklar001.html](http://www.leftwatch.com/holly_sklar/sklar001.html)>.

Include page numbers as in other entries if they are provided, though they are not in many Web sites and e-mail postings.

Chapter  
*Using Research*]]  
*Resources*

## Sources in Print

- Books: Card catalog (online or drawer)
- General or specialized references (encyclopedias, etc.): Library reference room
- Government publications
- Periodicals (newspapers, scholarly journals, popular magazines):
  - Periodical indexes: may be printed, on-line, or on CD-ROM
  - Databases: may contain full text of journal and newspaper articles

Locating printed source materials in both books and periodicals requires determining

- *Subject headings*: classifications or categories for your general topic
- *Keywords*: words more specific to your topic, including authors, titles, and proper names

The Library of Congress subject headings system is an important aid for determining subject headings and keywords. This system is used by most libraries and many periodical indexes. These subject headings are found in large, hardbound books, owned by most libraries. Your library's card catalog—online or not—will also have Library of Congress subject headings, along with author and title headings, listed for book entries. If your library has an Internet home page, you may be able to access these sources off campus. Library home pages usually also offer a number of research resources.

## Government Publications

- *American Statistics Index (ASI)*
- *Congressional Information Service Index (CIS)*
- *Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications*
- *Resources in Education (RIE)*

## General-Circulation Periodicals, Book Publishers, and Research Institutes

See Chapter 15, table 15.1B and “Political viewpoints in sources,” for lists identifying their political viewpoint.

## Periodical Indexes

Periodicals are located through indexes that may be online, on CD-ROM, or in print. If your library's catalog is online, subject-specific indexes may include books as well as periodicals.

Among print indexes, *general indexes* are the best place to begin for many research topics:

- The *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, issued every month and cumulated quarterly as well as annually, is an author-and-subject index to articles of general (rather than scholarly) interest published in over a hundred American magazines. Also available online as *Readers' Guide Abstracts*.

- *The Magazine Index* lists chiefly by subject matter articles from over four hundred magazines.
- *The New York Times Index* lists selected articles published in the *Times* from 1851 to 1912, and all articles published in the *Times* thereafter. Issued twice a month with quarterly cumulations and then bound into annual volumes, this index is a prime source of up-to-date information.
- *The Newspaper Index*

*Specialized indexes* include, among many others:

- *The Environment Index*
- *The General Science Index*
- *The Humanities Index*
- *The Modern Language Association International Bibliography*
- *The Social Sciences Index*
- *The Bulletin of the Public Affairs Information Service*

## Online Resources

### Critically Analyzing Web Sites

*Look at the Web site's domain:*

- .com: commercial site. Either an individual or a commercial enterprise has paid to post material.
- .edu: maintained by an educational institution
- .gov: government agencies
- .mil: military groups
- .org: nonprofit organizations, special interest, and political party groups
- .net: commercial network

*Look at the Web site's sponsor.* Determining the Web site's domain is a first step. However, you should determine a site's credibility by finding out and researching what

specific organization, institution, or individual is responsible for the site. If you have trouble determining who posted the information, be careful. Virtually anyone can post on the Internet, and much that appears there is unreliable. Apply the same criteria of evaluating sound arguments and evidence there that you do to print sources.

*Determine when the site was updated.* There is a great deal of outdated information on the Internet. A credible Web site will usually indicate when it was updated. Your search engine may also provide you with dates.

## Avoiding Plagiarism from the Internet

Sources on the Internet must be acknowledged in the same general way as those in books and periodicals. You should identify the source in your text and provide bibliographical documentation in your list of works cited (see example in Chapter 22).

## Internet Search Engines

Using search engines requires determining keywords, also called “search terms,” and subject categories, also called simply “categories” or “directories.” Most search engines allow you to combine keyword searches with category searches. Some engines, such as Yahoo, work primarily through category searches.

Every search engine allows you to customize your search. The most common advanced search option is a Boolean or “word-filter” search that allows you to include and/or exclude certain words associated with your search term.

**Keyword Searches.** The most popular and powerful keyword search engines are:

- Google, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- All the Web, [www.alltheweb.com](http://www.alltheweb.com)

Other keyword search engines include:

- AltaVista, [www.altavista.digital.com](http://www.altavista.digital.com)
- Hotbot, [www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com)
- InfoSeek, [www.infoseek.com](http://www.infoseek.com)
- Lycos, [www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)
- Teoma, [www.teoma.com](http://www.teoma.com)

### Category Searches

- Yahoo, [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

- DMOZ Open Directory Project, [www.dmoz.org](http://www.dmoz.org)
- eBLAST: Encyclopaedia Britannica's Internet Guide, [www.Britannica.com](http://www.Britannica.com).
- LookSmart, [www.looksmart.com](http://www.looksmart.com)
- Librarian's Index to the Internet, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/InternetIndex/index.html>

### **Alternative-Format Searches**

- Ask Jeeves, [www.askjeeves.com](http://www.askjeeves.com), a keyword search engine in a question/answer format
- Northern Light, [www.nlsearch.com](http://www.nlsearch.com), a keyword search engine that allows results to be saved in folders organized by categories

### **Selected Online Databases for Books and Articles**

- *American History & Life*
- *Biography Index*
- *Book Review Digest*
- *Britannica Online*
- *CQ (Congressional Quarterly) Researcher*
- *Contemporary Women's Issues*
- Dow Jones News Retrieval
- ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center)
- Expanded Academic Index
- Fact Search
- *Humanities Abstracts*
- MLA (Modern Language Association) Bibliography
- Newsbank
- ProQuest Research Library
- *Readers' Guide Abstracts*

- *Social Sciences Abstracts*
- Stat-USA
- *Wilson Business Abstracts*
- *World Almanac*

**Full-Text Databases.** Many libraries have indexes that allow you to download a periodical text online. The most common full-text databases are:

- EBSCOhost
- LexisNexis
- ProQuest Research Library

Your library must be subscribed to these databases in order for you to use them.

