

SWIMMING in a SEA
of IDEOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

At times one has to deal with hidden enemies, intangible influences that slink into dark corners and from this hiding [place] affect people by suggestion....When such elusive influences are brought into the light and branded, they lose their power over people.

Hexagram 57, line 2, *I Ching*, Richard Wilhelm translation

When the 3,000-year-old *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* mentions elusive influences it could well refer to ideologies that have entered our thinking without our full awareness, or to frames or filters designed by a propagandist or PR firm. These spooky half-ideas that haunt our thinking are the subject of this second of three books in the series *Thinking toward Survival*. The series is based on the belief that our current thinking patterns are not up to the challenge of the existential threats facing humanity. Each book proposes suggestions to improve the situation so as to keep our species and others alive and thriving on our green and blue planet. All three grew out of one book that was “half-written” in 1988. (That was wishful thinking—it wasn’t even one-tenth written.) A lot has happened since, and three things have become even clearer.

First, humans are a self-endangered species. My purpose here is not to convince you of our gloomy prospects. Plenty of others are doing that, and you really should be convinced by now—but I don’t want to spread doom and gloom. Instead, the aim is to analyze how our thinking got us here and—especially—how a different kind of thinking could get us out. In other words, there is still hope for the species. However, we don’t have a whole lot of time to change our ways.

Second, it is obvious that we in the United States are caught in the crossfire of numerous ideologies, along with blatant and subtle propaganda, all of which prevent us from giving full attention to the larger predicament of our species. The purpose of this book is to identify some of those ideologies, both the conscious and unconscious ones, and to describe how we collectively string words and images together in order to justify our own actions and to spread our ideologies and ideas far and wide.

Third, as the song goes, “the times they-are-a-changing” very rapidly. As I write, at least seven Arab nations are erupting in protests or revolutions against repressive, corrupt, and ineffective regimes that have been in power for decades. These uprisings have used social networks such as Facebook and Twitter as a major organizing tool. The online whistleblower group WikiLeaks has spread state secrets across the web, promising radical transparency among nations. November, 2008 saw the historic election in the United States of a president self-identified as African American, an intellectual, attacked in the campaign as having the most liberal record in the Senate yet with a history of bipartisanship, who campaigned for hope and inclusiveness. The American public looked for a new political paradigm less about ideologies and partisanship and more about problem-solving. But two years later another election sent the pendulum swinging in a new, radically right direction. The nation seemed more divided than ever and in a persistent economic slump. Meanwhile, the day rapidly approaches when, climate scientists predict, the process of climate change will reach a point of no return unless we now make serious changes world-wide.

Ideologies still distract us. Many or most people, whether they call themselves conservative or liberal, like to read and listen to sources that reinforce beliefs they already hold. It was not always thus. Susan Jacoby in *The Age of Unreason* notes that a hundred years ago, people went to listen to people like free thinker Robert Ingersoll with whom many disagreed. Today, despite our great strides in communication technology, intellectual isolationism is growing and has

grown greatly within recent decades. However, thinking is not mainly about making oneself feel comfortable. If it were, we would probably see a lot more of it.

It is not the intention of this series to reinforce your beliefs but rather to ask you to think about thinking itself, to point out what we have collectively ignored or forgotten, and to open up alternative viewpoints. The method is to look at a thing from different perspectives, like all the blind men conversing together. An elephant is like a fan, a rope, *and* a tree trunk. None of the *Thinking Toward Survival* books is intended to be an exhaustive study, the definitive word, or anything but an attempt to introduce more clarity and context into vitally important matters that seem to be neglected or confused. We cover a lot of ground, and we can't cover everything.

While flattering myself that I am no kind of ideologue, of course I have biases. This book is not concerned with all ideologies but particularly with certain widespread ideologies that have captured the media and other institutions—opportunistic systems of ideas that currently dominate portions of the American intellectual landscape—the kudzu and Norway rats of mental life. While we dig into the underlying assumptions and in many cases present counter-arguments, this is not meant to be a political polemic for this moment in time. Ideologies have histories. By using historical examples of ideological thinking, propaganda, and censorship, it is easier to see the nature and persistence of patterns.

It is important to dissect those ideologies that close down our thinking processes. At best they distract us from real problems. At worst they catapult us into violent unrealities. Ideological thinking is a major barrier to meeting the grave challenges we face.

To recap what has gone before: *Models, Myths, and Muddles* outlined five major situations that together challenge not only civilization but the very survival of the human race. These species-level threats include, first, the growth of our numbers beyond the carrying capacity of the earth and especially growth at the high level of consumption currently maintained by industrialized nations and aspired to by less-developed nations. Overpopulation leads to famine, dwindling water supplies, and wars.

A second danger is from the technologies we have devised to make things easier for ourselves. New technologies usually have unforeseen consequences, and many are downright dangerous to human health and survival. Several scenarios suggest our conveniences could do us in.

A third great threat is the failure of ecosystems on which all earthly life including human life depends. Climate change is the failure on which we are most focused today, in part because many scientists say that we have only a brief window of opportunity, perhaps a decade, to install major changes needed to turn the trend around. There are other, interrelated failures such as the Sixth Extinction, during which we are losing great numbers of the world's plant and animal species, and the unhealthy condition of the planet's Ocean (for all the oceans flow into each other) that provides sustenance for many species including us. Certain ocean species and land forests serve as planetary 'lungs' and their decline only accelerates climate change.

The last two threats to our existence relate to war. First, war is an increasingly dangerous habit. Armed conflicts proceed apace with the same old short-sighted, selfish reasons behind them but using ever more destructive Doomsday weapons. Second, while wars have been a constant since civilization began, they are now especially likely to occur and spread because of Peak Oil and other geostrategic considerations that would propel us towards a Hobbesian "war of all against all." This is madness, of course, but we need to recognize that many of our leaders and many belief-systems across the world are indeed mad.

The eminent biologist E. O. Wilson describes the immediate future as a bottleneck that our species must go through. The term ‘bottleneck’ usually describes a population crash, but Wilson does not spell that out. The last time we were such an endangered species was about 70,000 years ago, when drought or perhaps the aftereffects of an erupting supervolcano brought our numbers down to a few thousand. This bottleneck is quite different, since we (collectively and historically) are largely responsible for our own plight.

The important question now is: What will we do about it? So far, while the dangers multiply and expand, so do the over-simplified ideologies that purport to address them. Many people are in denial or caught up in personal problems. New consumer technologies and modes of escapism have captured public attention, especially of the young. Meanwhile, the PR and advertising industry, media, and think-tanks have perfected the arts of persuasion and “pushing our buttons.” Those buttons are our inborn and ingrained ways of thinking. *Models, Myths, and Muddles* surveyed a great many habitual patterns of thought, some of them so ancient that they seem hard-wired into the human species such as denial, finding scapegoats, and preferences for that which is large and novel (supernormal stimuli). After all, instinct is only a very old, species-wide habit.

The previous book presented several general ways to improve our responses to problems. The first is to realize that not only our country or civilization is threatened, but our entire species of almost seven billion individuals. Species consciousness is more than taking a global viewpoint. It looks at humans as biological organisms which developed over millennia. It is not only the *whole* view but also the *long* view. Book three will expand on ways to cultivate a point of view or frame that includes our whole species rather than simply nation, religion, race, class, or gender.

The second life-affirming strategy is to recapture part-of-the whole or participating consciousness that was the best part of Stone-Age thinking but which Western civilization gradually lost, especially after the 17th century when the new mechanistic, materialistic paradigm took hold. Modern science-and-technology is now our consensus reality, and it certainly has many benefits, but it is not enough. We have lost a necessary dimension that connected us with the rest of life. What we lost is not simply religion. Mainstream religions also lost this dimension, and some are trying to revive it. Participating consciousness means trusting one’s own observations and intuitions ahead of abstractions and ideologies. I don’t mean that we should trust ingrained prejudices or believe the Earth is flat because it looks that way, but rather that we seek out primary experiences and trust our own perceptions unless and until there is good evidence to think otherwise. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay on “Self-Reliance” gives another view of this.

The third, very important strategy is to cultivate literacy and critical thinking in every way possible, as widely as possible, not only on the individual level but by creating a public infrastructure for it. Critical thinking is critical in the second sense of the word: it is absolutely necessary for preserving democracy, preventing wars, and meeting dangers in a rational way.

This book introduces three more positive strategies: the scientific method or seeking evidence-based, testable knowledge; development of a more conscious and responsive science, with broader participation and public understanding of science; and media reform. But humanity needs a great variety of strategies, tactics, and new paradigms to overcome all the problems we have created so far. Book three concentrates on numerous positive models and ideas that could help us with what needs to be a concerted, species-wide effort.

The Trouble with Ideas

Patterns of thought that are really useful in one age can make serious trouble in the next one.
Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By*, 1919-

Individual tendencies are not the only kind of dysfunctional thinking that works against survival. Never mind the Stone Age—humans are still trying to deal with intellectual changes that took hold in the 17th and 18th centuries. English philosopher Mary Midgley points to some Enlightenment ideas that were very useful two or three centuries ago but badly need rethinking today. Midgley calls them myths, “imaginative patterns, networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular way of interpreting the world....For instance, machine imagery, which began to pervade our thought in the 17th century, is still potent today.”

These older myths may be given new forms that distort their original meaning. They are often over-simplified and applied too rigidly, or they fail to take new conditions and knowledge into account. Thus they are on their way to becoming ideologies. Two Enlightenment ideas that Midgley says have become especially troublesome are the social contract myth and the myth of omniscient science (competent in all spheres of human endeavor), both of which we will discuss later on. Midgley gives another example:

The Enlightenment’s overriding emphasis on freedom often conflicts with other equally important ideals such as justice or compassion....The insistence on individuality that has so enriched our lives degenerates, if we don’t watch it critically, into the kind of mindless competitiveness that is so destructive today.

Ideas are sometimes written on stone tablets but they are hardly ‘written in stone.’ Midgley views individual ideas as part of an organic whole in constant change: “Our thought [is] an *ecosystem* trying painfully to adapt itself to changes in the world around it.” Individual, nation, and civilization all experience the daily evolution of this intellectual ecosystem, an evolution that is speeding up each decade. With modern communications we are beset daily by systems of ideas, some thousands of years old and others popping up by the day, spread by mass culture and mass media.

From rationale to rationalization: Humans developed the ability to string ideas together for many purposes. Historically, ideology might have begun as a leader’s necessary explanation of aims in order to organize the group for some action. But as groups became larger and more complex, the explanations picked up more complex motivations and often became elaborate rationalizations for what we and our group have done, want to do, or are doing. Ideologies may serve the function of a battering ram, a masquerade costume, a teddy bear, or a cold, distant star to make a wish on. Sometimes they are based on fantasies or hysteria. Some ideologies start out as reasonably legitimate thought systems but become over-simplified in the course of trying to appeal to a larger audience, and may end up appealing to the lowest common denominators of mass belief—these are dangerous ideologies that incorporate bigotry, deceit, and violence. Once upon a time kings made war on each other just because they could. Now power grabs and exploitation are surrounded by systems of ideas that disguise the true motives and immerse us ever deeper in an abstract unreality.

This ability to ideologize can become counter-productive. Just as some species of bird might evolve a brilliant display of male tail-feathers for purposes of attracting the female—until the tail-feathers get so heavy that the grooviest males are the first to be eaten by predators—so our

human ability to develop brilliant systems of ideas may likewise threaten our overall fitness for survival.

One example of ideologies becoming extreme and counter-productive is a recent trend in the U.S. politics. Political columnist Ann McFeatters notes the result of ideology run amok. “Nothing gets done any more because hyper-partisanship in Washington has gotten so awful that many good legislators are quitting. Politics is no longer fun. It’s mean-spirited and demoralizing.” In times past, this was known as factionalism, an ancient problem described by the historian Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. Thucydides lived through the events he described in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. He saw Athenian democracy, at its height of greatness mid-century under Pericles, lose its compass in the course of fighting Sparta until political factionalism became anarchy and civil war. But what is most relevant to our situation today, Thucydides understood the role of language (ideology) in creating factions and justifying violence and injustice:

To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one’s unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action.

Two and a half millennia later, words still change their usual meanings in the course of a hard-fought presidential campaign.

Ideologies Simple and Complex

As far as I’m concerned, any worldview that can be summed up in a word probably isn’t much of a worldview.

Leonard Pitts Jr., columnist for *Miami Herald*

A century and a half ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson described a pendulum between “the love of repose” and “the love of truth,” saying: “He in whom the love of repose predominates will accept the first creed, the first philosophy, the first political party he meets—most likely his father’s. He gets rest, commodity, and reputation; but he shuts the door of truth.” Emerson is describing those who are content to think within the boundaries of ideology (although he never mentioned that word). Today the situation is a bit more complex, in large part because of technological innovations.

Mass media and related institutions such as the public relations industry are the most important players in defining and spreading ideologies. Networking sites on the Internet, for instance, allow ideologues to cluster with other like-minded thinkers and reinforce their ideas, which become contagious (‘viral’). Groups prone to hold certain ideologies can be identified as demographics by advertisers and political consultants who want to take advantage of the group’s weaknesses and prejudices. Marketing and media accentuate the more dramatic, black-and-white contrasts between one ideology and another. In the process of spreading, ideologies get starker and simpler. The ideology becomes *a system of ideas that is transferred as a set of memes*. That is, simple ideologies are in large part imitated and involve relatively little actual reflective thinking. You could describe them as mental reflexes.

Human behavior so rigid it resembles animal instinct has been described as ‘sphexism’ after the sphex wasp, a creature that demonstrates unusually inflexible, repetitive behaviors. For instance, if a human pushes the wasp’s paralyzed prey an iota of an inch, the creature has to move it back to the original spot and prepare its underground storage area all over again. Sphexism is not a human ideology as such; but military and other institutions that greatly value blind obedience and technical perfection may encourage sphexism. The picture that pops in mind is of Chaplin’s “Modern Times” in which factory workers, even after the closing whistle blows, keep up their assembly-line motions like automatons.

Ideologies and their components are often very persistent, since they can be swallowed whole and reproduced endlessly. They often arise because some obscure person with a brainstorm writes a book. Centuries later, people faithfully reproduce his idea system although they are in the middle of an entirely different landscape. Or in order to adapt to the times, components of the old ideology combine with components of newer ideologies to produce a chimerical monster ideology. Of course some ideologies are more complex than this, more rational and less mythological, especially for the inner circle of those that first devise the ideology and argue about its fine points.

An ideology is characterized by either/or, dualistic, binary thinking. Symbols and slogans loom large, along with short-cuts in thinking and the habit of ignoring context. Ideologies crystallize thinking in such a way that any subsequent information is fitted into the -ism system. Ideologies are the boxes that people must learn to think out of.

Ideologies have agendas. An ideology tends to serve a particular group of people: one class, one ethnic group or culture, one nation or group of nations. In some cases ideologies are deliberately manufactured by propagandists. Ideologies often contain social myths—self-serving, fragmentary stories. The social myth has a similar role in an ideology that an ego-defense mechanism has for the individual, and one can see much of the same denial, projection, and fantasy thinking. This is especially noticeable in classic conspiracy theories, which are a form of ideology. But do not assume that only ignorant and hysterical people cling to ideologies. The hip, cool, and cynical are by no means immune.

As pre-industrial people lived by mythologies, so we live by a variety of isms, increasing numbers of them floating about and colliding in distracting and often lethal displays. The masculine readiness to do combat that includes intellectual combat assures a certain amount of disputation. As partial explanations, each ideology tends to call forth an opposing or competing ideology, until it seems they are multiplying like rabbits, spreading by mass media. They tend to fill up all the available mental space. The marketplace of ideas thus turns into Ismism.

Devising an ideology isn’t rocket science. Ideologists need only be basically literate, with old grievances, a hunger for power, a fixed idea, or just a vivid imagination that captures an audience, along with sufficient leisure to spin their systems and access to the airwaves or the Internet, a pulpit or a podium. It helps if they have charisma and energy; even more if they appeal to the prejudices of their audience. Ideologies that seem contradictory and bizarre may draw followers anyway. However, isms that come out of universities are among the most complex, persuasive, and dangerous—for example, two important idea-systems that came out of the University of Chicago.

I don’t mean to criticize the whole university; in fact, Chicago was my alma mater, which I was privileged to attend as an undergraduate thanks to my mother’s savings from working as a drill press operator during World War II. Nevertheless, two graduate departments at Chicago developed schools of thought or ideologies that have had a large and troubling influence on the

course of world history. Their effect is especially malignant in combination. The first is the “Chicago School” of economists led by Milton Friedman; the second, Neoconservative thinkers who follow teachings of philosopher Leo Strauss. These two idea systems illustrate the dangers of intellectualism that is not moored to reality or the moral values of justice, truth, democracy, and respect for other human beings. In both cases, however, the ideologies served long-standing agendas and expanded older ideas.

College-educated professionals are not at all immune to ideological thinking. Noam Chomsky says it is the highly educated classes who have best internalized the principle that the U.S. owns the world. These are the ‘best and brightest’ who led the nation into war in Vietnam, the ‘talking heads’ one sees on television discussions of politics and foreign policy, or what Paul Krugman calls “the commentariat” which “mainly consists of people who live in Washington and go to the same dinner parties. This in itself foments group think.” Chomsky says, “If you have gone to the best schools...you have instilled in you the understanding that there are certain things it would not do to say; actually, it would not do to think. That is the primary way to prevent unpopular ideas from being expressed.” Chomsky adds that members of the general public are more likely to react like human beings, engaging their hearts as well as their heads.

Some ideologies, though held by small groups, can exert a great deal of influence if that small group has political power, or well-thought-out plans for acquiring power (Bolsheviks), uncommon skill in using propaganda, or a media monopoly.

The United States has always had its competing ideologies (as in the hard-fought campaign of 1800), but Ismism really began to take off in the 1960s and ‘70s, aided and abetted by the ever-present television camera and the imperatives of mass media news. The landmark events and movements of civil rights, opposition to the Vietnam War, environmentalism and feminism were soon met by free market fundamentalism, the Southern Strategy, the Christian Right, and the Contract with America. Not only do the media spread ideologies but they also tend to oversimplify them, exaggerate their differences, and happily report on their clashes. In addition, one should not suppose that the media are entirely neutral or non-partisan observers. By dramatizing, politicizing, and distorting ideas, the media helps them to become cartoons of themselves, perpetuating sound-bite thinking. The clash of ideologies replaces real debate about real issues. Then disinformation and propaganda take over.

Rigidly-held complexes of memes separate us from each other and also obstruct our view of larger, more harmonious yet more dynamic worldviews. We are swimming in a sea filled with these divisive ideas looming up like dying coral reefs, each with its own set of assumptions and often a separate vocabulary.

Part One: Ideology, Culture, and Religion

CHAPTER 1: TYPES OF IDEOLOGY

Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it is the only one you have.

Emile Chartier, French philosopher, 1868-1951

Our quarrel here is not so much with ideologies as such but with their proliferation and the rigid identification with one ideology that develops when defending it against all the others. Be aware that not every word that ends in ‘-ism’ is pernicious. Some such words aren’t even ideologies, some ideologies are relatively benign, and all ideologies change through time.

Sometimes it is a little sticky to separate out philosophies from ideologies. Certainly if people start to march down the street carrying banners that say “Aristotle Today and Forever!” or “Existentialism is the One,” then it will be clear that a philosophy has turned into an ideology. In general, however, philosophical systems of ideas are more complex and universal, and cover more ground than do ideologies. They are discussed in peer-reviewed journals. As for religions, some are more ideological than others, radiating out from a mystical core that is not ideological at all. Countless ideologies exist from agrarianism to Zionism, and many without a name or scholarly analysis. As is common with our English language, the one word ‘ideology’ has several dictionary meanings. This sets us up for confusion and equivocation, so let us call them Ideologies A, B, and C.

Ideology A is a systematic body of concepts, especially about human culture. This definition would include many philosophies and also scientific approaches such as Behaviorism. However, these are beyond the scope of this book and, for the most part, we will leave analysis of A-type ideologies to the scholars. But should every system of ideas be called an ideology? Here let us reserve the term for those idea-systems that are more unconscious, contagious, rigid, and/or programmatic.

Trouble comes when people do not see any difference between the idea-system they got off the Internet or hear on the radio, and other arguments that are based on evidence and examples, subjected to criticism or peer-review. Without recognized standards, many people will continue to mistake one sort of idea-system for the other. To distinguish philosophy or scholarship from ideology, one could apply the following qualities listed by the late Teresa Brennan, Schmidt Distinguished Professor of Humanities at Florida Atlantic University: “The classical criteria by which theoretical worth is gauged [are] internal consistency, consistency with the known facts, explanatory force, parsimony, and refutability.” ‘Parsimony’ refers to economy of explanation, or Occam’s razor. Also, the more consciously an argument exposes its own assumptions, the more it resembles philosophy or scholarship.

Ideology B is the way of thinking characteristic of a group or culture and it is very much our subject. Ideology B is like a collective frame, containing the main social assumptions of society as a whole. It includes the conventional wisdom created by sheer repetition in the mass media. It is orthodoxy in any field. People are often unaware that they follow such an ideology. It may not end with –ism; it may not even have a name. The prevailing ideology is what a society may simply consider common sense. While this prevailing ideology or conventional wisdom is a bit

more variable than consensus reality—the latter goes deeply into how we physically perceive the world—yet most people take these social assumptions for granted as well. And woes betide you if you disagree, especially in an authoritarian nation, for you will be seen as a dangerous radical or heretic.

Three common manifestations of ideology type B might be described as the Conventional Wisdom (CW), the Mainstream Media (MSM), and the White Affluent Male Libertarian Internet Culture or WAMLIC. These are not separate ideologies but different perspectives on a generalized American ideology. A more deliberate ideology type B is the Washington Consensus, an agreement of the ‘commentariat’ or academic and official circles that has been supported by both major political parties. The Washington Consensus refers to economic policies promoted as a standard for other countries especially in the 1980s and 1990s by Washington-based institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and U.S. Treasury Department. This reform package prescribed fiscal discipline, privatization of state enterprises, deregulation, trade liberalization (lowering or ending tariffs), tax ‘reform’ (to make it less progressive), and other measures related to neoliberalism. A similar package was promoted for the United States by conservative pundits and politicians.

Marxian analysts define ideology (type B) as the result of a ruling class imposing its values on the entire society in order to make its own interests appear to be everybody’s interests. For instance, those in charge of foreign policy may speak of "American interests" abroad when what they mean is the fortunes of a particular company or industry, whether bananas, aluminum, or oil. But groups promoting a certain consensus are not only economic powers. They may be based on gender, race, or class. Such hierarchies persist despite the fact that basic notions of equality and human rights have been widely accepted for two centuries.

Dominant classes need to justify their power to create a social consensus. Robert Jensen, a journalism professor at the University of Texas, describes one way this is done: they argue that certain systems of domination and subordination are “natural” and inevitable. If men are naturally smarter and stronger than women, this justifies patriarchy. If white people are naturally smarter and more moral than people of color, this justifies white supremacy. If rich people are naturally smarter and harder-working than poor people, then economic injustice is inevitable. If some countries, regions, religions, and civilizations are naturally superior to others, then they are justified in colonizing, converting, or otherwise dominating subordinate countries in order to improve them. And if humans have a special status in the universe, they may do whatever they like with the rest of Creation

Why do so many people accept such arguments and end up thinking alike? Jensen says this has to do with telling good stories: “Because of their power to control key story-telling institutions (especially education and mass communication), those in the dominant class can fashion a story about the world that leads some portion of the people in the subordinate class to internalize the ideology.” As mentioned previously, the ‘talking heads’ of elite opinion may present debate but only within a very limited range of opinions. This narrow range reinforces social assumptions. Public education also contributes to widespread acceptance of certain basic assumptions. In previous times, other institutions such as the Church were more important in reproducing such ideologies.

When certain myths are constantly repeated, they become a given, “what everybody knows.” Propaganda or the institutional reinforcement of certain ideas makes the individual’s own reality less ‘real.’ One can see in many letters to the editor the complete lack of personal examples or evidence for assertions. For these writers, the abstract word or the symbol *is* the reality. One

might consider participating consciousness—as described in *Models, Myths and Muddles*—as the ‘opposite’ of this process. The individual participates directly, sensually, and concretely in the whole of life and does not allow others to define his or her reality in terms of conventional abstractions. If I use illustrations from my own experience in these books, it is precisely for this reason. They are personal reality, not universal arguments. Any of us must use our own perceptions, experiences, and intuitions as a touchstone to find our way through the abstract, virtual reality world we have collectively constructed.

Type C ideologies are collections of ideas whether political, economic, religious, or something else, that individuals hold voluntarily and consciously. In some cases, the person’s ideology may be quite detailed and focused, becoming “the integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program” in other words, marching behind a banner. As one example, my step-grandmother Minerva was a member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), an organization with a sociopolitical program (legalized prohibition of alcoholic beverages). Minerva firmly believed that drinking only a single glass of beer or shot of liquor would start any person on the inevitable path of alcoholism. Thus she supported the Volstead Amendment, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, even after its repeal in 1933.

However, not all type C ideologies are political especially in the sense of connecting with the programs of major political parties. For instance, a few decades ago I met quite a few people who had very strongly-held belief systems about what people should eat. They were fruitarians, macrobiotic devotees, or raw-foodists, along with various sects and schisms of vegetarianism (ovo-lacto-vegetarians, lacto-vegetarians, vegans, and so on). In fact, I have found useful information in all these systems of ideas, benign ideologies since nobody was trying to pass any laws to force everybody in the country to eat nothing but fruits and seeds, or brown rice and pickled plums. That would be a different matter.

Type C is what people most commonly think of as ideology, but we will be looking at both B and C ideologies. Either type can be flashy and over-simplified so it is rapidly transmitted as a set of memes via media, the Internet, and mass marketing techniques. Paul F. Campos says that “lazy autopilot journalism” is partly to blame for the recent spread of myths and ideologies. Reporters and editorialists don’t bother “to check whether the story line they’ve repeated for years still has any relationship to reality.”

Since this media transmission involves little ‘thinking’ on either end, many people defend their ideology not by actual arguments but only by repeating its component myths or slogans and its attendant social myths (collective ego defense mechanisms) such as denial and projection. Real thinking, unfortunately, takes more time and effort. Also, people’s egos easily become attached to their ideologies, and we humans tend to defend our egos regardless of evidence or logic. Wearing an ideology with its accompanying myths is so comforting to many people that it requires a great deal of contrary evidence to dislodge it. Even then, when the ideology is shown to be quite hollow, some people simply exchange one ideology for another, as when former Marxists become neo-conservatives.

A recent letter to the editor defines an ideology as one’s personal guide to decisions—making it equivalent to “core values.” Insofar as a person bases decisions on stock values that the person accepts without question and without reflecting on her own experience, this is indeed an ideology. Otherwise one’s guide might better be called a philosophy of life, or a conscience.

Too many ideologies admit of no differences of opinion. Some theorists define ‘ideology’ in terms of its claim to absolute truth. But people do differ in how rigid or ‘doctrinaire’ they are

about their systems of ideas. For some, ideologies are guidelines and for others, strait-jackets. There is a story that Karl Marx, beset by followers who had oversimplified and crystallized his ideas, exclaimed, “I am not a Marxist!” People are starting to use the word “fundamentalism” to describe any sort of belief or idea system that is held quite rigidly, but this use confuses matters. We may need a new word to describe the tendency for idea-systems to become oversimplified, exaggerated, and rigidly held.

Some ideological systems are internally inconsistent, that is, one article of faith may contradict another article of faith—but the dedicated ideologue doesn’t notice or doesn’t care—or it gives him an excuse to start another branch of the ideology. One characteristic of ideologies is that they tend to disagreements, splits, schisms, branches, movements, schools, and sects. Each school of thought has its own definitions and concepts, making it practically a life’s work to find one’s way through the tangle of each ideology’s twists and turns.

Some ‘laws’ of ideology:

- Ideologies are often associated with particular personalities and books.
- They are contagious and have spread exponentially since the Internet.
- They are very persistent.
- Ideologies over-simplify and gloss over exceptions, subtleties, and context.
- They tend to promote the interests or beliefs of a certain group.
- They are often mass produced and express themselves in slogans and ‘recipes.’ They favor symbols over substance.
- Ideologies are one-sided and attract opposing ideologies.
- They are prone to branch and divide.
- Ideologies develop their own vocabularies.
- They tend to fill up the available mental space.

Rule of thumb: It is often easier to identify the other person’s set of ideas as an ideology than your own.

Ideologues

[Ideology’s] proper definition is the science of Idiocy. And a very profound, abstruse, and mysterious science it is...taught in the school of folly.

John Adams, 2nd president of the United States

People don’t like to think of themselves as ideologues even if they are. Some organize their beliefs around an ‘ism’ and may even buttonhole you at a gathering to tell you about it, but they certainly do not want to hear your ideas on the subject in return. It is more like “I talk, you listen.” The person who quite rigidly promotes his chosen ideology we define as an ideologue: “an often blindly partisan advocate or adherent of a particular ideology.” He religiously follows the party line, whether it is the Communist Party, the Republican Party, the Prohibition Party, or the conventional wisdom. It appears that the ranks of ideologues increase as politics becomes more polarized and people are increasingly anxious about jobs or wars..

The ideologue tends to be a ‘know-it-all’ on the basis of quite limited information. Attempting to have a real discussion with a person who has strong ideological beliefs can be very frustrating. He (or she) tends to argue with other people as if they were ideologues too, assuming that there

are only two opposed positions and no nuances. Thus the ideologue continually tries to push his adversary into extreme positions that offset his own, and set him up as a straw man to knock down. Perhaps the ideologue is temperamentally a more combative person, or has a greater need for closure.

The ideologue is not as extreme as the crank, though. The crank is a person who talks about nothing but his one idea, which is sometimes unique to him but sometimes not. There is (at least) one crank in my town—I bump into him as seldom as possible—whose crank-ish idea is far from unique: it is anti-Semitism. For him, everything that happens around the world ties in some way into Jewish influence. You could start out with “Aren’t the trees beautiful this fall?” and by the fourth sentence he would have launched into his abiding subject.

Fanatics are more dangerous than cranks. They are more likely to put rigid ideas into action, while cranks tend to confine themselves to conversation and letters, with occasional calls to the police or lawsuits. Even beyond the fanatic is the person whose ideas resemble clinical paranoia. For example, a woman who was running for a minor office in New York State in 2006 accused Senator Hillary Clinton of peeking in her bedroom window and buzzing her apartment with a helicopter. This woman lost the primary election.

Are certain types of personalities more likely to be ideologues? Some research indicates that people with insecure personalities are attracted to the structured framework of an ideology, whether it is left, right, or not political.

CHAPTER 2: MYTHS AND IDEOLOGY

“Don’t take my word for it; don’t take anybody’s word for it; read what it says on the bottle and see for yourself.”

Unknown

When ideological thinking dominates public conversation, it produces a lot of intellectual flotsam and jetsam, the man-made trash that may eventually wash up on the beach. So as we wade into our subject, let us take a sampling of the waters. This chapter contains an assortment gathered over recent years of contradictions and ironies, myths, frames, slogans, arguments lacking logic, odd bits of reasoning from letters to the editor, propaganda, answers to these, and a few ideas here and there to upset our preconceptions. Comments in brackets refer to popular fallacies and bad arguments as previously described in *Models, Myths, and Muddles*.

Bogus Atheist Plot: A man visited several churches in Little Rock, Arkansas, warning Christians that Madelyn Murray O’Hair had a petition to ban Sunday worship broadcasts and had been granted a hearing before the FCC. No such petition ever existed, but over a fifteen-year period, people sent the FCC more than 21 million pieces of mail about it. Such rumors often spread as ‘outrage memes.’ There is nothing like an enemy threat to fire up the followers of an ideology. That particular rumor used up a lot of trees and added maybe \$5 million in stamps to Post Office coffers.

Political smear campaigns depend on unfounded rumors, such as false information on the Internet that Barack Obama refused to be sworn in on the Bible when he entered the Senate; and that he will not salute the American flag. Obama subsequently set up his own website expressly to address such charges. The newspaper reports a surge of government inquiries from people worried that their cell phone numbers will be released to telemarketers. However, the Federal Trade Commission says that it is already against the law for most telemarketers to call mobile phones. Recently a rumor spread that my local area had epidemics of both leprosy and tuberculosis linked to immigration. Public health authorities denied this, while pointing out that leprosy is not very contagious and can be treated with antibiotics.

Widespread use of the Internet seems to have resulted in an exponential increase in rumors and urban legends. There is something about seeing a rumor in print that lends it credibility. Text-messaging also spreads rumors. Websites such as Snopes.com exist for the sole purpose of tracking them and trying to ascertain whether they are true or not. The spread of rumors may be related to anxiety about the economy, lack of practice in critical thinking, and widespread perceptions that our leaders and the media are not giving us the full picture. The same reasons contribute to conspiracy theories.

The following is an example of meme persistence. This writer appears to be stuck in the outmoded vocabulary of Cold War ideology, using Communists as scapegoats for any trend in society that she dislikes:

Letter to Editor, November 26, 2001: According to a report given to Congress in session many years ago, this is the Communist plan for weakening the moral character of the American people, in hopes of a future takeover: Corrupt the young, get them away from religion. Get them interested in sex. Make them superficial, destroy their ruggedness. Get control of publication and thereby get

people's minds off their government by focusing their attention on sexy books and entertainment, on trivialities and athletics...E.C.

[Two unlikely assumptions are: 1. Without Communist influence, young people are not interested in sex; 2. It is Communists, not capitalists, who produce mass-media magazines about entertainment and athletics.]

Activist Judges: Conservative Christians, unreconstructed segregationists, and other conservatives who are upset about various legal decisions often claim that liberal judges are legislating from the bench. A *New York Times* article analyzed how often each current Supreme Court justice voted to strike down a law passed by Congress. As our national elected body and one of three branches of government, Congress should have a high degree of legitimacy. The Supreme Court from its founding in 1791 until 1858 struck down only two laws of Congress. The numbers have risen lately. Before 1991, the average was one Congressional law invalidated every two years. But in seventeen years of the Rehnquist Court, parts of more than three dozen laws were invalidated—about four times the previous rate.

Analysis of these cases shows that those justices considered “conservative” vote most frequently to strike down laws. They are led by Clarence Thomas, who votes to invalidate laws 65.63 percent of the time. The justices considered more “liberal” (Breyer, Ginsburg, Souter and Stevens) voted least frequently to overturn laws.

The late columnist Molly Ivins said that the current Supreme Court and federal judges are activist, all right, in the direction of helping corporations, limiting congressional authority, and restricting individual rights. One example is the decision by a federal judge in Mississippi that hurricane insurance policies which exclude water damage are “valid and enforceable.” She notes that “insurance company stocks went up across the board after the decision.” Some would maintain that there are at present no “liberal” judges on the Supreme Court: about half of them are moderate conservatives and the others are right-wing, cultural conservatives.

Letter to Editor, May 11, 1995: Hard-working middle class-income families are being trampled underfoot, and seem to have no voice. We work hard to live decent lives and just try to maintain our existence, but we are ignored because we are not considered a minority....

I am sick of hearing and reading about these civil libertarians who want their freedom from our government's control, and yet they are unwilling to leave our country. I am also sick of them constantly siding with criminal rights...A.T

[Over-simplification. Poor Me. Lacks examples.]

These complaints do not add up to one ideology, but they could easily be swept into an authoritarian populism that supports curtailment of liberties, while scapegoating immigrants, Muslims, and blacks.

Al Gore and the Internet

On AM talk radio, where scientific standards are not particularly high, the attitude seems to be “If Al Gore is upset about carbon, we must need more of it.”

Michael Gerson, columnist *Washington Post*, July 19, 2008

A certain number of men seem to identify Al Gore with that smart kid they disliked in high school. He has successfully promoted the issue of climate change despite opposition from the Bush Administration and several powerful industries. As a presidential candidate defrauded of

his election, Gore's very existence embarrasses Republican partisans, an embarrassment compounded by his winning both an Oscar and a Nobel Prize. The favorite ad hominem attack on Gore concerns a statement he supposedly made that he invented the Internet. However, he actually said something rather different.

When Gore was a senator, he sponsored several bills to make the federal government a catalyst for developing the Internet. "His constant prodding gave the concept high visibility within government and among academic and industry leaders," says Jonathan Coopersmith, who teaches the history of technology at Texas A&M University. Gore was instrumental in mandating a policy study of government computer networks under Reagan. He introduced the 1991 High Performance Computing Act that provided over \$1 billion in order to connect computers at universities and other institutions into national networks.

Coopersmith says Gore's activities provided a foundation for the explosive growth of the Internet in the mid-1990s. In a 1999 interview on CNN, Gore said "During my service in the U.S. Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet." This is true. He did not claim to have invented it.

Letter to Editor, Oct. 22, 2003: Evolutionary teaching in public schools began in the late 1960s in this country and now has claimed so many victims that a third of the students graduating from high school can scarcely read above the sixth-grade level of yesteryear's standards....J.W.C.
[*Post hoc, ergo propter hoc.* Error in fact: some public schools included evolutionary teaching before the 1960s, while some still do not. Lacks source for facts.]

Opposition to evolution was one of the defining tenets of Christian fundamentalism 100 years ago. Since the development of Creationism and Intelligent Design, anti-evolutionary thinking has become an ideology of its own.

Killing Bugs is a Losing Proposition. Harper's Index reports that the amount of insecticides used in the United States in 2000 was ten times the amount used in 1945. However, the estimated percentage of pre-harvest crops lost to insects in 1945 was seven percent, while the amount in 2000 was thirteen percent. Continuing to use insecticides under these circumstances suggests the Sunk Cost Fallacy.

Industrial agriculture uses the military model of killing the enemy or the medical model of killing germs. Although the technology may not work very well, there are large industries, profits, and jobs based on it. Think-tanks funded by chemical or other agricultural industries that support this technology attack environmental groups that criticize it. See Chapter 20 about anti-environmentalism ideology and propaganda.

Scientists at the University of Michigan led by Prof. Ivette Perfecto have found that organic farming can equal yields achieved by conventional farming in industrialized nations and outperform yields up to three times in less industrialized countries.

Letter to Editor, Sept. 3, 1995: Mr. H--, if you are so concerned about America's poor, her parks and bicycle trails, I would suggest since you have such a liberal heart, that you donate part of your salary to your socialistic programs. Or better still, you could take your socialistic agenda and pedal to the East Coast and take a slow boat to one of your European countries that you have stated have everything so good...F.E.K.
[*Ad hominem, Abuse, Non Sequitur*]

The ideology of super-patriotism will admit of no suggestion that any other country might do anything whatsoever better than we do. The ideology of Free-Market Fundamentalism regards parks and bicycle trails as socialistic programs.

An Ancient Myth: *The belief in the possibility of a short decisive war appears to be one of the most ancient and dangerous of human illusions.* (Robert Lynd, Anglo-Irish writer, 1879-1949)

Letter to the Editor, May 21, 2004: The Marxist-leaning Democratic Party has declared war on the Second Amendment, Christianity, the Confederate flag, and other things that define Southern heritage and culture.... R. H. M.

[Name-calling. *Non sequitur.* Marxists are usually more interested in economic issues than in historical symbols. The Constitution with all its amendments applies to the entire country, not just part of it, and there are many Christians outside of the South. Exaggeration—“declared war on.”]

The above letter is another example of extreme partisanship that turns Democrats and Republicans into a battle of good versus evil. Oddly, this comes from a region that was solidly Democratic only forty years ago. Many partisans have found powerful ideological justifications for their 180-degree turn.