## Online Government Document Sites

- Thomas (Library of Congress information service; it includes guides to congressional legislation), <http://thomas.loc.gov>
- Federal Web Locator, [www.infoctr.edu/fwl/](http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/)
- FedWorld Information Services, [www.fedworld.gov](http://www.fedworld.gov)
- National Archives and Records Administration, [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)

## Listservs, Bulletin Boards, Newsgroups, and Usenets

Listservs are e-mail lists either for organizations or for people interested in a specific issue or project. They allow a single text to be distributed to all those who have subscribed to the list. Bulletin boards, newsgroups, and Usenets provide e-mail forums on specific issues. A list of all of these can be found at the following Web sites:

- Liszt, [www.liszt.com](http://www.liszt.com)
- Tile.Net., [www.tile.net](http://www.tile.net)

## Online Newsmagazines and Newspapers

### Newsmagazines

- *Newsweek*, [www.newsweek.com](http://www.newsweek.com)
- *Time*, [cgi.pathfinder.com/time/daily](http://cgi.pathfinder.com/time/daily)

### International Newspapers

- *International Herald Tribune*, [www.iht.com](http://www.iht.com)
- (Australia) *Sydney Morning Herald*, [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)
- (Canada) *Canada*, [www.canada.com](http://www.canada.com)
- (Colombia) *El Colombiano*, [www.elcolombiano.com](http://www.elcolombiano.com)
- (Germany, in English) *Berliner Morgenpost*, [www.berliner-morgenpost.de/bm/international](http://www.berliner-morgenpost.de/bm/international)
- (India) *Afternoon Dispatch & Courier*, [www.aftemoondc.com](http://www.aftemoondc.com)
- (France) *Le Monde*, [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr)
- (Mexico) *El Universal Mexican Newspaper*, [www.el-universal.com.mx](http://www.el-universal.com.mx)
- (U.K.) *London Daily Times*, [timesonline.co.uk](http://timesonline.co.uk)
- (U.K.) *The Guardian* [www.guardian.co.uk/](http://www.guardian.co.uk/)

### National Newspaper Listings

- Alternative newspapers, [www.newslink.org/alter.html](http://www.newslink.org/alter.html)
- U.S. major daily metros, [www.newslink.org/dayin.html](http://www.newslink.org/dayin.html)

### National Daily Newspapers

- *Arizona Republic*, [www.azcentral.com](http://www.azcentral.com)
- *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, [www.ajc.com](http://www.ajc.com)
- *Baltimore Sun*, [www.baltimoresun.com](http://www.baltimoresun.com)
- *Boston Globe*, [www.boston.com/globe](http://www.boston.com/globe)
- *Chicago Sun Times*, [www.suntimes.com](http://www.suntimes.com)



- *Chicago Tribune*, [www.chicago.tribune.com](http://www.chicago.tribune.com)
- *Christian Science Monitor*, [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)
- *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, [www.cleveland.com](http://www.cleveland.com)
- *Dallas Morning News*, [www.dallasnews.com](http://www.dallasnews.com)
- *Denver Post*, [www.denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com)
- *Detroit Free Press*, [www.freep.com](http://www.freep.com)
- *Hartford Courant*, [www.ctnow.com](http://www.ctnow.com)
- *Houston Chronicle*, [www.chron.com](http://www.chron.com)
- *Indianapolis Star*, [www.indystar.com](http://www.indystar.com)
- *Kansas City Star*, [www.kansascity.com](http://www.kansascity.com)
- *Los Angeles Times*, [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)
- *Louisville Courier*, [www.courierjournal.com](http://www.courierjournal.com)
- *Miami Herald*, [www.herald.com](http://www.herald.com)
- *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, [www.startribune.com](http://www.startribune.com)
- *Nashville Tennessean*, [www.tennessean.com](http://www.tennessean.com)
- *New Orleans Times Picayune*, [www.nola.com](http://www.nola.com)
- *New York Daily News*, [www.mostnewyork.com](http://www.mostnewyork.com)
- *New York Post*, [www.nypost.com](http://www.nypost.com)
- *New York Times* [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)
- *Philadelphia Inquirer*, [www.philly.com](http://www.philly.com)
- *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, [www.postgazette.com](http://www.postgazette.com)
- *Sacramento Bee*, [www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com)
- *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, [www.stltoday.com](http://www.stltoday.com)
- *Saint Petersburg Times*, [www.sptimes.com](http://www.sptimes.com)
- *San Diego News Tribune*, [www.signonsandiego.com](http://www.signonsandiego.com)

- *San Francisco Chronicle*, [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com)
- *San Francisco Examiner*, [www.examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com)
- *San Jose Mercury News*, [www.sjmercury.com](http://www.sjmercury.com)
- *Seattle Times*, [www.seattletimes.nwsourc.com](http://www.seattletimes.nwsourc.com)
- *Tampa Tribune*, [www.tampatrib.com](http://www.tampatrib.com)
- *Toronto Star*, [www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)
- *USA Today*, [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com)
- *Wall Street Journal*, [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)
- *Washington Post*, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)
- *Washington Times*, [www.washtimes.com](http://www.washtimes.com)