Letter to the Editor, October 7, 2003: No matter who we vote for, God has a plan and the one he wants to lead us will be elected according to his plan....R. T.

If the above letter is true, is there any point in voting? Does God’s plan allow for bad or mediocre presidents? R.T. expresses a deterministic ideology that does not allow much room for free will and which does not encourage democratic values.

Newspaper column, July 27, 2008: The leftist project of replacing socialism with environmentalism as an ideological organizing principle has culminated with global warming theory, an apocalyptic scenario that has proved much more salable than anything Karl Marx could come up with....Global warming was the perfect expression of environmentalism as ideology and religion because it went farther than Marxism to discredit not just capitalism but industrialism and consumerism as well...Bradley R. Gitz, a professor at Lyons College and regular columnist at *The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.

Gitz treats climate change as a political ideology, as if it had nothing to do with any scientific investigations. He does not once mention the word ‘science’ in this column.

Ten Commandments Are the Foundation of Law: This Dominionist belief has been widely adopted by conservative Christians. Those who insist that the Decalogue is the basis of U. S. law demonstrate lack of knowledge about either the legal system or history. Nor have they read the commandments very carefully. The majority of the Ten Commandments are about matters that are not crimes under either U.S. law nor under the laws of most nations. It is not a crime to believe in gods other than Yahweh, to fail to observe the Sabbath (now that ‘blue laws’ have been repealed), or to covet someone’s wife or possessions unless that leads to actual rape, theft, or fraud. How could the police or prosecutors know what or whom you covet, as long as that is just going on inside your head?

The injunction to honor one's mother and father is rather vague to be a law. Worshipping graven images (statues) is not a current issue, although large stone monuments and crosses beloved by conservative Christians sometimes are. As for cursing, occasionally a municipality arrests someone who is swearing loudly and violently in public, usually for "disturbing the peace," a misdemeanor, not a felony. The Decalogue is a code of religious morality but not of law. Unfortunately, one variety of Christian fundamentalisms believes the Ten Commandments *should* be the basis of U.S. law (see Chapter 5).

Actual codes of law preceded the Decalogue in India, Egypt, and Babylonia, where for example, Hammurabi's Code was longer and more inclusive than the Ten Commandments and included penalties. Steve Kangas points out that "The laws of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Sumerians, Hammurapi, Eshnunna, Hittites, Mishnah, and Israelites all bear a striking resemblance to each other, due to widespread copying of laws." They had similar penalties for offenses such as murder, kidnapping and sale of an abductee, bribing judges, perjury, shutting off another's irrigation canals, adultery, and fraud.

Letter to Editor, April 1, 2008: The United Nations has determined that world population should be decreased by at least one-third immediately and more later. Long ago it started this reduction through birth control, feminism, homosexuality and war...Feminism makes frustrated men and keeps them from a lasting relationship with women, causing both homosexuality and...war....J.W.C. Jr.

Despite the publication date, the above letter was no hoax. Its writer has a small local following. There's probably no need to point out the lack of evidence that any UN agency, resolution, or official has stated that world population should be decreased by one-third "immediately." That strongly suggests genocide. The chapter "Irrationalities of Reason," discusses this growing tendency in public life to assert entirely made-up 'facts' to further one's ideology. Nor need we enlarge on the fact that birth control, feminism, homosexuality, and war all existed long before the UN was formed. In fact, the UN was set up in large part to prevent wars.

In his remarks about feminism, the writer appears to equate this movement only with hostility toward men and the withholding of sex.

Newspaper column, May 25, 2001: The World War II generation never knew public school without prayer in it. They believed in law and order, and never conceived the Miranda rights superseding justice....The malcontents of that era were given short shrift, not a microphone to pervert the First Amendment....They fought [in World War II] for the American dream of free enterprise and free worship and personal liberty...Dana D. Kelley, *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*.

The above column exemplifies the common idealization of the WWII generation in order to promote conservative ideology. Presumably I am a member of that generation (graduating high school in 1946) yet living in Midwestern cities, I never knew public school *with* prayer in it. The World War II generation also experienced the 1930s Depression, a period during which there were plenty of malcontents who literally got up on soapboxes to rail against the capitalist system. What good is the First Amendment if those expressing themselves get "short shrift"? During WWII, none of the GIs I knew nor did any of the patriotic movies I saw ever mention "free enterprise" as a motivation for why soldiers fought. Even apple pie came ahead of it.

Letter to the Editor, May 31, 2008... The Bible tells us that God will bless those who bless Israel and he will curse those who curse Israel... If President Bush would retract his demands upon Israel to give up land, I believe you would see oil go back down to \$10 a barrel where it should be... D.F.

The above writer believes he has established a chain of causation but it is missing too many links and his last statement is a *non sequitur*.

Too Many Lawyers: Vice President Dan Quayle said it first, and the “fact” has been often repeated since, that the United States has 70 percent of the world’s lawyers, while Japan has only a few thousand. However, according to the late columnist Mike Royko, this is a form of equivocation. A number of other countries including Japan as well as England, Germany, and France, have systems in which many or most law school graduates do not become licensed lawyers but instead belong to other categories of “law providers.” In England, for instance, they are barristers and solicitors. Royko claimed that America has less than 10 percent of the world’s lawyers and that at least 34 countries have more lawyers per capita than we do.

Again, our legal system has problems, but Christian Reconstructionists and others who want to enlarge the power of the executive branch at the expense of the other two branches or to impose a different system of laws not based on the U.S. Constitution find it to their advantage to attack the legal system wholesale. This is accomplished by bad-mouthing all lawyers as one and by attacking “activist judges” or severely restricting judicial flexibility in sentencing.

Looking outside the United States, in November 2007, lawyers and independent judges are the core of resistance to dictatorial rule by President Musharraf of Pakistan. In other countries such as Italy and Colombia, those engaged in upholding the rule of law have shown great courage in the face of hostility and violence from certain segments of the population.

Letter to the Editor, August 9, 2004... The people who are continuing to draw attention to the atrocities committed at the Abu Ghraib prison are the same people who vehemently defended the former commander-in-chief when he engaged in inappropriate sexual activities while on the job in the Oval Office... L.T.

The type of *non sequitur* in the letter above is a common argument in partisan politics and anti-environmentalism (see next letter). Another form of it is the false comparison, for instance this: we should not be so concerned about American deaths in Iraq because far more people are killed in highway accidents. Other common *non sequiturs* are that people who are protesting their own government’s policies should instead protest the policies of some other government, or that a group concerned with the issue of capital punishment should instead be concerned with victim’s rights or some other issue.

Letter to the Editor, June 6, 1988.... In the U.S. we have a government which has received one-third of the land for ticks, chiggers, mosquitoes and assorted wild beasts. Certain people say that it is being set aside for future generations. Many of these same people are systematically destroying the future generations in their mothers’ wombs via abortion... J.G.

[Exaggeration. *Non sequitur*—what does nature conservation have to do with abortion? Error in fact—according to 2002 government inventory of major land uses, the federal government owns about 28% of U.S. land area, over 1/3 of which is in Alaska. The total includes deserts, glaciers, national defense and industrial areas, farm roads, and public parks, as well as wilderness areas.]

The anti-abortion ideology often places itself in opposition to nature conservationists or environmentalists. There is, however, no necessary opposition between these positions.

Were Arabs and Jews Always Fighting? Many letter writers assume that Arabs and Jews have been fighting for centuries, or since “the beginning.” Some of this perception is based on the fact that within their own lifetimes, for 60 years, the Palestinians have struggled against the original donation of their land by third parties to Jews. The perception also seems based on all the fighting that is depicted in the Old Testament among various ethnic or cultural groups or tribes. However, Israeli writer Uri Avnery says:

Every honest Jew who knows the history of his people cannot but feel a deep sense of gratitude to Islam, which has protected the Jews for 50 generations, while the Christian world persecuted the Jews and tried many times “by the sword” to get them to abandon their faith.

Christopher Hitchens notes that until the late 1940s, as many Jews lived in Baghdad as in Jerusalem.

Letter to the Editor, October 28, 2008: [Voters are not ignorant.] Come November they will vote for the person they believe will do the best job. Whoever that may be, he surely will start cleaning up Congress, which is long overdue...C. S.

The writer above does not understand the ‘checks and balances’ nature of the government set up by the U.S. Constitution and is making a scapegoat of the legislative branch.

Hard Birth of U.S. Democracy: Americans tend to think that the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were part of a single historical process, and that the origin of our country went smoothly. First it is forgotten that an estimated 30 percent of the population were Tories or Loyalists who opposed the war. Besides merchants and local gentry, many of more humble means either supported the King or simply wished to remain neutral. Many fled to Canada and other countries, some of them were tarred and feathered or killed outright, some fought alongside the British, and the rest were intimidated into passivity.

There was also a period of disintegration after the Revolution ended in 1777. It took five years for the thirteen sovereign states to agree to sign the Articles of Confederation, weak as they were. “By 1786, under the universal depression and want of confidence, all trade had well-nigh stopped, and political quackery, with its cheap and dirty remedies, had full control of the field,” according to John Fiske in *The Critical Period of American History, 1783-1789*. He says the United States was not born until 1787 when the U.S. Constitution came into being. However, at the time many found that document too federalist, and its ratification only squeaked through.

Americans might keep this history in mind when trying to export representative democracy abroad, especially to countries with strong ethnic or religious divisions. Even with a relatively homogeneous population (since Indians and slaves had no voice), the United States did not have an easy birth.

Letter to Editor, October 23, 2008: When the Democrats gained control of both houses of Congress two years ago, along with their promise of a better day, gasoline was at \$2.53 per gallon, unemployment was at 4.7 percent and we had a stable economy. Now after two years of Democratic control, gasoline has exceeded \$4 per gallon, the unemployment rate has reached 6.1 percent and corruption has run amok...K.G.

[*Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. Exaggerates “control” since there was no veto-proof majority and Senate Republicans held a record number of filibusters. Writer needs to specify who is involved in the corruption—if they were mostly Republicans, this weakens her argument.]

Letter to Editor, September 17, 2006: We haven’t had constitutional government since 1955 and in 1968 the poverty program was started and the federal government became socialist....Any attempt to start the nation back on the Constitution track is met with calling people theocratic... W. G.

[Needs definition of ‘constitutional government’ (in 1955, the Supreme Court ordered school integration). Error in fact: L.B.J.’s poverty program began in 1964, not 1968.]

Obviously, some people want to turn back the clock to the 1950s or even earlier. This is not ‘conservatism’ but rather a reactionary position, by definition.

Letter to the Editor, Dec. 20, 2000: Liberals are cultural Marxist elites, or CMEs. CMEs are Leninist-Marxist communist revolutionaries. Look no further than the election where Democrats Bill Clinton, Al Gore and Joe Lieberman were literally tearing this nation apart with a bloodless coup d’etat, where they set various ethnic groups against one another, promoted class warfare and subverted the rule of law. Not since the Weimar Republic of pre-Nazi Germany has decadence so completely permeated a political party and government as during the years of the Clinton-Gore-Lieberman administration... R.W.G.

[*Non sequitur*. Exaggeration. Assertion without evidence. Error in fact—Lieberman was not part of the Clinton administration]

R.W.G. is attempting here to develop a new ideology with its own vocabulary, but he did not appear to draw a following.

Letter to the Editor, November 27, 2001: A 1941 Florida Supreme Court ruling in *Strauss vs. Strauss* said that every system of law known to civilized society generated from or had as its component one of three well-known systems of ethics: pagan, stoic or Christian...H.B.

Surely there are better authorities on ethics than the 70-year-old state court ruling cited above. Most universities have departments of philosophy, and one area of philosophy is the study of ethical systems, which are not limited to the three mentioned.

Economies of Scale: The usual assumption is that a larger business operation is more efficient than a smaller one. However, a small farm of 10 acres or less in the United States generates average revenue per acre of \$1,902.50, while a farm of more than 2,000 acres generates an average \$21.40 per acre.

Lincoln Didn’t Say This, Either: Many quotes are falsely attributed to Abraham Lincoln, including one in which he purportedly issues this prophetic warning about corporate power: “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 on the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands, and the republic is destroyed.”

In fact, the Civil War did empower a number of corporations which spent the rest of the century acquiring legal and actual power. But Lincoln did not predict that. According to historian

Merrill Peterson, this quote is based on a bogus letter. While Lincoln did make some pro-labor statements, Peterson says his message was “individual opportunity, not class struggle.”

Column, May 2, 2001: Those who say we can’t shoot an intercontinental ballistic missile are the same people who said that man would never fly or we’d never walk on the moon. L. R.

[*Non sequitur*—because one technological innovation was successful does not mean that every technological innovation will be successful.]

Editorial (different newspaper) **May 2, 2001**... What, hit a bullet with a bullet? Can’t be done. You might as well talk about harnessing the power of the sun to set off an explosion big enough to end a world war.... You might as well dream of an instantaneous system of electronic communication that can... link up everybody on the globe into some kind of world-wide web.... Or men walking on the moon....

[It’s still a *non sequitur*. Simultaneous talking-points suggest a network of spin/propaganda. See Chapter 28]

Cut and Run: The roots of this phrase come from the days of sailing ships in the early 1700s. If a ship at anchor came under sudden attack by an enemy, it would sacrifice the anchor by cutting the cable, rather than waste valuable time in hoisting it. The ‘run’ refers to running before the wind. This was an accepted military tactic in emergencies. “Cutting losses in a losing situation is considered wise action in most contexts, as for example where an economic investment has proven to be a bad one and will most likely only get worse.” Compare the “sunk-cost fallacy.”

The sudden currency of an obscure phrase from the 18th century with a new connotation suggests a deliberate propaganda effort. The newly-revived phrase would be directed toward the Scots-Irish with their Celtic background of warriorship, fighting back repeated invasions of their territory, and tradition of never retreating. However, most military strategists throughout history have included the disciplined retreat as one of their tactics.

Letter to the Editor, Aug. 16, 2006.... Now the news media tells us that Hezbollah and other sleeper cells are ready to attack from within our own country and there is still no sign of repentance in America.... J.W.C.

[Error in fact: I doubt any news media have accused Hezbollah of planning to attack either the United States or any other country except for Israel. It would not be to Hezbollah’s advantage to attack the United States. Hezbollah was formed for the purpose of defending Lebanon against Israel.]

The above letter is an example of generalized and uninformed fears about Mideast terrorism that make people vulnerable to propaganda.

Letter to the Editor, July 6, 1998: Businesses, cities, police, military, clubs, churches, and committees all have one leader (boss). Marriage is an organization that must operate like all the rest.... R. C.

[Bad analogy]

Is a friendship between two people an organization? Are all relationships between people hierarchical? Isn’t leadership sometimes split between two or more entities, each in charge of a different domain (for instance, three-part government under the U.S. Constitution)? The organizations listed in the letter have different purposes and are organized in different ways. Some elect their leader; others hire or appoint the person, and some have rotating chairmanships.

A business executive is accountable to a board, while a mayor can be overridden by the city council. The analogy above was part of the letter's argument supporting Christian fundamentalist beliefs in the subordination of women.

Bible Forbids Abortion? Anti-abortionists usually claim or assume that the Bible expressly forbids abortion, but it does not. To say that the Commandment "Thou shalt not murder" applies to abortion is a circular argument (begging the question) because it assumes that abortion is in fact murder. On the other hand, four kinds of passages in the Bible strongly suggest that there was no special solicitude for the fetus in Biblical times.

First, some passages indicate that the census did not count infants until the age of one month. (Numbers 3:15) *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* says that "Archeological evidence indicates that in ancient Israel the infant mortality rate was as high as fifty percent." That suggests a reason not to count the newborn immediately.

Second, the ancient Israelites did not judge the accidental death of a fetus in the same way as that of a person already born. Penalties were different. (Leviticus 27:3-7, Exodus 21:22-25)

Third, on several occasions the Lord leads the Israelites to massacre entire towns of their enemies, including pregnant women. That certainly does not demonstrate concern for the fetus. (2 Kings 8:12, 1 Samuel 15:3, Psalm 137-9, Hosea 9:1)

Fourth, in Numbers 5:11-31, a husband comes to the temple with his wife, whom he suspects of adultery, and the priest assists him in giving her a potion that will cause her to abort if she is pregnant. (Biblical passages pointed out by Darrel Henschell)

In addition, most present day practicing Jews do not oppose abortion. The United Synagogue of America passed a resolution including these statements: "In all cases, the mother's life takes precedence over that of the fetus up to the minute of its birth. This is to us an unequivocal position. [Abortions] though serious even in the early stages of conception, are not to be equated with murder."

However, while the Bible does not expressly forbid abortion, this fact does not automatically make the procedure a great idea. Abortion is a crude and harsh form of birth control. Societies can greatly reduce the abortion rate by extending the use of contraception and by ending abject poverty throughout the world, where in some places women may face the choice of "feed two or starve three." With widespread contraception and support for pregnant women, abortion would most likely be reserved for cases of rape, incest, and strictly medical reasons.

The revulsion many people feel about abortion may not have so much to do with the Bible as with mammalian urges to reproduce and to protect our offspring. We cannot deny these instincts, but as humans, we are not entirely driven by them. Unlike other animals, we are capable of foresight. People have found ways to limit births since time immemorial. Probably the oldest way to space one's children was breastfeeding for several years, since that inhibits fertility.

Letter to the Editor, March 10, 2008: *This country won World War II in less time than it takes Nancy Pelosi to change her panty hose. How did we do it? We bombed Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo, Berlin, Hiroshima, etc. killing every man, woman and child who had the misfortune to live there. In other words, we went to war....The day will come when our Congress will be called to account for treason for putting their own self interest ahead of their country. Until this country, and our leadership understands that the radical Muslim community is hell-bent on destroying everything American, we will reap exactly what we have sown....H.M.*

In the letter above, H.M. has seriously revised the history of World War II, which lasted three and one-half years (for the United States) and involved many battles and military campaigns besides the air bombing of civilian cities by Nazi Germany (the London Blitz) and similar bombings by the Allies of German and Japanese cities. Also, while the bombings resulted in horrendous loss of life, they did not kill every person in the cities bombed. H.M. appears to be confusing World War II with Old Testament stories of ancient massacres which in his mind form the template or model of real war, in fact, the ideal war.

H.M. implies that Congress holds back the war effort by not supporting an all-out war that would involve saturation bombings of civilians in foreign cities (which ones are not specified). These would of course be horrific war crimes. He fails to note that the U.S. presence in Iraq and Afghanistan is an occupation rather than a war between armies as in World War II.

This bellicose letter is an extreme example of the imperialist ideology and its justifications, as well as curdled Borderer attitudes. The misogynistic dig at Nancy Pelosi is code for establishing the writer as a manly man, who does not flinch from exterminating millions of civilians in a just cause.

Socialist Mayors in 1912: Here's a little hidden history you probably don't know. In the elections of 1912, the U.S. Socialist Party elected 56 mayors, and one congressman (V.L. Berger), while its presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs won 897,000 votes (Woodrow Wilson was elected with 6,286,214 votes). A later chapter discusses how left-wing views have been omitted from U.S. history and public life, meanwhile calling liberals and moderates "leftists."

Letter to the Editor, October 14, 2006: We went to a Muslim country to free its people from a murdering despot and to give the population a chance for democracy [but] the spread of democracy is one of Islam's biggest fears. When are we going to become outraged by these people and their threats? The news media is in fear of insulting them in the least bit, historical texts that are not kind to Islam are now forbidden....I am also sick of the media and many politicians who quake with fear at the thought of stirring up terrorists but do not hesitate when an opportunity is available to insult Christianity. G. L.

[Overgeneralization, Rationalization, Oversimplification, Exaggeration, Demonizing, Poor Me]

Letter to the Editor, October 7, 2003: A Little Rock fireman attended the meeting and compared fighting a fire with military combat. [Another fireman stated that fighting a fire is like fighting a small war.] These two firemen should visit [a cemetery] and read the names of the veterans who gave them a gift—that being the free soil they walk upon. These two men insulted every veteran who served and bled....A.A.W.

It is sad that two groups of brave men in dangerous occupations should find themselves in conflict with each other, especially after the many deaths of firemen during 9/11. Here I would comment on the often-expressed idea that war is what has preserved our liberties. However, with the exception of the Revolutionary War and World War II, and the Civil War as it relates to the former slaves, most American wars were not fought to preserve liberty but for reasons of American expansion and power. That fact does not detract from the courage and honor of anyone who fought in those wars. However a better understanding of history and geopolitics by young men of military age could stop the cycle of future wars.

Do Democracies Fight Democracies? President George W. Bush and others claim that democracies don't attack each other or threaten world peace. However, political commentator

Patrick J. Buchanan notes that in the War of 1812, the United States went to war against Britain while the latter country was engaged in fighting Napoleon. In the War Between the States, both the Union and the seceding states were set up as democracies. So were the adversaries in the Boer War. And “what about World War I, fought between the world’s democracies, which also happened to be empires ruling subject peoples?”

Buchanan also notes that it is democracies such as Britain, Israel, France, India, and the United States that possess most of the nuclear weapons—and they are not disarming. He adds “Were not the Western nations first to invent and use poison gas and atom bombs?”

CHAPTER 3: CULTURE WARS

Long live freedom and damn the ideologies.

Robinson Jeffers, American poet, "The Stars Go Over the Lonely Ocean," 1940

Something dramatic was needed to change the narrow, conformist, materialistic outlook of the 1950s and early 1960s—an era I lived through as a young wife and mother. Both men and women felt trapped by "the system." Women's rights were going backward; there was systematic discrimination against black Americans both in the North and the South a century after their supposed liberation; and finally, we were fighting a pointless, bloody war in Vietnam.

The unexpected vehicle for change comprised a "whole earth catalog" of new and historical ideas: Martin Luther King Jr.'s adaptation of Gandhian nonviolence, a revival of feminism, novel forms of political activism, the Bacchanalia of rock music, 'consciousness raising', primitivism and high technology, 'back to the land', mass gatherings, hallucinogenic spirituality, celebration of sexuality, respect for indigenous cultures, a resurgence of 19th century communitarianism, and other social inventions. These were also ideological times. Besides the New Left, civil rights, and feminism, cults formed especially around Eastern religious leaders.

As idealists and creative thinkers put together a host of new ideas, followers interpreted the moment in their own, sometimes confused way. Rural youth let their hair grow, smoked pot, and scrounged out a living. The result was that many country people still define 'hippies' as ne'er-do-wells and thieves. Cultural critic Camille Paglia says

"Sex, drugs, and rock and roll" was the fast-track reality for a significant segment, working-class as well as middle-class, of the sixties generation. Drugs....functioned as magic elixirs for the missing initiatory rituals in an increasingly transient society....I am painfully aware of the tragic toll that drugs took on my generation. This was one of the great cultural disasters of American history....Nevertheless, it was drugs, abused until they turned on their takers, that helped trigger the spiritual explosion of the sixties.

Creativity was often co-opted and commercialized. The Sexual Revolution was a license for some men to shed personal responsibilities toward women and children along with the grey flannel suit. Many feminists concluded that this revolution played out in a way that did not benefit women and children. However, one must weigh the excesses of the period against important gains for civil rights, women's rights, and gay rights, widespread anti-war and pro-environment attitudes, and a broader awareness on many levels that still continues.

Paglia says that a major part of '60s culture was a new religious vision that synthesized East and West. But the promise of this new vision was never completely fulfilled for several reasons including abuse of drugs, young people who confused Asian religions with free love; the public's continuing lack of knowledge about comparative religion; scientific materialism; and New Age muddles. Paglia says "The religious impulse of the sixties must be rescued from the wreckage and redeemed." She expects this would lead to positive effects on religion, science, and politics.

Just as with the Rosicrucian Enlightenment of the early 17th century, it was inevitable that even the most idealistic changes would lead to reaction. The term *culture war* describes ideological confrontations typical of American public culture beginning in the late 1960s and especially since the 1980s. (There is also a more limited 'culture war' in Australia, where groups have conflicting views about Australia's history and its treatment of aboriginal people.) In the United States the conservative camp generally frames these oppositions, deciding which

controversies form part of the 'war.' The culture war can be considered a counter-revolution or counter-reformation against changes created in the earlier period of the '60s and '70s.

In the early 1960s, ideological differences created confrontations on university campuses, especially in the liberal arts. The university is a logical place for ideological confrontations. Since universities first began in late medieval times they have been centers for intellectual ferment and activism. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1963-1964 developed after conservative Regents pressured the University of California Berkeley to ban students from an area traditionally used to set up tables and hand out pamphlets and petitions for causes such as civil rights. It eventually involved the largest mass arrest in California history and a campus-wide strike that probably involved three-fourths of the faculty.

During those years, the student body across the country was becoming larger and more diverse and began to include veterans of the civil rights struggle and later, of Vietnam. From my own experience attending college with World War II veterans who were on the GI Bill, I know that a leavening of non-traditional students who have had intense life experiences can introduce a new dimension to college life. This was particularly true during the turbulent sixties.

Conservative framing of the campus culture wars tends to focus on cultural controversies and to ignore the larger political issues students introduced during the era of civil rights struggles and of opposition to the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and militarism in general, including academic research for the military-industrial complex. By leaving out these major concerns, those issues that conservatives consider to be part of the campus culture wars include feminism, affirmative action in admissions, supposed enforcement of political correctness from the left, and multiculturalism in the sense of calls for inclusion of other voices from minorities and world cultures beyond the focus on "dead white males" and 'Anglo-Saxon' culture. Judging by current letters to the editor, these campus issues continue to disturb a great many conservatives who have little or no association with university life and who vastly overestimate the amount of political activism on most college campuses today.

Second, the culture wars as framed by conservatives focused on patriotism and anti-Communism. The War in Vietnam was the pivot for these conflicts, and remained so for several decades after it ended. The invasion and occupation of Iraq revived many of the same conflicts and even memes. For example, in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq a group of mostly middle-aged, middle-class people carrying protest signs on a Saturday were met by shouted commands from several passing vehicles to "Cut your hair" or "Get a job!"

A third, underplayed aspect of the culture wars was the backlash to desegregation. For instance, many Christian schools began as private white schools to avoid desegregation. Paul Weyrich, master fund-raiser for conservative causes, claimed that it was not *Roe vs. Wade* but the IRS threat that turned politically conservative evangelicals into the Religious Right. Evangelicals, upset by an IRS decision under President Carter to deny tax-exempt status to segregated private schools, turned against Carter and worked to elect Ronald Reagan. Randall Balmer, a professor of religion, emphasizes that "The Religious Right arose as a political movement for the purpose, effectively, of defending racial discrimination at Bob Jones University and at other segregated schools."

Abortion was not a major issue until several years later. According to Balmer, it is a myth cultivated by the Religious Right that the movement began as a direct response to the *Roe vs. Wade* decision in 1973. But at the time of the Court decision, most evangelical leaders said nothing about it, and some favored it. Later in the decade, strategists picked abortion as an issue with which to build a broader political movement.

However, a fourth major aspect of the culture wars did arise from an issue related to women: “the Pill.” Improved contraception under the control of women themselves made it possible to separate their sexual activity from the risk of pregnancy. This ability threatened to upset the ancient male/female relationship in which women are dependent on men and subordinate to them because of childbearing. Also, women were traditionally expected to be more moral than men and to ‘civilize’ males, a role threatened by their own unrestricted sexual enjoyment. The anti-feminist and “pro-family” movement feared the changed role of women more than they did the feminist movement itself, which became a convenient scapegoat.

Austin Cline sees the roots of the Christian Right in anti-feminism and notes that its organizational structure was first created by the successful opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment in the early 1970s.

These oppositions were tied to politics from the beginning. An important aspect of the culture wars is the nature of those leaders who arose to define and develop them. John Dean describes four major players, all right-wing authoritarians, who helped to launch the movement known as social or cultural conservatism. The first was J. Edgar Hoover, who ran the FBI from 1924 to 1972, almost half a century. The FBI still bears his imprint. Hoover squelched political dissent in the 1920s and (says Dean) was deeply involved in McCarthyism in the 1950s. Besides his strident anti-Communism and intolerance for dissent, Hoover opposed and tried to destroy Black civil rights leaders and the American Indian Movement (AIM). While Hoover personally was no paragon of family values, he managed to set himself up as a moral leader. Dean describes him as a “classic Double High authoritarian” and manipulative demagogue.

Research by Robert Altemeyer and others on the different sorts of right-wing authoritarian personalities, and Dean’s application of this research to recent history is summarized in my previous book, *Models, Myths and Muddles*. According to this research, Double Highs tend to become leaders of other authoritarians.

Spiro Agnew, vice president under Richard Nixon until he was forced to resign on charges of shady financial dealings, was a great admirer of Hoover and an early leader of the culture war. When the Vietnam War was escalated in 1969, Dean says Agnew was the first high-profile conservative to attack the mainstream media. Dean says Agnew admitted to trying to divide the American public with what he called “positive polarization.”

Phyllis Schlafly, another Hooverian anti-Communist, became a highly effective leader of the anti-feminist and “pro-family” movement in the 1970s, organizing conservative women to block ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Schlafly is undeniably intelligent (she graduated college as a Phi Beta Kappa at age 19), possessed of great energy (she raised six children and wrote 20 books), with “miraculous managerial skills” according to Dean. Nevertheless, Schlafly used misleading information and propaganda devices to kill the ERA. While Schlafly has a law degree and an MA in government from Harvard, high intelligence and advanced degrees do not guarantee critical thinking or freedom from demagoguery.

Paul Weyrich is a Catholic conservative and strong anti-Communist who developed many of the tools of social conservatism that helped it to dominate the Republican Party. Weyrich is the “funding father” of modern conservatism and in 1973 established the Heritage Foundation, which became the forerunner of numerous conservative think-tanks. According to Dean, the biggest contribution of Weyrich to modern conservatism was bringing fundamentalist Protestants and conservative Catholics into politics. Dean considers Weyrich to be a Double High authoritarian.

The election of Jimmy Carter as the first openly evangelical president impressed many fundamentalists in politics. They had stayed out of the public arena for 50 years, since their defeat in the 1925 Scopes “monkey trial.” In 1979 “three Catholics and a Jew” (Paul Weyrich, Terry Dolan, Richard Viguerie, and Howard Phillips) recruited a popular fundamentalist Baptist preacher, Jerry Falwell, to found the “Moral Majority.” According to scholar Steve Bruce, the Christian Right was built on the beliefs of these men that an organized conservative movement could be based on social and moral issues. The Moral Majority did play a significant role in the 1980 elections, lobbying for prayer and creationism in public schools, while opposing the ERA, homosexual rights, abortion, and the U.S.-Soviet SALT treaty.

A 1981 book by Francis Schaeffer warned that the United States was falling into the abyss of secular humanism. His book, *A Christian Manifesto*, argued that Christians needed to take immediate action to restore the Bible’s principles. It sold almost 250,000 copies its first year. Schaeffer understood that the issue of abortion, previously of most concern to Catholics, could potentially motivate Protestants. According to Ed Larson, a historian at the University of Georgia, “Schaeffer made abortion an issue for Christians more than anyone else, and he commanded Christian soldiers to start marching.”

In the 1980s another fundamentalist preacher, Rev. Pat Robertson, developed a huge television audience. Dean says that in 1982 Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network reportedly reached 100 million homes. In 1989 Robertson founded a voter mobilization organization of “pro-family” Americans called the Christian Coalition of America or CCA, which at its height had an estimated million members and was one of the main funders of the culture wars. The organization Theocracy Watch claims, on the basis of Congressional scorecards, that Robertson founded the CCA in order “to take over the Republican Party from the bottom up.” Dean considers Robertson to be a Double High authoritarian.

Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America, by James Davison Hunter, was published in 1991 and gave currency to the term “culture wars.” Hunter argued that a number of divisive issues such as abortion, gun politics, separation of church and state, homosexuality, and others had turned into two polarized positions that split American politics and culture. He described these positions as ideological worldviews. Patrick J. Buchanan in his 1992 campaign for the Republican nomination for U.S. President described “a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war.” This speech brought the issues to public attention.

Since the culture wars shifted from the political/patriotic front of anti-Communism and the Vietnam era to the religious and moral front, one hears many complaints in the letters columns that secular humanists, liberals, the ACLU, or other demonic groups are trying to push Christianity and Christians out of the public sphere. In fact, writers often use the term “persecution” as if they were still being thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. On the other hand, Austin Cline claims that many Christians in the United States have an attitude of Christian Supremacy, the idea that Christianity is superior to all other religions. Cline describes it as follows:

Politically, Christian Supremacy is an agenda to get America’s political institutions to reflect this superiority by favoring Christians over non-Christians and Christianity over all other beliefs. [Christian Supremacists] would reduce non-Christians in America to an inferior status analogous to dhimmis in Muslim lands [where] members of any tolerated religion, like Jews and Christians...are allowed to exist and to practice their religion, but they are not allowed to proselytize or otherwise make trouble.

Cline notes that Christians have more privileges than they realize. Most Christians don't have to work on their holiest days; can easily find Christian movies, TV shows, and films; rarely encounter groups that exclude Christians; and can ignore the holidays of other religions while expecting that stores, schools, and public media will recognize their own holidays.

A recent skirmish in the culture wars concerned Christmas and the fact that some retailers, aware that Hanukkah, Kwanza, and other religious holidays occurred around the same time as Christmas, were promoting "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." Although "Happy Holidays" and "Season's Greetings" have existed for many years on greeting cards, if only for the sake of variety, the Religious Right suddenly saw this trend as "a War on Christmas." However, Rob Boston points out that the Puritans—those Calvinist forebears of the Religious Right—did not actually care for the holiday, which they associated with Roman Catholicism. After the Revolution, some Americans frowned on the celebration as a Tory custom. Before the Civil War, many Protestant churches held no Christmas services.

The unexpected introduction of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as Senator McCain's selection for vice-presidential candidate also marked the beginning of an intense, last-minute Republican campaign based on previous themes of anti-abortion, guns, jingoism, and anti-intellectualism directed to the party's Evangelical base. This brief but divisive campaign seemed to be a revival of the waning culture wars. After the election of President Obama, the Tea Party arose and so did many of the same cultural issues, although the Tea Party was ostensibly most concerned with fiscal issues.

Multiculturalism

Unfortunately, in all the heated discussion around the term [multiculturalism] no clear definition of the concept has yet emerged. People are thus left to read into the term whatever their biases and self-interests dictate.

Caleb Rosado, "Toward a Definition of Multiculturalism" 1996

There is more than one meaning of multiculturalism—and ideologies thrive on the lack of clarity. The term is used in four main ways. First, some consider that multiculturalism is the actual ethnic and cultural diversity in a given place. Others see it (usually negatively) as the claims and demands of minority groups in society (including women, although they are not truly a minority). A third definition refers to an academic policy of setting up a more inclusive curriculum. Fourth, especially in countries outside the United States, multiculturalism means an official or widely held social policy that promotes recognition of diverse groups. We might use shorthand for these differing definitions as follows: diversity, demands, curriculum, and policy.

In Europe, those who oppose the official policy of multiculturalism also tend to oppose further immigration. They may use a number—a specific ratio of newcomer to established populations—to describe a top limit to immigration beyond which they believe social cohesion breaks down. In the Netherlands, a fairly rapid change from a country that was largely of one ethnicity and culture in the 1950s to one in which one fifth of the population was of non-Dutch ethnicity in 2006, and half of those of non-western origin, tested and strained the official policy of multiculturalism, which was recently reversed. Canada, which currently has the highest per capita immigration rate in the world, has kept its policy.

This fourth meaning—official (or popular, unofficial) policy—is probably the one most widespread across various countries. Caleb Rosado sets up an operating definition as follows:

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society

Modern celebration of diversity has historical antecedents. For instance, in 1940s Cleveland, Ohio I attended events in community parks that marked the national origins of the city's inhabitants, many of whom came from countries of Eastern Europe. Also localities often promote, for the sake of local tradition as well as tourism, the national dances, cuisine, music, and other cultural expressions of whatever people settled these Chinatowns and Little Switzerlands. However, such popular and sometimes stereotyped celebrations of diversity are not enough to prevent political conflicts today. There is currently a backlash against multiculturalism in several European countries and the UK, and controversy elsewhere, even in Canada, where the policy is generally seen as having been most successful.

On the other hand, the United States does not really have an official policy, yet many would agree with Sam Roberts that the United States today is "the world's most multicultural society and a model for what other countries could become." He says the degree of diversity is much higher today than during the first half of the 20th century when the country was hailed as a 'Melting Pot,' a term coined by a playwright around 1900. Sam Roberts says the Melting Pot was always largely a myth. Also, Blacks and Native Americans were left out of it.

The United States, Canada, UK, and Europe have all received great numbers of immigrants in recent years. The UK has high immigration rates from former British colonies, especially Pakistan, India, and Somalia. In continental Europe many of the newcomers are followers of Islam. Besides Islam being an 'exotic' religion in Europe, terrorist bombings such as 9/11 have added fears about Islamic minorities and have increased polarization. High rates of unemployment among immigrant populations or the population as a whole always exacerbate such conflicts. In the United States, there has been a large influx of Mexicans and other Spanish-speaking people, as well as Asians, Eastern Europeans, Irish, and others. Currently, one in five Americans are either foreign-born or second-generation. In addition, the United States has large racial minorities: about one-fourth of Americans are black, Hispanic, or Asian.

While North Americans tend to view multiculturalism (diversity) differently than do those in Europe, in most countries there are concerns about national identity, human rights, free speech, religious conflicts with civil law, security, and possible fragmentation of political life.

The government of Canada was first to adopt an official policy of multiculturalism, in 1971. At the time it was set up to respond to grievances of a large French-speaking minority in Quebec Province. In contrast, the United States has long held the ideal of a "Melting Pot" in which newcomers are expected to assimilate to the initial culture brought from England. In the words of John Jay, First Chief Justice of the Supreme Court: "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs." Many Americans still hold the ideology expressed by John Jay although 200 years later only about a fifth of us are descended from English ancestors, and we have many subcultures divided by such things as age and consumer tastes as well as ethnicity. Those who believe in the Melting Pot metaphor oppose the idea of hyphenated Americans and may complain that Mexican immigrants are not assimilating fast enough.

Rosado notes that while the concept of assimilation means that newcomers are expected to conform as quickly as possible to the host culture in a one-way process of cultural exchange, yet

few groups have assimilated completely. Instead, there has been a reciprocal process of ‘transculturation’ in which two cultures adapt to each other and create a new cultural reality. He also notes that people of color—American Indians, African Americans, and Latinos—have historically not been encouraged to assimilate but were presented with a different model of colonization and segregation.

In England, novelist Salman Rushdie says that cultural pluralism is an irreversible fact, and that any attempts to achieve ‘purity’ will inevitably lead to “segregation and explosions.” But he finds unsatisfactory all the available social models for dealing with a multifaceted culture. Rushdie says that multiculturalism can become cultural relativism, “under cover of which much that is reactionary and oppressive—of women, for example—can be justified.” On the other hand, he says the model of one-size-fits-all or “full assimilation” (as in the American ideal) is both undesirable and unachievable.

In the United States and Canada multiculturalism has an added dimension: women, gays, and lesbians. There is also greater concern about ‘identity politics’ in the United States. The emphasis on the rights of specific groups, whether based on gender or ethnicity, is not only opposed by many conservatives but also by leftists who feel that it has fragmented the progressive movement. Focusing on the rights of particular groups does not promote unity of the whole, whether political movement or nation.