## Online Journals of Opinion

- *American Enterprise*, [www.americanenterprise.org](http://www.americanenterprise.org)
- *American Prospect*, [www.prospect.org](http://www.prospect.org)
- *American Spectator*, [www.spectator.org](http://www.spectator.org)
- *Atlantic Monthly*, [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)
- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, [www.chronicle.com](http://www.chronicle.com)
- *Commentary*, [www.commentarymagazine.com](http://www.commentarymagazine.com)
- *Commonweal*, [www.commonweal.com](http://www.commonweal.com)
- *Conservative Digest*, [www.conservative-digest.com](http://www.conservative-digest.com)
- *Consumer Reports*, [www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org)
- *Dissent*, [www.dissentmagazine.org](http://www.dissentmagazine.org)
- *The Drudge Report*, [www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com)
- *Extra!* [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org)
- *Harper's*, [www.harpers.org](http://www.harpers.org)
- *Human Events*, [www.humaneventsonline.com](http://www.humaneventsonline.com)

- *Insight*, [insightmag.com](http://insightmag.com)
- *In These Times*, [www.inthesetimes.org](http://www.inthesetimes.org)
- *Mother Jones*, [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com)
- *Ms.*, [www.msmagazine.com](http://www.msmagazine.com)
- *The Nation*, [www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)
- *National Review*, [www.nationalreview.com](http://www.nationalreview.com)
- *The New Republic*, [www.tnr.com](http://www.tnr.com)
- *The New Yorker*, [www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)
- *The New York Review of Books*, [www.nyr.com](http://www.nyr.com)
- *Policy Review*, [www.policyreview.org](http://www.policyreview.org)
- *The Progressive*, [www.progressive.org](http://www.progressive.org)
- *Reason*, [www.reason.com](http://www.reason.com)
- *Salon*, [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com)
- *Slate*, [www.slate.msn.com](http://www.slate.msn.com)
- *Tikkun*, [www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org)
- *The Village Voice*, [www.villagevoice.com](http://www.villagevoice.com)
- *The Weekly Standard*, [www.weeklystandard.com](http://www.weeklystandard.com)
- *Z Magazine*, [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org)

## TV News Services

ABC News, [www.abcnews.com](http://www.abcnews.com)

- BBC News (British Broadcasting Corporation), <http://news.bbc.co.uk>
- CNN, [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)
- C-Span, [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org)
- PBS Democracy Project, [www.pbs.org/newsandviews](http://www.pbs.org/newsandviews)

## **Business, Labor, Economics**

- American Federation of Labor, [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)
- Commerce Department, [www.doc.gov](http://www.doc.gov)
- Federal Reserve Board, [www.bog.frb.fed.us](http://www.bog.frb.fed.us)
- FreeEdgar (company database from the Securities and Exchange Commission), [www.freedgar.com](http://www.freedgar.com)
- International Monetary Fund, [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)
- Public Register's Annual Report Service, [www.prars.com](http://www.prars.com)
- Stat-USA (U.S. Department of Commerce statistics), [www.stat-usa.gov](http://www.stat-usa.gov)
- World Bank, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

## **Politics: Nonpartisan Sources**

- Fact Check, [factcheck.org](http://factcheck.org)
- All Politics (*Time* and CNN), <http://allpolitics.com>
- The Democracy Network (covers local elections), [www.democracynet.org](http://www.democracynet.org)
- Kennedy School Online Political Information Network, [www.ksgwww.harvard.edu/ksgpress/opin/index.html](http://www.ksgwww.harvard.edu/ksgpress/opin/index.html)
- Opensecrets.org (campaign contribution information), [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)
- Federal Election Commission Data (campaign contribution information), [www.tray.com/fecinfo](http://www.tray.com/fecinfo)
- Project Vote Smart, [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)
- FedWorld Information Network, [www.fedworld.gov](http://www.fedworld.gov)

## **Party Organizations**

- Democratic National Committee, [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)
- Republican National Committee, [www.rnc.org](http://www.rnc.org)

- Democratic Socialists of America, [www.dsausa.org](http://www.dsausa.org)
- International Socialist Organization, [www.internationalsocialist.org](http://www.internationalsocialist.org)
- Green Parties of North America, [www.greens.org](http://www.greens.org)
- Libertarian Party, [www.lp.org/lp.html](http://www.lp.org/lp.html)
- New Party, [www.newparty.org](http://www.newparty.org)
- Reform Party, [www.reformparty.org](http://www.reformparty.org)

## **Conservative and Libertarian Organizations, Web Sites, and Listservs**

- The Right Side of the Web, [www.rtside.com](http://www.rtside.com)
- Right Spin, [www.rightspin.com](http://www.rightspin.com)
- College Republican National Committee, [www.crnc.org](http://www.crnc.org)
- Progressive Conservative Interactive, [PC Interactive@onelist.com](mailto:PCInteractive@onelist.com)
- Conservative Activist, [www.conservativeusa.org](http://www.conservativeusa.org)
- Center for the Study of Popular Culture (David Horowitz), [www.frontpage.com](http://www.frontpage.com)
- Leftwatch, [www.leftwatch.com](http://www.leftwatch.com)
- Town Hall: Conservative News and Information, [www.townhall.com](http://www.townhall.com)
- Liberty Tree (Libertarian), [www.Liberty-Tree.org](http://www.Liberty-Tree.org)
- The Federalist Society, [www.fed-soc.org](http://www.fed-soc.org)
- National Association of Scholars, [nas.org](http://nas.org)
- American Council of Trustees and Alumni, [goacta.org](http://goacta.org)
- Christian Coalition, [www.cc.org](http://www.cc.org)
- Liberty Alliance, [www.libertyalliance.org](http://www.libertyalliance.org)
- Empower America (William J. Bennett), [www.empower.org](http://www.empower.org)
- Judicial Watch, [www.judicialwatch.org](http://www.judicialwatch.org)
- Leadership Institute, [www.lead-inst.org](http://www.lead-inst.org)