Rosado emphasizes that the ideal of multiculturalism is an inclusive process that leaves no one out, and decries what he calls ‘bashism’ or attacking another person solely because of his group membership. Specifically, Rosado says a narrow [ideological] view of multiculturalism may lead to blaming white males for most of the social evil in the world. While various oppressive institutions are historically the end-result of the abuse of power by white males, nothing is gained now by reversing the process and excluding white males, many of whom are working to increase institutions of inclusion. “White maleism” is an example of personalizing, oversimplifying, and stereotyping. It is also counter-productive and engenders hostility from white males, leading to duelling ideologies.

Another ongoing argument is whether multiculturalism (policy) is the same thing as, or leads to, cultural relativism. For instance, Edward W. Younkins, accounting professor at Wheeling Jesuit University, says: “The main idea of multiculturalism is the equal value of all cultures (i.e., cultural relativism)...For the multiculturalist, truth only exists by consensus within each biologically-defined group.” Younkins appears to be reacting to multiculturalism in its narrow, ideological forms especially in terms of group demands (identity politics). He says, “There would be no harm in multiculturalism if the term simply meant that we should acknowledge and teach truths about many cultures.”

The viewpoint of Jesco Delorme, doctoral student in political science at a Berlin university, is quite different from Younkin’s. Delorme says that we need to agree first on which values are essential to the liberal model of society, then examine whether certain actions threaten this idea of ethical individualism. For instance, Muslim women wearing headscarves, Christians wearing crosses, or Jewish men wearing yarmulkes do not threaten the liberal framework: “A liberal society forces no one to carry out any particular religious practices; no more should it forbid such practices, as long as they are voluntarily chosen.” At the same time, he cannot justify granting ethnic/religious groups the right to make judicial decisions within the family which have led in some cases to ‘honor killings.’ The perspective of one well-known advocate of multiculturalism in Canada, Will Kymlicka, is that societies should protect minorities from majorities, but not at the expense of the rights of individuals within minority communities [such as women].

One popular view of cultural relativism appears in a comic strip with a conservative bias, “Mallard Fillmore,” which criticizes cultural relativism, political correctness, and the educational system at one stroke. In the first panel, a teacher says: “Who are we to say our system is ‘better’ than the Soviet Union’s?” Panel two, another teacher: “Who’s to say Shakespeare was any ‘better’ than the Beatles?” Panel three: “Who are we to say our culinary customs are ‘better’ than cannibalism?” In panel four, the punch line, Mallard Fillmore says “My high-school teachers avoided ‘value judgments’ about everything...except my grades.” However, the first three panels besides being highly exaggerated are very different sorts of arguments. The first questions nationalist and ideological bias, the second the literary canon, and the third disregards an almost universal taboo. Cannibalism has sometimes been practiced ritualistically, sometimes in a situation of extremity, but never as a culinary custom.

Ethics philosopher Burton F. Porter says that multiculturalism does not have to entail moral relativism:

The movement is really asking that we have a sympathetic understanding of other cultures and the perspective that different peoples bring to political, social, or cultural issues. We should consider multiple points of view in reaching decisions rather than just the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant perspective. This does not mean, however, a moral neutrality in which all values are equal and no behavior is ever condemned.

This seems clear enough, yet the battle still rages about “cultural relativism.”

Tribes and the Culture Wars: The Borderers or Scots-Irish who settled in colonial America in such large numbers, and who had so much influence on the Southern region and the frontier, were a tribal people. Borderers have put a very strong stamp on the American character and history. In many ways their cultural descendants still display many tribal values (even more, that is, than the rest of us—we are all tribal descendants and retain much of that universal background). Their Calvinist religion emphasizes moral absolutes. They vote for warrior leaders, those who support military funding and appear to ‘kick butt.’ They are still xenophobic and nativist, suspicious of outsiders while generous and hospitable to those they identify as their own. The Neo-Borderers tend to demonize those of other tribes, defined as other ethnic and religious groups, homosexuals, liberals, and Yankees, or people of other nation-states, especially nations that are not predominantly white and English-speaking.

Insofar as the ‘Red States’ display Borderer values and norms, their citizens are very concerned about “free-riders and cheats.” For instance, in my state there is a constant barrage of letters to the editor attacking welfare recipients, unemployed or homeless people, those who have allegedly cheated their way into disability payments, or Hispanic immigrants who “won’t” learn English, all seen in some sense as free-riders or cheats. Writers attack affirmative action for giving unfair advantages to blacks. One criticism of gay people is that “they want special privileges” although it is not clear what these are.

While ignoring the moderate majority, current culture wars pit cultural conservatives who have Borderer roots against the recent rise of individualism and secularism. Neo-Borderers also oppose “big government” insofar as it accommodates free-riders, skeptics, and dissenters. They may analogize their ancient resentment toward the ‘big government’ of England that kept invading the Scottish borderlands.

One observes that these tribalistic people are especially susceptible to manipulation by propaganda and outrage memes. They have strong emotions and little history of cultivating

critical thinking. Reportedly, Karl Rove, master political strategist in several George W. Bush campaigns, especially targeted the neo-Borderer group in his propaganda. In the 2008 presidential primary campaign, elections in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and West Virginia hinged on “white working-class” people who are direct Borderer descendants, although this was never spelled out. Political manipulation of this group goes back at least to Nixon’s “Southern Strategy” and maybe to the Civil War, when Borderer descendants fought valiantly for a system based on slavery although most of them had no slaves. The War Between the States was framed for them in a way that emphasized states’ rights and sovereignty, and the idea that they were about to be invaded by another region, as their ancestors had been repeatedly invaded in Britain.

Conservatives in the Culture Wars employ a good bit of anti-intellectualism, equating cultural liberals with intellectuals and regarding both as elites. The late Ron Rockwell pointed out yet another aspect of this anti-intellectualism: anti-professionalism. The recent Bush administration, with its voting base of culturally conservative Christians, disregarded or removed not only those scientists, lawyers, diplomats, and top military leaders who disagreed with its policies but also professionals of all sorts, replacing them with right-thinking cronies who lacked expertise in the field. But losing your professional people leads to incompetence and organizational decline. This new version of the spoils system echoes Mao’s Cultural Revolution in China half a century ago.

One result of this trend was pointed out by Rashid Khalidi, director of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, who says that the U.S.A. went to war in Iraq blindly. “This administration is particularly knowledge-averse, not only to the academic world outside but to their academic experts inside.” Professor Khalidi became politically controversial late in the 2008 presidential campaign, but his point here is widely shared. Veteran journalist Chris Hedges said about U.S. policy in the Middle East, “We’re walking blind into an area of the world we know absolutely nothing about, and dealing with people we’ve turned into cartoon figures.”

Another aspect of this anti-intellectual ideology is called the politics of resentment. It is based on the notion that liberals or Democrats look down on regular people and are “elitists.” These elitists are purportedly concentrated in universities, Hollywood, and the two coasts. The idea is not dislodged by the fact that about half the country votes for Democrats, including many less-educated people, or that the upper Midwest and northern industrial cities are as likely to vote Democratic as people on the coasts.

This resentment is spread by pundits and talk show hosts who themselves are often well-educated and who command a good income. They have succeeded in transferring much of the resentment that working-class people might feel toward the economic elites who have steadily received a larger chunk of the pie over the last 30 years, to intellectuals, media, and Democrats.

Wedgies

Marriage is between a man and a woman and life begins at conception. Our president, George W. Bush, is a fearless warrior for the two most important commissions of the Christian faith.

Mathew T. Carpenter, letter to editor of *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Oct. 2, 2008

The wedge issue is a side-effect of the culture wars. The two issues referred to above—opposition to gay marriage and legalized abortion—together comprise the tried-and-true recipe for bringing out the Republican base of fundamentalist Christians on voting day. Most of these voters live in the South and lower Midwest. Until recent decades, neither they nor any other

Christians would have maintained that the issues mentioned were “the two most important commissions of the Christian faith” or even necessarily part of the Christian faith. The Bible in both Old and New Testaments has a great deal more to say about poverty.

These two religious/political tenets or slogans rest on dubious premises. Nowhere in the Bible is marriage defined as between one man and one woman, since some of the Lord’s favorites practice polygamy. Today in the United States polygamy usually shows up in small religious cults in which leaders cite biblical authority to coerce underage women into marriages with older men. (However, some suggest that since elderly women outnumber elderly men, perhaps an exception might be made allowing polygamy for those beyond a certain age.) As for same-sex marriage, the word ‘marriage’ is ambiguous. If a distinction can be made between marriage as a civil right and marriage as a religious ceremony, gay people could have their legal marriage while disapproving religions can ban religious ceremonies in their own churches.

Nor is abortion proscribed in the Bible, as mentioned previously. There are both theological and scientific questions about how to define a human life. Religions differ on exactly when the embryo is ensouled, which is to say, becomes a human person. Medical science can tell us when the embryo or fetus acquires a working nervous system, when it has a brain, and when it is capable of independent life outside the womb. These suggest differing definitions of human life and different beginnings to it. Another ambiguity concerns propaganda use of the word ‘baby’ to describe embryos and fetuses before the stage of viability. By totally ignoring such distinctions, and equating abortion to infanticide, some of those opposed to abortion can work themselves up into such a state of outrage that they compare abortion to the Nazi Holocaust of Jews and others, or can even justify violence against abortion providers.

Results of the presidential election of 2008 indicated that these wedge issues were not as politically important as they were earlier. A poll for the group Faith in Public Life found that a majority of young white evangelicals favors either same-sex marriage or civil unions, while six in 10 believe that abortion should be legal in most cases. Robert P. Jones, spokesman for the Public Religion Research which performed the study, commented: “What we see is younger Americans, including Americans of faith—they are not of the culture war generation.”

CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC EDUCATION

The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled.

Plutarch, Roman historian AD 46-120

The greatest myth about education is that learning is something that happens only in school. But the greatest achievement of a child is acquiring an entire language and many basic concepts in the first few years of life without formal instruction and before ever attending school. John Holt pointed this out and started a reform movement. Learning is a lifelong process that continues without formal training even into old age. My Grandma Winkler had completed only the sixth grade in school—then she had to go to work as a ‘hired girl’—but in her eighties she listened to the discussions of her college student grandchildren and would subsequently pop up with words and ideas she had overheard, using them correctly and in context. As Mark Twain said, “Don’t let schooling interfere with your education.”

Myths and strong opinions abound regarding education, and public education appears to be a central focus of the culture wars and related politics. Many political, educational, economic and religious ideologies are in play at the same time. Education has to do with our own children and the future direction of the country—what could be more important? Besides that, Americans often expect schools to be the answer to almost every major national problem. Peter Schrag says that ever since 1957 when the Russians sent up Sputnik, the world’s first orbiting satellite, the United States has been continuously trying to reform public education. Schrag says “That event more than any other began the process of nationalizing the task of the schools.”

Reforms are proposed even for the youngest. From time to time somebody like Newt Gingrich suggests that poor people are incompetent to raise their own children, who should be brought up in residential schools or orphanages run by good, solid, middle-class people. More recently, a movement of well-intentioned people is promoting universal state education for three, four, and five-year-olds, as well as full-day kindergarten. (Note that this is a different issue from subsidized day-care for working mothers.) By 2006, at least 40 states provided state funding for preschool programs, according to Larry and Susan Kaseman. They say that in the forty years between 1965 and 2006, the number of three-year-olds who attended preschool rose from 5 to 42 percent and four-year-olds rose from 16 to 68 percent.

However, according to the Kasemans, research does not support the claims that early preschool has social and academic benefits. Further, some studies find early schooling to be detrimental. Children of three or four are not developmentally ready to deal socially with large numbers of other children. One study by Stanford/University of California found that early preschool leads to negative social behaviors such as acting up, aggression, and bullying.

One persistent conflict about education has to do with teaching reading, whether it should be by Look and Say or a phonics-based approach. Not only U.S. conservatives but also Tories in the UK have strongly aligned themselves with the phonics approach and made it a political issue. When schools used both reading methods, UK nine-year-olds came out third of 35 countries in the 2001 International Literacy Study, a very respectable showing. Nevertheless, Tories believe a more structured study of phonics, mastered before children even see any books, will reach the seven percent of UK young people who never do become functionally literate. In the United States, Schrag says that phonics and “look-say” readers like “Dick and Jane” replaced each other in alternate decades as the pendulum swung back and forth.

Teachers who oppose the pure phonics program point out that while it speeds up the rate at which children can read words, it does not help them to understand what they read. Nor does it encourage them to love reading and books. How can they be reading ‘better’ if they do not understand what they read? A large part of our problem now is that many people have a mechanical grasp of reading but can’t analyze what they read or apply it to anything else.

It isn’t clear why this must be an either/or. Since there is more than one way to break the code, and different children have different learning styles, most teachers prefer to use more than one method. The phonics-only program, in contrast, sounds like a Quick Fix. The strangest part of this controversy is that it is so political. But so is much else about public education.

Critics Abound

I don’t think the American public has any idea about the seriousness of the efforts to dismantle public education, piece by piece.

Diane Ravitch, address to AACTE, February 25, 2007

The notion that public schools are in terrible shape—much worse than they used to be (whatever decade “used to be”) began at some point after desegregation and has now become the conventional wisdom. However, some schools are in bad shape and some aren’t. Often the more well-to-do suburban schools show pretty good results by the conventional measures, while schools in the inner cities and pockets of rural poverty are failing. A lot of the difference has to do with the kind of tax base the local school system has to draw from.

Diane Ravitch is a historian of education and former Assistant Secretary of Education under Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. She is widely respected for the independence of her views. Ravitch says that every decade since the 1950s has seen calls for reform, but unlike today, “the critics in the 1950s did not challenge the very existence of public education.” She blames media in part for a false perception about public schools:

The media knows nothing about teaching except what they see in the movies, where a bright young person miraculously transforms students in a matter of weeks or months. The media loves to beat up on regular teachers, who don’t seem to have that magical ability... They loudly applaud any superintendent who promises to fire teachers and principals who don’t raise test scores overnight. The media know it can be done; they saw it in the movies!

Many critics talk about economic competitiveness. Education is supposed to be the magic bullet that cures any problem with the economy. First in the 1981 report *A Nation at Risk*, next in the 1990 report *America’s Choice: High Skills or Low Wages*, most recently in the 2006 report *Tough Choices or Tough Times*, experts complained of “a rising tide of mediocrity” or they charged that industrial productivity had slowed to a crawl and that without radical school reform, the bottom 70 percent of Americans would have permanently low wages. But Lawrence Mishel and Richard Rothstein point out a curious response of American manufacturers to these alleged problems: they moved their plants to places like Mexico where education levels are lower than in the United States. This suggests that to be truly competitive in the global economy one does not need a college education as much as willingness to work for \$10 a day. Meanwhile, many college graduates in the U.S. have to take jobs that require only a high school education.

Mishel and Rothstein note that in fact U.S. productivity steadily rose in the 1990s, and in the late 1990s wages increased for both high school and college graduates and even drop-outs. Yet

“denunciation of public schools increased in intensity, often tied to calls for their privatization with vouchers.”

Many critics agree with Benno Schmidt, former president of Yale University, who complained in the early 1990s: “We have roughly doubled per pupil spending (after inflation) in public schools since 1965... Yet high school students today are posting lower SAT scores than a generation ago. The nation’s investment in educational improvement has produced very little return.” However, the SAT argument does not take into account that more minorities and low-income students now take the college-bound SAT test than did 30 years ago. This tends to lower the overall average from when mainly middle-class, white students took it. Desegregation brought minority children into the general mix from separate, underfunded and inferior schools, making up for generations of educational neglect and allowing more lower-income children to consider college. Meanwhile test results for minorities and lower-income whites are rising.

Critics do not factor in new expectations of the public schools. Steve Kangas noted that most of the extra money spent on public education has gone to vital services rather than directly improving general education. For example school lunches accounted for about 10 percent of increased spending, while about 30 percent of increased spending from 1965 to 1993 was directed to special education. Because of the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, more disabled children are now mainstreamed or specially taught in public schools. Also, some disabilities such as autism and ADD appear to be increasing. By 1990, almost 12 percent of public school students were enrolled in special education, which is often quite costly. A recent Supreme Court decision upheld the right of an extremely wealthy man to require the New York City school system to pay for his son to attend an expensive private school for his learning disabilities. Nationwide in 2005 there were 71,082 special education students attending private schools at public expense.

By including more children, with more special needs, the educational system is doing a bigger job. Other major changes in society since “the good old days” are the widespread use and addictive nature of television and electronic games, cell phones and other gadgets; and the fact that most mothers now work outside the home. High school students commonly have part-time jobs with demands on their time and energy, and more of them are likely to come to school stoned or drunk than in the 1950s. These changes must be factored in too.

Critics of public education commonly target teacher’s unions, the AFT and NEA, claiming that collective bargaining rights destroy professionalism. Note there are two different models of professionals. Most teachers, nurses, and social workers are employed by an institution, while most doctors, lawyers, dentists, architects, and accountants work for themselves. Members of the former professions are predominately women, and earn less than those in the self-employed, predominately male professions. Professionals who work for themselves do not need collective bargaining rights but that does not make them the only model for professionals. They also have professional organizations such as the American Medical Association which lobby for them.

Answering the common argument that teachers’ unions are the cause of low performance in the public schools, Diane Ravitch says, “Line up the states that have strong teachers’ unions in one column, and line up the states that have weak teachers’ unions in the other. Which column has the higher performance?” She adds that other nations with high-performing educational systems usually have strong teachers’ unions.

Critics and defenders of free public education view its mission differently. Defenders see it as probably the greatest force for unifying and democratizing the nation, and creating the well-informed citizens on which democracy depends. However, many critics think the first mission of

the schools is to prepare students for the workforce. A third mission for education is to help the individual self-actualize and become all that he or she can be. John Gatto emphasizes that the purpose of a real education is to teach the student how to teach himself—to give him the tools of how to learn. Often overlooked in the education wars is that education can help a person to develop values informed by the best minds and experiences of the whole human race.

So which is or what are the most important missions of public education: To provide the one place where children of all ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds can work together? A place where they learn the skills of being a good citizen (which would surely include critical thinking skills)? Is it to prepare them for good jobs, or perhaps to provide employers with well-trained employees? To give children basic learning skills so they can continue to teach themselves throughout their lives? Is it to expose them to the accumulated wisdom and creative products of the ages? Several ideologies depend on which mission or missions appear foremost.

The five major strands in criticism of or attacks on the public school system are: the home-school movement(s), Christian fundamentalism, opposition to desegregation, social conservatism, and privatization. The earlier home school movement inspired by John Holt's books includes many parents who are Christians, but conservative Christians have developed homeschooling in a separate direction. Religious dissatisfaction with public schools has taken other forms as well, involving local politics and ideological debates in the media. Besides a two-pronged attack by Christian fundamentalists—abandoning schools while at the same time trying to co-opt them—the public education system has other critics such as social conservatives who prefer traditional teaching methods and sources such as the McGuffey Reader to anything that smacks of 'progressive education.'

The largest threat to public education is from those who want to run the schools like a business. We hear a lot about vouchers, charter schools, testing, and accountability. This is framed as 'reform,' but many suspect that proponents of privatizing build on any dissatisfaction with the public schools not in order to reform them, but to take them over and operate them for profit. Those who want to run the educational system by the bottom-line are themselves well-funded. For instance, several large corporations endowed a Department of Education Reform at my local university. Local media have publicized pronouncements by the department's first professor and chairman, previously associated with a right-wing think tank, who insists for instance that class size has nothing to do with children's learning.

Another ideological group is the Standards movement and their belief in the primacy of testing for "accountability." The No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB) is an expression of this which began six years ago with high hopes and bipartisan support but now is under attack from many quarters.

Homeschooling

It's a nutty notion that we can have a place where nothing but learning happens, cut off from the rest of life.

John Holt, American author and educator, 1923-1985

Compulsory education first began in several states of Germany, notably Prussia, around 1800. In the United States it did not begin until the middle of the nineteenth century, in Massachusetts, and soon spread to other states. Before that, most children were taught at home or by local teachers. At the time that compulsory education was introduced, not all parents and

communities welcomed it, and some attack it now. For instance, Dr. Raymond Moore and John Gatto claim that national literacy was higher before compulsory education than it is now

A movement toward home schooling was inspired especially by teacher John Holt in his *How Children Fail* in 1964 and *How Children Learn* in 1967. Holt tried to show how schools short-circuit the child's natural learning process, and he hoped for some deep reforms in education, but neither of these books proposed any alternative to the public schools. Around the same time other writers such as Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, and Harold Bennet were also questioning the basic assumptions of public schooling. Two educational professionals, Ray and Dorothy Moore, conducted research and reviewed 8,000 studies about early childhood education and development. From this research the Moores concluded that formal school before the age of eight was damaging to children, especially boys because of their delayed maturity. They found that family bonding during early years was critical, and asserted that most young children are better off at home, even with mediocre parents, than in the best of schools with fine teachers.

Other school reformers or critics include Herbert Kohl, William F. Rickenbacker, and John Gatto, an award-winning veteran of 30 years teaching in New York City schools. Critics often noted that America's compulsory school system used a model developed in the regimented German state of Prussia. Others say that the school system tends to be dominated by individuals from the lower middle-class and reproduces the conformist values of that class. Gatto claims "Schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders [through] endless exercises in subordination."

Education critics of the '60s and '70s were mainly concerned with how children learn best. By the mid 1970s, both Holt and the Moores were advocating homeschooling, although Holt continued to hope for reform within education. Holt's ideas appealed more to the counterculture, the Moore's more to conservative Christian families. Holt recommended "unschooling" which does not rely so much on textbooks or desk activity but rather on life experiences and following the child's interests. Here I call the movement based originally on Holt's influence "inclusive" to distinguish it from the separatist Christian home school movement, although the more inclusive group has many Christians in it as well.

Today homeschooling is legal in all states and many countries (although not Germany or China), with about one million children currently educated at home in the United States according to a U.S. Census report. However, there is still official opposition to homeschooling. In 2008 a California state appeals court ruled that parents could not educate their children at home without recognized teaching credentials. Education expert Richard Kahlenberg said the case "pits those who believe parental rights are paramount against those who place a premium on well-educated citizens." Kahlenberg's framing of issues is a false either/or.

Homeschooling by conscientious parents can be a good choice especially for children with special needs, those prone to be bullied, very bright children who are not mentally challenged in school, children who live in isolated places so far from schools that they must ride buses for hours a day, or where the schools are substandard. Many of the children (mainly boys) who are now taking Ritalin and other psychoactive drugs with unknown long-range effects might be drug-free if they were not forced to sit still and pay attention for long hours of the day, if homeschooling gave them more time to run off their energy outside, and if it allowed more self-initiated learning (unschooling).

On the other hand, I know several adults who came from dysfunctional or abusive families for whom public school was their salvation, their refuge from the misery of home, and a

substitute family. One size does not fit all. John Holt believed only a small fraction of parents would homeschool even if the practice were widely accepted.

It is good that parents now have more options, but it is unlikely that homeschooling will become a mass movement. One big limiting factor today is that most mothers as well as fathers are forced by economic conditions to work outside the home. The government report noted that 60 percent of home schooled children have a non-working adult in the home, twice as many as children in public school. Homeschooling parents tended to have moderate to high education and income, and the families were especially likely to live in the rural or suburban West.

Christian home-schooling: Many people falsely assume that all home schooling is for religious reasons. The Census report says “No simple division exists between religiously-motivated and academically-motivated parents.” Most parents are just trying to do the best for their children, but there are some differences between the John Holt-inspired and the Christian homeschoolers. The inclusive group does not attack or try to undermine the education system. Sometimes their children are educated at home for a time and then decide to go to public school. However, separatist Christian homeschoolers are part of a larger movement that does actively oppose the public schools. The founder of Christian Reconstructionism, Rousas Rushdoony, was an avowed foe of secular education who strongly promoted homeschooling.

The fundamentalist attack on public schools has employed several different but simultaneous strategies. The first is to abandon the public schools for either private Christian schools or homeschooling. The second strategy is to place fundamentalists on school boards, people who do not usually declare that they are running on a religious platform. Also, activist parents lobby or badger schools with complaints about the curriculum, textbooks, library books, and other matters. They try to introduce Bible courses along with creationism or Intelligent Design, and to limit or eliminate sex education, or present Abstinence Only courses. The goal is evidently to make over the public schools to resemble private Christian schools.

Many conservative Christians believe that biblically-oriented public schools have always been the national norm. That was certainly not the case in every part of the country. Public schools that taught fundamentalist Christian beliefs may well have existed in some rural school districts especially in the South; but when I went to public school in Minneapolis and Cleveland in the 1930s and 1940s there were no Bible readings or instruction, no posted Commandments, and no public prayers at ballgames or in class. My high school was an ethnic and undoubtedly a religious mix, although I recall no occasion to discuss religion with any of my classmates including a boy from Lebanon whom I dated a few times, or his friend from Syria. They might have been Christian, Muslim, or secular, but the subject didn't come up. In general, people were more private about their religion in those days, at least in the Midwest. The American school system as a whole could not be sectarian wherever the ‘melting pot’ was in evidence.

Desegregation was a third strand of dissatisfaction with public schools, and coincided with fundamentalist opposition. Private Christian schools proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, while leaders such as Dr. James Dobson and Rousas Rushdoony urged Christian parents to home school. Race was a major motivation for this flight from public schools, although not made explicit. Ironically, while evangelical African-American churches led the Civil Rights movement, it was evangelical fundamentalist churches such as the Southern Baptists who were at the center of white resistance to desegregation. Many observers see desegregation as the major motivation behind the fundamentalist resurgence as a political movement. Moral Majority co-

founder Paul Weyrich insisted that the IRS threat against Christian schools (that segregated schools would lose their tax-exempt status) was what first galvanized the Religious Right into action—not the abortion issue.

While the Supreme Court outlawed school segregation in the Brown decision of 1954, the peak effort to desegregate schools was in the 1960s and early 1970s. Between 1964 and 1968, federal officials and courts actively supported rapid integration efforts. The South went from almost complete racial segregation to become the most integrated region in the country. With the Nixon presidency, this effort slowed down or reversed, and never recovered its momentum through several Republican Congresses and administrations, and the Rehnquist Supreme Court. Gary Orfield says, “There has been no major push to integrate schools since the early 1970s.” In fact, the schools are becoming resegregated in both North and South.

On June 2, 2007 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Parents Involved* that public school districts cannot consider race when they assign students to classrooms. It was not a simple case and the ruling by a 5-4 majority was not clear-cut. The debate may be about school integration, but the basic reason for segregated schools is residential segregation, and the major reason for low-performing schools in poor districts is that schools in wealthier districts are better funded by property taxes. Also, years and generations of poorly-funded, substandard schools for minority and poor children have created a deficit that will not be overcome overnight, without extra effort and funding.

In *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, Kevin M. Kruse suggests that white flight to the suburbs turned out to be the most successful and lasting segregationist response to the civil rights movement and the courts. However, despite resegregation the South is still the only region in which most whites attend schools with significant numbers of Blacks, while the most segregated states for Black students are Illinois, Michigan, New York, and New Jersey. Latinos are at least as segregated in their schools as Blacks, and the degree of their segregation has increased greatly since 1980, says Kruse.

School systems and courts were perplexed about how to find a way to desegregate the schools except for the highly unpopular plan of busing. When I attended college in Chicago after World War II, the so-called Black Belt was already like a separate city within the larger metropolis. For mile upon mile, all you could see were black faces. Certain streets formed the invisible boundaries which one was not supposed to cross—I recall Cottage Grove Avenue was such a barrier. On election night 1948 I did cross the boundaries to act as a poll-watcher in this part of the city and was welcomed without incident. What struck me then was the alienation and despair of those who made the effort to vote. Some deliberately spoiled their ballots by voting for all the candidates.

Sam Smith tells how American cities became segregated by the practice of “redlining” mortgage loans that began as far back as the 1930s. One New Deal reform was the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation to provide federal guarantees for home mortgages. HOLC and its successor the FHA helped millions of families to own homes. However, the FHA underwriters recommended enforced zoning and restrictive covenants. From 1936 on, those in the real estate industry created an inventory with color coded maps of neighborhoods graded A to D. Black neighborhoods were almost always graded “D.” Smith quotes historian Kenneth T. Jackson: “In a March, 1939, map of Brooklyn, for example, the presence of a single non-white family on any block was sufficient to result in that entire block being marked black [redlined].” These maps were available to lenders and realtors but not to the public.

The FHA also had a strong suburban bias, which continued from the 1930s into the 1970s. Not only did this help ghettoize the inner cities, but it created the modern phenomenon of sprawl, something we can no longer afford in the era of Peak Oil and Climate Change.

U.S. Senator John Edwards said in 2003 “We still have two separate school systems in this country. It’s not [any longer] based on race; it’s based on economics, but that’s related to race.” Smith says at the time Americans were fighting about school integration, the process “would have been much easier if zip code had been included as well as ethnicity.... The segregation is heavily based on class as well as ethnicity,” but we don’t like to talk about that, he says. “As a result, affirmative action has lost a major weapon. Class diversity would have achieved much the same ends without as much political and social conflict.”

Social Conservatism: Since the days of John Dewey, conservatives have attacked progressive education and promoted various aspects of traditional education from phonics to an emphasis on the classics. John Dewey (1859-1952) was a philosopher and educator regarded as the founder of the progressive education movement that began in the early decades of the last century. Dewey emphasized the individual and the development of problem solving and critical thinking skills rather than rote learning. Although there are differences among progressive educators, in general they are concerned with preparing citizens for active participation in a democratic society. Two essential elements are respect for the diversity of individuals (“child centered”), and “the development of critical, socially engaged intelligence” for effective citizenship in the community.

Progressive educators opposed a movement that began about the same time which proposed academic education for a few top students and vocational training for the majority. Progressives were wary of the increasing use of “scientific techniques” such as intelligence testing that might be used for the purpose of setting up this two-tiered system. Dewey explicitly rejected the doctrine of Social Darwinism and saw the goal of education to help every individual achieve his or her full potential:

Democracy [is] aristocracy carried to its limit. It is a claim that every human being as an individual may be the best for some particular purpose and hence the most fitted to rule, to lead, in that specific respect. The habit of fixed and numerically limited classifications is the enemy alike of true aristocracy and true democracy.

The principles of progressive education were very popular in the early decades of the 20th century but it never became the main educational philosophy in the United States. Opponents often act as if it did. There were not enough teachers qualified to follow Dewey’s educational theories, and his writings were not always understood by the enthusiasts who tried to follow them. In 1938 he wrote *Experience and Education* to correct those progressive educators who had the false idea that “almost any kind of spontaneous activity inevitably secures the desired or desirable training of mental power.” However, these misunderstandings were not what brought down the progressive education movement.

As the Cold War developed in the 1950s, cultural conservatives attacked progressive education as fuzzy-headed and part of a Communist plot. David Wiles says: “The irony of taking the idea of the individual and critical inquiry as one and the same with the mass society model of inevitable determinism was lost on the conservative detractors.” After a decade of right-wing attacks, progressive education disappeared as a movement. Nevertheless, social conservatives have been attacking progressive education ever since. Once having selected a scapegoat

individual, group, or idea, many conservatives tend to flog it long after it has expired. For instance, years after welfare reform in the mid-'90s, letters to the editor continue to attack welfare as if no changes had occurred. In the case of progressive education, conservative Christians have taken up the cudgel against it. In one example, a Christian site accuses Dewey of having written the Humanist Manifesto and blames him for the alleged loss of Christian-oriented education in public schools.

Although the progressive education movement is defunct, in the late 20th century a number of educational ideas developed that owe something to it, including open classrooms, schools without walls, ungraded classrooms, cooperative learning, free schools, alternative schools, and unschooling.

One stream of conservative critique targets both child-rearing and educational practices together. During the 1970s the operative word was “permissiveness,” a type of child-rearing that conservatives associated with Dr. Benjamin Spock. Having made good use of Dr. Spock’s childcare handbook while raising my own children, I could not discover exactly what was so “permissive” about it. Spock did note that babies and children are individuals, and it’s true that he advised mothers to feed newborn infants when they are crying from hunger rather than adhere to a rigid schedule. He recommended a variety of disciplinary methods, although not corporal punishment. The criticism of Spock’s childcare advice arose only after he became a prominent critic of the Vietnam War.

Privatizing Schools: Probably the most relentless attack on the public school system comes from the free-marketeers who would like to privatize the nation’s public school systems, with its annual budget (2002-2003) of \$455 billion (\$388 billion of it for current expenditures). Those amounts represent about 14,000 school districts, 94,000 public schools, and 50 million schoolchildren. (Approximately six million children attend 28,000 private schools.) Public schools could be very big business and taking them over would be a coup almost on the scale of privatizing social security.

The first step in turning public schools into a business is to attack them, and paint them all with the same brush. Admittedly, there are schools that don’t work. Many of them are in the inner city, operating in older buildings on smaller budgets than suburban school systems. They try to educate students from poor families, many of whose parents were educated in segregated, “separate but unequal” school systems. And the curriculum is based on middle class values and aspirations that may seem foreign to these children. The answer often touted for inner-city schools is some kind of highly disciplined schooling that involves uniforms, rote learning, zero-tolerance, positive slogans and affirmations, and other quasi-military training. This Prussian-style education may produce certain kinds of academic improvement without being true learning that shows children how to teach themselves.

If student literacy and academic achievement have declined over recent decades, those who want to put the entire blame on public schools do not consider the effect on children of hours of daily television-watching, along with videogames and other electronic nuisances. Some people who favor private schools insist that they do a better job than public ones, meanwhile ignoring differences in student composition and expectations of the public schools, which enroll more poor rural and inner-city children, foreign language speakers, slow learners, physically disabled, autistic, and emotionally troubled children. Private schools tend to be more selective.

The Bottom Line: A reformist website compares U.S. public and private schools in terms of performance and spending, and finds that private non-elite schools (mostly religious schools) cost 42.6 percent less than public schools. With 55 percent of private school enrollment in Roman Catholic schools where many of the teachers are in religious orders, and 31 percent in other religious schools which apparently pay their teachers even less, the spending difference is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that the turnover rate of private school teachers is 50 percent higher than for public school teachers, presumably because of the low salaries. The site claims that if all public school education could be provided for at the per student cost of non-elite private schools, this would save taxpayers about \$115 billion a year (1995 figures). It does not say where all those poorly-paid new teachers would come from.

This website compares schools strictly by performance on standardized tests. According to the 1994 figures cited, private schools did have higher average proficiency in reading and mathematics scores. In reading scores, however, between fourth and twelfth grade the public schools improved greatly in the comparison, suggesting that they did a reasonably good job of teaching their more diverse and relatively disadvantaged student body.

In general, it is not helpful to compare apples and oranges by ignoring the different kinds of enrollment. One can also question the use of standardized tests as the only way to evaluate a school's performance. However, one area not mentioned on this bottom-line website that could be explored further is *scale*. John Gatto claims that in a huge public school system such as New York City (where he taught for many years) expenses from the different levels of administration take up about three-quarters of the budget, leaving only about one-fourth for teaching and instructional supplies.

Rural consolidation is not always implemented sensibly, but it would seem possible to streamline administration and athletics without closing local schools, especially elementary and middle schools. National standards and local regulations could hold schools to a certain ratio of administrative budget to instructional budget. The prescription of turning schools into a business does not solve this problem, as large private corporations are top-heavy and bureaucratic too. Privatization also introduces new problems. Businesses must be profitable, which means that bottom-line considerations can come ahead of student needs and welfare.

One area of educational expense that is often under fire is the creation of smaller classes. According to Steve Kangas, 33 percent of increased public school spending between 1965 and 1993 was dedicated to this goal. It reduced average class size almost a third, to 24 students, helping classroom discipline and management. But Kangas says educational experts believe that to achieve truly individualized instruction requires an even smaller class of about 15 students. Conservative think tanks attack this idea. Seldom does anyone take a survey of actual classroom teachers about these questions.

School Reform

Just as we recognize that there must be a good firehouse in every neighborhood, there must be a good public school in every neighborhood.

Diane Ravitch, Address to AACTE, February 25, 2007

The words of the day are "reform," "competition," and "accountability." These imply that something is not working and needs reform; that schools, school systems, and teachers improve by competing with each other; and that educational success can be measured. Most proponents of these reforms take for granted that the American school system is failing. For those who would

reform or bypass the public schools, the four main proposals are merit pay, charter schools, vouchers, and standardized tests that define "accountability."

Merit pay is an attempt to incorporate business principles such as competition into the schools. But according to Paul Teske, dean of the School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado, "You're trying to put market ideas into a non-market system." In general, teachers have opposed the idea of merit pay because the 'merit' was hard to measure and held danger of personal or political favoritism by the principal or other supervisor doing the measuring. Nor do many agree that what teachers do can be adequately measured solely by how their students do on a standardized test. Such plans also encourage teaching to the test. However, in some school systems, a merit pay system devised with participation by the teachers themselves, and not tied only to tests, has been more successful. Teske says "Successful plans focus on the qualifications of the teacher, not just the achievement of the student...It's about helping teachers get better at what they do."

The No Child Left Behind act or NCLB became law in early 2002. It requires schools to test all students in the elementary grades and get them all to a certain level of proficiency in math and reading by the school year 2013-14. Schools that didn't meet the goals would be sanctioned, and in some cases this could mean replacing the entire staff. Ravitch says that the 2014 deadline is quite impossible. Many critics objected that the law was an unfunded mandate: despite penalties, substandard schools in poorly funded districts were not given any help. In other criticism, Schrag notes that NCLB has prompted reading and math drills to the point that there is little time to teach history, music, art, or physical education. Ravitch says that accountability has become an end in itself, and "schooling is being turned into the worst kind of gradgrind drudgery, killing the possibility that children will ever love learning or become educated people."

Apparently the testing philosophy has gone even further in England, where according to a 2008 report primary school children are the most tested in the world. Coincidentally or not, a UNICEF report ranked the UK the worst place to be a child out of 21 developed nations.

Charter schools are publicly funded schools that are exempt from some of the regulations applying to other public schools. In exchange for this freedom, they are held accountable for results superior to non-charter schools. Some critics claim that in practice, charters are not held to higher standards of accountability. Some free-market proponents push charter schools, while labor unions generally oppose them or at least the way they are developing, even though the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) helped start the charter school movement. Bella Rosenberg representing the AFT said that the states were doing a very poor job of monitoring the contracts with charter schools, and that the charter school movement "has become increasingly political and has lost all sight of the education of children."

However, many minority parents still think that charter schools may do a better job than public ones for their children. Both Republican and Democratic parties include charter schools in their platforms. A number of studies comparing charter schools with public schools have given mixed results, although certain charters have enjoyed success, notably KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) middle schools.

School vouchers are a different matter, controversial from the start. A school voucher, education voucher, or tuition credit is a certificate which gives parents the ability to pay for their children's education at a private school rather than public school. By treating education as a marketplace, competition is supposed to improve the general quality of public education. Milton Friedman first proposed vouchers in 1954 as a way to get government out of education. Next, after the Supreme Court Brown decision, southern legislatures proposed vouchers to help white

parents fleeing integrated schools. Then Richard Nixon came up with ‘parochaid,’ a plan to provide public money to religious schools, primarily Catholic. Alex Molnar, professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, lists other major players in the promotion of vouchers as Ronald Reagan, George Bush the elder, Lamar Alexander (former governor of Tennessee), Bill Clinton, and the Bradley Foundation.

Proponents say that vouchers ensure ‘parental choice’ and empower poor families. Critics of voucher plans say they may not be constitutional, because the majority of private schools are sectarian. Voters in a number of states have rejected ballot measures to establish voucher plans that are viewed as subsidies for religious schools. The other major argument against vouchers is that they take money away from the public schools, especially the underfunded ones in poor districts. Of course replacing public schools was precisely the point for Friedman.

Other arguments against vouchers are that private schools reject many of the children who apply to them on the basis of low achievement, discipline problems, or special needs. This greatly narrows actual ‘school choice.’ The better private schools cost much more than vouchers pay, so that poor families are unlikely to make use of them. Also, few private schools are located in depressed rural areas or in the inner cities.

In 2006, the report “Tough Choices or Tough Times” recommended that we dismantle the existing school system. Instead, school districts should hire independent private contractors including “limited liability corporations owned and run by teachers” to run the schools. Diane Ravitch commented: “What secret do private organizations have that has not been shared with the nation’s educators? What is the logical connection between privatization and quality education?” Schrag is surprised by the commission’s confidence that if the schools were run correctly we could compete with nations whose wages are one-fifth of what they are in the U.S. He says, “In that respect, this report is no different from every other warning we have received these past 50 years.”

In February 2008 a panel of professors discussed free-market education choices at the University of Central Arkansas. One member of the panel, Loyola University economics professor Walter Block, said charter schools and school choice are not enough options—the free market could provide everybody with an education, and public schools should be abolished. Block said the public system is not moral because it requires people who do not have children in the public schools to pay for the education of others [see Anarcho-Capitalism].

CHAPTER 5: RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS

To become a popular religion, it is only necessary for a superstition to enslave a philosophy.
William Ralph Inge, "Idea of Progress," May 27, 1920

Some ideologies are so widespread, so influential, and so interwoven into the fabric of social and political life that we react automatically either for or against them. The following chapters will survey several ideologies—religious, political, and economic—deserving at least basic definition with a look at some of their assumptions and effects on our shared mental life.

In this chapter we try to define fundamentalism, then question whether there are fundamentalisms in a number of religions, or if the term properly applies only to Protestant Christian fundamentalists, who first used the word to describe themselves a century ago. We consider conservative movements in Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Catholicism that may or may not be 'fundamentalist.' Another question is whether the word is being applied too broadly, with negative consequences for our understanding of current events and of other cultures.

Protestant Christian fundamentalism is rooted in Calvinism, a Protestant Reform movement that began in the sixteenth century. Many U.S. immigrants from the British Isles followed Calvinist-influenced religions, which have had a major effect on American religious beliefs, especially in the Southern states. Calvinism also influences economic ideas and politics.

Next, we consider a number of issues that have risen around Christian fundamentalism in the United States, such as opposition of fundamentalists to some basic scientific understandings and extending to the role of reason and evidence in discovering truth. The situation is complicated by a decline in religious literacy even among Christians about Christianity. Also, we note that in several English-speaking countries there are racist 'religions' that have some resemblance to Christian fundamentalism, although we in no way want to implicate all fundamentalists in racism. A major concern is that various sects of Christian fundamentalists hold a range of problematic beliefs that impinge on United States governance and foreign policy.

World Fundamentalisms: The term 'fundamentalism' has recently come into widespread and expanding use, yet religious fundamentalism is not easy to define. The *Britannica* says it is a "type of militantly conservative religious movement characterized by the advocacy of strict conformity to sacred texts." Religious scholars Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe call fundamentalism "a proclamation of reclaimed authority over a sacred tradition which is to be reinstated as an antidote for a society that has strayed from its cultural moorings." Others find politics and nationalism of equal or greater importance than the sacred. For example, UK scholars Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis see fundamentalist movements as basically political:

There are two features which are common to all fundamentalist religious movements: one, that they claim their version of religion to be the only true one, and feel threatened by pluralist systems of thought; two, that they use political means to impose their version of the truth on all members of their religion. Fundamentalist movements, all over the world, are basically political movements which have a religious imperative and seek in various ways, in widely differing circumstances, to harness modern state and media powers to the service of their gospel.

Is the key conformity to sacred texts or a sacred tradition? Or is it political power? In the 1990s, American scholars Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby edited a five volume work called *The Fundamentalism Project* which argued that fundamentalism is inherently political and

totalitarian. Similarly, Bruce Lawrence sees the fundamentalist phenomenon as a world-wide reaction to modernity, defined by opposition to the Enlightenment values of rationalism and individualism, without however rejecting most of the technological advances of modern times that grew from Enlightenment science. Hadden and Shupe also view this type of religious ideology as a worldwide trend, a response to globalization and its spreading, secular monoculture evidenced first in Christianity but also present in Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism.

This global approach is controversial, however. The *Britannica* lists several frequent objections to *The Fundamentalism Project* such as the following: “‘Modernity’ is a vague word. Many movements categorized as fundamentalist seem more motivated by ethnic and nationalist grievances than by rejection of modernity. The term ‘fundamentalism’ has so many negative connotations that it is not an appropriate category for scholarship.”

Nevertheless, religious scholars Lawrence, Marty, Appleby, Emmanuel Sivan, and Gabriel Almond find similarities among various kinds of fundamentalism. Combining their lists, we come up with the following fundamentalist “family resemblances:”

- Fundamentalists are first of all concerned with the erosion of religion and its proper role in society. They envy domination by modernist culture and try to bring religion back to center stage in public policy.
- They understand truth to be revealed and unified and see themselves as the guardians of truth. Fundamentalists stress absolutism and inerrancy in their sources of revelation.
- They are selective about what parts of their tradition they stress and also what parts of modernity they react against. They want to restore an idealized past.
- Fundamentalists see themselves as advocates of a minority viewpoint, even when they are numerically a majority.
- Fundamentalists embrace some form of Manichaeism (Good and Evil dualism). They perceive themselves as part of a cosmic struggle and reinterpret history in light of this cosmic struggle.
- They are oppositional and confrontational towards secularists and “wayward” religious followers. They demonize their opposition.
- They are led by males, and have charismatic, authoritarian leaders.
- They generate their own technical vocabulary, which outsiders cannot understand.
- They tend to believe in some form of Millenarianism or Messianism. This is a recurring movement within religions, especially the three main monotheistic religions, that despises current society and leaders, and looks forward to prophets or apocalyptic forces to bring dramatic change.

Surprisingly, these scholars do not emphasize one belief that is common in conservative religious movements, namely, that God ordains the submission of women to men, requires modesty in dress and attitude, and wants traditional family arrangements with women at home taking care of children. Women’s expanded education and increasing autonomy are among the most striking features of modernity which the fundamentalist strongly opposes. This resistance to the full equality of women in conservative Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism is not a minor peculiarity but rather a deeply rooted attitude that may itself help to explain the recent rise in fundamentalist religions. Insistence on rigid demarcations between male and female also leads to hostility towards gays and lesbians in most of these conservative traditions.

Islamic fundamentalism: A great deal of controversy exists about which world religions do have fundamentalist movements. State University of New York College professor Dr. Ilyas Ba-Yunus argues that the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' is a Western projection onto the Muslim world. According to Ba-Yunus, those groups which Western pundits pick out as Islamic fundamentalists are "a bewildering array of a wide range of ideological, narrowly nationalistic and even revengeful groups in the disparate Muslim world" Since social grievances and nationalistic beliefs underlie most such movements, many scholars prefer the terms 'Islamists.' Some of these groups borrow Marxist ideas; some resort to terrorism. However, they share the following fundamentalist traits, according to the *Britannica*:

Most Islamists insist on conformity to a code of conduct based on a literal interpretation of sacred scripture. They also insist that religion encompasses all aspects of life and hence that religion and politics cannot be separated. Like most fundamentalists, they generally have a Manichaeic (dualistic) worldview: they believe that they are engaged in a holy war, or jihad, against their evil enemies, whom they often portray as pawns of Jewish and Masonic conspiracies in terms taken directly from the anti-Semitic literature of 20th-century Europe.

Many westerners falsely assume that Islam and Islamic fundamentalism are the same. This notion is evident in local letters to the editor. It may be that those who follow Islam are generally more orthodox in their beliefs than Christians who are splintered into a number of different sects. However the *Britannica* says: "Not all Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the literal and inerrant word of God," adding "Most Muslims are not ideologically committed to the idea of a state and society based on Islamic religious law."

Chris Hedges, a journalist who was Mideast bureau chief for the *New York Times*, says that Americans generally have turned Muslims into a caricature, not realizing that Islam is quite varied. "There are mosques in India where men and women pray together; Egyptians could drink me under the table. [Most Muslims] do not live lifestyles that are particularly different from most mainstream Christians." He notes that Afghanistan was not strictly fundamentalist before the United States conducted a proxy war against the Soviets by supporting Islamists such as Osama bin Laden. "In Kabul, under the king, women could get doctorates and be gynecologists."

American media sometimes define Arab fundamentalism in terms of how resistant the group or nation is to Western culture. For instance, an AP article describes the contrasting reactions in Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Dubai to the celebration of Valentine's Day, which though named after a saint, is a quite secular holiday celebrated mainly in the United States. At one end of the spectrum, Saudi Arabia outlaws the holiday; at the other, Dubai is decorated with giant hearts. The article says: "Across the Arab world, attitudes toward Valentine's Day are a gauge for the level of fundamentalism." But this is not about reacting against modernity so much as against domination by another culture. It is evident to residents of the Middle East that the United States is trying to colonize their region by military, political, and economic means. Thus resistance to Western culture and especially to that of the United States reflects nationalism and cultural conservatism rather than religious fundamentalism.

Like most religions, Islam has had recurring revivalist movements calling for religious reform. There exists a small movement within Islam called Salafism, which some describe as "puritanical," "fundamentalist," "Manichean," and "utopian." Salafism began in the ninth century and in the fourteenth century an Islamic scholar, Ibn Taymiyya, gave it a theology. Salafis call on modern Muslims to revert to the pure religion of the Prophet Muhammad's generation and the next two. They also adhere to a strictly literal interpretation of the sources of revelation, the

Qur'an and the *Sunna*, which is a collection of Mohammad's sayings and accounts of his actions. Scholar Bernard Haykel says fewer than one percent of Muslims currently follow this movement, and they vary in their interpretations of it. Even among this one percent, "There is now intense competition between groups and individual scholars over the 'true' Salafism."

Salafism has some commonalities with Wahhabism, the Islamic movement that dominates Saudi Arabia, but the two have separate beginnings and some different beliefs. Wahhabists are more anti-modern. Most Salafis, while doctrinally rigid, are peaceful. However, radical Salafism or Jihadist Salafism is an orientation within Salafism that has led to violence by its followers, notably Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda groups.

One important aspect of radical Salafism is contrary to basic Sunni principles of Islam. Sunnis, who constitute 90 percent of Muslims worldwide, do not permit the exclusion of fellow Muslims by calling them infidels. Radical Salafis, however, are prepared to turn fellow Muslims into heretics whose blood may be shed, and ready to declare war against Muslim rulers who do not apply Islamic law (Shari'ah). Thus did Osama bin Laden advocate violence against the government of Saudi Arabia, his own country.

Several characteristics similar to Christian fundamentalism are present in Salafism such as literalism, Manichean dualism, the tendency to demonize opposition including fellow believers, and a strong desire to recreate the ancient past represented in their holy book.

Like Dr. Ba-Yunus regarding Islam, Dr. David Frawley argues that there really is no such thing as *Hindu fundamentalism*:

It is questionable whether fundamentalism, as it is usually defined relative to Christianity and Islam, can exist at all in the more open and diverse religious tradition of Hinduism which has many names and forms for God, many great teachers and incarnations, many sacred books, and a pursuit of Self-realization which does not recognize the existence of any eternal heaven or hell. There is no monolithic faith called Hinduism with a set system of beliefs which all Hindus must follow that can be turned into fundamentalism.

However, several groups in India have been called 'fundamentalist' such as the BJP whose name means "the Party of the Indian People." BJP has sometimes violently opposed the seeking of converts by Muslims and Christians in India. In 1992, militant Hindus destroyed a mosque, believing that it was on a site sacred to Hindu beliefs, after which rioting led to more than 1,000 deaths. But the *Britannica* says BJP motivation was not so much religious as nationalistic: to preserve the Hindu character of their country, adding "The fact that Hindu nationalism is sometimes called 'Hindu fundamentalism' illustrates how indiscriminately the term fundamentalism has been used outside its original American Protestant context."

Arya Samaj is sometimes described as fundamentalist. It is a reform sect of modern Hinduism that began in 1875. Its founder, Swami Dayananda, believed in the infallible authority of the Vedas. The Arya Samaj opposed animal sacrifice, child marriage, the caste system and other practices viewed as degenerate. They established schools, colleges, orphanages, and homes for widows, and conducted relief efforts during famines and disasters. Despite all these good works, some have criticized the sect for its hostility towards both Christianity and Islam.

Sikhism, a minority religion in India, experienced a violent fundamentalist movement in the late 1970s and 1980s led by an uncompromising preacher, Bhindranwale. This leader emphasized conformity to a sacred text, the *Adi Granth*. However, the *Britannica* says that Bhindranwale's group was at heart a nationalistic separatist movement that wanted an

independent Sikh state in Punjab province. “Although images of holy war pervaded their rhetoric, their primary enemy was the Hindu state of India rather than secularism per se.”

Various confrontations between the Sikhs and the Indian government led to the assassination of Indira Gandhi, prime minister of India, by two Sikh bodyguards in 1984.

Jewish fundamentalism: While Orthodox Jews fervently believe in the divine origin of the Torah—the first five books of the Old Testament—most Jews believe that one must read the Old Testament together with the oral law (Mishnah, Talmud, and later legal codes). In other words, contextual reading is important in Jewish religious tradition. Neither are there distinct sects within Judaism that depend on literal and inerrant reading of these texts. Despite strict interpretations by ultra-Orthodox Jews, there does not appear to be within Judaism an anti-modernist movement based on literal interpretation of religious scriptures.

For other reasons, however, three trends of Judaism within Israel have been described as fundamentalist. These are militant religious Zionism and two branches of ultra-Orthodox religion. David Hirst, long-time correspondent for the *Guardian* in the Middle East, says that Jewish fundamentalism in Israel has gained great political importance over the last quarter century, motivating an estimated 20 to 25 percent of the population. These fundamentalists, especially the settlers who dominate the National Religious Party, “have acquired an influence, disproportionate to their numbers, over the whole Israeli political process.”

Zionism began in the late 19th century, a secular version of an ancient theme among Jews that a messiah would come and lead them back to Israel. Non-religious intellectuals such as the Viennese writer Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) argued that the only way to end anti-Semitism was for Jews to have their own nation-state. But for traditional believers, this human-devised plan looked like heretical defiance of God’s will. Most Orthodox Jews and rabbis opposed Zionism for half a century, until the Nazi Holocaust seemed to prove that Jews required their own state in order to be safe. Ultra-Orthodox rabbis continued to oppose Zionism as blasphemous.

Despite general opposition to Zionism before World War II, some Orthodox rabbis argued that Zionism was part of God’s plan for the eventual messianic redemption of the Jews. These ideas led to a nationalistic Orthodox movement that cooperated with secular Zionists in creating and ruling the State of Israel. Then, according to the *Britannica*: “The Six-Day War of 1967 awakened the dormant messianic dimension of religious Zionism.” The more militant religious Zionists—the *Gush Emunim*—began to settle in the Arab territories occupied during the war. They believed it was part of God’s plan for them to take over this land permanently and also to expand the land of Israel until it reaches the borders foretold in the Bible.

Note that both Jewish religious Zionists and Christian Zionists (to be discussed later) insist on a literal interpretation of the Bible in this one matter of Israel’s boundaries.

Hirst says the Gush consider any Arab-Israeli peace brokered by the United States to be virtually impossible, “but furthermore, any attempt to achieve that impossibility should be actively sabotaged.” The Gush were shocked by the Oslo accords and they declared a “Jewish intifada” against this agreement and against Jews who supported “land for peace.” This way of thinking culminated in the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. Various Messianic rabbis have suggested ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians without reproof from the state Rabbinate which has the official duty to correct doctrinal errors.

According to Hirst, American Orthodox Jews have not only done much to finance the religious settlers, but at least 10 percent of the settlers are immigrants from America and include some of “the most extreme, violent and sometimes patently deranged” among them. One such

was Baruch Goldstein, a medical doctor born and raised in Brooklyn, who in 1994 machine-gunned 29 Muslim worshippers at a mosque.

The ultra-Orthodox: The *Haredim* or ultra-Orthodox of European origin (Ashkenazi) still oppose Zionism in principle—one group though living in Israel does not recognize the State of Israel—but most participate in Israel’s politics with their own *Haredi* parties. Hirst says they tend to support the militant religious Zionists against “land for peace.”

The *Hanedim* branch of fundamentalism is composed of ultra-Orthodox Jews of Middle Eastern origins (Sephardim). They also have a political party, *Shas*. Poorer and less educated than the Ashkenazi, the Sephardim have major concerns about their perceived second-class citizenship in Israeli society. The *Britannica* notes that *Shas* is an example of the many fundamentalist movements that “owe their success to political and social grievances rather than to strictly religious ones.” Like Arya Samaj in India, and some fundamentalist Islamic movements, *Shas* provides schools and social services for the poor.

Theologically, *Hanedim* beliefs somewhat resemble the pre-millennialist position among Christian fundamentalists, that the Messiah will appear when He wills it. In contrast, from Hirst’s description, the messianic fundamentalism of the Gush and their National Religious Party somewhat resembles Christian Reconstructionism. Both Gush and Reconstructionists would set up a theocratic state under religious law. The Jewish Kingdom would be governed by the *Halacha*, or Jewish religious law, and a king chosen by the rabbis. Men and women would be segregated in public, and adultery would be a capital offense. Hirst says “the *Halacha* would be an edifice of systematic discrimination against [non-Jews].”

Israeli Critics of Jewish Fundamentalism: It bears repeating that not all Israelis or Jews are Zionists or support expansionism. Many Israelis are secular or Reform Jews who resist the influence of Jewish fundamentalisms on Israeli politics and culture. One prominent critic was Israel Shahak, a chemistry professor whose parents had perished in a concentration camp. He emigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine as a young teenager and experienced the birth of Israel. Shahak became an outspoken critic of Israel’s government, Zionism, and Orthodox Judaism, creating great controversy, even accusations that he was a Jewish anti-Semite. He co-authored *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (1999) with Norton Mezvinsky. The two authors regarded the “messianic tendency” as the fundamentalist trait most dangerous to democracy and a major obstacle to peace. Shahak also asserted that Zionism is an attempt to re-create the closed Jewish community forced upon Jews during feudal times, and that it is a reflection of European anti-Semitism.

Shahak and Mezvinsky note that “Jewish fundamentalism is practically unknown outside of Israel...When its existence is acknowledged, its significance is minimized or limited to arcane religious practices and quaint middle European dress.” Also, criticisms of government policies supported by religious Zionists and the ultra-Orthodox appear more frequently in Israel’s daily media than in U.S. media. Israeli human rights activist Assaf Oron says:

A few brave Israeli journalists keep us informed. They write about towns and villages that have become open-air prisons....The conclusion from their writing is inescapable: The terrible Palestinian suicide bombings are, first and foremost, the result of Palestinian civilization disintegrating under the pressure of Israel’s army. If only a fraction of these stories appear in America, not as contentious “allegations” but with the indisputable credibility that these journalists have earned, the public’s entire perspective might change.

In 2005 the noted Israeli journalist, writer, and peace activist Uri Avnery described the effects of religious Zionism on Israel: “A small and gallant state, progressive and (relatively) egalitarian, respected by the world, has become an occupying and looting state, hostage to delirious settlers, full of internal violence and ‘swinish capitalism’.”

Israeli, Israeli-Palestinian, and Jewish peace organizations attempt to overcome the ideological obstacles to peace. A small but growing number of Israeli reservists, draftees, and potential draftees in high school have become “refuseniks” who pledge not to serve in the occupied territories, although the consequence may be military prison.

Catholic Fundamentalism: Some Catholics deny the term ‘fundamentalism’ can apply to them because there is no Catholic movement that insists on rigid literalism “that wrenches a text from the context of a passage in Sacred Scripture.” However, in June 2008, the Vatican issued a statement that criticized a growing tendency for Catholics to read the Bible through the lens of a

fundamentalism [which] takes refuge in literalism and refuses to take into consideration the historical dimension of biblical revelation. This kind of interpretation...demands an unshakable adherence to rigid doctrinal points of view and imposes, as the only source of teaching for Christian life and salvation, a reading of the Bible which rejects all questioning and any kind of critical research.

Duke University religion professor Julie Byrne suggests that a Catholic fundamentalist theology is emerging, defining it as “resistance to the relativism of contemporary Western societies.” By this definition, Pope Pius IX may have been the first fundamentalist pope because his Vatican Council invented papal infallibility—or perhaps the first was Pope John Paul II or the current Pope Benedict XVI who seems to share many of his predecessor’s anti-modernist attitudes.

Jesuit Fr. Mark Massa of Fordham University says that Catholic fundamentalism, as distinct from Catholic orthodoxy, “always takes a sectarian stance within the large Catholic tradition, rejecting some aspect of Catholicism’s commitment to rationality, history, the material world, or community.” The fundamentalist, says Massa, does not want any accommodation with the modern world, believing that the truest religion was found at some earlier “golden moment” that it is his duty to preserve. “History [is] to be resisted and rejected.” Massa uses the example of Jesuit Leonard Feeney, excommunicated in the 1950s for preaching his own interpretation of a fourth century Catholic teaching. Feeney insisted that everyone who was not baptized Catholic was damned for eternity. Massa calls Feeney “a classic example of Catholic fundamentalism—a separatist, a-historical, anti-pluralistic, understanding of Catholicism.”

Opus Dei is a controversial and somewhat mysterious organization or sect within the Catholic Church. It was founded during the 1930s and 1940s by José Maria Escrivá, a Spanish priest who invited University students to re-Christianize Spanish culture, which he felt was contaminated by modern intellectual trends in Europe. Thus Opus Dei was anti-modernist. The group came to include business executives, politicians, academicians, and elementary school teachers as well as clergy. Opus Dei developed under the dictatorship of Franco and a reactionary church hierarchy that supported Franco, later spreading to other traditionally Catholic countries such as Italy, Portugal, France, and Latin America. Most of the church hierarchy in Latin American is reportedly Opus Dei, while the rank and file religious who work with the poor tend to follow Liberation Theology.

In the United States conservative Catholics often make common cause with Protestant fundamentalists about certain cultural and political issues, notably abortion.

Protestant Fundamentalism

He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all.

Samuel Coleridge, English poet, 1772-1834

Let us now focus on Protestant fundamentalism, the oldest such movement, which defined itself as fundamentalist a century ago, although it had been developing for some decades before that. It grew out of millenarian movements in the 1830s and 1850s, and built into a single movement through meetings of the Niagara Bible Conference in the 1870s and through the rest of the century.

Several dedicated and energetic individuals kept the momentum going. Law scholar Douglas O. Linder traces three intellectual generations of fundamentalism from John Nelson Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren Movement and an indefatigable traveler and writer. Crossing the Atlantic six times between 1859 and 1874 to spread his word, Darby preached biblical inerrancy and the imminent return of Christ. His writings inspired the next figure, Dwight L. Moody, who crisscrossed the United States and preached his message in evangelical crusades from 1875-1899.

The third generation figure was Baptist minister William B. Riley. A leading light and co-founder of the fundamentalist movement, Riley also invented the term 'fundamentalism.' It then became popular from a series of books by conservative Protestant theologians called *The Fundamentals: a Testimony to the Truth*, published between 1910 and 1915, with three million sets distributed to English-speaking Protestants world-wide. Of the essays in these books, more than a quarter of them were written in objection to the theory of modern scholars that the first five books of the Old Testament had several authors over several centuries. Fundamentalists, like Orthodox Jews, believe that Moses was the primary author.

These conservative Protestant theologians actively affirmed five fundamental beliefs: the inerrancy of the Bible; the virgin birth of Christ; the doctrine of substitutionary atonement; the bodily resurrection of Jesus; and the authenticity of the miracles by Jesus.

The fundamentalist movement grew particularly after World War I. During the 1920s, fundamentalists tried to gain control of Protestant denominations, mission boards, and seminaries with little success. They supported Prohibition, Sunday "blue laws," and other moral measures, and attempted to stop the teaching of evolution in the public schools.

Hadden notes that political fundamentalism combines theological fundamentalism with the commitments of its followers to work against worldly vices. Examples from the earlier half of the last century are the temperance movement, Gerald L.K. Smith, and the Scopes trial, the last of which proved a major setback for political fundamentalists.

Evangelicalism: Christian fundamentalists are a subset of a larger group: evangelicals or conservative Christians, who are estimated to comprise about one-quarter to one-third of U.S. population, or about eighty to one hundred million people (including the children born into such families). However, in surveys, the number of people describing themselves as either 'born-again' or evangelical fluctuates widely from year to year.

Historically, evangelicalism developed from religious revivals widespread in the British Isles and the United States in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These revivals established

Baptists and Methodists as the two major Protestant denominations. Prior to the Civil War, evangelical Protestantism was by far the most dominant form of Christianity in the United States, working for social betterment through reforms such as temperance, the early women's movement, and abolition of slavery. After the Civil War, however, increasing urbanization, industrialization, and the immigration of millions of non-Protestants all served to diminish its power.

Stephen Prothero, author of *Religious Literacy*, notes that surveys show that evangelicals are very unpopular with those on the Secular Left, but he feels that this is based partly on misunderstandings, including the confusion between evangelical and fundamentalist belief systems. There are some crucial differences. Fundamentalists tend to be more opposed to modernity and to be very conservative in politics, while evangelicals have a broader range of political opinions. Most evangelicals are concerned with protecting the environment, fundamentalists not so much. Fundamentalists show more separatism. They may try to stay apart from the rest of the culture, including from other Christians who don't share their own views. They have a reputation for being intolerant and judgmental. "Oftentimes, Fundamentalists will even want to separate themselves from people who refuse to separate themselves from people who they don't agree with," says John Green, author of *Religion and the Culture Wars*.

There are differences in doctrines. Fundamentalists believe in literal reading of the Bible but many evangelicals are willing to accept that the Bible contains metaphorical language. Prothero says: "Whereas fundamentalists describe the Bible as the infallible Word of God, evangelicals insist merely that the Bible is divinely inspired." Many evangelicals see conversion as a more gradual process rather than a sudden event. Evangelicals do not share some special doctrines of fundamentalists, notably dispensationalism. This is the idea that sacred time, the relationship of god to human history, is divided into several different eras or dispensations. These dispensations, which usually end with some catastrophe, are God's tests of humanity—all of which tests humans have so far failed. We are either in the sixth or seventh dispensation. Jesus will return at the end of this process, according to dispensationalists.

Calvinism: John Calvin was the most prominent leader of the Reformed Churches in the sixteenth century Reformation, even more influential than Martin Luther. Other preachers and theologians also contributed to the theology known as Calvinism, which became the dominant form of Protestantism in Scotland, Netherlands, and North America, including Presbyterians, Huguenots, New England Pilgrims/Puritans, and the Southern backcountry settlers from the borderlands of northern England and lowland Scotland. Present-day Christian Evangelists and fundamentalists also come out of the Calvinist tradition.

We can list five major points of Calvinism under the often-used acronym TULIP:

- **Total depravity of man:** all people are born too sinful and selfish to follow God of their own will.
- **Unconditional election by God:** God bases his choice of whom he will save not on any merit or faith of those people but solely of his own mercy.
- **Limited atonement by Christ:** Christ took away the penalty of sins from those on whom God chose to have mercy (the elect)—not of all humanity.
- **Irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit:** God's saving grace applies to those whom he has determined to save (the elect) and overcomes their resistance to a saving faith in Christ.

- **Preservation of the saints:** persons who are truly saved from damnation (the elect) will necessarily persevere in that state of grace.

Many evangelical groups drop the idea of limited atonement in favor of “four-point Calvinism.” A number of other doctrinal variations and Calvinist movements also exist. The theocratic Calvinist movement called Christian Reconstructionism is influential in the United States, Canada, and to a limited extent in the UK.

Because of Calvinist belief in original sin and the total depravity of man, Calvinism could be said to be a pessimistic religion, at least concerning the efforts of human societies to improve themselves. This was incompatible with Enlightenment beliefs, and Thomas Jefferson was no friend of Calvinism, about which he said the following:

The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man. But compare with these the demoralizing dogmas of Calvin:

1. That there are three Gods.
2. That good works, or the love of our neighbor, is nothing.
3. That faith is everything, and the more incomprehensible the proposition, the more merit the faith.
4. That reason in religion is of unlawful use.
5. That God, from the beginning, elected certain individuals to be saved and certain others to be damned; and that no crimes of the former can damn them; no virtues of the latter save.

Letter to Benjamin Waterhouse, Jun. 26, 1822

Calvinism has been a significant influence in United States history, especially in New England, the Southern Highlands, and the areas those colonists settled to the west and south. As currently practiced in Christian fundamentalist religions it is often a paradoxical combination of a harsh theology coupled with easy forgiveness. No matter what you have done you are forgiven if you are a member of the tribe and you ask God for forgiveness. You become a member by having, or claiming to have, a born-again experience, by being saved, by being a follower of Jesus Christ. The claim is usually accepted at face-value. Lack of trust in those outside the tribe (non-believers, liberals, foreigners, elites, etc.) is countered by trust to the point of gullibility in leaders who are saved and thus have completed the rite of membership.

Issues Concerning Protestant Fundamentalism

*Both read the Bible day and night,
But thou read'st black where I read white.*

William Blake, English poet, 1757-1827

The memplex of Protestant fundamentalism includes the meme for spreading itself, with more than a hint of the idea that the end justifies the means. Certain traits and offshoots of the fundamentalist approach to Christianity and political life lead to social conflict and controversies such as these:

- Claim to exclusive truth, a truth based on literalism and inerrancy

- A history of political associations, beginning with defense of slavery 150 years ago; currently, strong links to conservative Republicanism, single-issue politics, and entitlement to religious tax exemptions while flouting their requirements
- Selective reading of the Bible, to conform with other personal and social beliefs including nationalism and ethnocentrism
- Tendencies to be oppositional, to demonize adversaries and support conspiracy theories
- Battles with science, evidence, and the process of reasoning
- Attitudes that promote an inferior status for women and submission to men
- Persecution of gay people while insisting—despite increasing scientific evidence and the personal testimony of most gay people to the contrary—that homosexuality is simply a moral choice
- Assuming moral leadership while ignoring evidence that figures for divorce, teen pregnancy, and some other social dysfunctions are higher among fundamentalists than among more liberal Christian or non-Christian groups
- Radical ideologies such as Christian Zionism, Christian Nationalism, Christian Reconstructionism, and Dominionism that diverge widely from both traditional Christianity and democratic traditions. Although minority beliefs, these have influenced other fundamentalists, evangelicals, politics, and government policies.

Many of these problematic issues are widely known, so let us focus on just two of them, fundamentalist battles with science and reason; and the extreme ideologies mentioned last.

Science and Reason

The Church says that the earth is flat, but I know that it is round, for I have seen the shadow on the moon, and I have more faith in a shadow than in the church.

Ferdinand Magellan, first circumnavigator of the globe, 1490-1521

Critics say that fundamentalists are trying to undo the Enlightenment—sometimes called The Age of Reason—that period of intellectual history that swelled during the eighteenth century and brought the founding of the United States in its wake. Earlier we noted that fundamentalists see Faith and Reason as two competing systems. It is not clear just how far and wide fundamentalists would pursue this rivalry, which began in the mid-nineteenth century as a reaction against modern Bible scholarship and new scientific understandings about evolution of species and the age of the Earth.

According to U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III, who ruled on the Dover, Pennsylvania Intelligent Design case, “It is notable that defense experts’ own mission...is to *change the ground rules of science* to allow supernatural causation of the natural world [my italics].”

It does sometimes appear that in refusing to confront scientific evidence in particular areas, fundamentalists act as if they do not respect any evidence in general. They also use political and social leverage to undermine the scientific position. One example of such use of social leverage is a local science center that hosts a number of field trips from the region’s schools. The center employed a geology graduate as docent or instructor, then asked him never to mention to the schoolchildren the actual age of the Earth as scientists understand it in billions of years, lest some participating school system get wind of this heretical teaching. (The geologist quit his position.) Many public schools in my state do not, and perhaps never did, teach the theory of

evolution by natural selection, even though state standards now require this. I know of one high school biology teacher who does not believe in evolution but teaches it, as he is required to do, although in such a way that he is making fun of it.

Fundamentalists have developed theological systems that attack reason at an even deeper level than opposition to particular scientific theories. Much of this can be traced to the work of Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) who redefined conservative theology in his 800-page *Institutes of Biblical Law*, published in 1973. His doctrine of **presuppositionalism** declares that all issues are religious issues, and since people do not have the ability or the right to discover truth on their own, they must turn to a literal reading of the Bible. Presuppositionalists believe that the Christian must assume (presuppose) the supernatural revelation of the Bible as the ultimate truth in order to have any knowledge whatever. That is, all human thought is ultimately based on the God of the Christian Bible.

Because of Rushdoony's extremist and racist views such as denying the Holocaust and defending segregation and slavery, the mainstream has largely ignored his work. John Sugg says that most people and the media are still unaware of Rushdoony as the intellectual founder of Dominion Theology and Christian Reconstructionism (discussed later in this chapter).

In Christian theology, the field of apologetics consists of giving a rational basis for Christianity, defending it against criticism, and exposing the flaws of other worldviews. Presuppositional apologetics is one school of Christian apologetics appealing mainly to Calvinist Christians. While *evidentialist apologetics* provides evidence from archaeology, history, and science to support the existence of God and biblical truth, presuppositional apologetics focuses on the third task of opposing other worldviews, based on the idea of presupposing the Bible is the ultimate truth.

Critics say that presuppositionalism uses circular reasoning, a logical fallacy. One branch of presuppositionalists counters that *all* worldviews are ultimately circular. However, this would make all arguments invalid! These discussions remind me of stories about medieval theologians who debated how many angels could dance on the head of a pin.

Surprisingly, a recent feature film is based on presuppositionalism. but Writer and director Tim Chey is quoted as saying that he hopes his audiences come away from “The Genius Club” with the meaning of life. And that is? “To determine to yourself if God exists. *Because if God doesn't exist, nothing matters because you can do whatever you want.*” Clearly, Chey refers to the God of the Christian Bible. Chey is also quoted as saying “You can't have a meaningful discussion about world problems without discussing whether God exists or not.” According to a perceptive person at Radio Station KWVE, Chey's film is “the world's first apologetic movie.” They were referring to Presuppositionalism, the ultimate circular argument.

I submit that whether or not you believe in a particular conception of God, you still can't “do whatever you want.” First there are scientific laws; you can jump off a tall building if you like, but you are not guaranteed a soft landing. You can party till you puke for years but are likely to get a beer belly, an unplanned pregnancy, or a DWI, and eventually cirrhosis of the liver. Then there are other people, who tend to push back when you push them. Try to kill them and they will try to kill you, or put you in jail. If you go around hurting people, you are unlikely to find the affection craved by human beings, who are strongly social animals.

Of course the presuppositionalist might argue that scientific laws and human nature were all created by God in the first place. He always wins the argument with this trick.

Who Delivered the Sermon on the Mount?

Our current mix of fervent religious belief and widespread religious ignorance is surely a dangerous combination.

Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy*

According to Stephen Prothero, Chairman of the Religion Department at Boston University, the United States is not only the most religious nation in the developed world but is also the most ignorant of Christianity (and other religions). Prothero says that while two-thirds of Americans say they believe the Bible holds the answers to most of life's basic questions, only half of them can name just one of the four gospels, most cannot name the first book of the Bible, and only one-third know that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Evangelicals are only slightly more knowledgeable than non-Evangelicals. It is no surprise that Americans know even less about religions other than Christianity. Paradoxically, in the highly religious U.S. "faith is almost entirely devoid of content."

In one example of the paradox, Georgia Republican Representative Lynn A. Westmoreland while seeking reelection appeared on the comedy show the "Colbert Report." Westmoreland advocates placing the Ten Commandments on the walls of Congress but on the show he could name only three of the commandments. Professionals may lack essential information about religious groups they deal with. Prothero says that the tragedy of Waco occurred because the FBI and other officials did not understand end-times theology—a case of "death by religious ignorance."

Contrary to some popular beliefs, Prothero says this lack of religious knowledge was not caused by activist judges and humanist conspiracies. Instead, "In one of the great ironies of American religious history, it was the nation's most fervent people of faith who steered us down the road to religious illiteracy." He refers to historical waves of revivalism—especially the Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century—that emphasized emotional conversions rather than knowledge. Later developments that contributed to religious illiteracy were the 19th century attempt to make religion generic in order to avoid controversy in the public schools, and the "faith in faith" of the 1940s and 1950s. Some critics such as Susan Jacoby believe that the decline of religious literacy is part of the erosion of all forms of cultural literacy since the shift from a print to a video culture that began 50 years ago.

Religious scholar Phillip Goff says that the 1963 Supreme Court decision that removed devotional Bible reading from public schools has been widely misunderstood. It spells out that the Bible should be studied as literature and its role in history. Goff says, "The decision clearly states you can't be educated without it, but it scared schools so much they dropped it all." Prothero notes that in 1995 a wide assortment of groups including the National Association of Evangelicals, the American Muslim Council, and the American Humanist Association signed a joint statement endorsing teaching about religion in public schools, although *not* providing religious instruction. Even Richard Dawkins in *The God Delusion* advocates acquaintance with the Bible.

Prothero's solution for the problem is constitutional but controversial: a required course in world religions and a required high school course on the Bible. A world religions course has been successfully taught in Modesto, California since 2000, in a community with many evangelical Christians as well as Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Sikhs. However, a course in the Bible spurs more controversy. Critics such as Rev. Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Dr. Charles Haynes of the First Amendment Center fear that a Bible course would be taught without objectivity.

Supporting their fears, a study by Mark Chaney, associate professor of religious studies at Southern Methodist University, found that of 25 Bible courses offered as electives by Texas high schools in 2005, 22 of them broke the law by being mainly devotional and sectarian. Many used a curriculum from the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools that critics say presents an evangelical Protestant interpretation of the Bible and ignores Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, and mainstream Protestant perspectives, as well as modern biblical scholarship. Chaney said “Some classes promote creation science. Some classes denigrate Judaism. Some classes explicitly encourage students to convert to Christianity.... This is all well documented, and the [Texas State Board of Education] knows it.” Prothero recognizes these problems but says: “There is no way out of controversy here; teaching about religion is bound to be controversial, but so is ignoring it. The way forward is not to try to avoid disagreements but to tackle them head on.”

Christian Right Ideologies

Distrust everyone in whom the impulse to punish is powerful.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-2000) *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

The basic idea of Protestant Reformation was to allow each individual to read and understand the Bible for himself. One could see view the newer idea of Bible literalism, about two centuries old, as actually undermining this basic Protestant tenet. Literalism is a paradoxical doctrine that pretends that Bible passages are transparent—although they actually require a religious authority to do the inevitable interpreting. It would be well if people became more familiar with their own holy books instead of letting dubious leaders tell them what is in the Bible or Qur’an. An Islamic scholar says that while some radical clerics are glorifying suicide bombers, the Qur’an itself specifically prohibits both suicide and the killing of innocent people. Similarly, some conservative Christians find more to admire in Mosaic Law than in the teachings of Jesus.