- Young America's Foundation, [www.yaf.org](http://www.yaf.org)
- Young Americans for Freedom, [www.yaf.com](http://www.yaf.com)
- Students for Academic Freedom, [studentsforacademicfreedom.org](http://studentsforacademicfreedom.org)
- Cato Institute, [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org)
- Club for Growth, [www.clubforgrowth.org](http://www.clubforgrowth.org)

## **Liberal and Left Organizations, Web Sites, and Listservs**

- Electronic Policy Network (liberal publications and links), [www.epn.org](http://www.epn.org)
- Web Active (liberal links), [www.webactive.com](http://www.webactive.com)
- College Democrats of America, [collegedems.com](http://collegedems.com)
- AlterNet, [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)
- Common Dreams, [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)
- MoveOn, [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org)
- AFL-CIO, [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)
- AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, [aflcio.org/organize/](http://aflcio.org/organize/)
- Center for Campus Organizing, [www.cco.org](http://www.cco.org)
- Educators for Social Responsibility, [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org)
- Rethinking Schools, [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)
- Teaching Tolerance, [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)
- Jobs With Justice, [www.jwj.org](http://www.jwj.org)
- Solidarity Info Services, [solidarity4ever@igc.topica.org](mailto:solidarity4ever@igc.topica.org)
- IGC Labornet (Institute for Global Communications), [www.igc.org/labornet](http://www.igc.org/labornet)
- Free Speech TV, [www.freespeech/fstv/](http://www.freespeech/fstv/)
- Globalvision, [www.globalvision.org](http://www.globalvision.org)
- Media Channel, [www.mediachannel.org](http://www.mediachannel.org)
- Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, [www.fair@fair.org](http://www.fair@fair.org)

- The Left Business Observer, [www.dhenwood@panix.com](http://www.dhenwood@panix.com)
- Focus on the Corporation (Russell Mokhiber), <http://lists.essential.org/mailman/listinfo/corp-focus>
- Economic Democracy, [www.EconomicDemocracy.org](http://www.EconomicDemocracy.org)
- Michael Moore, [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com)
- Public Citizen, [www.publiccitizen.org](http://www.publiccitizen.org)
- Ralph Nader, [www.citizenworks.org](http://www.citizenworks.org)
- Free Press, [www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net)
- Media Matters for America (David Brock), [www.mediamatters.org](http://www.mediamatters.org)
- Tom Paine, [tompaine.com](http://tompaine.com)

# Glossary of Rhetorical and Critical Thinking Terms

**absolutism.** See **primary certitude**.

**abstract.** Adjective denoting generalized, theoretical concepts or words, in contrast to concepts or words denoting concrete, specific objects and actual instances. Critical thinking makes accurate connections between the abstract and the concrete.

**ad hominem.** See Chapter 12.

**ad ignoratiam.** See Chapter 12.

**ad populum.** See Chapter 12.

**alliteration.** Rhetorical or poetic technique of repeating consonant sounds for rhythmic effect.

**allusion.** A direct or indirect reference to a piece of information that readers or listeners are presumed to be familiar with.

**analogy.** A comparison based on a resemblance or similarity between two or more things. Critical thinking must distinguish between sound and false analogies, based on whether the two things being compared have more significant similarities or differences.

**analysis.** Various modes of critically examining a subject or forming value judgments on it, such as scientific, causal, moral, historical, logical, rhetorical, semantic, or literary. Analysis precedes and leads to **synthesis**.

**anecdote.** A brief story, often humorous, used as a form of argumentative **evidence**. The phrase “anecdotal evidence” has a somewhat negative **connotation** when it is used to suggest that a particular anecdote might be an **unrepresentative sampling** or **argument from the exception**.

**anthropomorphism** or **androcentrism.** The tendency to view humans as the center of all life, superior to all other animals, or to **project** human characteristics and expectations on everything in nature.

**appeal to authority.** See Chapter 12.

**appeal to fear** or **scare tactics.** See Chapter 12.

**appeal to the past.** See Chapter 12.

**appeal to pity.** See Chapter 12.

**argument.** Defense of a **premise**, **assertion**, or **claim** through **deductive** or **inductive reasoning** and **supporting evidence**. The mere assertion of an opinion without support does not constitute an argument, though many people fail to understand the distinction.



**argument from the exception.** See Chapter 12.

**assertion** or **claim.** In **inductive argument**, a disputable statement to be supported by evidence or reasoning.

**attribution.** Support of an argument through attributing a claim to a source, preferably a reliable one.

**authoritarianism.** The mental trait of uncritically accepting or obeying anything that someone perceived to be in a position of authority says. It also describes the mentality of political rulers who impose uncritical acceptance of their authority on those they rule, particularly through an undemocratic government, and it can be a description of the **ideology** of such governments.

**bandwagon.** See Chapter 12.

**begging the question.** See Chapter 12.

**bias** (Noun. The adjective is **biased**). In the neutral sense, any particular, subjective **viewpoint**. In the negative sense, synonymous with **prejudice**.