This emphasis on ‘Biblical Law’ (theonomy) is relatively new doctrine. Religious scholar John Chrysostom says “The fundamental error of most theonomy is that it reads the New Testament through the lens of the Old Testament [while] historically the Church has read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament.... Christianity is all about Jesus, not the law.” More extreme ideologies such as Christian Reconstructionism or Dominionism, Christian Nationalism, and Christian Zionism show little relationship either to the teachings of Christ or the long traditions of Christianity.

While most people are not aware of these extreme ideologies, they nevertheless influence fundamentalist Christians and others who do not know the movements by name. Members of Congress have proposed Christian Reconstructionist legislation although it was not identified as such to the public. Austin Cline says that while the Christian Right does not explicitly accept the doctrine of theonomy (God’s law) the movement does accept most Reconstructionist tenets, ideas that would lead to theocracy. Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee during his primary campaign proposed amendments to the United States Constitution prohibiting abortion and gay marriage so as to make the Constitution “conform to God’s law.” Thus he appealed to Christian Reconstructionists who have even more drastic plans for changing the Constitution. Senators Ron Paul and his son Rand Paul have expressed related ideas, and the elder Paul had a prominent Christian Reconstructionist, Gary North, on his staff.

One problem in describing such ideologies is that they rely on emphases or interpretations of the Bible that differ markedly from that of mainstream Christianity and even from each other.

Although their followers would undoubtedly agree that one should read the Bible literally, yet a number of conflicting beliefs have arisen around the Bible, and these differences are phrased in special terminology that is unfamiliar to most people. This splitting and branching is typical of ideologies. Please bear with us through these theological discussions, because they have important consequences for all of us.

Dominion theology

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully, as when they do it from religious conviction.
Blaise Pascal, French mathematician and philosopher, 1623-1662

As articulated by Rousas John Rushdoony, Dominion theology bases itself on two biblical passages in particular, first Genesis 1:28 giving men "dominion" over "every living thing." The second passage is Matthew 28:18-20, sometimes called the "Great Commission," where Jesus tells his followers to spread his teachings across the world. John Sugg describes how Rushdoony founded a movement, Christian Reconstructionism, whose followers are to be Christian crusaders, conquering and converting the world, either taking over or eliminating the institutions of secular government.

Dominionism is said to be the theology of the anti-government movement. According to S. R. Shearer, Dominionism is a "militant post-millennial eschatology [doctrine of the end-times]."

Now we get into the confusing terminology, so take a drink of water and fix your pillows before proceeding. Pre-millennialists and post-millennialists are both dispensationalists who believe that history is made up of several periods (dispensations) and that after the last dispensation the Kingdom of God will arrive. Dispensationalists interpret the Book of Revelation as a literal prophecy that includes Armageddon, a period of calamity and suffering (tribulation), and then the union of true believers with God. These ideas developed from a 19th century movement called the "Plymouth Brethren" that started in England and Ireland, spreading to the United States through immigration of founder John Darby.

Pre-millennialists believe that Christ will return to earth and will rapture away the true believers. On the other hand, Post-millennialists believe that Christ will not return until the "true believers" have reigned for 1,000 years. In the Dominionist view, this means that the seizure of earthly power by the church is the only way to rescue the world so that Christ can eventually return to "rule and reign." The post-millennialist view is therefore strongly theocratic, and many think dangerously so—unlike the pre-millennialist view that includes the Rapture. Dominionism, then, is a different branch of belief from the Rapture depicted in the popular "Left Behind" series, and the differences are important.

The Rapture is part of a pre-millennial model in which the church is apostasized—that is, church leaders and members have renounced their faith and followed the anti-Christ. But in the Dominionist post-millennial model, the Lord brings revival to the church, which would then "inherit the earth and rule over the nations with a rod of iron"

It is not clear what is meant by "the church" that will rule us all, whether it is the sum total of Protestant fundamentalist churches or more likely only those following Dominionist beliefs. One aggressive sect of Dominionists called Joel's Army has been growing in recent years. It has enlisted tens of thousands of mostly young people from the ranks of mainline Pentecostal churches (some churches have declared it a heresy) as well as from the biker, heavy metal, punk, and goth scenes. Members of Joel's Army believe they are the final generation to come of age before the end of the world. Several charismatic preachers such as Todd Bentley—whom they

consider a prophet—tell them that their destiny is to become Christian warriors ready for Armageddon and the divine duty to impose Christian dominion on non-believers. They seem to cast themselves in the role of 1917 Russian Bolsheviks.

Christian Reconstructionism

The long-term goal of Christians in politics should be to gain exclusive control over the franchise. Those who refuse to submit publicly...must be denied citizenship.

Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism*, 1989

If Dominionism is the theology, it is Christian Reconstructionists who are actively working toward a theocracy in the United States, even before the expected revival of the church by the Lord. Their main target in this work is the judiciary. The goal is to make the United States Constitution conform to Biblical Law, that is, the criminal code of the Old Testament that would apply the death penalty to homosexuals, adulterers, fornicators, witches, incorrigible juveniles, and those who spread false religions. One spokesman, Gary North, promotes stoning as the best form of capital punishment because it is a communal activity and “the implements of execution are available to everyone at virtually no cost.”

Rushdoony, a Presbyterian minister, started the Christian Reconstruction movement with his book *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. Rushdoony said “The only true order is founded on Biblical Law. All law is religious in nature, and every non-Biblical law-order represents an anti-Christian religion. In brief, every law-order is a state of war against the enemies of that order, and all law is a form of warfare.” As one battle in that warfare, the Constitution Restoration Act of 2004 was introduced into both House and Senate in February 2004. Former Judge Roy Moore’s lawyer, Herb Titus, drafted the bill. Included in its provisions was this one:

Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the Supreme Court shall not have jurisdiction to review, by appeal, writ of certiorari, or otherwise, any matter to the extent that relief is sought against an element of Federal, State, or local government, or against an officer of Federal, State, or local government (whether or not acting in official personal capacity), by reason of that element’s or officer’s acknowledgment of God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government.

Katherine Yurica, who studied law and has specialized in writing on Dominionism, says this wording would allow any judge in the United States to institute biblical punishments [such as stoning for adultery] without being subject to review by the federal court system, including the Supreme Court. The measure was apparently never brought to a vote, but has been reintroduced in other sessions of Congress.

Theocracywatch.org lists a number of efforts to undermine an independent judiciary in the United States such as the Feeney Amendment which orders records kept on any federal judge who gives a sentence less than that called for in federal sentencing guidelines, with the information sent to both the attorney general and judiciary committees of both houses. The amendment was criticized by many judges including then Chief Justice William Rehnquist, a conservative Republican.

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia evidently believes in Biblical Law. He has said that “government...derives its moral authority from God” and that “the reaction of people of faith to this tendency of democracy to obscure divine authority...should [be] the resolution to combat it

as effectively as possible.” Scalia wrote a textbook titled *America’s Providential History*, which views the death penalty as “the backbone of civil government.”

Rushdoony said that “basically you can have two kinds of law: *theonomy*—God’s law, or *autonomy*—self law. That’s what it boils down to and autonomy leads to anarchy, which is what we are getting increasingly.” Those who believe in Biblical Law put a great deal of emphasis on the Ten Commandments and many claim that the Decalogue is the foundation of the United States legal system. These ideas rewrite history to make the founders sound more like the twelve Apostles than the shrewd and practical men that most of them were.

Some in this religious movement have also developed doctrines about economics. Gary North founded the Institute for Christian Economics in Tyler, Texas, teaching that laissez faire capitalism, free markets, and minimal government are the only system compatible with God’s laws in the Bible. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., a theologian at the Bahnsen Theological Seminary, also insists that the biblical worldview requires the existence of free-market economics. Critic John Sugg says that the future outlined by Reconstructionists would have no unions, unemployment benefits, Social Security, or environmental protection laws. Although I have not read the writings of North and Gentry, it is hard to imagine what in the Bible interpreted literally or otherwise, could apply to a capitalist system that was 2,000+ years in the future.

The one message related to economics that the Bible repeats scores of times has to do with the poor: be just to hired workers, take care of the poor and needy, and protect them from the greedy, powerful individuals who would exploit and trample them. Here is a sampling of dozens of such passages:

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of the field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. Leviticus 19:9-10

Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Deuteronomy 24:14

Who is like you, O Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them. Psalms 36:10

He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker. Proverbs 17:5

He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty. Proverbs 22:16

The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: “It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?” Isaiah 3:14

You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. Amos 5:11

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Matthew 19:21

[Jesus said] *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”* Luke 4:18

Some of these verses surely apply to Enron, Halliburton, welfare reform, tax cuts, Wal-Mart, foreign sweatshops, foreclosures, financial derivatives, bailouts, collective bargaining, and other modern issues. I have not yet discovered one Bible verse that extols economic competition. On the other hand, Deuteronomy 15:4 tells people to forgive debts every seventh year, the same year that they let the land lie fallow to regenerate the soil. But since modern economic systems depend on credit and interest, how would literalist fundamentalists follow this teaching? If these Bible verses supported any modern economic system, it might be a regulated capitalism; however, I don't believe in taking Bible passages 2,000+ years out of context.

Verses about taking care of the poor are seldom subjects of fundamentalist sermons although they far outnumber passages about sexual sins such as fornication, adultery, and homosexuality. It seems that in religion as in advertising, "sex sells." One wonders if fundamentalists are actually reading their own Bibles. Centuries ago, the motivating idea of Protestantism was for people to read and interpret the 'Good Book' for themselves, instead of depending on a priestly hierarchy. However, fundamentalist ideologues form a new sort of priestly hierarchy to interpret the Bible and to monopolize religious belief.

According to Austin Cline, Christian Reconstructionists do not support the public schools for the reason that the schools promote autonomy, or reliance on one's own human judgment, rather than submission to God [or to the ideology that claims to interpret God]. Promoting autonomy makes the public schools anti-Christian, blasphemous, and evil, in the view of Rushdoony, who was an early advocate of Christian homeschooling. Cline says Christian Reconstructionists have been very influential in the Christian homeschooling movement.

The Christian Reconstructionists may sound like a fringe group, but they have funding, had political power in the Bush administration, and have ties with denominations such as the Southern Baptists. According to Chris Hedges, "Religious utterances from political leaders such as George Bush, Tom Delay, Pat Robertson and Zell Miller are only understandable in light of Rushdoony and Dominionism. These leaders believe that God has selected them to battle the forces of evil, embodied in 'secular humanism,' to create a Christian nation."

Racist Christianities: An online comment notes two strands in Christian Reconstructionism. Some followers take their Bible and theology seriously, while others are 'Wannabe' Christian Reconstructionists who belong to the militia, jural-society, patriot, and Christian Identity movements. "The Wannabes believe that, in Christian Reconstructionism, they finally have found a religion that justifies and, indeed, promotes their own hate, bigotry, anger, and violence."

Matthew C. Ogilvie has studied racist "Christian" theologies in several English-speaking countries, covering groups such as Christian Identity, World Church of the Creator, Worldwide Church of God, Kingdom Identity Ministries, the Ku Klux Klan, British Israelism, and others in Australia. Ogilvie says although racist Christianity uses the power of religion and religious language it "does not originate within a religious context but [rather in] a social and political context that uses religion for its own purposes."

Racists, when they do not start their own churches, are more attracted to fundamentalist churches than to other denominations. Ogilvie says that although these racist ideologies have many common views with fundamentalism, he "would in no way wish to implicate most fundamentalists in racism." Racist Christians and fundamentalists both tend to "collectivize" their enemies and give them a common name and identity, whether calling them mongrel races,

Jews, liberals, or secular humanists. “This in turn makes it easy to believe that this one enemy constitutes a worldwide conspiracy.”

Ogilvie notes another similarity between racist theologies and fundamentalism in the “unscholarly and often anti-intellectual character” of racist Biblical *exegesis* (the explanation or critical interpretation of a text).

One is presented with Biblical data and then expected to assent to the racist dogmas supposedly based upon these texts. There is no intervening act of understanding, no attempt to dialogue with the text...A racist will approach Scripture, not with the question or set of questions, “What does this text mean?” Rather, the racist will use Scripture with the predetermined idea that “This is what Scripture **must** mean!”

Ogilvie compares this uncritical and forceful approach with the “naïve realism” of Biblical fundamentalists, for whom the meaning of anything in the Bible is obvious. Naïve realism is the philosophical position that one knows an object simply by looking at it. “The naïve realist will approach the Bible, for example, and assume that one can know correctly its contents simply by reading them at face value.” However, it is necessary to expend a great deal more effort than that to understand an ancient text or in fact any writing more complex than a grocery list. The person who reads at face value is ignoring the all-important *context*. This context includes knowledge of the literary form containing this passage, of other passages surrounding it, connotations of words, customs at the time when the passage was written, and so on.

It may be that naïve realism is an attempt to use an older way of thinking—participating consciousness—but in the wrong arena (the written text). I admit the possibility that people may be inspired or intuitive readers, as others are inspired writers. On rare occasions I too have had an “aha!” moment when the meaning of a text suddenly becomes clear. However, for the most part, *and judging by the fruits*, the person who thinks he knows a written text simply by looking at it is not fully literate, or is simply using the written words to reflect his own ego.

Another similarity between racist Christians and fundamentalists is their common views on evolution. Both believe that the original creation was perfect and any changes can only go backwards. According to fundamentalist Bob Jones, “The process of the human race has not been upward from the swamp by evolution, but downward from the garden by sin.” Ogilvie says that, “Properly speaking, the fundamentalist theory of human development is of actual *devolution*, rather than possible evolution.” Thus the scientific theory of evolution directly threatens this basic doctrinal belief and their entropic worldview that everything is running down and coming apart.

Similarly, racists believe that God made white people a certain way and they must either maintain their race as it is or else devolve. Ogilvie notes the assumption underlying racist fear of race-mixing and intermarriage is that “any change to humanity will inevitably be for the worse.” This resembles Calvinist ideas that humans are born sinful and can do no good by themselves.

In comparing racist Christianity and fundamentalism, we should remember that before the Civil War the Southern branches of several religious denominations attempted to justify the institution of slavery by using the Christian Bible. This defense of slavery led to splits with the national denominations and the establishment of Southern Baptists, Southern Methodists, and other distinctively Southern denominations. After the Civil War, during 100 years of Jim Crow, it is likely that many parishioners retained racist Christian beliefs even when the institutional churches themselves disavowed them. There is evidence (such as letters to the editor, the success

of code words in politics and of the ‘Southern Strategy’ used by Nixon and later Republican campaigners) that many in the South still retain racist Christian beliefs.

Christian Nationalism: While Christian Nationalism has some links with racist Christianity, its ideology is much broader and more widespread. The basic idea is that the United States was founded by devoutly religious men and was always intended to be a uniquely Christian nation. In addition, Christian Nationalists believe that America has a God-given mission in the world. Christian Nationalists are usually Protestant fundamentalists.

Christian Nationalists tend to sacralize the Constitution and treat it as if it were another book of the Christian Bible, but they often do not seem well versed in either document. They make dogmatic, unsupported assertions about the beliefs of the men most involved in founding our nation, and ignore those founders who were not conventional Christians such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine, which is to say, the majority of the most important leaders and inspirers of the American Revolution.

Many erroneous beliefs that the Founding Fathers meant America to be a Christian Nation are due to bogus quotes put out by one man, pseudo-historian David Barton. These widespread notions of what the Founders believed are so different from what they actually said that I must include some quotes at length. Founders—including three of the first four presidents, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine (a chief inspirer of the Revolution), and Revolutionary-era dignitaries—said this regarding the mixing of religion and government:

John Adams, 2nd U.S. President in “A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America,” 1787-1788: “Although the detail of the formation of the American governments is at present little known or regarded either in Europe or in America, it may hereafter become an object of curiosity. It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of Heaven, more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; It will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses.
...Thirteen governments thus founded on the natural authority of the people alone, without a pretence of miracle or mystery, and which are destined to spread over the northern part of that whole quarter of the globe, are a great point gained in favor of the rights of mankind.”

Thomas Jefferson, 3rd U.S. President: “The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

James Madison, 4th U.S. President in Letter to Edward Livingston, 1822: “Religion flourishes in greater purity without than with the aid of government.”

James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments,” 1785: “During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.”

Thomas Paine, Rights of Man, Part I: “Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly marked feature of all religions established by law.”

Benjamin Franklin, Founder and polymath, sometimes called “The First American”: “When religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to

support it so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”

Luther Martin, Founder and a leading anti-Federalist, “The Genuine Information XII,” Feb. 8, 1788: “The part of the system, which provides that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States, was adopted by a very great majority of the convention, and without much debate.”

Reverend Isaac Backus, Baptist minister, Feb. 4, 1788: “And let the history of all nations be searched, from that day to this, and it will appear that the imposing of religious tests hath been the greatest engine of tyranny in the world. And I rejoice to see so many gentlemen who are now giving in the rights of conscience, in this great and important matter.”

Henry Abbot, Baptist clergyman, July 30, 1788: “But it is objected, that the people of America may perhaps choose representatives who have no religion at all, and that Pagans and Mahometans may be admitted into offices. But how is it possible to exclude any set of men, without taking away that principle of religious freedom which we ourselves so warmly contended for? This is the foundation on which persecution has been raised in every part of the world.”

An attitude that often accompanies Christian Nationalism is that white, Protestant, English-speaking people are superior to others and that they represent the true spirit of the United States, to which others are obligated to conform. Indigenous people already on the continent, Spanish-speaking settlers and Black slaves who arrived earlier than the English did, French fur-traders, Chinese coolies who built the railroads, Jewish immigrants, Catholic Irish and Italians are not considered an integral part of this uniquely (white Protestant) Christian nation.

Reporting on a Family Research Council immigration conference held in April 2007, Alexander Zaitchik notes that immigration has very quickly become one of the major issues on the religious right along with abortion and gay marriage. A more liberal speaker at the FRC conference—Joan Maruskin—pointed to more than 300 times the Bible says to show mercy to immigrants. But most of the conference attendees were unmoved. A survey of FRC members showed 90 percent of them favored deportation of undocumented immigrants.

Christian Zionism

To understand what is happening in the Middle East, you must first understand what is happening in Texas....In the United States, several million people have succumbed to an extraordinary delusion.

George Monbiot, *The Guardian*, April 20, 2004

Christian Zionism depends on the theological notion of seven dispensations, stages or tests that God has imposed on man according to some readings of scripture. Dispensationalism is fairly new doctrine, as religious doctrines go, says John Scott, who describes how the doctrine was systematized and popularized by John Darby of the Brethren, starting with a tract written in 1828. He was the first to insist that these dispensations were irreversible, and that a revived national Israel would soon replace the Church on earth.

Darby (1800-1882) was a strong leader, who was largely responsible for founding about 1,500 separatist Brethren assemblies throughout the world to follow his teachings and become that small remnant of the Church that would be saved at the end. Others continued to propagate

Darby's ideas, especially Cyrus I. Scofield, whose reference Bible in 1909 included dispensational notes that relied heavily on Darby's writings (although he did not give him credit). The Scofield Reference Bible became the leading Bible for American Evangelicals and Fundamentalists for sixty years, selling several million copies, according to Scott.

At the inception of the state of Israel in 1948, these religious ideas became necessarily linked with the politics of the Middle East. The writer Hal Lindsey wrote several best-selling books applying such notions not only to the Middle East but also the Cold War and Communism, and later to the European Union. Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* has sold nearly 20 million copies in English and another 30 million in translation.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, the UN Assembly passed resolution 242 that condemned Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Christian evangelists then set up the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) as a show of support for Israel. Since then, the Christian Right has strongly opposed any type of peace settlement in which Israel trades land or shares power with the Palestinians. By taking the Darby-Scofield doctrine as 'Gospel truth,' these Christian conservatives are unable to feel any human concern for the five million dispossessed Palestinians.

Going back to our introductory quote, just what *was* happening in Texas to explain United States policies in the Middle East? Monbiot describes resolutions passed at various Republican Party conventions, using Harris County (Houston) as representative of most. In a raucous session, the delegates passed a motion that, according to Monbiot, stated that "Israel has an undivided claim to Jerusalem and the West Bank, that Arab states should be 'pressured' to absorb refugees from Palestine, and that Israel should do whatever it wishes in seeking to eliminate terrorism." Some delegates evidently had wanted a stronger motion.

Political Religion

A simple sacrifice offered with real piety holds a greater blessing than an impressive service without warmth.

I Ching, hexagram 63, line 5

One could view Conservative Protestant Christianity as an ideology in the second sense (B), expressing folkways of the Southern region and the Borderer pioneers. Protestant fundamentalism is also strong in some border states such as Missouri and Kansas that were not part of the Confederacy but shared many of its values. Many in the southern states turned to religion as a major channel of their culture after the South's defeat in the Civil War, its decline in national power, and its entrenched poverty. The South suffered a long period of humiliation, something like Germany's after the harsh terms imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.

Beginning in the 1970s, the region attempted to regain through politics more of the national power that they had lost with the Civil War. The Christian Right became powerful not only because of political manipulations such as "the Southern Strategy" or right wing authoritarian leaders such as Pat Robertson, but also because of links with already held ideological beliefs about race, nationalism, and gender relationships. Political propaganda works because it touches deep feelings.

Like other ultra-conservative, reactionary, and nationalistic religious movements in Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, the Christian Right is struggling against modernity and globalization—rapid changes producing the "culture shock" that Alvin Toffler predicted some decades ago. For instance, the American male worker has lost economic ground in the last thirty-five years so that

most wives and mothers have to work whether they want to be ‘career women’ or not. This symbolically diminishes the role of men, as well as reducing the actual time that women can spend with their children. One reaction is to try to recreate a simpler culture, imitating an imagined past when men were men and women walked a few paces behind. Another reaction is to find scapegoats such as minorities, gays, or immigrants.

Or again, the proliferation of electronic media has surrounded us with a trashy consumer culture. Cultural conservative leaders say that this is due to ‘liberals’ and never suggest that it could have anything to do with the profit motive. In our own ways, all of us have to cope with such social changes, as well as with the truly dire environmental and international conditions that we have arranged for ourselves. If we can only learn to transcend old patterns of blame, projection, and following false leaders, we might be able to do something constructive about our problems.

Currently, there are signs that many Evangelicals are consciously separating themselves from the most politically partisan and extreme positions of the Christian Right. They have seen the truth of the old adage “When you mix religion and politics, you get politics.” Many Evangelicals are deeply concerned about the environment. The Rev. Rich Cizik, Washington Director of the National Association of Evangelicals, has been a prominent advocate for environmental issues and climate change in particular. Although some conservative Christians including James Dobson and Charles Colson still questioned the idea that humans are largely responsible for changes, on March 8, 2008 a group of Southern Baptist leaders released a declaration saying that the denomination had been “too timid” concerning environmental issues, and that it has a biblical duty to stop global warming. This major shift was supported by the denomination’s president and two former presidents, and the presidents of three prominent Baptist universities or seminaries, among others. The denomination is the largest Protestant group in the US with 16.3 million members.

Are There Atheist Fundamentalists?

I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented.

Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006

It turns out that the evils which have infested religion are not confined to it, but are ones that can accompany any successful human institution. Nor is it even clear that religion itself is something that the human race either can or should be cured of.

Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By*, 2003

Many Founding Fathers were deists who believed not in a personal God but a designer God who having created the world did not continue to interfere in it. Some famous Americans such as Thomas Jefferson and Mark Twain expressed strong reactions against the God depicted in the Old Testament because of his many violent, unjust actions. Thomas Paine was accused of being an atheist but wrote that instead he was defending the Deity from barbaric conceptions of Him. There is more than one way to criticize religion: a person may attack or desire to reform the belief-system itself, or religious organizations that claim to embody the belief, or undue influence of religion on public life. Some simply want to be secular without interference or discrimination against them. There are also different shades of disbelief.

Anti-clericalism—especially common in Spanish-speaking countries—is an attitude or ideology that the church should not involve itself in politics and other secular matters. Historically, the Catholic Church in Spain and Latin America has often allied itself with right-wing, authoritarian governments. In the U.S, separationists believe strongly in separation of church and state, seeing this as the nation’s tradition and based on founding documents. Many separationists hold religious beliefs, and some oppose church-state collaboration especially because it erodes religion.

Freethinkers follow their own path to truth rather than the dictates of authority. Humanists emphasize reason and the ability of human beings to solve their own problems. While an atheist denies the existence of God, the agnostic simply doubts it. Richard Dawkins puts down agnostics as “fence-sitters” who ignore the strong probability that there are no supernatural deities, since a god with the ability to design the universe would have to be very complex and “statistically improbable.” However, Dawkins’ insistence on closure creates an overly simple, either/or difference between believers and non-believers, as though there were only two positions and one of them is a conventional belief in Christianity.

Instead, an agnostic might be someone who accepts the scientific method and who is also attracted by ethical aspects of various world religions. This person remains unsatisfied both by the creation myth of Bible-based religions *and* by the lack of an ultimate beginning in the scientific world-view. If there was a Creator, who or what created this Deity? What existed before the Big Bang? It seems that scientists are now learning about another universe whose collapse in the Big Bang gave birth to our present universe. Either way, the questions are simply pushed back farther into time, and hardly more satisfying than the several hundred imaginative creation myths devised by indigenous cultures around the planet. This agnostic might prefer to withhold judgment and call the first cause a Mystery.

Here is more Mystery. Three scientists won the 2008 Nobel Prize in Physics for their discovery that the universe has a tiny imbalance of one extra particle of matter for every 10 billion particles of anti-matter. This tiny imbalance or “broken symmetry” keeps matter and anti-matter from colliding and annihilating each other. It insures that we have a matter-dominated universe, without which life would be impossible. How this happened is still a mystery to science. Another scientific mystery is gravity and its relationship to the three other fundamental forces of nature (the strong nuclear force, weak nuclear force, and electromagnetic force). Yet no religious theology uses broken symmetry and gravity as evidence of God’s existence.

A great many people hardly think in religious terms at all. Nominally they may belong to a religious denomination, telling poll-takers that they are Christian, yet they don’t pray, read the Bible, or attend church except for funerals and weddings. Similarly, in Hindu or Islamic countries or in Israel there are many people who are secular even though their nation is identified with a certain religion. Secularists aren’t atheists: they are just uninterested in religion. Atheists, on the other hand, have thought out a position or ideology.

Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, the eminent scientist Richard Dawkins, and a handful of others are called the New Atheists because of their outspoken criticism of religion through books, debates, and media. But Michael Ruse, a philosopher of science who has testified in court and publicly defended evolution for 35 years, criticizes militant atheists such as Dawkins, philosopher Daniel Dennett, and scientist Jerry Coyne because they allow no compromise with religion. He says this is a tactical mistake and also shows oversimplification of religious beliefs. The problem seems to be that New Atheists are criticizing religion without acknowledging the questions that religions attempt to address—with whatever degree of success—and which

science is not equipped to address. Ruse accuses New Atheists of dogmatism—“a refusal to listen to others, a contempt for nonbelievers, a feeling that they alone have the truth....Let us not mistake science for scientism, the belief that science and science alone has all of the answers.”

The notion of atheist fundamentalism was raised by Chris Hedges in *I Don't Believe in Atheists* (Free Press, 2008). Hedges, a well-regarded foreign correspondent, previously published a book criticizing the Christian right. Now, after debates with Harris and Hitchens, he found them “little more than secular fundamentalists.” In other words, they have turned non-belief into an ideology. However, the New Atheism lacks most of the fundamentalist traits listed at the start of this chapter. It is not organized as a religious belief-system. Nor do the New Atheists represent all atheists or non-believers. There are no sacred texts interpreted literally, no inerrancy or infallibility, no special language, no opposition to modernity or feminism, no belief in millennialism or messianism.

The New Atheists have their own ideological flaws. They tend to conflate all of Christianity or Islam with their fundamentalist branches and to ignore the history of religious thought. Theologian John F. Haught says of the New Atheists: “their understanding of religious faith remains consistently at the same unscholarly level as the unreflective, superstitious, and literalist religiosity of those they criticize” and they do not address “significant theological voices.”

Harris, Dawkins, and Hitchens attack the worst aspects of religion but ignore past benefits, for instance, campaigns to abolish slavery and to achieve civil and human rights. They don't mention the Quakers along with the Inquisition. While enumerating all the follies and atrocities committed in the name of religion—and they are many—the New Atheists neglect the long list of terrible things committed in the name of loyalty to king or country. Humans are quite capable of producing horrors without the help of religion. Examples are World Wars I and II, the Holocaust, and imperialist conquests from the Conquistadors to the Congo. Even science has its past follies and tragedies, such as scientific racism and eugenics.

Another problem with several of the New Atheists is a special dislike for Islam, a view that seems culture-bound. Many Westerners now equate religious fundamentalism with violent Islamist groups. They see the 9/11 attacks as the ultimate act of irrational religion, and assume that Islamic terrorists are motivated entirely by religion. But the situation is really more complex. Most terrorist groups in or out of Islam are motivated by nationalist and political agendas at least as much as by religious beliefs. For instance, a July 2008 bombing in Istanbul that killed 17 civilians was believed to have been committed by either Kurdish rebels (the PKK immediately denied responsibility) or hard-line Turkish nationalists. As author Aliza Marcus noted: “There's never any shortage of suspects in Turkey who want to cause some sort of disarray.” In eastern India, it's hard to keep straight the many insurgent groups as they battle for power, ethnic pride, and control of drug routes. The Indian violence has killed more than 10,000 over the past decade. Only in 2008 did Islamic militants join the fray.

Jonathan Miller in his excellent BBC series “A Brief History of Unbelief” claims the 9/11 suicide mission could *only* have been perpetrated by religious fanatics sure of an afterlife. But historically there have been many military suicide missions that did not involve religious fanaticism. Sometimes soldiers volunteer for suicide missions; sometimes they are sent out by their commanders. Individual acts of bravery that result in self-destruction are often seen as the height of heroism. Yet we don't view patriotism or nationalism as religious fundamentalism.

New Atheists apparently find it more rhetorically persuasive to promote atheism against the bad example of Islamic fanatics—who are already demonized by their audience—rather than to bring up Christian Zionists and Jewish religious Zionists whose converging fanaticisms might

end up precipitating the death of far more people. Harris in particular tends to demonize the Islamic religion, even to a genocidal degree. Hitchens is an equal-opportunity basher of religions in *God Is Not Great* but elsewhere he has supported neo-conservative policies in the Middle East. Hedges notes that both New Atheists and the Christian right externalize evil:

Evil is always something out there that can be eradicated. For the New Atheists, it's the irrational religious hordes. I mean, Sam Harris, at the end of his first book, asks us to consider a nuclear first strike on the Arab world. [Harris and Hitchens are] great supporters of preemptive war, and I don't think this is accidental that their political agendas coalesce completely with the Christian right.

What Is Fundamentalism, Anyway? Many of us are using this term too loosely. For instance, it is not the New Atheists' atheism but their dogmatic belief in scientific progress and reason—*scientism*—that Hedges says ignores humanity's true situation of peril. Here, Scientism is the 'fundamentalist' belief, turning scientific progress into a religion, reviving 19th century notions. Hedges says: "The greatest danger that besets us does not come from believers or atheists; it comes from those who, under the guise of religion, science or reason, imagine that we can free ourselves from the limitations of human nature and perfect the human species."

But with New Atheism or scientism, we are far afield from our original definition of fundamentalism. Hedges defines fundamentalism as a belief characterized by absolutism, dogmatism, utopian dreams of perfect societies and perfect human beings, blindness to the believer's own corruption and capacity for evil, and intolerance of those with other beliefs. The dictionary says it is "strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles." In the days of Stalin, Communism was a fundamentalist religion in the Hedges sense. Perhaps we can apply the dictionary definition to "Free-market fundamentalists" who obsessively emphasize a single doctrine and belief known as the "Invisible Hand"—a deity mentioned only once in the sacred book which is Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Naomi Klein says that neo-liberalism is one of "the closed, fundamentalist doctrines that cannot coexist with other belief systems... The world as it is must be erased to make way for their purist invention."

Another belief has been dubbed "gundamentalism," its basic text the ambiguous Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was interpreted one way for 200 years and an entirely different way yesterday, by the Supreme Court, much to the joy of gundamentalists. But are free-market fundamentalism or gundamentalism truly fundamentalism? Bobby S. Sayyid says the term is already much too broad. "One cannot use it to carry out a meaningful comparison between, for example, the BJP, Likud, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Christian Coalition, and so on." Religion scholar Stephen Prothero insists that fundamentalism is strictly "a Protestant impulse" with only superficial resemblances to movements such as Wahhabism, right-wing Hindu nationalists, or Ultra-Orthodox Jews.

Belief-systems may come to resemble Protestant Christian fundamentalism in two ways: first, direct imitation and borrowing of memes. This may have happened with some conservative voters who merge their religious and political beliefs into one patriotic Christian religion. Second, there may be a natural tendency for ideologies, especially religious and nationalist ones, to become purist, dogmatic, and fanatic. Using the term fundamentalism to describe so many diverse beliefs creates confusion. Because of a current trend in the U.S. to demonize the Islamic religion, we definitely need a new word to describe the tendency of many belief-systems to become rigidly orthodox, narrow, and extreme. For instance, in the early 19th century, people with such beliefs were called "Ultras." Or we might use the term "Hard-core" for the purest, most basic form of some ideology and those who insist on it. Meanwhile we could reserve the

word 'fundamentalism' for religious beliefs that have certain characteristics such as literalism and opposition to modern cultural changes—or even more specifically for Protestant Christian fundamentalists who first used the term.

Part Two: Political and Economic Ideologies

Two idea-systems have had an enormous effect on people in the Western world over the last three hundred years or so. Today they are so ingrained in our thinking that many tend to forget that nationalism and capitalism are ideologies, not Holy Writ. They are almost the consensus reality that we take for granted, 'the way it is.' Here we can only touch on some of the issues involved, with an eye to clarifying fuzzy concepts.

CHAPTER 6: NATIONALISM

Today, fanatical nationalism is perhaps 90 percent of the religion of perhaps 90 percent of mankind.

Arnold Toynbee, British historian, 1889-1975

Nationalism is our form of incest, is our idolatry, is our insanity. "Patriotism" is its cult.

Erich Fromm, American psychoanalyst

Nationalism is an ideology that claims a given human population has a natural solidarity based on their shared history and a common destiny. According to Toynbee, it is "the worship of the collective power of a local human community."

While nationalism and patriotism mean very much the same thing, patriotism has more favorable connotations. Americans use the word almost exclusively to describe their own love of country, rarely about people of any other nation. We call other people nationalists, not patriots. The situation could be described with one of those old sayings that show how words with the same denotation or basic meaning can give off very different connotations or emotional meanings: "I am thrifty, you are tight, and he is a skin-flint." Another one is, "I am firm, you are obstinate, and she is pig-headed." So we might say, I am a patriot, you are a nationalist, and he is a radical extremist.

Whatever it is called, Americans in comparison with other nations do make more of the trappings of patriotism such as singing the national anthem at sports events and pledging allegiance to the flag. In the past, children have been excluded from public schools because their religion forbade them to make this pledge. Another example of flag reverence is that Congress a few years ago passed legislation to punish burning of the flag, an event which occurs maybe a half dozen times a year during a drunken rage or freak-out, among 300,000,000 inhabitants.

Not all famous Americans revered patriotism. Mark Twain's definition of a patriot was: "the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about." Observers from other countries have commented that patriotism is a sort of civil religion for Americans. A contemporary German describes his inability to understand American customs such as the ubiquitous flags and singing of the anthem, reciting the "pledge of allegiance" every morning in every school and politicians who constantly praise "the greatest nation on earth:"

This is nauseating to the average German, but it is also rather difficult to understand given the widespread hatred of the government and its institutions [by Americans]. Atrocities committed by the army in various wars, crimes committed all over the world by the CIA, and the huge social

problems of the country are openly discussed [but] all of this does not seem to have much of an impact on the American's love of their nation. Apparently, the nation is seen to be a completely separate entity from the nation's institutions.

The situation in Germany, of course, is radically different. To love Germany is to love its history, its culture, its political and economical system, the government's institutions, the whole enchilada. Obviously, Germany's history cannot be loved, and so it is a pretty safe bet that someone wearing a shirt with a German flag on it is either a soldier or a foreigner or a neo-Nazi. At best, it is considered to be in bad taste to claim that one is proud to be a German.

Judging by local letters to the editor, Americans can get even more upset about differences of opinion regarding patriotism than about religion, perhaps because there are many different religious sects and only one accepted patriotic religion. In practice, the patriotic religion seems to have a lot to do with supporting wars, or even promoting them. It also has to do with denying that one's country has made any mistakes in the past. To my knowledge, no other people accuses some of its members of being "un-Swedish" or "un-Turkish" or "un-Nigerian" as we use the term "un-American" to brand heretics from the civil religion.

Strangely enough for a democratic nation, many Americans equate loyalty to the government in power with loyalty to the country itself. However, a number of others have criticized this attitude, for instance Mark Twain's advice to "[give] loyalty to the country always, loyalty to the government when it deserves it."

But that is just us Americans, five percent of the world population. We are not the only country in the world that has exalted ourselves at the expense of all the others. The ideology of nationalism has been going for several centuries among all the nation-states, which now number almost two hundred, and it does indeed have a lot to do with our history of wars.

Origins of Nationalism

Nationalism is an ideology that holds that a nation is the fundamental unit for human social life, and takes precedence over any other social and political principles.

Wikipedia

First, what do we mean by the word 'nation'? It sometimes refers to ethnic groups that live in more than one country, such as Roma, Kurds, or Jews, or to ethnic or linguistic minorities living within one nation-state, such as Hopis or Lapps. 'First Nations' is a term used for all groups that share an aboriginal culture. The word 'nation' is also often extended metaphorically to describe some group with common interests or a common identity such as NASCAR Nation or Queer Nation. Another less frequent use of the word describes species of animals as a collective, as "the nation of foxes." However, here we will be talking only about humans and mainly about the nation-state as a kind of political entity that emerged in Europe during the last 350 years.

The most ancient nation is a tribal identification, almost always with a national homeland. Later, peoples intermingled or were forcibly pulled into a larger collective by Roman and other imperial conquests, but these were not yet the modern nation-state which demands an almost religious devotion from its members.

A majority of scholars regard the modern nation-state as a constructed idea. While there were city-states, empires, and plenty of wars in the distant past, modern nations began to arise in Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This treaty ended the Thirty Years War and the era of religious wars in continental Europe. But the majority of modern nations developed

somewhat later, after the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquests. Most historians believe that the nation-state created nationalism, and not the other way around.

Instead of identifying with one's religion, people began to identify with the group of people who lived in the same area under the same government. The idea was that each nation had a specific territory, a homeland, beyond which another nation began. Unfortunately, nationalist movements often disagreed on the exact location of their borders, differences that led to new territorial disputes. Many times cultural or ethnic groups with distinct histories and languages were caught within a nation-state where they were pressured to assimilate to the dominant group, leading to long-lasting struggles.

Many nationalist movements desired to separate from a large empire. From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, a number of nationalist movements appeared in the American continents, as colonial Americans became independent from England, and Latin American countries threw off the yoke of imperial Spain. In the early 20th century, nationalist (anti-colonial) ideas spread to India, which finally secured its independence from England after World War II.

With the collapse of two large empires in Europe after World War I—the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire—a number of new nation states formed in central and southeastern Europe. The major WWI powers in furthering their own interests drew lines on a map to form new nations in the Middle East. Later in the 20th century, as Britain and other colonial powers withdrew from Africa, a number of new nations formed there, again following administrative boundaries rather than natural ones. Arbitrary national boundaries often enclosed several ethnic nations or religious groups in an uneasy relationship. As a result, the Balkans, Middle East, and Africa suffered many regional conflicts throughout the 20th century and continuing into the 21st.