**causal analysis.** Mode of critical thinking identifying, or distinguishing between, causes and effects.

**causal fallacies or faulty causation.** See Chapter 13 for **blaming the victim**, **confusion of cause and effect**, **giving your side credit for positive results**, **post hoc ergo propter hoc**, **reductive fallacy**, **slippery slope**, **too much or too little**.

**circular argument.** See Chapter 12.

**“cleans” and “dirties.”** Words with strong positive or negative **connotations**, often used selectively and irrationally for emotional appeal in favor of one’s own side and against opponents. Also called by various semanticists “God” and “Devil” terms or “purr words” and “snarl words.” **committed relativism.** The understanding that in spite of the complexity and uncertainty of many truths, judgments of truth and falsity, right and wrong, and moral commitments still need to be made, on the basis of the most complete, diverse knowledge presently available to us.

**common practice.** See Chapter 12.

**compartmentalization** or **compartmentalized thinking.** See Chapter 12.

**conclusion** or **inference.** A reasoned judgment in an argument reached deductively through a sequence of **premises** or inductively through supporting **evidence**.

**concrete.** Adjective for concepts or words denoting a specific object or actual instance, as opposed to **abstract** or theoretical concepts and words.

**conflict of interest.** A financial or other kind of involvement (such as a family tie or friendship with one of the parties) in a controversy that might bias the viewpoint of a writer or speaker.

**connotation.** The emotional associations with, or implications of, some words, beyond their literal **denotation**.

**consistency.** The need for a speaker or writer to put ideas together that are free from selfcontradiction, **compartmentalization**, and **doublethink**.

**context.** The parts of a discourse that surround a word, passage, or concept and that can help elucidate its meaning, or the interrelated conditions within which something exists. **Quotation out of context** is a common fallacy (see Chapter 12).

**critical thinking.** An approach to argumentative rhetoric that includes formal and informal logic; the judicious use of evidence; ability to evaluate the quality of written or spoken arguments; awareness of psychological, sociological, and political factors in the formation of our thinking; skeptical questioning of, and open-minded dialogue on, all matters of truth and belief.

**cultural conditioning.** The whole complex of social forces that form our attitudes and behavior, frequently without our being conscious of their influence on us.

**cultural literacy.** Education theorist E. D. Hirsch's term for the body of factual knowledge needed as a basis for critical thinking and higher education, and the ability to recognize and use cultural **allusions**.

**culturally conditioned** or **socially constructed assumptions.** Beliefs or attitudes that we absorb unconsciously from our cultural conditioning. Learning to question those assumptions is an essential aspect of critical thinking.

**cumulativeness** or **cumulation.** The process of writing or understanding an **extended line of argument** through developing a sequence of ideas and **synthesizing** them into a conclusion. Related to **recursiveness** in the critical thinking process of moving forward and back repeatedly to get a coherent sense of a piece of writing.

**deductive reasoning** or **argument.** A form of argument in which a **conclusion** or **inference** follows through a logical chain of reasoning from one or more **premises**.

**defense mechanisms.** Psychological blocks to critical thinking that result from defensiveness against recognizing truths that are threatening to oneself or one's side. They include **reaction formation**, **denial**, **projection**, and **rationalization**.

**demagogue.** A politician or other public figure who cynically manipulates the emotions, ignorance, and prejudices of the masses for his or her own benefit or to gain power for a party or clique. **Demagoguery** or **demagogy** are the words describing this practice.

**denial.** Psychological **defense mechanism** involving irrational refusal to acknowledge an unpleasant truth, as distinguished from the justified denial or refutation of an asserted truth on reasoned grounds.

**denotation.** The concept or object that a word literally or objectively designates, a Part from its possible **connotation**.

**derision.** See Chapter 12.

**disinformation** or **black propaganda.** Information propagated by a governmental or other agency that is calculatedly false, intended to confuse opponents or discredit them by fabricating malicious stories about them.

**distortion.** See Chapter 12.

**double standard** or **selective vision.** Seeing faults on the opposing side that one is blind to on one's own, or applying a harsher standard of judgment to opponents

than to oneself and one's allies. A common form of **the ESBYODS principle** and of **doublethink**.

**doublethink**. A term from George Orwell's novel *1984*, devised by the all-powerful ruling party of the future state of Oceania to describe the self-contradictory mental process through which the masses are culturally conditioned into **rationalizing** all the party's lies, deprivations of rights, and constant changes of policy.

**downplaying**. The rhetorical pattern of deemphasizing or ignoring altogether evidence or arguments that are unfavorable to one's own side and favorable to the opposing side, while **playing up** the reverse pattern in favor of one's own side and against the opposing side. Can be done in either a scrupulous or an unscrupulous manner.

**drawing the line**. Indicating the limits of one's argument to prevent the possibility of its being pushed farther than one would be willing to defend, to the point of **reduction to absurdity**.

**either-or fallacy**, or **false dilemma**, **false dichotomy**. See Chapter 12.

**elitism**. The mentality of, or social domination by, a small group of people regarded by themselves or others as superior to the masses in either power, wealth, or education and culture. Opposed to **populism**.

**eloquence**. Language that is both emotionally moving and on a high moral plane, such as Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Eloquence also is distinguished by memorably articulate, ingenious, and apt language; as the eighteenth-century English poet Alexander Pope put it, in what is itself a famously eloquent phrase, "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."

**emotional appeal**. An attempt to sway the opinion of others through an argument based on **appeal to pity**, **fear**, or **sentimentality**.

**empirical**. The kind of inductive **evidence** derived from systematic observation, experimentation, or survey, typified by scientific or social-scientific research.