Sometimes nationalistic identifications arise among the dominant group in a nation-state in the form of nativism. Broadly speaking, nativism is the xenophobic reaction of any population to an influx of newcomers, especially those of a different culture, religion, or ethnic background. This may lead to attempted ethnic cleansing to harass, force out or kill minority groups. An unusual example of two groups of nativist nationalists making common cause occurred in November, 2007, when a white supremacist from Texas—Preston Wiginton—addressed about 5,000 Russian nationalists at a rally in Moscow. Wiginton said, "I'm taking my hat off as a sign of respect for your strong identity in ethnicity, nation and race."

National Pride, Symbols of Patriotism

Patriotism is the belief your country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it.

George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright, 1856-1950

Nation-states commonly have a mythos about their culture and history. This mythos lies somewhere between the social myths that so resemble individual ego defense mechanisms, and the larger mythologies that seek to explain creation and cosmos by story and metaphor. That is, each form of nationalism is an incomplete mythology because it is based on only one part of the species. Unlike primitive tribal members, modern nationalists are fully aware that the rest of the species exists, with increasing travel, trade, modern communications, and science to tell them how alike we all are. Yet none of that counts: the ideology of nationalism claims an ultimate loyalty to the state above all other loyalties, even that of religion. Thus it is something of a tribal

religion itself, although it does not fill many of the traditional roles of religion such as explaining how the universe arose, or promoting cooperation among all members of the species and not just the ones that share a given territory.

Patriotism in the United States depends heavily on using and displaying the right words and symbols as badges of membership in the Tribe. The important thing is not what you *do* but what you say (or wear, or display on your car or in your yard). The symbol may be the flag, a yellow ribbon, or a Bible. The words must be coded and delivered just right, and even body gestures must meet the standard. For example, after all these years I learned that one is supposed to put one's hand over one's heart during the playing of the national anthem. I thought it was enough to hit the high notes in that difficult-to-sing piece of music.

An article in *Seed* magazine describes the decline of NASA while noting that other countries are “staking their reputations on space: China recently became the third country, after the Soviet Union and the United States, to launch a man into space with its own rocketry.” Meanwhile, India, Nigeria, Malaysia, and South Korea have aspirations to do the same. The article's author, Emily Arthes, seems to lament the minimal funding for NASA saying: “Just because war is no longer motivating our space efforts doesn't mean that national pride in them is unimportant.” But Arthes ignores Pentagon plans to dominate space militarily. She says nothing about the misplaced priorities of countries with millions of desperately poor citizens who would fund an expensive space program, or the misplaced priorities of any country that would put a space program ahead of efforts to prevent climate change.

Some countries find it a matter of national pride to develop solar power or to reduce their high birth rate.

Imperialism

To me, I confess, [countries] are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for dominion of the world.

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, regarding Afghanistan, 1898

Imperialism may be defined as one people extending sovereignty or control over another. It is not the kind of ideology whose current followers say proudly, “I am an imperialist!” Over the last century, such forthrightness has fallen out of favor. While people may promote imperialist policies or support what their country is doing in the way of imperialism, they tactfully use other names and justifications for what their country is doing.

The practice of imperialism has deep economic and geostrategic/military roots. First and foremost, imperialist nations exploit their colonies economically. They use cheap or slave native labor to harvest or mine the colony's resources of gold, silver, rubber, tin, ivory, tea, sugar cane, diamonds, copper, bananas, or coffee. Without the payoff, colonizers would not go to the trouble and expense of conquering and suppressing the populations of other countries. Additional reasons for conquest such as setting up puppet governments, gunboat diplomacy, and exerting other kinds of influence may be geostrategic, for instance, controlling a third country's access to the sea or to resources, or setting up military bases for future wars.

In relatively democratic countries, leaders must rationalize aggressions and exploitative behavior to their own people. They use various ideological justifications such as their own racial, religious, and cultural superiority or the inevitability of one group's domination according to natural laws or Social Darwinism. The rationalization may be the need to Christianize or “uplift” the colonized group, giving colonials the benefits of modern technology and Western medicine,

removing their dictators, introducing democracy and greater rights for women, and/or bringing the conquered a higher standard of living through economic development. Perhaps the most dangerous ideology to justify imperialism is theocratic nationalism or the idea that conquering other countries is God's will. Manifest Destiny is one example.

Generally, modern people in an imperialist nation do not like to think of their country's actions as 'imperialist' and nowhere is this truer than in the United States. The United States was born in a revolt against the imperial domination of England. The early part of the nineteenth century saw a number of other former colonies throw off their yokes, especially in South America with the leadership of Simon Bolivar, but also places such as Greece, which won independence from the Ottoman Empire. United States Americans have historically identified with people winning their independence from colonial powers.

But the ideologies of nationalism that characterize imperialists are very different from those of a people attempting to gain independence from imperialist domination. The spirit of nationalist pride and national superiority may help motivate the populations of imperialist nations. They carry "the white man's burden" of civilizing others and are in competition with other nations for the privilege of assuming this burden. A different sort of nationalism motivates the conquered, who simply want to run their own country, express their own culture, and keep the fruits of their own land. Their focus is on attaining greater freedom and democracy. In the United States these two sorts of nationalisms coexist, blend, or conflict, all coming under the same name of "patriotism."

The "New Imperialism:" Historians count three major stages of world imperialism since the fall of the Roman Empire. Imperialism lay dormant through the Middle Ages, reviving during the age of exploration and discovery, 1450-1650. This first boom in the fifteenth to seventeenth century saw Spain and Britain as the main rivals. First on the scene, Spain amassed a great empire in the New World, easily conquering vast regions with the unexpected aid of diseases to which the native populations had no immunity. Meanwhile England acquired a toehold in North America. In the 18th century Britain won a struggle with France for India and consolidated her holdings in North America against the French and Spanish. In the early and mid-nineteenth century, despite the loss of the colony that turned into the United States, Britain became the world's major imperialist power. She subdued India and without actually colonizing China, forced that country into very unfavorable economic concessions during the Opium Wars.

Imperialism flourished for a second time from 1870-1914. The most important factor in this "New Imperialism" was the Industrial Revolution, which created large surpluses of capital in European countries, capital that sought investment abroad. Also industries had a heavy demand for raw materials. An English economist of the time, John Hobson, wrote these acute observations in 1902:

Every improvement of methods of production, every concentration of ownership and control, seems to accentuate the tendency [towards imperialism]. As one nation after another enters the machine economy and adopts advanced industrial methods, it becomes more difficult for its manufacturers, merchants, and financiers to dispose profitably of their economic resources, and they are tempted more and more to use their Governments in order to secure for their particular use some distant undeveloped country by annexation and protection.

Countries which added the most colonial area in this period were, in order: Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, and Netherlands. The competition over colonies among these imperial powers was a major cause of World War I.

I will tell the story of just one of these colonial acquisitions, not only because it was the most horrific example of the “New Imperialism,” and because it demonstrates a truly modern use of spin and doublespeak, but because just about everyone in the West seems to have forgotten about it—an amazing display of denial. This story involves a genocide whose numbers surpass even the Nazi Holocaust that came fifty years later.

The horrors were set in motion at an international conference in 1884, the Berlin Conference. The meeting was attended by thirteen European nations, the United States, and a delegation from a philanthropic organization, the International Association of the Congo, founded by King Leopold II of Belgium for the expressed purpose of ending the slave trade and bringing free trade to the Congo basin. As they carved up Africa, the conference attendees agreed to create the Congo Free State under the direct rule of King Leopold—his personal property. Leopold seems to have had great powers of political persuasion along with the ability to spin his greedy intentions as altruism.

The watershed of the Congo River in the center of Africa has been populated for perhaps 10,000 years and was ruled by the Kongo Kingdom from the 14th to 18th century. Its first contact with Europeans was a Portuguese explorer in the 1480s. Soon the Portuguese began a slave trade, employing Arabs, that brought turmoil and weakened the local governments. Over the next four centuries missionaries and traders ventured deeper into Central Africa, but the region’s fate was sealed after British explorer Henry Morton Stanley (“Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”) explored the length of the Congo River 1874-1877 and returned to Europe with tales of the Congo’s great untapped wealth. Stanley became an agent for King Leopold, persuading village chiefs in the Congo basin to sign over their land and rights to the Belgian king, in all 450 treaties that represented only a lack of comprehension and misplaced trust in Stanley.

In the book *King Leopold’s Ghost* by Adam Hochschild, reviewer Michiko Kakutani says:

Leopold himself comes across as a cartoon-strip megalomaniac—a mad, greedy king obsessed since adolescence with the idea of running a colony of his own, and intent throughout his career on covering his lust for money and real estate in honeyed talk of philanthropy and human rights.

Despite his humanitarian promises in Berlin, Leopold tolerated Arab slavers in the Congo until a missionary movement forced him to once more champion African freedom with an anti-slavery congress in 1889. There the Belgian King won support for a plan that funded an anti-slaving campaign by charging import duties on goods going into the Congo. The slavers were soon driven out, but Leopold continued to collect the lucrative import duties, although the Berlin Conference had expressly agreed on free trade.

King Leopold’s great crimes against humanity occurred in the course of mining copper and harvesting ivory and rubber with indigenous laborers, many of whom were simply worked to death. Others were killed in the drive to meet production quotas. Especially in the “rubber terror,” workers were tortured, shot, whipped, or beaten to death because they did not meet the production quotas imposed by Leopold’s local agents, who had broad discretionary powers. The agents could earn bonuses from trade companies for exceeding their quotas.

Other workers who refused to work for the foreigners or failed to meet quotas saw their wives and children taken hostage by Leopold’s soldiers. Hochschild says taking hostages, as well as the severing of hands from corpses or living humans was a deliberate policy meant to terrorize

the population into submission. As conditions degenerated even further, according to the BBC, “company officials and armed African soldiers would set themselves up as local kings or even gods, killing and mutilating those who spoke out against them. As more and more of these tyrants became entrenched, mutilation became a more common practice.”

Many Congolese died of diseases introduced by Europeans and famines that resulted after soldiers rampaged across the countryside. During King Leopold’s genocidal reign over the Congo, the region’s population was reduced by half. The number who lost their lives is estimated at eight to ten million or even more. It should be remembered that the Congo is a large country—larger than Mexico, one and a half times the size of Alaska—with a population today close to that of France.

Several men actively protested the horrible conditions and atrocities under Leopold’s rule, including an employee of a British shipping-company, a black American journalist, and an Irish/British diplomat. Efforts by these and other activists helped to bring international pressure on King Leopold to give up the Congo. Joseph Conrad’s classic *The Heart of Darkness* was based on his four months in 1890 as steamboat captain on a river in the Congo—an experience that severely traumatized him. But many critics were not ready to believe that the horrors were real, so they read the novel as an allegory.

The evidence suggests that Leopold knew a great deal about these horrors. When he turned over the Congo to the Belgian government in 1908, he burned the archives of the Congo Free State, with the furnaces burning for eight days. He reportedly said, “I will give them my Congo, but they have no right to know what I did there.”

Belgian rule ended the worst excesses of Leopold, but Belgian administration was not especially enlightened. A large debt transferred from Leopold to the Belgian government, which considered it a debt owed by the people of the Congo. Payment required still more exploitation of people and resources. The BBC says the region “progressed quite minimally [while] the real rulers of natives’ lives were the missionaries, who, through the establishment of Western-style schools and churches, served to suppress the native way of life in a manner common to many former colonies around the world.”

The Second Congo Holocaust

Perhaps the most significant moral characteristic of a nation is its hypocrisy.

Reinhold Neibuhr, American theologian, 1892-1971

After World War II many colonies across the world pushed for their freedom. After a period of civil war, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) also became an independent state in 1960. Its first prime minister was Patrice Lumumba who had helped launch a nationwide independence movement. Unlike his rivals who represented large and powerful ethnic groups, Lumumba’s movement emphasized all Congolese. Although the Eisenhower administration greatly feared him, Lumumba was anti-colonialist, not Communist. Kevin Whitelaw quotes CIA Director Allen Dulles as follows:

In high quarters here, it is the clear-cut conclusion that if [Lumumba] continues to hold high office, the inevitable result will [have] disastrous consequences for the free world generally. Consequently, we conclude that his removal must be an urgent and prime objective.

Lumumba was assassinated soon after reaching office, probably by Belgium (although the CIA was also planning to kill him, and both countries may have been complicit). The Belgians were already hostile to the newly elected prime minister and left him out of Congo Independence Day celebrations. Lumumba made an impassioned impromptu speech. Some believe that this act sealed his fate. Lumumba was succeeded by Mobutu Sese Seko, a military leader favored by the United States, which continued to support him. James A. Lucas of Peace Action notes this irony: “In May 1979, the U.S. sent several million dollars of aid to Mobutu who had been condemned three months earlier by the U.S. State Department for human rights violations.” This exceptionally brutal dictator misruled for about thirty years, built up a reported \$3 billion nest egg, and drove the Congo into deep poverty. It took a civil war to dislodge him.

In the 50 years since independence the Democratic Republic of Congo has seldom had a period of stability. Besides civil wars and fighting between Congolese political factions, five other African nations have entered the fight for territory and Congo’s great natural resources. Paul Salopek writing in the *National Geographic* describes the human tragedy of thousands of Congolese he calls “cosmopolites” who left Congo to get higher education but returned to a chaotic country that has no role for them—now they wander in rags, some reciting poetry, trying to retain their knowledge in case it is ever needed.

On the 40th anniversary of independence, a Congolese newspaper, *Le Potentiel*, said “The country has ceased to function as a country. It has become a vast battlefield.” Salopek says that the Congo is “the worst human calamity since World War II.” More than five million Congolese have died in the past decade, more of them from malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and malnutrition than from the violence itself. Congolese soldiers have often been behind the violence, overthrowing regimes and robbing civilians with the consent of each new regime. Most recently the conflict has involved an epidemic of excessively brutal rapes, affecting tens of thousands of women and children. A Congolese gynecologist who tries to treat the victims says of these assaults: “One thing is clear. They are done to destroy women.” It appears that the army that Leopold set up to enforce his exploitation over a century ago has continued as an undisciplined, corrupt, and anti-social institution that splintered into dozens of armies and militias. But men who attack women and children and especially those who try to destroy women’s reproductive capacity seem to be trying to commit race suicide.

Especially at risk in the Congo are the Mbuti Pygmies of the vast Ituri forest, 23,000 square miles of rain forest. Some Congolese regard the Pygmies as subhuman and one rebel group in particular (MLC) has at times cannibalized them. However, Salopek says an even greater threat to the Pygmies is the oncoming land rush, timber cutting, and exploitation of the Ituri’s gold, diamonds, and coltan (or tantalum), a metal used in cell phones and other electronics.

Mineral exploitation is at the heart of the Congo’s conflicts. The region is rich in bauxite/aluminum, petroleum, cadmium, cassiterite, coal, iron ore, lead, manganese, silver, uranium, diamonds, and zinc. The Congo has at least 30 percent of the world’s cobalt, 10 percent of its copper, and 80 percent of its coltan, according to Maurice Carney, director of Friends of the Congo. Carney blames specific U.S. companies and the massive demand for coltan with fueling the Second Congo War in 1998-2002. He says, “You have to look at the corporate influence on everything that takes place in the Congo.” Cobalt is another important industrial mineral used for alloys, magnetic alloys, superalloys, catalysts for the petroleum and chemical industries, electroplating, sterilization of medical supplies and medical waste, irradiation of foods, and other purposes. The Congolese government is trying to renegotiate or cancel a number

of mining contracts that are making mining companies rich while most Congolese live on 30 cents a day or less.

Yet one more consequence is that Congo violence endangers some of the last mountain gorillas, our cousins 7 million years removed. More than 120 Congolese park rangers have been killed over the last ten years trying to protect the gorillas, and now their sanctuary has been overrun by rebels and soldiers. No one knows the current fate of the creatures, which have the potential to draw tourist revenue and funding from conservation groups to a region that is desperately poor. Park ranger Mburanumwe says of the park's occupation: "It's a catastrophe. For them and for us."

While many know about the terrible violence in Darfur, hardly anyone seems to know about the problems in the Congo. Some say that is because the Congo is so remote, but a cynical person might think that like King Leopold, more recent exploiters do not want general knowledge of the entire situation. People might realize that, for instance, our ubiquitous cell phones depend on robbing the rich resources of a traumatized, poverty-stricken people. People might even ask a very broad question such as this: Since the West has presumably brought to the Congo its science and technology, administrative skills, economic system, democratic institutions, Christian religion, and Western Civilization, why has all this benefit left behind so much pain and suffering?

Today's Imperialism: The world appears to be in the third era of modern imperialism, which began in earnest after World War II. The old colonies gained independence, while a few countries added new colonies and a new, less obvious form of imperialism developed. The former Soviet Union hung on to Eastern European countries it had occupied in the course of defeating Nazi Germany and China took over Tibet; however the United States seems to have had its finger in almost every other pie. The United States is by far the major imperialist power today, having received the torch from our mother country, Britain.

The Third Imperialism is more likely to appear in the frame of "national security," "national interests," "globalization," "the war on terrorism," or "geostrategic considerations." It usually operates through the covert actions of secret agencies, proxy wars, international economic agencies such as World Bank and IMF, collusion with corrupt regimes in undeveloped countries, However, during the Bush/Cheney Administration, in addition to the usual puppet regimes and the occasional bombing, the United States has reverted to an older pattern of wars of conquest and occupation. These wars are to control the energy commodities oil and natural gas or routes for their pipelines, and for other geostrategic reasons such as containing Russia, China, and Europe as possible rivals.

Again we see imperialist policy justified by humanitarian reasons such as liberating Afghani women from the Taliban, although the Northern Alliance allies of the United States are also harshly patriarchal. In fact, it appears that most of the country's new elected leadership upholds an extreme anti-woman interpretation of the Koran—to a greater degree than other Muslim countries, even Saudi Arabia. In a recent incident, an Afghan journalism student was sentenced to death by an Islamic court for downloading a report from the Internet questioning the oppression of women. The Afghan Senate passed a motion to confirm this death sentence.

On February 9, 2007, the Pentagon announced a plan to establish an Africa command (Africom) to keep an eye on resource security, international terrorism, and the rise of China. Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University (UK) says the long-term issue is oil, especially in relation to China, which depends on imports for almost half its oil. In 2006, almost

one third of China's oil imports came from Africa, especially Sudan. Nigeria and war-torn Sudan are two of Africa's oil-producing states. Oil has recently been discovered in Chad, a large country that has suffered civil wars and invasions ever since it gained independence from France in 1960. Rogers predicts that "The U.S. approach to Africa will increasingly be determined by considerations of U.S. military and political security rather than the human-security needs of relatively poor countries."

Bases and Bombings

Once upon a time, you could trace the spread of imperialism by counting up colonies. America's version of the colony is the military base.

Chalmers Johnson

Historically, empires such as Rome and 19th century Britain have relied on foreign bases to establish their political supremacy. Chalmers Johnson says the U.S. network of bases is a new form of empire. As of 2003, the Pentagon had at least 700 military bases in about 130 countries, "on every continent except Antarctica." The latest military sites are in Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ethiopia, and Kenya, with others considered in Pakistan, India, and Australia. (If one lived in Russia, one might feel a little pressure to the West and South of one's country.)

Military actions are part of the third imperialism just as they were of the older forms. Chalmers says that "Militarism and imperialism are Siamese twins joined at the hip. Each thrives off the other." Since World War II, the United States has bombed or invaded 48 nations and performed covert actions such as coups, assassinations, and off-the-books funding to dictators in at least 22 nations, according to a list by Lucas. William Blum, author of *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, says the U.S. has carried out serious interventions into more than 70 nations including (chronologically) China, Italy, Greece, Philippines, South Korea, Albania, East Germany, Iran, Guatemala, Indonesia, British Guyana, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Chile, East Timor, Nicaragua, Libya, Yugoslavia, and others, some more than once.

Lucas attempts to add up the number of deaths in other nations caused by U.S. interventions since World War II. Since wars have complex causes, Lucas says that in some of his cases other nations may have been responsible for more deaths, but if U.S. involvement was a necessary cause of the conflict (if it would not have happened otherwise), he considers the United States most responsible. His study shows that U.S. military was directly responsible for about 10 to 15 million deaths during the Korean and Vietnam Wars and two Iraq Wars. This also includes Chinese, Cambodian, and Laotian deaths in the course of the first two conflicts. Additionally, the United States is responsible for between nine and 14 million deaths by proxy wars in Afghanistan (1979-92), Angola, Congo, East Timor, Guatemala, Indonesia, Pakistan (1971), and Sudan. There were also smaller conflicts. All together, says Lucas, he estimates U.S. interventions since WWII have been responsible for the deaths of between 20 and 30 million people worldwide. That is the equivalent of about 10,000 September 11ths.

It is of utmost importance that the American public acknowledges that, Yes, our country is imperialist and has been increasingly so for the past 60 years. Let none of us continue to fantasize that the United States government is some philanthropic organization whose actions are always directed toward the greater good of the planet or its people, or of any particular country that it takes under its wing under the pretense of saving it. Our country is no more altruistic than

the rest of the historical nation-states. We are no better than those others and sometimes worse because power corrupts and we currently have a great deal of it.

Superpatriotism and the Higher Patriotism

Patriots always talk of dying for their country and never of killing for their country.

Bertrand Russell

American patriotism has two distinct strains that often conflict. Michael Parenti defines superpatriotism as “the readiness to follow national leaders unquestioningly in their dealings with other countries, especially in confrontations involving military force.” A second strain of patriotism has been called “the higher patriotism” because instead of identifying with particular administrations or with saber-rattling and war, a patriot of this sort identifies with the idealistic values introduced to the world by the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and over 200 years of reasonably stable, reasonably democratic government.

Love of country has a third form, a very ancient form that could be called *matriotism*. The matriot more literally loves her or his country as the actual land forms, bodies of water, forests, fields, flora and fauna, as well as living people and their local traditions that work with nature. Particularly he or she loves that part of the country nearest and most familiar. To the matriot it would be unthinkable to top mountains, pollute streams, clear-cut forests, or drive animals such as cougars and blue butterflies into extinction. It would also be unmatriotic to place ideology or profits ahead of the health of the American population or any subset of it. Matriotism is not only the most essential form of patriotism but it precedes the other forms.

American Nationalism: The Scots-Irish, the Frontier

In America, the record of settlement has been one of unqualified victory through ruthless violence—with all the effects this is likely to have on a nation’s psyche.

Anatol Lieven, American author and policy analyst, *America Right or Wrong*, 2004

The frontiersmen who settled the South and West descended from the so-called Scots-Irish who comprised the largest immigration to colonial America in the 18th century. Their previous history in the British Isles had been violent. For almost 2,000 years various invaders, from the Romans to Norman-English kings, had tried to conquer and subdue their ancestors. The invaders conducted a number of historic, large-scale massacres but their brutality was in vain—this people would not be conquered. Those who later were called the Scots-Irish suffered further injustices and violence at the hands of the English after moving to Northern Ireland (Ulster) as part of an English plan to replace with Protestants the Irish Catholics who already lived there.

Borderers—Celts and others from both sides of the border between Scotland and England including the Scots-Irish who had moved to Ireland—came to the American colonies in droves to escape the burdensome conditions of their lives. These relatively poor and uneducated immigrants realized that they were looked down upon by the Puritans of New England (although they were fellow-Calvinists) as well as by the aristocratic flatlanders of Virginia and the Carolinas. The independent, proud Borderers knew well that their role was to be a buffer to the Indians, and that they were only allowed to practice their own brand of Calvinist religion as long as they stayed in the backcountry and kept the Indians at bay.

In light of their history it was no wonder that the Scots-Irish were anti-authoritarian and proud of their fighting ability and spirit—it had kept them free in England against great odds and brutal tactics. In fact they had become a warrior culture. In 1776 the Scots-Irish flocked to help fight the interfering English. They formed a large part of the Revolutionary Army. Guerrilla tactics which they had developed on the frontier during the French and Indian War were often decisive in battles against the redcoats. As part of the new nation, the Scots-Irish frontiersmen continued to advance into Indian Territory, provoking more conflicts with Indians.

President Andrew Jackson (1828-1832) symbolizes the populist nationalist tradition that came out of the American Frontier. From a prominent Scots-Irish family, Jackson first distinguished himself as an Indian fighter. Although a hero of the War of 1812, he mostly fought against the Cherokee, Cree, and other Indian nations. Anatol Lieven, in his study of American nationalism, *America Right or Wrong*, says that a strong sense of White identity and violent hostility to other races was at the core of ‘Jacksonian nationalism.’

In 1831 when a Supreme Court decision ruled for the Cherokee nation against Georgia laws that would expel them beyond the Mississippi, President Andrew Jackson reportedly said, “[Chief Justice] John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it.” Lieven notes

His statement [described] the attitudes of the vast majority of Jackson’s constituency, the White inhabitants of [the South and West]. They were determined to drive out the Indians irrespective of what the U.S. government or U.S. law said....This folk law took precedence over the written code of the United States....Together with these attitudes came a deep hostility to humanitarian East Coast, or “Yankee” lawyers and intellectuals, who having gotten rid of their own Indians more than half a century before, now felt free to criticize and restrict the behavior of the West and South in this regard—a regional hostility which has replicated itself over numerous different issues up to our own day.

Lieven describes several lasting effects of the frontier experience on American nationalism. First, there was a long history of ferocious warfare that sometimes amounted to genocide, while both sides committed horrible atrocities. “This legacy has bred in sections of the American tradition both a capacity for ruthlessness and a taste for absolute and unqualified victory of the kind which in the end won over all the indigenous adversaries of White America.”

Another effect of the frontier was constant expansionism, which those on the frontier promoted even against Washington policy. Expansionists in the South coveted not only Indian and Mexican lands but also European colonies in the Caribbean.

American Nationalism: the Civil War Legacy

Radical nationalism has many fathers, but its mother is defeat, and her milk is called humiliation. From this poisoned nourishment comes in part the tendency to chauvinist hatred which has streamed through so many of the world's nationalisms.

Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*

Looking at world history, Lieven notes that classes in decline or who fear decline and those who have suffered culture shock from abrupt economic and social changes often support an embattled nationalism. The German middle class in the 1930s is an obvious example. Humiliated by defeat in World War I and the punishing peace terms at Versailles, then beset by economic problems, many people followed Hitler because he appealed to their emotions and promised a

way out of national decline. However, according to Lieven, many European radical right and radical nationalist movements actually originated in the first "Great Depression" from the mid-1870s to the 1890s, when economic growth gave way to economic depression and stagnation.

Besides reacting with fear, anger, and self-righteousness, disappointed people often desire to return to an idealized past. Germans 100 years ago looked back to a yet older world of independent and homogeneous small towns, with guilds that guaranteed employment to insiders. In the United States we often see idealization of past decades such as the 1950s, early 1900s, or the antebellum South.

In the United States, according to Lieven, "this sense of defeat and embattlement" is found in several distinct yet overlapping groups that include the original White Anglo-Saxon and Scots-Irish populations of the colonies, the specific historical experience of the White South, and the cultures of evangelical and fundamentalist Protestantism. Here I will focus on the Civil War experience that has influenced American nationalism up to this day. We note that the eleven states that formed the Confederacy now make up 30.21 percent of the nation's population (2002 Census). Subtracting non-whites who live in the South, White Southerners are now one-fifth of U.S. population and form a major voting bloc. However, Lieven adds that the Greater South in the cultural sense extends beyond the borders of the Confederacy and includes parts of the Midwest and West.

To the Scots-Irish, the Civil War represented a threat similar to that of the invading Romans or English. Also, they were bred as warriors. James Webb (*Born Fighting*) insists that the Southern Borderers were not defending slavery (most did not own slaves):

The Confederate soldier fought because, on the one hand, in his view he was provoked, intimidated, and ultimately invaded, and, on the other, his leaders had convinced him that this was a war of independence in the same sense as the Revolutionary War.... This was not so much a learned response to historical events as it was a cultural approach that had been refined by centuries of similar experiences.

The Confederacy was greatly overmatched by the Union forces in every way except this fighting spirit and better generalship until Ulysses S. Grant took the field—himself of Scots-Irish descent. According to historian David Hackett Fischer (*Albion's Seed*), the Union greatly outnumbered the Confederacy in the number of free males of military age by 4.4 to 1. The North had three times the total wealth, three times the farm acreage, nine times as many merchant ships, and ten times the industrial output. Eventually, the Rebels suffered a crushing defeat. More than one-fifth of all Southern white males died in battle or of disease. Then Radical Reconstruction under military rule felt like yet another invasion and humiliation to a group whose history and culture did not prepare them at all for defeat or humiliation. One hundred and fifty years later, many still seem to carry resentments against 'the North.'

(I experienced a taste of North-South hostility first-hand during a move from Florida to Missouri in the early 1960s, a woman driving alone with an aquarium of fish in the passenger seat. This was the era when Northern civil rights workers were helping Southern Blacks gain their legal rights, and several had been murdered in the attempt. All I had to do was open my mouth and order dinner in a café, with the wrong accent—all conversation stopped and every hostile eye was on me. When the waitress brought my stone-cold dinner, I was afraid to complain. All I wanted to do was drive through Mississippi as quickly as possible and never return.)

Lieven says this "embittered defensiveness" began even before the Civil War, leading up to it:

Cultural, racial, political and economic defensiveness reached the point in the 1850s where the South became the pioneer in the modern world of the mass public burning of “dangerous books,” in this case, attacks on slavery from the abolitionist North....Both before the Civil War and in the mid-20th century, the social system of the South was on the defensive against most of the Western world, and White Southerners saw outside aggression against the South everywhere.

Such hostility seems to have waned in the South itself. Most Southerners have come to terms with civil rights, aided by the fact that Black numbers in the South declined greatly because of immigration to Northern states in search of jobs and freedom from harassment. The ‘New South’ industrialized with the factories lost by the Great Lakes industrial region and this raised incomes in the region. In some ways, however, this defensiveness persists but has come to apply to the whole United States, not just the South. It is America against the world.

American Nationalism: the Imperialism Script

I firmly believe that when any territory outside the present territorial limits of the United States becomes necessary for our defense or essential for our commercial development, we ought to lose no time in acquiring it.

Sen. Orville Platt of Connecticut, 1894

Since the middle of the 19th century, proponents of America’s “Manifest Destiny” pressed the country to become a colonial power like Britain, Spain, Belgium, France, and Netherlands. Once the frontier closed around 1890, with the Indian nations totally defeated, the time seemed to have arrived. Events in the 1890s and turn of the century seem to have greatly influenced the course of nationalism in the United States to this day, and one may note many modern parallels. For this reason, we might look carefully at the Spanish-American War and events leading up to it.

The 1890s was a pivotal time, with a number of major economic and political changes. The United States had become the most successful economy in the world but according to historian Richard Barnett, rapid industrialization had "devastating consequences" on farmers, small-business men, and factory workers. Just as agriculture became more dependent on exports, prices fell on the world food market. Factories made more than they could sell. Many men were unemployed, and armies of hoboes took to the streets.

Barnet notes that between 1881 and 1900, there were almost 24,000 strikes. Five hundred banks closed in 1892 and 16,000 companies went bankrupt, leading to the panic of 1893. Debt-ridden farmers formed the populist People's Party to fight against Wall Street, the big banks, and the trusts (corporate monopolies). During this turbulent moment, Democrats came into power for the first time since the Civil War, and tried to meet some of the populist demands. Democrats still subscribed to the Jeffersonian ideal of a nation of family farms and small businesses.

The Republican Party, however, was tied to the interests of banks and trusts, and wanted to shift the political agenda away from domestic economic questions. Republican expansionists such as Teddy Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge pushed for foreign military adventures that would unite the country and diffuse the ideological polarization.

Barnet cites a study of 23 industrialized, democratic countries (by political scientist Bruce Russett) that shows them more likely to engage in foreign military action during hard times than prosperous ones. For the United States however, the 1898 Spanish American War seems to have set a pattern. (Secretary of State John Hay called it the "splendid little war.") Since then, U.S.

foreign military adventures have continued through good times as well as bad, especially in the Americas, then Indochina, and now the Middle East.

To overcome the economic crisis of the 1890s, Barnet says "imperialism served the interests of both parties in the difficult task of managing the fear and outrage of millions of potential voters." The nation needed a war. The Democratic oligarchy in the South, afraid of the populists with their grass-roots 'free silver' movement, looked again towards Cuba, as they had before the Civil War. Now, as Cubans struggled to overthrow Spanish rule, this created an opening.

The Spanish used cruel methods against Cuban rebels. The Spanish general Valeriano Weyler had designed the "Reconcentration Plan" to separate civilians from insurgents, thus protecting them from the fighting. However, the camps were so badly run that an estimated 322,000 Cuban peasants died of malnutrition and disease, according to Heather W. Austin. Americans had a history of sympathy with people fighting for independence and a concern about human rights violations in other countries such as Czarist Russia or the Ottoman Empire.

However, the contemporary philosopher William James did not think that humanitarian concern was the major reason for the imperialism fever, which had become "a peculiarly exciting kind of sport." The *New York Journal of Commerce* described the "artificial patriotism being carefully worked up at the present time... hanging the flag over every schoolhouse and... giving the boys military drill."

President William McKinley, a Republican, was the first president to recognize the power of mass media, setting up a post for public relations. The build-up to war with Spain was great for newspapers. Circulation of Hearst's *New York Journal* went from 150,000 in 1896 to 800,000 after two years of covering the insurrection and atrocities in Cuba. Barnet says that "liberties were taken with the facts in virtually every news story out of Cuba." The press was changing in the 1890s with new technology such as mass circulation presses, photography, and wire services. Newspapers moved away from straight information and political persuasion toward adventure and fantasy, a change which "would have a lasting effect on both electoral politics and foreign policy," according to Barnet.

The war with Spain in Cuba was popular, since it had the three ingredients Barnet says are necessary for public support: "It was a moral crusade. It was blessed by victory. It was short." However, imperial strategists of the time such as Theodore Roosevelt were more interested in the Philippines and expansion in the Far East than in Cuba. Roosevelt as Acting Secretary of the Navy cabled secret orders to Commodore George Dewey to begin the offensive in the Philippines as soon as McKinley declared war on Spain. Within hours of Dewey's victory in Manila, McKinley sent 10,000 troops to occupy the islands. His excuse was that otherwise, the British, French, Germans, or Japanese would take them. Also, McKinley told a group of Protestant ministers that God told him to take the Philippines "to uplift and Christianize them." He must have known that the Filipinos had already been Christianized by their Catholic Spanish conquerors several centuries earlier.

The United States had a bitter national debate over annexation of the Philippines. Some anti-imperialists were racist, afraid of mass immigration by brown-skinned people. Others felt that since the United States had been formed in opposition to an empire, occupation of the Philippines was both immoral and inconsistent with American values. Anti-imperialists were strong in the Senate, and the treaty with Spain which included ceding of the Philippines for \$20 million was almost defeated in December 1898.

Filipino rebels had expected that they would gain independence with American help. Filipinos had been fighting for independence from Spain since 1896, led by Emilio Aguinaldo,

then in his late 20s. While in exile in Hong Kong, Aguinaldo was approached by several American Consuls who sought his support. None spoke his language, Tagalog, and he knew little Spanish. Aguinaldo and a British businessman who interpreted for him later maintained that the Consuls had promised independence for the Philippines in exchange for helping the United States defeat Spain. Robert Couttie, on the Spanish American War Centennial website, describes what happened next:

Dewey landed Aguinaldo on the mainland of Luzon, the large Northern island of the Philippine group, and within two weeks, with no arms supplied by Dewey and following refusals by Dewey to provide support, Aguinaldo's forces controlled the Philippines.

In control of the entire country except for Manila, Aguinaldo announced the creation of a Philippine republic, which would have been the first republic in Asia. However, negotiations between the U.S. and Spanish governments did not include any Filipinos, and the U.S. refused to communicate with Aguinaldo. The situation was tense and a fight between two soldiers, one American and one Filipino, provided the justification to begin hostilities. The U.S. military then began a war against the rebels that lasted for four years, involving 120,000 U.S. troops. Over 4,000 American troops died and over 200,000 Filipinos—some estimate as many as one million including those dead of disease and hunger from the ruin of their farms.

The Filipino insurgents had quickly shifted to guerrilla warfare, the only possible strategy in the face of America's vastly superior firepower. However, they faced relocation or burning of their villages, massacres of civilians, and torture. Benjamin Pimentel notes that guerrilla wars are more frustrating to their military opponents than are conventional wars, consequently brutal tactics are common among military forces who fight guerrillas—an elusive enemy with popular support. On the other hand, Gary Brecher notes that guerrilla wars are also very costly to the guerrillas. He says a standard figure is that for every soldier that guerrillas kill, they can expect to lose ten people from their own community, sometimes many more.

Racism was quite evident in this war. One American general said: "It may be necessary to kill half of the Filipinos in order that the remaining half of the population may be advanced to a higher plane of life than their present semi-barbarous state affords." Although McKinley imposed censorship, stories of American atrocities trickled through to the American public. Academics, writers, artists, and college students organized anti-imperialist leagues, with Mark Twain a prominent member of this group. "I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land," he said.

The United States prevailed at last, Americanized the islands, and finally granted Philippine independence in 1946. The Philippines became a republic almost 50 years after Aguinaldo first declared it such. Cuba was allowed to be an independent republic although the U.S. occupied it from 1899 to 1902 and again from 1906-1909. Between 1898 and 1934, the Marines invaded Cuba four times, Nicaragua five times, and Honduras seven times, with incursions into the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guatemala, Panama, Mexico, and Colombia. The war with the Philippines is all but forgotten a century later, perhaps because there was nothing about it to make Americans proud. Pimentel interviewed a retired San Francisco State University professor, Creighton Miller, who says, "You do learn from the past. If we had been more aware of the Philippine situation, we would have thought twice about going to Vietnam."

Whether you call the Spanish-American War including the Philippine conflict a script or a meme-complex, it was the beginning of a series of American wars, invasions, occupations, bombings, and covert actions that has not yet ended. The United States in its history has made

more than 200 military interventions in foreign countries. Then there are proxy wars. According to John Stockwell, former CIA Chief of the Angola Task Force, covert actions by the CIA over the last sixty years add up to a Third World War. The agency has conducted 3,000 major operations in secret wars in the Third World, which Stockwell says in total would be “the third bloodiest war in all of history [wars against people of countries] where conspicuously, they nor their governments do not have the capability of doing any physical hurt to the United States.”

We cannot blame the birth of imperialist nationalism solely on President McKinley or expansionist Republicans or Hearst propaganda. The American people have some direct responsibility here, in the ideologies they support. Neoconservatives are only the latest group of aggressive nationalists to become influential in American government, notably in the administration of George W. Bush. In a later chapter, we look more at how the idea of Manifest Destiny developed into the assumption that “We own the world.”

American Nationalism: the Industrial-Military Complex

If the people are not convinced [that the Free World is in mortal danger] it would be impossible for Congress to vote the vast sums now being spent to avert danger. With the support of public opinion, as marshaled by the press, we are off to a good start. It is our Job—yours and mine—to keep our people convinced that the only way to keep disaster away from our shores is to build up America’s might.

Charles Wilson, Chairman of the Board of General Electric and head of the Office of Defense Mobilization, in a speech to the Newspaper Publishers Association, 1950

Economic policy based on military buildup is *Military Keynesianism*. Chalmers Johnson (citing the National Priorities Project) says that military spending today consumes 40 percent of every U.S. tax dollar. This economic dependence on military production dominates our public life and especially foreign policy. It leads to a focus on military values (militarism) and to actual wars.