**enthymeme**. A common form of deductive reasoning, a **syllogism** with one missing or implied **premise**.

**equal and opposite extreme**. See Chapter 12.

**equivocation**. See Chapter 12.

**ESBYODS principle**. Acronym for "Everyone s—s, but your own doesn't stink." The universal, ethnocentric tendency for us all to be more perceptive of, and angered by, faults in others than in ourselves and our allies.

**ethnocentrism**. A conscious or unconscious belief in the inherent superiority of one's own social group or culture—nation, political party, religion, race, gender, locality, school, and so on—over others, and a tendency to view other groups or cultures in terms of one's own. **ethos**. The moral or intellectual character that speakers or writers project, as well as the kind of identity they establish with their listeners or readers. The Greek word *ethos* is the root of the English word *ethics*, so the meaning of *ethos* can be extended to include the ethical dimension in argument, including moral judgments

and the quality of support for them, as well as the forcefulness of the emotion and language supporting the judgment or action being advocated.

**euphemism.** The use, sometimes with deceptive intention, of a blandly positive word to sugarcoat a harsh reality.

**evidence.** Various means used to support an **assertion**, **claim**, or **premise**. Useful sources of evidence include (1) the writer's or others' personal experience, examples, anecdotes, reasoned analysis, or generally acknowledged truths, (2) **primary research**, and (3) **secondary research**.

**extended line of argument.** The development of several single arguments into a complex, longer argument.

**false inference.** Drawing a conclusion from an **implication** that is not warranted by it.

**figures of speech** or **figurative language.** The opposite of **literal language**. A variety of verbal **analogies** or symbols made by substituting one word for another whose meaning is in some way related to the first. The most common figures are **metaphor**, **simile**, **personification**, and **metonymy**. **Irony**, **paradox**, **hyperbole**, and **symbolism** are also sometimes defined as figures, in the sense that meaning in them is indirect and must be deciphered. In argumentative rhetoric, figures should be judged as analogies, in terms of whether they show a persuasive similarity and bring us closer to the **concrete** reality of a situation, or distract from that reality by vague **abstraction**.

**flag-waving** or **jingoism.** See Chapter 12.

**general semantics.** The branch of linguistics dealing with the perception of external reality by human thought and its translation into meaningful language and communication, with rhetorical emphasis on sources of misunderstanding and miscommunication. Aspects of semantics include **denotation** and **connotation**, **literal** and **figurative** language, **abstract** and **concrete** language, and **euphemism**.

**guilt by association.** See Chapter 12.

**half-truth.** See Chapter 12.

**hasty conclusion.** See Chapter 12.

**hatchet job.** A journalistic article or book calculated to smear the person it is about. Opposed to **puff piece**.

**hidden agenda.** A situation in which a speaker or writer, arguing on a particular issue, really is aiming for a different or larger goal without admitting it.

**hype.** A noun and verb used in advertising, public relations, show business, and political campaigns to mean publicity or promotion of a product, idea, or individual, often extravagant or **hyperbolic**. By extension, anything for which the public's expectations built up by publicity far exceed the reality.

**hyperbole.** Deliberate exaggeration for a rhetorical effect such as humor or shock.

**hypothesis.** A tentative **assertion** made in order to test its possible truth through exploring evidence and consequences of its implementation supporting or refuting it.

**ideologue.** A spokesperson for a particular **ideology**, usually political, who is so certain of its truth and closed-minded that she or he presents its viewpoint in a one-sidedly **polemical** or **propagandistic** manner.

**ideology.** A systematic body of ideas, religious, philosophical, aesthetic, or—most commonly—political. The dominant ideology of a society or social group is often absorbed by individuals unconsciously, as a pattern of **culturally conditioned assumptions**.

**image.** A word or phrase denoting a visual or other sensory object. Images can be either **literal** or **figurative**.

**implied or hidden premise.** In deductive arguments, usually **enthymemes**, a premise on which the conclusion depends but that is not stated explicitly or supported. If it is not especially controversial, then no harm is done by not stating or supporting it, but arguments frequently are weakened by assuming the truth of hidden premises that are disputable.

**imply, implication.** To imply, or make an implication, is to suggest that something is true without stating explicitly that it is. The opposite of **infer** and **inference**—the reader or listener infers or makes an inference from what the writer or speaker implies. “The implications of X’s position” refers to the consequences of a policy or argument.

**inductive argument or reasoning.** Marshaling of **empirical evidence**, data (facts and figures), or specific examples, either to support an **assertion** or to lead to a **conclusion** or **inference**.

**inductive leap.** See Chapter 12.

**infer, inference.** For a reader or listener to infer something is to draw a conclusion from a writer’s or speaker’s **implication**. **Inference** is also synonymous with the **conclusion** of an argument. A frequent error in reasoning is false inferences, drawing conclusions from a speaker’s or writer’s implications that are not warranted.

**invective.** A kind of **polemics** whose **tone** is angry or strident, filled with insults and **namecalling** toward opponents, and propagandistically one-sided.

**irony.** General term for many kinds of disparity, employed or pointed out by a writer or speaker for rhetorical effect—disparity between what is said and what is meant (verbal irony), between appearance and reality, between what people say and what they do, between intention and outcome, between what characters in a literary work know and what the audience knows (dramatic irony), between past and present realities (historical irony), and so on.

**I won’t . . . but I will.** See Chapter 12.

**Let’s you and him fight.** See Chapter 12.

**levels of meaning.** In approaching serious academic studies, it is necessary not only to read or write recursively and cumulatively, on a linear or horizontal plane, so to speak, but also to stop frequently to process varieties of information stacked or compressed “vertically” in a text, including multiple or complex meanings and viewpoints; irony, paradox, figures of speech, allusions or references (cultural literacy), between-

the-lines implications, words to look up in a dictionary, facts to look up in reference works, and citations to check for accuracy and further information.

**literal language.** Words that are used purely for **denotation** or description, as opposed to **figures of speech**.

**metaphor.** **Figure of speech** using a word or phrase to describe an object or concept it does not literally denote, in order to suggest a comparison, without the comparison being explicit as in a **simile**.

**metonymy.** **Figure of speech** making a symbolic substitution of a Part for a whole or a location for what is located there.

**name-calling.** See Chapter 12.

**non sequitur.** See Chapter 12.

**overgeneralization.** See Chapter 12.

**oversimplification.** See Chapter 12.

**paradox.** A seemingly self-contradictory statement that contains an ironic truth.

**partisanship.** Allegiance by a writer or speaker to a particular political party or **ideology**. **personification.** **Figure of speech** assigning human characteristics to animals or objects. **phallocentrism.** Cultural bias assuming men as the norm of humanity or the superior gender.

**plain folks.** See Chapter 12.

**playing up.** The rhetorical pattern of emphasizing one side of a controversy while **downplaying** the other side, which can be done in either a scrupulous or unscrupulous manner.

**polemics.** (Singular or plural noun.) Heated, usually **partisan** argumentation. Argumentation can be polemical while still being fair-minded and not resorting to **invective**. See “Ground Rules for Polemicists” in Chapter 11.

**populism.** Ideas or policies that speak for, and serve the interests of, the common people. Opposed to **elitism**. Appeals to populism can be judged either authentic or fake, as in **demagogy** and **plain folks**.

**prejudice.** Literally prejudging; making judgments, typically with strong attitudes, before one has studied a subject enough to make a fair judgment on it. Also, general closedmindedness and quickness to form negative **stereotypes**, especially toward particular nationalities or social groups. Synonymous with **bias**.

**primary certitude.** Being absolutely sure that your viewpoint is correct, even if you don’t have enough information to form an educated opinion; thinking in terms of black and white and failing to comprehend complex realities.

**primary research.** Any form of **empirical** support for an argument gathered personally by a writer or speaker. Contrasted to **secondary research**.

**projection.** Psychological defense mechanism shifting one’s own traits or faults onto others, or blaming others for doing to us what we are doing to them.

**propaganda.** A deliberately one-sided account of all issues, usually engineered by a government, political party, or **special interest group**.

**puff piece.** A journalistic article or book that is calculated to make the person or cause written about look good, **downplaying** all faults and suppressing any criticism. Opposed to **hatchet job**.

**quotation out of context.** See Chapter 12.

**rationalization.** Psychological **defense mechanism** through which people convince themselves that irrational beliefs supporting their side are really rational. “To rationalize” means to reason in a way that justifies a predetermined or desired conclusion.

**reaction formation.** A psychological **defense mechanism** in which people respond with irrational anger to an idea that is threatening to their way of thinking.

**red herring.** See Chapter 12.

**reduction to absurdity.** A rhetorical technique that pushes an opponent’s unqualified position to its extreme logical consequences, in order to show a weakness in it.

**rebuttal** (verb **to rebut**). A response to an argument presenting an opposing view. Often used synonymously with **refutation** and **refute**.

**refutation** (verb **to refute**). An attempt to discredit an opposing argument by showing factual errors and fallacies in it.

**relativity of viewpoint.** The concept that different individuals’ perceptions and beliefs tend to be relative to their **ethnocentric** biases. This concept does not imply that there is no objective truth or reliable basis for value judgments, but only that we need to become aware of our subjective viewpoint in order to approximate a more objective one or **committed relativism**.

**relevance.** Having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand, as opposed to various forms of the fallacy of **irrelevance**.

**religiosity.** A form of **sentimentality** that appeals to religious feelings but that lacks any true substance; it is sometimes hypocritical, but more often it is simply superficial.

**rhetoric.** The art of persuasion; principles, techniques, and forms of argumentation, incorporating but not limited to aspects of logic or reasoning. In popular usage rhetoric has a negative **connotation** associated with unscrupulous arguments, but in its actual **denotation**, rhetoric can be either scrupulous or unscrupulous.

**Rogsonian argument.** A rhetorical method devised by psychologist Carl Rogers in which opponents in an argument agree to show that they understand and respect the opposing position by summarizing it as they think its proponent would.

**secondary research.** Argumentative support through citation of scholarly, journalistic, or other sources, as opposed to the **primary research** that writers or speakers conduct themselves.

**self-fulfilling prophecy.** A variety of **circular argument** in which the belief in, or publicizing of, something itself causes it to become true or accepted. It can be a form of **vicious circle**, as in: Citizens think politicians are all corrupt, so they don’t inform themselves about politics or vote. But it’s their ignorance and apathy that enables

politicians to become corrupt, so that political corruption becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**sentimentality.** See Chapter 12.

**setting the agenda.** The control by one side in public discourse not only of particular arguments on controversial issues but also of the very framework of issues that will and will not be discussed. This is a powerful force in **downplaying** issues unfavorable to those setting the agenda by simply excluding them from consideration. Communications scholars talk about “the agenda-setting function of the media.”

**shifting ground.** See Chapter 12.

**simile.** A common **figure of speech** in which a **metaphorical** analogy is made explicit by the words “like” or “as.”

**skepticism.** The philosophical doctrine, central to critical thinking, that absolute, unchanging knowledge is impossible and that inquiry must be a process of systematic questioning in order to acquire approximate or relative certainty.