American Nationalism as a Set of Blinders

War is God’s way of teaching Americans geography.

Ambrose Bierce, 1842-1914, *The Devil’s Dictionary*

Like most people everywhere, Americans are culture-bound, that is, our world view is tied to the particular time and place we were born and brought up. Each individual’s worldview is further restricted by identification with his or her gender, age-group, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, occupation, and religion. Add to that the American’s comparative lack of knowledge about the rest of the world and about the past. We are increasingly blinkered just by living in the United States. With our emphasis on the new and novel we are bound by today, as if yesterday had nothing to do with it and tomorrow will take care of itself by some Invisible Hand of economics or religion—not by the consequences of our own acts here and now.

Education, travel, and globalized media are supposed to open up this restricted view. But while the ninety-five percent of the world’s people who do not live in the United States of America receive the impact of our economic policies, our military, and our media, we ourselves, according to editor and author James Ledbetter, practice “cultural unilateralism.” The United States does not practice the free information market that it preaches. As a result, not only do

American cultural products flood the world market, but Americans are less and less aware of works of art from elsewhere.

By 2000, music from domestic acts comprised 92 percent of the U.S. music market. “That makes America the most insular music market in the world except for Pakistan,” notes Ledbetter. There are few books on the bestseller lists that weren’t originally written in English. Foreign films are distributed less than they were in earlier decades, although several countries are enjoying a renaissance in film making. Ledbetter says that foreign film producers face huge hurdles to distribute on American screens or television. Imported CDs from some nations are subject to tariffs as high as 30 percent. The obstacles facing smaller, foreign music labels, publishers, and film producers add up to *market censorship*.

Ledbetter says that in theory, cable television is one of America’s most diverse forms of communication. But in the intense period post 9/11 and the run-up to the Iraq War not one cable operator chose to run any regular footage from Al Jazeera or other Arab broadcasters. Ledbetter says that decision was not based on popularity, since “It’s hard to imagine that a condensed Al Jazeera would get lower ratings than the Golf Channel.”

Mainstream media leads the way for Americans to have both an exalted view of ourselves and a limited view of the rest of the world. We are also news-bound in that our individual views are very much shaped by the way events are parlayed by mass media, particularly television. The first time that I became personally aware of a concerted effort by the media to shape public opinion was during the Iran hostage crisis with its countdown headlines and hostility towards President Jimmy Carter in general. Carter was not my favorite president, but the bias was very obvious, as it was again in the other direction during Ronald Reagan’s administration. In both cases, I was surprised by how easily many people fell in line with the conventional wisdom picked out for them. Glorification of President Reagan continues today, without regard to his actual record in office. Fear and hatred of Iran also continues, as if modern interactions between the United States and Iran began with the hostage crisis and not with a CIA-engineered coup some 25 years before that.

The jingoistic television coverage of the 1984 Olympics, in which commentators cheered Americans and the camera did not focus on other athletes, was completely foreign to the whole idea of the Olympic Games, and very disrespectful to many talented and hard-working competitors. I was not able to watch the Olympics for many years afterward.

As Britain’s Mrs. Gaskell observed 150 years ago, “[There is] that kind of patriotism which consists in hating all other nations.” And in recent years, the glorification of the United States often seems to lead to fear and resentment of other countries. Media downplayed the intense sympathetic reactions to the September 11, 2001 tragedy in other countries, especially in Europe where in some places people spontaneously stopped their usual activities and took to the streets, dressed in black, or attended church. In Berlin something like 200,000 people gathered in silence at the historic Brandenburg Gate. Most of the American public saw and heard very little about these outpourings of kinship, which did not fit the preferred story-line, which is that the United States is always helping out the rest of the world—despite the ingratitude and envy of those other countries (“Poor Me”). Some Palestinian kids cheered after the tragedy, and that became the iconic news story.

The United States vs. Europe

After the United States sacrificed a few hundred thousand of its young men and billions of dollars to rescue Europe during its hours of need since 1917, we should expect Europeans to bend over backward to help us in our time of trouble.

David Gergen, *U.S. News and World Report*, February 2003

Following a century that included two horrific wars fought on their own soil as well as the Holocaust and other mass democides by several fascist regimes, Western European nations today appear to have evolved beyond settling disputes by force of arms, at least with each other, nor do most of them seem anxious to join the United States in its Middle Eastern crusades. This has caused resentment in Americans who strongly support current U.S. foreign policies, as in the David Gergen quote above. Gergen implies that a preemptive war by the United States against a much smaller nation already devastated by a previous war and a decade of sanctions is equivalent to World War II. However, the idea that Iraq's purported military buildup before we invaded it in 2003 constituted "our time of trouble" similar to that of Western Europe after it was actually invaded by Hitler is simply laughable.

Freedom Fries

You can't tell Polish jokes in polite society any more, so heap it on the French, right? It's not like the French ever had a Charles V or a Joan of Arc. Or a Charles de Gaulle who'd rather fight than collaborate. And it's not like any French fleet ever showed up at just the right time and place (Yorktown, 1781) to assure the independence of a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Editorial, *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, August 21, 2008

A strange episode occurred during the buildup to the War in Iraq. Because the French government declined to join in the invasion of Iraq, some Americans directed hostility towards France, to the extent of renaming French fries and reportedly pouring good French wine into the street. Pundits and public letters made the following arguments, such as they were. "We saved the French in World War II, so they should show gratitude by following our policies. The French are cowardly. The French think that they are better than other people and want more power like they had in some previous centuries." From the degree of this resentment, one would think that the Anglo Saxons were fighting against the Normans in 1066, or that we were replaying the French and Indian Wars of the eighteenth century. Why do such memes recur? At any rate, let us look at the reasons given, first, the World War II business.

While I was in junior and senior high school during World War II, some relatives and family friends fought in that war. Later I went to college with students who were on the GI Bill and met many other vets throughout my life, since there were a lot of soldiers in that war. But never until the buildup to the Iraq War did I realize that *any* World War II vets or non-vets regarded the U.S. role in that war as a French (or European) Rescue Scenario. The argument that Europe owes fealty to the United States is similar to the one made against France alone.

In his book *Worshipping the Myths of World War II*, Edward W. Wood, Jr. (who as a G.I. was wounded in that war) lists four major myths. The third one is that America won WWII on its own. I asked several vets of my acquaintance from "The Greatest Generation" or the one immediately after, when they thought this myth arose. Their consensus was that it developed during the Reagan years of the 1980s, a time of rampant mythologizing.

Americans did fight bravely, and the French did welcome them, but there was more to it than cheering crowds and French girls throwing flowers. The vets I knew thought that Hitler was a threat to the world and that after he gobbled Europe, the United States would have been next in line. Yanks also knew they didn't liberate anybody single-handedly—the Brits and other allies were just as heroic. Before D-Day, there was the London Blitz and Dunkirk. The Yanks welcomed all the help they could get, including from the French Resistance. It was widely conceded that the Soviets, who lost millions of soldiers and civilians on the Eastern Front, slowed down Hitler enough to turn the tide of the war. The United States also conducted a campaign in the Pacific that had nothing to do with France or Europe.

In terms of human lives sacrificed to World War II, Poland lost the most—about 16 percent of her population—followed by Lithuania, USSR, Latvia, Portugese Timor, Nazi Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Indonesia. Every American life lost was precious, but the sacrifice was not in the horrific range of many other countries.

The second odd bit of logic in 2002 was that because we were allies sixty years ago, the French were still obligated to follow the American lead in foreign affairs. Perhaps Americans are obligated to follow the French lead because of their help to us during the American Revolution? Or to thank them for their gift of that national symbol, the Statue of Liberty?

The third argument, that the French were “cowardly,” seems based on the ineptitude of French military leadership 70 years ago. Officials depended on the Maginot Line as their defense. The government changed hands several times during the six weeks of active fighting, and the last leader in charge was a WWI general who surrendered. The British too have had their ‘Colonel Blimps.’ The United States has also had its less-than-great military leaders, including many of the Union generals in the Civil War. Future historians may not deal kindly with former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his Iraq War strategy, for instance deploying so few soldiers that they could not secure ammunition dumps later used by Iraqi insurgents.

From the perspective of war casualties the French lost 479,000 soldiers and civilians in World War II, which was over one percent of their population. Just for comparison, United States deaths on all fronts of 418,500 were not quite a third of a percent of our population. A great sacrifice, in both cases, and every casualty a tragedy. World War I was even more destructive for France, which suffered the greatest losses of any country in that war. Eleven percent of their entire population were killed or wounded, compared with 9 percent of Germans, and 8 percent of British. Six in ten French men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight died or were permanently maimed.

The fourth idea, that the French wanted a greater role in world diplomacy than was warranted assumes that diplomacy is merely the words of the most powerful, has no value in itself, and does not rest on any experience or skill in previous diplomatic negotiations. But there are other and deeper reasons for a transatlantic breach than just the lukewarm attitudes of most European nations, including the French, toward America's recent trend of preemptive war. Before getting into these other reasons, let us define what we mean by ‘Europe.’

Europe as a *continent* contains 48 countries, ranging in size from Russia to tiny Vatican City, with an estimated total population of 728 million people. The European Union includes, so far, 27 member states with almost 500 million people. However you define it, Europe is a good bit larger in population than the United States with our 300 million citizens. The EU accounts for almost a third of the world's GDP. The United States accounts for about one-fifth, according to data from World Bank and IMF. Two other important things to know about Europe are that the continent has one of the highest population densities in the world; and that it is directly

threatened by climate change, including the possibilities of losing warming benefits of the Gulf Stream and inundation of several low-lying nations and world capitals by rising sea levels.

The Euro, the Macho, and Who Goes to Church: There are two basic reasons for conflict between the United States and the EU or Western Europe, and two that are more suitable for propaganda purposes. The first actual reason is economic competition between the euro and the dollar, which the euro is currently winning. In fact, as of this writing the dollar is weakening against a number of currencies ranging from the Chinese *yuan* to the Canadian “Loonie.” Even supermodels and rap stars prefer their contracts to be in major currencies other than the dollar. But the weak dollar has to do with more than trade deficits and comparative shopping: it threatens United States economic dominance.

As the Iraq War began, Indian scholar N.S. Rajaram noted that controlling Iraq’s oil reserves was only one dimension of American geostrategy:

There is a deeper economic struggle that the United States is waging to preserve its economic supremacy in the world. This now has taken the form of an unseen war between the Euro and the Dollar for which Iraq has become the military beachhead.

Rajaram notes that at different times in history, commodities such as grain or cotton textiles were the accepted medium of world trade. For more than half a century now, the accepted medium has been oil. Thus the country whose currency is used for the international oil trade is ‘in the catbird seat.’ Two historical events ensured that this role was filled by the United States. First, the international Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 established the dollar as the world currency of choice, “virtually replacing gold.” Second, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia in 1945 and they agreed that the U.S. dollar would be used in oil trade. The rest, as they say, is history. Rajaram points out some of the consequences, starting with U.S. ability to run huge deficits at home and in international trade:

While the U.S. printed dollars to meet its fiscal obligations, countries of the world accepted dollar payments for their goods because of the dollar’s value as the currency of choice for oil purchases. As a result, even while the U.S. kept losing its industrial preeminence it managed to retain its economic dominance as the producer of the currency of oil trade. Further, the demand for dollars as the de facto oil currency allowed the U.S. to commit enormous resources (by absorbing deficits) to defense production making it the mightiest military power in history.

In 1999 Iraq agreed to accept payment for its oil in Euros, a decision which was probably unwise as it may have precipitated the Gulf War. Other oil-producing countries are now considering the same move, according to Australian economist Geoffrey Heard. Rajaram says that Iran considered switching; Venezuela “has been cutting out the dollar by bartering oil with several nations;” and Russia is seeking to supply Europe, trading of course in Euros. He emphasizes that the war in Iraq and a threatened war with Iran are economic wars. “Seeing this as a conflict between civilizations serves only to obfuscate the real issue.”

The second of the real reasons for transatlantic conflict is that the continued existence and economic successes of Europe’s social democracies threaten the notion that American-style capitalism is the best and only way for an economic system to operate. Thus conservative writers constantly emphasize any economic flaws or failures in various European countries, usually conflating the problems of one economy to represent all of Europe.

Besides these two actual motivations for economic and ideological rivalry, two clusters of rationalizations to dislike or disregard Europe are used in propaganda. First, Europeans are supposed to have a superior attitude, are too attached to the past, are incapable of decisive action, and their societies are in general decline. Their economies are said to be weak because of burdensome social welfare provisions, unemployment is high, and birth-rates are below replacement levels. The second propaganda reason or set of reasons has to do with religious and ethical differences, suggesting that most Europeans are irreligious and hence less moral than Americans. European ethical principles against capital punishment and corporal punishment of children somehow demonstrate an *inferior* morality to the doctrines of those conservative Christians in the U.S. who support both kinds of punishment.

Both propaganda reasons combine in “The Case against Europe,” by Walter Russell Mead, a well-known writer on foreign affairs. He contrasts “Europeans” (it is not clear whether he means Western Europe, the 27 nations of the EU, or the 728 million people of continental Europe) with “Jacksonian Americans” or populist nationalists. While this latter group may well describe many descendants of the Scots-Irish and those they influenced in settling the South and West, Mead uses the term interchangeably with “Americans.” Also, the “Jacksonians” often seem to be speaking for the author, who does not define them or separate himself from their views. So Mead is contrasting two very ill-defined groups, personalizing 500 million Europeans (or more) as a single-minded “Europe” while hiding his own views under the name of “Jacksonian America.”

The Jacksonians (or Mead) say the United States is a more traditional society than Europe, with most of us believing in “God, the family, the flag and the death penalty [while] Europeans think that anybody who believes all that crap is too stupid to make good decisions.” But this is overgeneralization to the point of caricature. In fact, the various countries of Europe differ a good deal in the degree of their religiosity, insofar as that can be measured by church attendance. They also appear to be as family-minded as Americans are. For example, divorce in Europe is generally rarer and less accessible than in the United States, with longer waiting periods and mandatory counseling. The highest divorce rate in Europe is Russia’s, and it is lower than the United States average. At least 29 American states have divorce rates higher than those of any country in Europe, in most cases much higher.

According to a recent book about marital infidelity across the globe, in largely secular France 3.8 percent of married French men and 2 percent of married French women say they have had an affair during the past year, while the comparable figures for highly religious America are 3.9 percent of the married men and 3.1 percent of the women.

The Mead persona scorns what he considers the pretensions of Europe to play a world role equal to that of the United States, a role he finds unlikely because of their “declining and aging population and an economy likely to grow more slowly than most of the economies of the developing world, to say nothing of the United States.” However, Mead ignores that the EU is larger than the U.S. and contributes more to the world’s GDP. Also, five years after Mead’s scornful assessment, the euro was healthier than the dollar.

Mead says that Europe’s military thinking is quite unrealistic—their welfare and pension costs are so high that Europeans can’t and won’t spend the money for military defense. (It seems they would rather not base their economies on military Keynesianism.) “Europeans think of themselves as mature and evolved,” says Mead. “Jacksonians think of them as yellow.” Also, Jacksonians “don’t trust Europe’s political judgment. Appeasement is its second nature.” With the 70-year-old specter of Neville Chamberlain hovering by, Mead has his mythical European say that after September 11, Americans should deal with the “root causes” of Muslim anger.

Dealing with root causes is what Mead considers to be appeasement. Mead's attitude here resembles the old equivocation between 'understanding' as intellectual analysis and 'understanding' as justification. But are you not better off in any situation by knowing the root causes of other people's attitudes and actions? One could deal with root causes (such as the perennial problem with Israel and the Palestinians) while at the same time pursuing, trying, and punishing criminal members of al Qaeda—they are not exclusive actions.

Maybe some "Jacksonians" believe in this cartoon of Europe, but Walter Russell Mead should know better and has written more objectively elsewhere.

The Battle of Birth Rates: In the conventional wisdom, Europe is doomed because her birth rates over the last 50 years have been declining, in some countries to far below replacement level (considered to be 2.1 births per woman). Some worry about this so-called "fertility trap" although *down* is the direction that the whole world's population should go until we reach a more sustainable number such as three billion inhabitants. As previously mentioned, the European continent is still one of the world's most densely populated places.

The United States fertility rate is higher than that of any country in continental Europe, or of Australia, Canada, or Japan: the U.S. also had a baby boomlet in 2006 due only partly to Hispanic immigration, with the highest number of births in 45 years. Mainstream media tend to regard population growth as a good thing and declines as a bad thing. An AP report says that countries such as Japan and Italy with birth rates at 1.3 (much lower than replacement level) "face future labor shortages and eroding tax bases if they fail to reproduce enough to take care of their aging elders." An article in the *Economist* says that "the combination of low fertility, longer life and mass immigration will put intolerable pressure on public health, pensions, and social services, leading (probably) to upheaval."

These worries seem to be based on a somewhat limited and mechanistic view of the economy, leaving out a number of factors. Each country is viewed as an island, yet world-wide, perhaps half of the planet's people are unemployed or underemployed. While some of the industrialized nations have median ages over 40, the world median is only 28.4 years, and many countries have populations hovering around twenty years old. There are yet other considerations adding complexity to the simple formula that we must have a high birth rate in order to provide workers to support an aging population. For instance, if a country's population is older, there will be fewer children so that less money is required for schools and teachers. If the medical system became more prevention-oriented, if toxic factors in the environment were treated, the population would be healthier and the costs of an aging population would be lower.

Another factor is the continuing rise in productivity due to automation, so that fewer workers may be needed in the future. Thirty or 40 years ago, some economists were concerned about how society would organize itself when automation was more advanced. Some suggested a universal subsistence income not connected with work. One never hears anything about that now. If the economy becomes more steady-state, if people stop over-consumption and waste—which we surely need to do—the economy and its needs for labor will contract along with the population. If jobs were better adapted to people's needs, more people might enter the workforce. For instance, mothers of elementary-school children could work five or six-hour shifts during their children's school hours, while a college student could take a short evening shift from, say, three to nine.

Let's not automatically assume that low birth-rates are a bad thing. They may reflect not only individual prudence but also an unconscious, collective response to needs of the species and planet.

Other U.S. propaganda plays attempt to show that 'Europe' is on its last legs economically and must accept the prescriptions of free trade economists to save it (this despite the abysmal results in many countries that have accepted such prescriptions—see "The Chicago School" in Chapter 11). But different nations in Europe have different economic histories and there is no "one size fits all."

Just before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, economist-columnist Paul Krugman suggested that current differences between the United States and Europe were driven in large part by the fact that the two continents were viewing different news. For instance, coverage of the huge, world-wide, anti-war rallies of February 15, 2003 received scant attention from U.S. media. [The state-wide newspaper here put it on page 15.] Another difference arose because of fuzzy reporting or viewer preconceptions about the Sept. 11 attacks. Krugman says:

Surveys show that a majority of Americans think that some or all of the Sept. 11 hijackers were Iraqi, while many believe that Saddam Hussein was involved in Sept. 11, a claim even the Bush administration has never made. And since many Americans think that the need for a war against Saddam is obvious, they think that Europeans who won't go along are cowards.

These false beliefs fortified many in their resentful response to anti-war protestors, often yelling at them to "Move to France!" and writing letters to the editor that called them cowards.

Some other forms of American hostility towards Europe are so pronounced that they seem deeply rooted in the collective unconscious and individual psychology, whether or not people have any conscious dislike of the EU as an economic competitor. These ideas and attitudes often figure in conspiracy theories with religious undertones, to be discussed later, along with ideologies focused on opposition to the UN, which often interweave with opposition to Europe.

Appeasement and the Appeasement Myth

Bush's dad surrendered to the namby-pamby Euro-view on Saddam, and we still have the Iraq problem. [George W.] Bush should show what strong leadership means and not simply go along with lesser men and women who take no chances and show no initiative.

John Teets, letter to *World Press Review*, October 2001

Appeasement, by one definition, is a policy of conceding to hostile demands in order to gain peace. The term is now used in a pejorative sense—it has had this negative connotation ever since World War II began in 1939 over Hitler's invasion of Poland. The "Political Dictionary" adds the following framing for current use of the word:

[Appeasement's] alleged practitioners are usually held to be willing, in an ignoble or cowardly fashion, to sacrifice other people's territories or rights in an attempt to buy off an aggressor or wrong-doer. Moreover 'appeasement' is supposed never to succeed for long: the aggressor always returns demanding further concessions. And the implication is usually that refusal to 'appease' would, by contrast, have a happy ending as in any morality play

The medieval morality play was a kind of religious drama or melodrama in which Good always overcomes Evil. Its oversimplifications were suited to uneducated peasants who were its intended audience. Current use of the word ‘appeasement’ is similarly oversimplified—we could call it ‘sound-bite history.’

Appeasement was a popular policy with more positive connotations before 1939. This earlier meaning is expressed by Paul Kennedy in *Strategy and Diplomacy* (1983) as follows: appeasement is “the policy of settling international quarrels by admitting and satisfying grievances through rational negotiation and compromise, thereby avoiding the resort to an armed conflict which would be expensive, bloody and possibly dangerous.” Great Britain’s policy toward Germany in the 1920s and until 1938-9 was appeasement in this older sense. The consensus in Great Britain and other countries then was that the Peace Settlement of 1919 had treated the defeated powers too harshly and punitively. It was widely believed that the way to avoid a second world war was for the victors to meet the *reasonably justified grievances* of the losers, including negotiating to end reparations.

When Hitler gained power, many hoped that he would moderate his aggressive positions with more experience in office. People assumed that he was rationally motivated. According to the Political Dictionary, public opinion neither in Great Britain nor France, least of all in the United States, would have favored war over the issues of German rearmament, remilitarization of the Rhineland, and the annexation of Austria. Lest we forget, the dominant mood of the United States during the 1930s was isolationism.

The Munich Pact in 1938 allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia with a large German minority, in exchange for Germany’s promise to make no more territorial demands. When Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned to Britain from this agreement, he received an ecstatic welcome. The policy of keeping the peace had broad public support. Britain was in the midst of economic depression. The country was still war-weary after losing a great many soldiers in World War I only 20 years earlier, and neither Britain nor France was militarily prepared for war. But six months later, Germany seized the rest of Czechoslovakia; six months after that, Nazi troops invaded Poland. Chamberlain declared war.

Historians differ greatly about Chamberlain’s actions at Munich. Some came to regard appeasement as a rational response to a leader (Hitler) who was unpredictable, others that it was implemented too late in the game. Some say that Chamberlain was buying time for military preparations. Some see Chamberlain as a political scapegoat for a general lack of vision that began with the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. But sound-bite historians see Chamberlain in black and white terms almost as the perpetrator of World War II.

Larry Beinhart, author of *Wag the Dog*, says that Americans hold to a simple narrative that appeasing dictators leads to war. This myth is based almost entirely on the Munich treaty, which supposedly led the Fuhrer to believe that the democracies were too weak to oppose him. The story goes that if other countries had stood up to Hitler at the beginning, they would have prevented World War II. And if we stand up to dictators now, we will prevent disasters in the future. It is rather ironic that Americans whose country was isolationist 75 years ago are now so gung-ho to maintain that England and France should have leaped to fight Germany back then. It is almost like a retroactive “Let’s you and him fight.”

The ideological notion currently circulates among some in America that *any* negotiations equal Munich-style appeasement. This train of thought finds diplomacy a waste of time, because you could just act decisively and get problems settled once and for all. (Like Hitler did?) Surely that works if you are the strongest country in the world, and if the quick fix and using force are

among your highest values. And maybe you do not care for those who run other countries. Yet the most difficult negotiations are often the most important ones. Diplomacy *did* finally work with the nuclear-armed and erratic leader of North Korea.

The appeasement myth has been applied to Iran and its ‘dictator’ Ahmadinejad. Beinhart, however, notes a number of muddles or “Fog Facts” in this story. First, the president of Iran is not a dictator: Ahmadinejad does not control Iran’s army or intelligence services, and cannot declare war. Second, the appeasement myth refers specifically to one country’s occupation of another’s territory. That is not happening with Iran, nor did it happen with Iraq just before the Iraq War.

Third, “appeasement” was actually American policy for 50 years, since the United States did not challenge Soviet power over eight countries in Eastern Europe. These Iron Curtain countries were annexed by the Soviets, or controlled through rigged elections, and threatened with military force when necessary. Truman’s containment policy and Nixon’s policy of détente could, in fact, be called appeasement of the U.S.S.R. Beinhart says appeasement worked:

The Soviets did more or less the same. They accepted American hegemony where the American armies had stopped. They vigorously contested any efforts to go beyond that, especially anything that encroached on their sphere of influence. Anything outside those lines—the Third World and the colonies that the Europeans had reoccupied—was up for grabs, and all sorts of proxy wars were fought. But the Big One, a Third World War, was averted.

CHAPTER 7: AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM

There's no such thing as society. There are individual man and women and there are families.

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister

If Ms. Thatcher doesn't believe in the existence of society, then what on earth did she think she was Prime Minister of?

Steve Kangas, political science writer

The Social Contract: In the above quote, Margaret Thatcher seems not to recognize the existence of neighborhoods and other local communities, villages, voluntary organizations, or any sort of cooperative effort, much less a stable national government. The corollary attitude is that there are no social problems, only individual problems. Presumably this includes infrastructure. Are the streets full of potholes? Don't whine about it or ask the city to fix it, fix it yourself! Thatcher's statement was apparently influenced by some version of social contract theory, which has had an enormous effect on Western thinking for 350 years, ever since the writings of Thomas Hobbes.

Old philosophies impel and impede our thinking, whether or not we are the least bit interested in them. One theme of *Models, Myths and Muddles* was that paradigms that were new and useful in the turbulent 17th century are still part of our mental ecosystem. One such idea is the 'social contract,' which the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP) describes as "one of the most dominant theories within moral and political theory throughout the history of the modern West." In fact, feminist philosopher Virginia Held says that "contemporary Western society is in the grip of [social] contractual thinking." So this is definitely one area in which we are still working out 17th century paradigms.

To explain this takes a wee bit of history. In the previous book we skipped over Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), an English philosopher whose *Leviathan* (1651) has greatly influenced political thought. Hobbes gave the first full exposition of social contract theory, and later philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau developed it further.

Hobbesian philosophy may be the most completely materialist of the 17th century—the century that invented the billiard ball universe. As Hobbes said in *Leviathan*, "The universe is corporeal; all that is real is material, and what is not material is not real." In his forties, Hobbes traveled on the continent and mingled with Mersenne, Descartes, Gassendi, and Galileo, who were then the main protagonists of the new 'mechanical philosophy' that developed into modern science. Hobbes wanted to develop a theory that showed human nature was just as explainable by universal law as is the movement of inanimate objects. Hobbes saw human behavior—like everything else—as nothing more than matter in motion. In his mechanistic system, human use of words such as 'good' and 'bad' express only our own, subjective appetites and aversions.

For Hobbes, human beings are complex organic machines operating according to universal laws of human nature. One of these laws is that individuals are exclusively self-interested. For instance, Hobbes believed the only motivation of an adult to care for an infant is to create a strong sense of obligation in the child who was thus helped to survive. Hobbes also assumed that humans, besides being subjective and self-interested, are reasonable creatures. However, their intelligence is only used to figure out the best ways to reach their self-interested goals. The IEP says that in Hobbes's system, "rationality is purely instrumental."

Thus even human beings are like billiard balls, though self-propelled and shrewd, driven by their selfish interests and often colliding.

The traumas of the English Civil War that began in 1642 stimulated Hobbes to set forth his theory of civil government. Hobbes thought of the state as a great monster or artificial man composed of men who have formed a social contract to submit to one central authority who will keep them from each other's throats. In his pessimistic view of the State of Nature, everybody acts in his own self-interest, resources are limited, and no power exists which could force people to cooperate. "In the state of nature profit is the measure of right." Everyone is filled with mistrust. "So long as man is in the condition of mere nature, (which is a condition of war,) as private appetite is the measure of good and evil [sic]." Lacking a central authority, there is a constant "war of all against all" and life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Therefore, all the individuals agree to give enough of their natural right to the sovereign authority so that it can ensure domestic peace and a common defense against enemies.

Hobbes did not maintain that the State of Nature or Social Contract happened literally. Clearly, it would be hard to locate the actual beginning of any given society. The closest that we may come to a literal social contract would be with shipwreck survivors, a new colony, or some post-apocalyptic era where a group of people start out fresh, selecting their leaders and making their own rules. (This is a perennial plot for stories and television programs.) However, even in these cases, people are often constrained by their previous relationships and beliefs.

In the social contract envisioned by Hobbes, the sovereign authority may be a monarch, an aristocracy, or a democracy, which Hobbes preferred in that order. (Europe at the time had little to offer as models for democracy.) Theoretically, the sovereign should not exert authority over citizens except to prevent them from harming each other and to protect the state's cohesiveness. But writing his book during a bloody civil war, Hobbes emphasizes the need for a strong central authority, suggesting that any abuses of power must be accepted as the price of maintaining peace. In other words, in the face of civil strife, Hobbes supported a fairly authoritarian view of the social contract. The IEP says: "Hobbes argues that because men's passions can be expected to overwhelm their reason, the Sovereign must have absolute authority in order for the contract to be successful." After all, anything is better than living in the State of Nature he describes.

Locke and Rousseau each gave a different spin to the social contract. Locke saw the State of Nature as a condition of families, rather than individuals—"conjugal society." It was a relatively peaceful state of liberty but not license. Locke argued that it is to protect their property, including their freedom against enslavement, that men make the social contract. His argument that citizens had the right to revolt against their king greatly influenced Thomas Jefferson and other founders of the United States, while his ideas about property have strongly influenced classical economics and libertarians.

Rousseau, on the other hand, saw private property in quite a different light. He believed the State of Nature was a peaceful and cooperative time until the invention of private property began inequality, competition, and greed. Rousseau says the "naturalized social contract" is an agreement that purports to guarantee equality but in reality is meant to institutionalize the inequalities introduced by private property. There needs to be a better contract, and in *The Social Contract* (1762) Rousseau insists that the only justified authority is agreements and covenants among free and equal people. This requires a direct form of democracy—not representative democracy. But this true democracy is possible only in fairly small states.

In the late 20th century, arguments by feminists such as Carol Pateman and Virginia Held attacked the basic elements of contract theory. They said the supposedly universal person at the

heart of contract theory was actually a specific sort of person, a man whose contract with other men contains a previous agreement to dominate women. He is a radically individual, socially isolated, totally rational Economic Man who does not represent children and those who care for them (usually women) and was evidently never a child himself. They note that certain kinds of dependence are necessary before someone can turn into the kind of person who is capable of entering into contracts.

Charles Mills further argues in *The Racial Contract* that a racial agreement precedes the social contract in Western society. It determines who counts as a full moral and political person and thus who can enter into the social contract. In his view, this is not a hypothetical contract but a real series of contracts made in history. The IEP summarizes Mills on how social contract thinking influences today's views on race:

One of the reasons that we continue to think that the problem of race in the West is relatively superficial... is the hold that the idealized social contract has on our imagination. We continue to believe, according to Mills, in the myths that social contract theory tells us—that everyone is equal, that all will be treated the same before the law, that the Founding Fathers were committed to equality and freedom for all persons, etc. One of the very purposes of social contract theory, then, is to keep hidden from view the true political reality—some persons will be accorded the rights and freedoms of full persons, and the rest will be treated as sub-persons.

Philosopher Mary Midgley sees the social contract theory that Hobbes first introduced as one of several Enlightenment ideas that limit us today. She notes that older myths “are often given a reductive and technological form. [For instance] social atomism strikes us as scientific.” She says that we continue to use the social-contract image of citizens as separate, autonomous individuals, but have updated them to a “neo-Darwinist” struggle for survival.

Take these arguments back to the touchstone of your own personal experience. Are the people in your town, your neighborhood, your workplace, your church, your family engaged in a constant competition with each other? I hope not. The people I know are quite different. In fact, the only time we may see conditions approaching this anywhere in the world are during disasters, famines, wars, and in concentration camps or gulags.

The Wild West: Supported by images from almost a century of classic Western films, Americans tend to have a sense of themselves as rugged individualists and self-reliant pioneers. Of course the actual frontier closed officially in 1890 and by now the vast majority of us (69 percent) live in towns with a population of 50,000 or more.

However in the case of American pioneers, those quintessential rugged individualists were aided by a strong community spirit. Historian John Mack Farragher describes life on the frontier as a community experience:

Sharing work with neighbors at cabin raisings, log rollings, hayings, husking, butchering, harvesting or threshing were all traditionally considered communal affairs. A “borrowing system” allowed scarce tools, labor and products to circulate for the benefit of all. [One pioneer told prospective settlers] “Your wheel-barrow, your shovels, your utensils of all sorts, belong not to yourself, but to the public who do not think it necessary even to ask a loan, but take it for granted.”

Development of the West also required the American government. Steve Kangas points out at least three ways in which the U.S. government helped settle the West. First, the government made massive land purchases such as \$15 million for the Louisiana Purchase, \$25 million for

Texas/California, and \$7 million for Alaska. Then the government sold this land below cost to pioneers according to the Preemption Act of 1841, the Graduation Act of 1854, and the Homestead Act of 1862.

Second, it was the U.S. Army, not the rifles of pioneer families, which conquered the Native Americans and made the country safe for settler families. Whatever you think of that genocidal effort, it was not accomplished by lone individuals. Law enforcement was important to tone down the gun-fighting and duels common at the outposts of settlement. The Sheriff brought law and order and a chance for communities to grow.

Third, the federal government had a crucial role in development. For instance, in the drive to connect the Great Lakes to the Eastern seaboard by building canals, the government funded or financially guaranteed three-fourths of the \$200 million project. It gave each state 30,000 acres of land to build agricultural colleges and provided mail services such as the Pony Express.

But there is an irony in some modern Western attitudes. Kangas says:

The West has also enjoyed a long tradition of anti-government sentiments....The story of the Montana Freemen is especially revealing. This is the radical anti-government militia that kept the FBI at bay in an armed stand-off that lasted for months. It turns out that they had stalled foreclosure on their farms for ten years by accepting \$676,082 in government farming subsidies and loans....[quoting William Kevin Burke] "A well-worn joke describes the typical westerner's attitude toward the federal government as 'go away and give me more money.'"

Finally, according to Kangas "It was not the small pioneer, but the major corporation that settled the West, often with vast help from the government." By 1900, the government had distributed a billion acres, but by some estimates, only one out of nine acres went to the small pioneers. Railroad companies received more than homesteaders did, and federal giveaways created the major logging companies.

Thus we perpetuate memes that celebrate heroic frontier individuals, sometimes even outlaws such as Billy the Kid or Jesse James, ignoring the realities then and now. The mythology of the go-it-alone hero or the self-sufficient little pioneer family fits easily into current, conservative political ideologies. Another enduring myth is built on the stories published by Horatio Alger in the 1870s through 1890s. This best-selling author of 'penny dreadfuls' wrote over 100 tales based on the same formula—hard-working, poor boy makes good.

The Horatio Alger stories struck a chord and sold over 20 million copies despite the fact they were very badly written. The moral of the Ragged Dick, Luck and Pluck, and Tattered Tom series is that honesty, optimism, perseverance, and hard work will win out every time. People forget that in almost all of Alger's stories the young hero gets a lucky break that propels him to success. While deserving, the plucky lad does not lift himself up entirely by his own bootstraps. Yet the memes persist. Exaggerated notions of social mobility from back in the Gilded Age still give hope to some people today in the same way that sweepstakes and lotteries do.

The positive effect of such mythologies is to encourage self-reliance, optimism, and an enterprising spirit, as in do-it-yourself projects, invention, modern homesteading, and creative plans for self-employment or small businesses. But as the belief diverges more and more from the reality of an urban population dependent on corporate employment, it can lead to projection, blame, and scapegoating. Since our hard work does not lead to riches or economic security, somebody must be holding us back, free riders and cheats. They won't work; they are asking for special handouts; they have a victim mentality or a sense of entitlement; they are pulling us down

and acting like parasites on us—we who are the hard-working, self-reliant ones. Thus the ideal of self-reliance becomes more a cause of division than motivation for self-achievement.

It seems to be a rule of human nature that it is easier to blame down than up.

The contrary notion that we are all the victims of society is also flawed, since together we *are* society. While not everything is a problem for individuals to solve, neither is everything a social problem. There needs to be some kind of balance between extreme individualism and pinning the blame on a vague, undefined whole.

The Classless Society: In the latter part of the nineteenth century a persistent myth arose that the United States is a classless society, where everyone has an equal chance to make good and even to become a millionaire. People actually believed the Horatio Alger fantasies and some still do. One may wonder, however, just when it was the United States became classless. It was certainly not so in colonial times, when half to three-quarters of all European immigrants to the colonies came here as indentured servants. In their history of U.S. labor, Priscilla Murolo and A. B. Chitty start at the very beginning, when bondage of one sort or another was the bedrock of colonial labor.

Many indentured workers voluntarily chose this way to work off their passage to the New World, which they figured had to be better than the grinding poverty of the old one. Other indentured were debtors or convicts, political prisoners convicted in religious persecutions, or poor children kidnapped from the streets of British seaports. According to one source, one-fourth of British immigrants were convicts, most of them young males, poor and unskilled, convicted of grand larceny. A typical term of indenture was three to five years, but often much longer especially for convicts or children. While under contract a person was not allowed to marry or to have children. Time might be added on as punishment for breaking a law, running away, or in the case of females, becoming pregnant. For the duration, they were their master's property, and most worked at hard labor.

All the indentured except convicts and debtors received "freedom dues" at the end of their term of work, likely a small farm of 20-25 acres, a cow, a year's worth of corn, arms, and new clothes. Most people preferred self-employment on the family farm or working at a craft to working for wages. However, according to Murolo and Chitty, historical records show that only about one-fifth of indentured workers between 1607 and 1776 went on to become self-employed. Almost half died during their indenture and a third became wage workers or paupers, or returned to the country they came from.

One type of indentured servant was the redemptioner from Ireland or Germany, lured by recruiters who described America as a paradise. Recruiters promised redemptioners good credit terms for their passage if they could not pay in full. However, during the voyage the ship's captain added so many charges for duties and provisions that passengers ended up deeply in debt. As they docked in America, entrepreneurs boarded the ship to sign up the whole family with indenture contracts. Gottlieb Mittelberger was on one such ship with Germans sailing to Philadelphia in 1750. He was fortunate to have paid his passage in full, but published a heart-rending account of the voyage on which many passengers died. He described their despair at finally reaching the supposed paradise only to become indentured servants.

When the American Revolution began, 90 percent of society was poor, politically powerless, or both. This disenfranchised majority was comprised of slaves, indentured servants, apprentices, women of all stations, and free men who did not own property. Murolo and Chitty say that independence was generally more popular with the laboring and middle classes than with the

elite, and the laboring class ended up doing most of the fighting. Some states had a military draft but the draftee could send someone else in his stead, a man bound to him or someone he paid to fight. By the end of the war, a majority of soldiers were common laborers, landless farmers, apprentices, slaves, and indentured servants. There were some all-black regiments but most units were integrated, including some Indian fighters and a few women who fought in disguise.

Soon after the war ended there was a debt crisis. Merchants eager to reestablish trade with England glutted the market with imports, and the trade imbalance led to a chain of debt collections from small inland shopkeepers and farmers. Many family farms faced bankruptcy due to the economic depression and excessive land taxation. In 1786 and 1787 farmers asked state legislatures to lower taxes on farmland and to end imprisonment for debt. A few legislatures attempted to ease the farmers' plight by printing paper money and other actions, but most, dominated by the propertied class, refused to pass such measures.