**Socratic dialogue.** A rhetorical method associated with Socrates in the dialogues of Plato, consisting of the attempt to arrive at truth through a series of questions and answers between two or more participants.

**special interests.** “Special” in the sense of selfish or personal, and “interests” in the sense of an investment or stake in a particular outcome. Individuals or organizations (such as corporations or labor unions) that have a stake, financial or other, in issues such as legislation, and that attempt to influence legislation or public opinion toward their own selfish ends, often against the interests of the general public.

**special pleading.** See Chapter 12.

**stereotyping.** **Overgeneralization** about some social group, often of a prejudicial nature.

**straw man.** See Chapter 12.

**style.** The distinctive characteristics of a particular writer’s or speaker’s language, or the genre of a written or spoken work. The style of a piece of writing, especially in the sense of its level of discourse, is related to its **tone**. Popular journalistic writing is likely to be more simplified, generalized, and superficial in style, as well as more polemical, than serious journalism or scholarly writing. Writers using the latter genres, however, often do combine serious research and documentation with a polemical tone.

**syllogism.** The classic form of deductive reasoning, consisting of two **premises** and a **conclusion** or **inference** drawn from them.

**symbol.** All language is symbolic, in the sense that spoken or written words are only arbitrary symbols for what they denote. The word *symbolism*, however, also refers to a distinctive kind of **figure of speech** in which a verbal **image** does not merely suggest a one-to-one analogy with some other denoted object, as in a **metaphor**, but stands for something larger or more elevated, as when Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*, seeking higher truths than those of the physical world, says, “I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.”



**synthesis.** The cumulation of the parts of an expository or argumentative **analysis** into a cogent conclusion.

**taboo.** A belief or value that is, in effect, forbidden to be considered in a particular society, even though it may be reasonable. Opposite of **totem**.

**tone.** The writer's implicit attitude, the tone of voice you "hear" in a piece of writing. Its importance in argumentation lies in the appropriateness and persuasive effectiveness of the tone the author chooses to use. Some of the adjectives applicable to tone include *compassionate, fair-minded, evenhanded, calmly and carefully reasoned, objective, opinionated, inspirational, sentimental, skeptical, cynical, humorous, ironic, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, sarcastic, facetious, angry, belligerent, accusatory, derisive, strident, shrill, polemical, and invective*.

**totem.** A belief or value that is, in effect, held sacred by a particular society, shielded from critical scrutiny, so that it is **taboo** to question it.

**tu quoque.** See Chapter 12.

**unconcretized verbal abstraction.** A vague concept, word, or phrase, usually with a strong **connotation**, but that **denotes** no concrete, specific reality, and thus impedes critical thinking.

**unrepresentative sample.** See Chapter 12.

**validity.** A term used in evaluating **deductive arguments**. Strictly speaking, a deductive argument is said to be valid when its **conclusion** follows logically and necessarily from its **premise(s)**. For the conclusion of a valid argument to be *true*, however, the premises must also be true.

**vicious circle.** A sequence of events, identified through **causal analysis**, in which a cause leads to an effect, and the effect in turn perpetuates the cause.

**viewpoint.** The subjective, restricted position from which each of us perceives both personal and social issues. Every viewpoint is a biased one, in the sense that nobody has a total, completely objective perception of controversial issues, but critical thinking enables us to aspire toward increased objectivity precisely through becoming more aware of our subjective biases and learning to understand others' differing viewpoints.

**what do you mean, "we"?** See Chapter 12.

**wishful thinking.** See Chapter 12.

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## A Semantic Calculator for Bias in Rhetoric

This is a guide that you can apply in writing papers about sources, with respect both to those sources' biases and to your own as a writer.

1. What is the author's vantage point, in terms of social class, wealth, occupation, gender, ethnic group, political ideology, educational level, age, and so on? Is that vantage point apt to color her/his attitudes on the issue under discussion? Does she/he have anything personally to gain from the position she/he is arguing for, any **conflicts of interest** or other reasons for special pleading? (See Chapter 17.)

2. What organized financial, political, ethnic, or other interests are backing the advocated position? What groups or **special interests** stand to profit financially, politically, or otherwise from it? In the Latin phrase, *cui bono*, "Who benefits?" (See Chapter 17.)

3. Once you have determined the author's vantage point and/or the special interests being favored, look for signs of ethnocentrism, **rationalization or wishful thinking**, **sentimentality**, **one-sidedness**, **selective vision**, or a **double standard**. (See Chapter 8.)

4. Look for the following forms of **setting the agenda** and stacking the deck reflecting the biases in number 3:

a. **Playing up**

- (1) arguments favorable to one's own side
- (2) arguments unfavorable to the other side

(3) the other side's power, wealth, extremism, misdeeds ("a widespread pattern of abuses"), or unity ("a vast conspiracy," "a tightly coordinated machine")

b. **Downplaying** (or suppressing altogether)

(1) arguments unfavorable to one's own side

(2) arguments favorable to the other side

(3) one's own side's power, wealth, extremism, misdeeds ("a small number of isolated instances," "a few rotten apples"), or unity ("an uncoordinated collection of diverse, grassroots groups")

c. Applying "clean" words (ones with positive connotations) to one's own side, without support

Applying "dirty" words (ones with negative connotations) to the other side, without support

d. Assuming that the representatives of one's own side are trustworthy, truthful, and have no selfish motives, while assuming the opposite of the other side's representatives

e. Giving credit to one's own side for positive events

f. Blaming the other side for negative events

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