The crisis pitted those who had fought the war against those who had financed it: New England merchants, shippers, and creditors. The latter feared that demands for paper money and reduced state taxes would depreciate the currency and financially drain men of wealth who had lent money to the war effort. Political leaders such as Samuel Adams saw the farmers' demands as anarchy and denounced them as traitors.

After trying in vain to use reform measures and peaceful protest, the back country then went into action. By the end of 1786, about one-fourth of the 'fighting men' in rural areas turned up as rebels in every state except Rhode Island. Armed farmers, mostly war vets such as those led by Daniel Shays, a captain during the Revolution, seized courthouses to stop debtors' trials. However, Shays' Rebellion and other rural uprisings were turned back in several states by private militias hired by merchants or planters, and the new Constitution made it possible to form a national army to suppress the rebellion.

Fear of Shays' Rebellion (and other farmers' revolts) unified those who supported a stronger national government at the 1787 Convention. Bruce Gagnon quotes one man of property:

The new Constitution is received with great joy by all the commercial parts of the community. The people of Boston are in raptures with it as it is...and all men of considerable property, the clergy, the lawyers, including the judges of the court, and all the officers of the late army advocated the most vigorous government.

Historians note that the U.S. Constitution is a remarkably idealistic document considering that it was produced by slave-holding planters. However, one could also look at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 in terms of a consolidation of power by the wealthy class in the wake of these farmer's rebellions. The closed-door sessions were expected to amend the Articles of Confederation, not to write a new Constitution. The added Federal powers meant that states could not enact measures that indebted farmers wanted. Ratification of the Constitution barely won in many states, with small farmers the strongest in opposition.

Everybody is Middle-Class: In a variation of the idea that we live in a classless society, most Americans appear to consider themselves as part of one big socioeconomic class. According to the National Center for Opinion Research, in 2000 the great majority of Americans claimed to be middle class, including 36 percent of those earning less than \$15,000 yearly, 71 percent of those earning more than \$75,000, and 16.8 percent of those earning over \$110,000. Instead of a bell-shaped curve, we then have the shape of a mesa, with a few poor at one end and a few very rich at the other. Yet although the United States is said to be a middle class country, and politicians

always speak to the concerns of middle class voters, there is no accepted definition of what the middle class actually is.

We could define middle class by income levels, lifestyle, status, education, attitudes, or some complicated combination of these. One common formula takes the median household income—\$46,326 in 2005—and defines as middle class those households between 80 percent and 120 percent of that median. That would give us a middle class with incomes between about \$37,000 and \$55,600. On the other hand, the non-partisan Drum Major Institute for Public Policy reports that the conventional meaning of middle class refers to families with incomes ranging between \$25,000 and \$100,000 a year.

Sociologist Katherine Newman has drawn attention to what she calls “The Missing Class” of people who are neither officially poor nor comfortably middle-class. They have household incomes between \$20,000 and 40,000 a year for a family of four. There are twice as many people in this group of the “near poor” or “working poor” as there are people living under the poverty line: 57 million of the missing class. Newman describes them as follows:

It’s a fragile existence because they don’t really have the security that comes with owning a home, for example, or having a savings account, or any of the other buffers the rest of us have—and they don’t qualify for federal benefits for the most part. They can’t get Medicaid because they’re too wealthy for that. They don’t get food stamps. They don’t get subsidized housing, for the most part. So we don’t really think about them very much. We don’t even track how many of them we have.

This class of the working poor is missing from the consciousness of both Republicans and Democrats, says Newman, yet Washington has a large impact on their lives. For instance, there is a paradoxical effect between welfare reform which sent many parents into the labor market, while No Child Left Behind created a high-stakes testing system that depends in many ways on parents who have time to read to their kids, look over their homework, and go to school conferences and events. Concerning welfare reform, Newman says it “won’t receive its real test until we see a big recession and we can see what happens to people without any safety net beneath that.” (The US was headed for “a big recession” soon after she spoke.)

Newman has particular concerns about the health of people in this missing class. She says that like the poor, they tend to live in older places with serious problems of pest infestation leading to childhood asthma and high rates of lead exposure. Their neighborhoods have fewer consumer options, less access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Basically, she says, “the poor and the near poor are soaked—everything they buy is more expensive than it should be. It’s like a huge tax on them.”

A documentary shown on PBS suggests that social class is the major determinant of health disparities. For instance, whether your parents owned their own home is a “great predictor” of later immunity. Also, the ability to control one’s living and working conditions protects one from high blood pressure and other ailments. Many of the working poor and near poor work in high demand, low control jobs that are actually more stressful than those of the stereotypical ulcer-ridden executive. Racial discrimination is an added factor that leads to excess deaths. The documentary says that public health improved over the last century because of social reforms more than from medical innovations.

Contrary to popular myth, says Michael Parenti, “The U.S.A. has the smallest—not the largest—middle-income stratum of the industrial world.” The average income is rising slightly but this is because of longer working hours. Nor is it easy to lift oneself up by the bootstraps. A large research study led by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that in the U.S., only six percent of

children from families in the lowest fifth of income ever move into the top fifth, and 42 percent of them stay in the bottom fifth. So much for Horatio Alger. The study found that even in class-bound Britain, children born poor have a better chance of moving up the income ladder than they do here. The study's author, Julia B. Isaacs, noted that the personal income of American men has been quite flat for three decades, and that most of the financial gains made by white families are due to the increasing numbers of white women who work outside the home.

In Britain, unlike the United States, almost two-thirds identify themselves as working class. Are middle class and working class the same thing? Or do these designations have different connotations and consequences? In any case, let us stop using the term "lower-class" to refer to either working class or poor people. It feeds into Social Darwinist ideologies that assume that those with more money are by nature more meritorious or fit for survival.

Dittoheads

"It takes two to lie—one to lie and one to listen."

Homer Simpson (cartoonist Matt Groening)

For two decades, Rush Limbaugh and his imitators have expressed a Social Darwinist version of American individualism. Part of Limbaugh's popularity may be due to the fact that unlike previous demagogues such as Father Coughlin or Joe McCarthy, he does not just rant but uses humor (of a mean-spirited, abusive sort). While reflecting the latent attitudes of his audience, Limbaugh has also given new words to their feelings of dissatisfaction, helping them direct blame down rather than up. These ideas have the automatic credibility of constant repetition, and continually reappear in the letters columns of local newspapers and on blogs.

In his 1992 book *The Way Things Ought to Be*, Limbaugh mentions one of his most popular radio monologues. Like most of his programs, this one features exaggerations, constant assertions without evidence, misstatements, lack of definitions, oversimplifications, and other popular fallacies and tricky argumentative devices that any novice critical thinker would spot. The monologue scapegoats poor people. Here are excerpts with my comments:

"The middle class, coupled with the rich, make this country work. [By 'Make this country work' he means that they form a larger part of the money economy. One could also say that the unpaid work of family members especially women in the home 'makes this country work.' Or that neighborliness, charities, civility, and cooperation make this country work.] *Now, what's slowing this country down? The poor.* [Does the word 'poor' include the working poor? the elderly poor? the disabled? Does it really mean 'welfare,' that is, women and their children on AFDC? Or is it a code word for black people and other minorities who are disproportionately poor?] *The poor and the lower classes of this country have gotten a free ride since the Great Depression when it became noble to be poor.* [Of what does this 'free ride' consist?]

"And do the poor pay anything back? [If he includes the working poor, they most certainly do, by contributing their labor for a minimum of recompense.] Do they pay any taxes? No. They don't pay a thing. [This statement is false. The argument always assumes that income taxes are the only taxes. And, as it happens, a working person or a couple without children in the home may pay income taxes even though they are living well below federal poverty guidelines. However, there are other taxes that are quite regressive and affect the poor more than the rich. Perhaps the most important of these is the payroll tax (FICA).

Warren Buffet, now the richest man in the world according to Forbes, in testimony before the US Senate Finance Committee proposed higher taxes on the wealthy in order to reduce the

burden of payroll taxes on working people. He pointed out that three of every four Americans pay more in FICA than they do to IRS. Obviously, Buffet was not speaking for his class, the super-rich, many of whom are quite comfortable with policies that move the tax burden from the richest to the working class.

Other regressive taxes are state and local sales taxes, especially those applied to food. People who rent rather than own their houses pay property taxes indirectly, since the landlord adds that expense to the rent. So the poor, and especially the working poor, do pay taxes. Illegal immigrants also pay them. While we're on the subject of taxes, an international group of tax experts and economists called Tax Justice Network reported that the world's rich are hiding \$11.5 trillion in tax havens. Normally these assets would provide income of about \$860 billion annually, with consequent taxes of several hundred billion dollars.

Limbaugh continues: *"The poor in this country have an average of three television sets in their houses. Let's go get two of them. The poor in this country all have cars. Let's repossess them.* [Later in the program Limbaugh said he was joking about taxing poor people. However, he does not show any evidence to back up his assertions about the material possessions of 'the poor'. Possibly some of his audience noted a decade later that many poor people in New Orleans were unable to evacuate the city as Katrina approached because neither they nor their friends and neighbors owned cars.]

"We need to encourage people to contribute to the economy, not to sit around basking in self-pity....The American middle class is just plain tired and worn out. They get blamed for everything in this country." [Just who is basking in self-pity here? Exactly what is it that the middle class gets blamed for? And who are the middle class?]

Perhaps the middle class is not feeling blame so much as anxiety. The working class or middle class people who respond to Limbaugh's messages know intuitively that they are falling behind economically, even if the media has not given them the facts and figures. Teresa Brennan points out that "by 1994 or 1995, the bottom 70 percent of Australia, Canada, Sweden and the United States were earning less than they were in 1974 or 1975. Meanwhile, the top 30 percent were earning more." Brennan says similar drops in real income for the majority of people occurred in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Italy, and Japan.

Teresa Brennan ascribes this trend of growing income stagnation and inequality to economic globalization and says:

The reduction in concern for the disadvantaged, apparent in the extent to which direct contributions to charities have been reduced as well as in the popularity of new right ideologies and the so-called third way [Clinton and Blair], reflects the rise of pure self-interest as the factor determining outlook on behavior. But this self-interest in turn results from an economic climate in which one can take nothing for granted: one's survival is one's own concern.

The middle class white males who presumably comprise most of Limbaugh's audience have felt the pinch of stagnating wages since the 1970s. They may well resent the fact that their wives have to work in order to maintain the same living standard previously attained with one worker in the family during the 1950s. However, projecting their insecurities and dissatisfactions onto the poor or minorities does not make logical sense, besides which it is a dangerous habit. This is exactly what Hitler encouraged in a Germany badly affected by the 1930s worldwide depression. The scapegoat group is different, but the mechanism is just the same: In fear for your job or your small business, lash out at your neighbor who is in an even weaker position than you are.

Instead of focusing scorn on the disadvantaged groups at the bottom, an individual could look upwards on the income ladder. Michael Parenti says that the United States leads other nations in the number of managers per employees with its “top-heavy bloated corporate bureaucracies.” America is also first in CEO salaries. Chief executives here receive two to six times more than do CEOs abroad.

Entitlement: Some years ago, when my small city had only one central post office, the parking lot was always quite crowded. One day a young woman was walking through the lot when a car trying to pull out of its parking slot almost hit her. The woman’s first indignant words were, “I’m an American citizen!” Nothing indicated that the car’s driver was anything but an American citizen too, and I was struck by her sense of entitlement, that American citizens should be able to walk behind parked cars without fear that they might start to move.

The word ‘entitlement’ has connotations of demands for special treatment. For instance, in this morning’s paper, a letter writer claims that illegal immigrants “seem to feel that they are entitled to special treatment” (but without giving any specific examples of this). ‘Entitlement’ is commonly used by political conservatives to refer to programs that help people who are poor, elderly, or disabled. This term is used even for those programs such as Social Security to which the intended beneficiary has made regular payments while assuming that he or she was investing in a form of social insurance.

People who try to get something for nothing—free riders—push our tribal buttons. However, whenever I personally run across an attitude of entitlement (or arrogance, self-importance, rudeness, hauteur, condescension, grabbing a parking space from the person who staked it out, cutting ahead in line or jumping turns at a 4-way stop) the person exhibiting it is most often a white person who appears to be in comfortable circumstances.

U.S. conservatives who attack “entitlement programs” today were attacking ‘welfare’ in the 1990s. Aid to Families of Dependent Children or AFDC was the prime target of those like Limbaugh who characterized poor people as parasites and leeches, and they successfully dismantled it in 1996. Theresa Brennan in *Globalization and Its Terrors* says that the new self-interest that arises from job insecurity and reduced living standards is understandable, but a real casualty in more than one country is the next generation, that is, children and their mothers. People seem to forget welfare was ‘reformed’ during the Clinton administration, and they cling to it as a hot-button issue near and dear to their hearts, a favorite frame they can use now against illegal immigrants. But now, in a severe recession with high unemployment, the word ‘welfare’ can also include unemployment compensation, Medicaid, and even Social Security.

Faux Individualism: Advertisers have convinced many of us that we express ourselves through what we buy and how we display ourselves. No matter how commercial the pressures, advertisers manage to frame the result as self-expression, in glossy magazines that have more ads than articles. Thirty kinds of cereal sit on the shelf, all basically de-germinated grains and sugar, but you can choose among them, and that consumer choice is constantly touted as part of the American Way of freedom. Another way to celebrate your freedom and individuality is to drive a truck or SUV that is the next thing to being a tank. These monsters appear on the urban streets usually carrying one human being and no loads in back. Is it my imagination, or are the drivers of these mastodons more likely than others to hog the road, ignore pedestrians, and parallel park two feet from the curb so that two-lane street becomes one-lane?

The Lone Star State of Texas is one of the bastions of this freedom to buy gas-guzzlers. Texan fondness for all things big (supernormal stimuli) means they buy more big pickups and

SUVs than anybody else. One Texan's theory is, "The larger the car, the bigger you feel." Other, more limited members of the animal kingdom who do not have our technology must make do with bristling their hair, puffing out their throats, or standing up high on their front legs to make such a statement.

With 19 coal-burning power plants, the most refineries, the largest petrochemical industry in the nation, and those big vehicles, Texas is the largest carbon polluter in the United States and would rank seventh in the world if it were a country, according to an AP article. But Texans aren't worried. On a Pew Research poll in 2007, only four percent of Texans mentioned the environment as a top concern, compared to slightly less than half of Americans in general. The state's Republican leaders refuse to make emissions reduction one of their priorities.

Or we can express ourselves through our bad habits. One early success of the 20th century field of public relations was the "Torches of Liberty," a group of New York debutantes who marched down Fifth Avenue lighting up and smoking cigarettes in the 1929 Easter Parade. Mark Dowie says, "It was the first time in the memory of most Americans that any woman who wasn't a prostitute had been seen smoking in public." This event, paid for by the American Tobacco Company, broke the taboo against women smoking and may also have launched the PR industry.

Today, cigarette producers continue to link the right to smoke with feminism, as in the ads that say, "You've come a long way, Baby." Women now have the right to develop emphysema and lung cancer just like men do. We women have the right to partake in all the worst aspects of male-dominated society, but we need to look at who is selling what and why.

By trying to reach the group ideal of tough or cool, by consumer choice, aggressiveness, self-indulgence, rudeness, asserting one's self over the community—in such ways people convince themselves they are expressing their individualism. Much of this behavior was analyzed a century ago by Thorsten Veblen, an original American economist ahead of his time, who invented the term "conspicuous consumption." His main work was *Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1899. What was true of the rich in the Gilded Age is now true of a much wider swath of the population, thanks to advertising.

The Nanny State

These people are hyper risk averse.

David Harsanyi, *Nanny State: How food fascists, teetotaling do-gooders, priggish moralists, and other boneheaded bureaucrats are turning America into a nation of children*, 2007

The derogatory term "nanny state" usually refers to excessive government regulation that restricts individual freedoms. But libertarians, conservatives, and liberals interpret the term in several different ways. Libertarians such as Harsanyi object to regulations that attempt to protect people against themselves, such as smoking bans, city regulation of food portions and unhealthy ingredients like trans fats, skateboarding bans, taxes on junk food, bans on recreational drug use, mandating motorcycle helmets and seat belts, and other rules they see as taking away people's right to make their own decisions.

Most of these regulations begin at the local level. An example comes from my own city where a couple years ago several prominent animal lovers persuaded the city council to regulate pets. Concerned that cats are sometimes run over by cars and sometimes injured in fights with other cats, the law now reads that to appear in public, cats must be on a leash. However, cats are notoriously hard to leash. Several dozen cats live on my street, and I have yet to see one of them—or cats anywhere in the city—on a leash.

Conservatives accuse liberals of nannyism, and some see political correctness and gun control as nanny-state issues. However, another type of nannyism results when social conservatives try to legislate morality. For instance, my state has both dry and wet counties. People who live in dry counties drink just as much but probably cause more accidents driving back home from the wet county. Two major issues of the Christian Right—outlawing abortion and gay marriage—are attempts to limit people’s choices. Harsanyi notes that the Bush administration was reaching out to social conservatives when his new Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez made it a top priority to go after porn in a post 9/11 world.

A third view of the nanny state comes from political conservatives who regard any restriction on business such as environmental or consumer safety regulations, as well as social welfare programs, as part of the nanny state. On the other hand, economist Dean Baker describes how government’s heavy-handed interventions in the economy are mainly for the benefit of those who are already wealthy. Baker intends to destroy the myth that liberals are for big government and conservatives favor the free market.

Obviously, the notion of the nanny state can be seen through a number of filters—at least four of them—and it would help if anyone who uses the term would define what he or she means by it.

Individual Rights: There is nannyism and then there is tyranny. A positive expression of American individualism, a trait for which we have been known across the world (although the love of freedom is not limited to Americans) is resistance to tyranny or attempted tyranny by government and other powerful entities. Such resistance is in fact how our nation began. Here is one recent example of American resistance to tyranny that the mass media have ignored. It regards the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) that was authorized under the umbrella of homeland security and first made public by the USDA in 2005 with virtually no public comment.

NAIS would require every farm animal in the country, every pet chicken, pony, or rabbit to get chipped with its own number and GPS tracking mechanism to go in a federal database. NAIS requires animal owners to report every “event” in each animal’s life including sales, deaths, and taking it off the premises, for instance to the vet or judging at a county fair. Owners must register their premises and pay fees for the privilege of doing all this, subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 for noncompliance with any of this program with its costs in fees, tags, and computer equipment.

The program was supposed to become mandatory in January, 2009 but too many people got wind of it first. A Texas newsletter, *The Hightower Lowdown*, says:

Quicker and hotter than a prairie fire, word of this corporate-driven, bureaucratic monstrosity spread through the countryside, and NAIS instantaneously became the most hated initiative in rural America. Meetings were held, rallies were organized, research was done, websites sprang up, blogs raged, Paul Reveres rode, groups formed, lawyers leapt into action—and the rebellion was on!

According to *Lowdown* editors Jim Hightower and Phillip Frazer, a private consortium of corporate agriculture and promoters of surveillance technologies (chip companies and computer tracking programs) with the acronym NIAA conceived the plan and wrote the USDA proposal. Obviously, they form a powerful lobby. Industrialized meat producers would benefit in several ways, starting with a loophole in the regulations that allows a large operation such as Cargill or Tyson, “a vertically integrated, birth-to-death factory system with thousands of animals,” to use a single lot number to cover the entire flock or herd. Besides that, such factories are already

computerized. They would not mind at all driving those small, independent competitors out of business. And an animal-tracking system would look—on the surface—like a cleanup of the meat industry, assuring export customers in Japan and Europe.

However, the *Lowdown* editors say that NAIS would not affect the source of common meat-borne diseases such as E-coli, salmonella, listeria, and mad cow which result from unhealthy practices in the meat industry and from how the carcass is treated after slaughter, which is when most spoilage occurs.

The USDA backed down and made the federal program voluntary, but is encouraging state legislatures to require participation. Indiana, Kentucky, and Wisconsin have already complied. However, grassroots opposition has forced legislators in 13 states either to drop proposed legislation or to introduce legislation rejecting the plan. This strong, widespread resistance to an absurd program (*Lowdown* describes it as “Animal Farm meets the Marx Brothers”) continues into 2011 as the USDA attempts various stratagems to circumvent the resistance.

CHAPTER 8: LEFT TO RIGHT AND ROUNDABOUT

Conservative, n.: A statesman enamored of existing evils, as opposed to a Liberal, who wants to replace them with new ones.

Politics, n.: A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage.

Ambrose Bierce, 1842-1914, *The Devil's Dictionary*

Political idea-systems are ideology type C—programs for action. However, they are often based on less conscious, conventional wisdom (ideology type B). Individual political beliefs may or may not fit exactly into the frame of a political party. Thus we have the ‘independent’ and the ‘undecided voter’ along with the no-voter.

Politics in the United States today is so caught up in partisan dualism that it might help us here to reframe the whole field. People commonly think of politics as a straight line from one extreme to another, from Far Left to Far Right with a big mass of moderates or Independents in the middle. However, in some ways the range of political ideas resembles a *circle*. At the circle's lowest point or nadir, the totalitarian right meets the totalitarian left where in both cases, the government is paramount. (The former Soviet Union was neither socialist nor communist but a dictatorship run by an elite.) Opposite this, at the zenith, the left anarchist has some resemblances to the right libertarian where in both cases the individual is paramount. There are also Greens, who like to think of themselves as neither right nor left.

Political discussion in the United States is limited not only by this straight-line dualism, but also by clever framing and repetition over recent decades which has moved the entire linear scale to the right. For instance, we describe as ‘conservatives’ certain ultraconservative, reactionary, or Radical Right elements in the Republican Party—some of which were part of the Democratic Party 40 years ago—which are not ‘conservative’ by any standard definitions. Meanwhile former moderates are now called liberals; and liberals are called leftists. Real leftists, whom I would define as anti-capitalist, are off the media scale. Liberals, on the other hand, would keep the capitalist system but regulate it. Leftists and liberals should not be merged in our thinking.

Not only are real leftists left out of the current dialogue, so too is the fact that a number of distinct ideologies exist on the Left, some of which oppose each other. ‘Leftists’ might be socialists, communists, or anarchists, and there are different forms of socialism and especially of anarchism. Many public intellectuals in the United States actually are leftists of one sort or another. Noam Chomsky is the most prominent of these, being internationally known both for his linguistic theories and his political analysis. However Chomsky, to my knowledge, has never been interviewed on U.S. network television, nor is he ever alluded to in the daily press. The only exception may have been when Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, displayed a book by Chomsky while Chavez occupied the podium at the United Nations. Other leftists are similarly ignored by the mass media, no matter what their credentials.

By effectively silencing actual leftists and thus taking them out of the left-right spectrum, commentators can refer to liberals and even centrists as ‘leftists’. Meanwhile, the center and moderates disappear, so we have two wings but no chicken in the middle.

Defining each other: After all the polarization and propagandizing, conservatives and liberals may not see each other clearly. One website that intends to remedy this confusion only

adds to it: “Political Ideology Definitions” oversimplifies by equating Left or Leftist with liberal, and Right or Rightist with conservative. Then it roughly equates Left and Right with Democrats and Republicans. Although conventional wisdom, this either/or construction is not accurate. It fails to take into account that instead of a coalition government as in some nations, we in the United States have coalition parties, which are often very “broad tents” indeed. The site fails to recognize that the current Republican Party includes four distinct strands working together in one party coalition: fiscal conservatives, social conservatives, neoconservatives (hawks, nationalists), and libertarians. Similarly, those who vote Democratic may also emphasize different things: some want to revive the New Deal; others care more about constitutional rights or individual freedoms (left libertarians); still others are most concerned with racial and gender inequalities or with environmental problems. When there are unpopular wars as in Vietnam or the Iraq occupation, more Democrats than Republicans are likely to want to withdraw from it.

The Political Ideology site shows its conservative bias by characterizing liberals as wanting to increase taxes. But does anyone really want to raise taxes for the sake of raising them? Of course the issue is what kind of taxes, how progressive, and for what purposes? For instance, a true fiscal conservative might prefer to raise taxes rather than have the country go into unprecedented debt. Surveys show that a majority of Americans would accept a small tax for the purpose of funding renewable energies. The website also says liberals believe “government needs to protect people from themselves” (the nanny-state) while conservatives believe “people should be responsible and be held accountable for their own actions.” However this doesn’t get into specifics and it ignores many areas in which social conservatives would make decisions for individuals, as in gay marriage, marijuana use, or end-of-life issues. It also assumes that a level playing field already exists in the economy and before the law.

Liberals too may characterize all conservatives in terms of neoconservatives, social conservatives, and/or the Radical Right without recognizing the more moderate and responsible strains of conservatism (currently eclipsed). An argument can be made that it is good to have these two different approaches, with one party always acting as “Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition.” But this assumes that each party has an identifiable position different from the other, and that it is not so obsessed with winning elections that it dilutes its message until it is unrecognizable or manipulates the public with inconsequential issues and smear campaigns. It also assumes that two parties are always better than three or half-a-dozen.

The main dance step for political candidates is to move to the legendary center which itself keeps moving further right, at least in public perception. This perception is due in large part to the preponderance of conservative opinion among newspaper columnists and editorialists, on talk radio, and television commentary.

Jeff Cohen of Independent Media, Ithaca College notes how a *New York Times* headline totally misrepresented the article beneath it, in which a dozen public opinion polls over a period of five to seven years showed that the opinion trend is leftward on virtually all issues. For instance, on this: “The government is spending too much for national defense and military purposes,” opinion went from 19 percent in February 2001 to 44 percent in February 2008. The headline said: “Americans Move to the Middle.” Cohen says that many establishment pundits cherish a myth “that most Americans perpetually and happily find their way to the safe center of American politics.” In the long term, however, trends in opinion are usually leftward, and Cohen says this is documented by a number of studies.

Blue plus Red Makes Purple: During and after the 2004 presidential election, U.S. media analyzed the vote in terms of ‘Blue’ (liberal) and ‘Red’ (conservative) states. These designations reflected the polarized culture wars as well as traditional sectionalism, but this analysis neglected three subtleties:

First, it was harder to see the polarization on maps that showed the 2004 popular vote as shades of purple. The dualistic blue/red analysis greatly accentuated the differences between states and between voting positions. Thus it emphasized polarization. Second, each state (with one or two exceptions) contained counties of both colors. Very often a state’s urban counties voted blue while more rural counties voted red unless they had large black or Latino populations. The reason whole states appeared as one color or the other is because of the American ‘winner takes all’ electoral voting system.

Third, analysts often mentioned the tendency of states on the West Coast and in the Northeast to vote a bluer shade of purple. This information reinforced old sectional rivalries and the common idea that ‘elites’ live in those places. It was mentioned less often that several states in the Upper Midwest such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois were also ‘blue.’ This did not fit ideological preconceptions. Also, few commentators mentioned the striking fact that the ‘blue’ Eastern states included a majority of the original thirteen colonies. Even Vermont, long considered “rock-ribbed Republican,” voted Democratic in 2004 by a large margin.

America: Democracy or Republic?

Do you know... that governments vary as the dispositions of men vary, and that there must be as many of the one as there are of the other? For we cannot suppose that States are made of “oak and rock,” and not out of the human natures which are in them.

Plato, *The Republic*

Many letters and columns make a big point of the distinction between a democracy and a republic. They insist that the United States is the latter and not the former. But the two terms are not opposites. Democracy means rule of the people. A republic has an elected government rather than a monarch. Consequently, a representative democracy is one kind of republic.

True, the United States is not a *direct democracy* because it is too big and complex for that. The New England town hall meeting is direct democracy. A referendum is direct democracy but even in those countries that make more use of them than does the U.S., referenda affect a limited number of issues and are usually reserved for important policy changes. Voters could not be knowledgeable about every matter considered by a full-time legislator, and would soon tire of voting weekly in addition to their own work and private life.

Republics are often not very democratic, even though their governments are elected. For instance, in the Roman Republic only a few citizens who were members of the nobility voted for the Senators who both legislated and acted as their supreme court. Many present-day countries that call themselves republics are actually dictatorships or oligarchies, with a fig leaf of elections. For instance, the late U.S.S.R.—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—could call itself a republic because lawmakers were elected.

The United States from the time of adopting the Constitution was a republic, but not a very democratic one. The Constitution institutionalized slavery and ignored both women and the Native American population. Jill Lepore notes in the *New Yorker* that in the election of 1800, “Out of a total United States population of 5.3 million, roughly five hundred and fifty thousand were enfranchised.” That is little more than one in ten. The nation has grown steadily more

democratic. At first, only white men who owned property were eligible to cast ballots. Gradually men without property and indentured servants won the vote. The Fifteenth Amendment gave the vote (in principle) to the freed slaves, although many of them and their descendants were unable to claim this right for another 100 years because of Jim Crow laws and customs. Women became full citizens by way of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Most of the Founders, all men of property, were suspicious of democracy. They wrote several anti-democratic provisions into the Constitution such as the Electoral College, which provided for another layer of representation between even the limited group of voters and election of the president. Senators too were not elected directly by the people but appointed by state legislatures, and only the House of Representatives was elected by popular vote. The Seventeenth Amendment, which took effect in 1913, provided that the Senate also be elected directly. William P. Meyers says that this last change finally tipped the scales from the United States being “a mere republic” to its being a true representative democracy.

Democracy Allegedly Grows: A century ago only about three dozen countries were politically independent and free of imperial domination. Today, more countries than ever claim to be democracies—but are they really? According to *Harper’s*, “Half of the most recent popular national elections in 163 countries were marred by violence; a fifth were contentious or sloppy enough to delay or cast doubt on the legitimacy of the outcome; and in at least twenty elections some opposition parties did not participate at all.”

Those political leaders who wish to reduce popular participation in government find it an advantage to define democracy solely in terms of national elections (which may be corrupt and even fraudulent) without allowing public feedback in between elections. One can also question to what degree there exists a functional democracy any place in the world, meaning a government that truly reflects the desires of a majority of its people as distinct from their leaders. For instance, just before the Iraq War, not only massive protests in many countries but also polls indicated that large majorities in European and other countries were opposed to the invasion of Iraq. Yet many governments such as UK, Spain, Australia, and Italy disregarded the wishes of a majority of their people in this matter by joining the Coalition that prosecuted that war.

An international poll in January, 2008, showed that large majorities of both Americans and Russians want to prevent an arms race in space. Seventy-eight percent of Americans and 67 percent of Russians say that as long as no other country puts weapons in space, their own government should also refrain. Even larger majorities in both countries favor a treaty that would ban weapons in space. The director of the polling organization, Steven Kull, made this comment: “What is striking is the robust consensus—among Russians as well as Americans, and among Republicans as well as Democrats—that space should not be an arena for the major powers to compete for military advantage.” It now remains to be seen if the United States, as the current instigator of arming space, will continue to over-ride the wishes of its people, and if Russia would then reactively over-ride its own people in order to compete.

Big or Little Government: Much political argument in the United States centers on the issue of the size of government. Conservatives say government is too big, usually referring to the federal government rather than states, counties, or cities. Joshua Holland describes this argument as constructed of frames rather facts:

[Possibly] conservatives’ greatest rhetorical victory in recent years has been their ability to shift the discourse about the role of government from whether it’s performing effectively or not to a debate—

an artificial one in many ways—about whether it should be “big” or “small.” [However], government should be no bigger than needed to accomplish the tasks people want it to do, and the question of whether a government is doing that effectively or not is really the only issue that matters

A major issue in big versus little government is how much money it spends. Holland cites Richard Viguerie, a paleoconservative who criticizes George W. Bush for his fiscal policies. In *Conservatives Betrayed*, Viguerie gives numbers that indicate Democratic administrations have been better fiscal managers than Republican ones. They show that the growth in federal expenditures, adjusted for inflation, was greatest under Bush II (through 2005) at 19.2 percent, next under Nixon/Ford at 14.1 percent, Bush I at 13.4 percent, and Carter at 13.1 percent. Reagan, despite his military build-up and S&L bail-out, increased government spending somewhat less, at 9.7 percent, and Clinton spent the least of recent presidents at 4.2 percent.

Conservatives are often found spending large amounts for military expenditures, intelligence operations, homeland security, or bailouts of failing industries or financial institutions.

Which Liberal Is Which? People use several quite different definitions of the word “liberal,” leading to a great deal of confusion. Here are eight definitions or frames currently in use in the United States:

1. According to the dictionary, a ***liberal political philosophy*** is based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, and the autonomy of the individual. Liberals stand for the protection of political and civil liberties.
2. A ***classical liberal*** in the economic sphere favors free trade and ‘liberalizing’—reducing or ending—government regulation of trade. In the 18th and 19th century thinkers such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill advanced this ideal based on free competition and the self-regulating market. Modern proponents of a similar view are often called “Neoliberals.” They are more like right libertarians or Free-Market Fundamentalists than those called liberals today as a political designation.
3. A ***New Deal liberal*** is said (by conservatives) to be in favor of Big Government. More than the actual size of the government, opponents dislike the fact that the New Deal produced a regulated capitalism and the rudiments of a social welfare state. See below.
4. ***Religious Liberalism*** is “a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity” according to the dictionary.
5. A ***First Amendment liberal*** is particularly concerned with preserving freedom of speech and worship. The organization American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) springs to mind. First amendment issues are also basic for libertarians.
6. A ***cultural liberal*** is in favor of reducing government regulation of public moral behavior and expressions. Again, such freedom is also important to libertarians.
7. Liberals are often ***equated with socialists*** (by those who oppose both liberalism and socialism). However, there is a clear difference in that modern American liberals usually believe in private ownership of the means of production, while socialists believe that steel mills, railroads, and other large-scale industries should be publicly owned.

8. As a catch-all derogatory term, liberals have become *demons for every occasion*.

Liberals were criticized by ideological leftists long before right-wing propagandists demonized both of them. Old Leftists often called liberals “petit-bourgeois intellectuals” who preferred talk to action, who didn’t have the courage of their convictions; who professed sympathy for the working class without respecting or understanding working people. Conservatives borrowed the gist of this rhetoric but drained its substance to make it fit in with neo-Conservative anti-intellectualism and fear of Northeastern elites (merchants and bankers) who were the economic adversaries of Southern and Midwestern farmers in a previous century.

Liberalism is an attitude as much as or more than an ideology. (See the first, dictionary definition above.) Yet even optimism and benevolence can be overdone. Individual liberals or clusters of them may have only a superficial grasp of the situation; they may be well-intentioned but clueless, passive, or smug. They may be overly trusting, especially of their government, experts, and others like themselves in the educated middle-class. Without any experience of how non-middle-class people live, their sympathies for poor, minority, or foreign people may be only skin-deep and their attitude condescending.

However, liberal ideology tends to be less pronounced and rigid than others discussed here at greater length. Also, conservative commentators and right-wing think tanks between them have attacked liberals with such vigor (although often distorting their beliefs) that I hesitate to take up the cudgel here. One liberal difficulty is over-reaction to ideas supported by conservatives. For instance, because John Birchers once opposed fluoridation of public water supplies as a government conspiracy, liberals tend to dismiss any opposition to this policy. Yet a recent article in *Scientific American* says that research suggests overconsumption of fluoride can raise the risk of disorders affecting teeth, bones, brain, and thyroid.

Because of the Christian homeschool movement, some liberals automatically assume that anyone who homeschools is a fundamentalist Christian who opposes the public school system. But as we have seen, there is also an older, less ideological homeschool movement. In reaction to the stridency and political gains by Protestant fundamentalists, some liberals feel the only alternative is militant atheism. Liberals have a tendency toward scientism, and an aversion to anything that smacks of a ‘conspiracy theory,’ ignoring some nuances to be discussed later on.

Current propaganda efforts to paint liberals as “angry” further blurs the differences between liberals and leftists, at least the New Leftists of the 1960s who often did adopt an angry stance.

Leftist ideologies are very diverse, and since they are not really much in play in the United States at the moment, let us skip over them here.

Right Wing Rollback

I don’t want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.

Grover Norquist, b.1956, founder and head of Americans for Tax Reform

One political ideology frequently expressed in the media today—especially among newspaper columnists and talk show hosts—makes its appeal to those who want government to leave them alone, who strongly believe in self-reliance, or who long for “the good old days” that they never knew or hardly remember. Much of it takes the form of hostility to taxes, by which they mean a progressive income tax, capital gains tax, and estate tax. However they are not interested in returning to the tariff, which was the principal source of federal revenue before the income tax was established in 1913. In many cases these are working-class conservatives who

are not aware of the history and context, or the motivations of those who supply them with catchphrases.

Many liberal writers say that for the past 30 to 40 years, right wing interests and ideologues have conducted a well-planned assault on 20th century liberalism. Economics writer Robert Kuttner, in *The Squandering of America* (2007) says that since the 1970s, narrow business elites have steadily dismantled the managed form of capitalism represented by the New Deal of the Roosevelt/Truman era. As a result, lesser-known economists such as Milton Friedman gained influence with claims about the perfection of markets, and business-funded think tanks proliferated. Today the business point of view is dominant. Kuttner calls this right-wing political program to destroy the New Deal a “counterrevolution.”

As usual, there is some history. According to Kuttner, banks, brokerages, and other financial institutions along with natural monopolies such as utilities used financial manipulations to bilk the public in the 1920s, something like what Enron did 75 years later. In the process they undermined the stability of the entire financial system. The reckless laissez-faire economics of the 1920s came crashing down in 1929 and the “free market” went haywire. The reforms of the 1930s and 1940s were possible—and necessary—because laissez-faire had failed so badly.

Roosevelt then regulated the financial markets including commercial banks, investment banks, brokerages, stock exchanges, and also the accounting profession so as to avoid such destabilizing manipulations in the future. Roosevelt and Truman introduced Social Security, unemployment compensation, the GI bill, and FHA loans, all of which helped develop a stable middle-class economy that lasted through the 1950s and 1960s. Kuttner says that similar policies were put into place in all the advanced democracies, although “in Europe, the sense of a social settlement between business and labor, with a large role for the democratic state, was more explicit and more expansive.” It was right after World War II, for instance, that Britain set up its universal health care system.

Although many Americans knew that things were a lot better for them in the ‘50s and ‘60s, few are aware that this was achieved by a managed form of capitalism, says Kuttner. Nor do they make a connection between the remaining New Deal institutions—such as Social Security, GI Bill, and FHA loans—and the social welfare systems of Western Europe that propaganda has taught many to despise as the “nanny state.” Kuttner says the supposedly impending bankruptcy of Social Security and Medicare are “pseudo-crises,” and that solving the projected shortfalls in those programs “is easy compared to the real risks created by foreign borrowing and the unleashing of an economy based on speculation.”

Economic globalization undermines national institutions that regulate capitalism and has given financial elites the same power they had long ago. Kuttner says:

Undermining national countervailing institutions ...has made it easier politically for the owners of capital to move the market system back more than a century, to an era when property rights were paramount and offsetting social rights nonexistent; when there was little taxation of capital and even less regulation of labor or of the environment.

William Greider, a well-known political journalist and author, describes three political waves in the right’s assault on the governing order and broad prosperity that lasted through the 1960s. The first wave was Ronald Reagan. The second wave was Newt Gingrich and the “Republican Revolution” that gave the House majority to Republicans for the first time in two generations. The third and most effective wave was the George W. Bush administration. Greider claims that this right-wing movement would reduce the size and power of federal government

not only to a pre-New Deal level, but eventually to the condition of America when William McKinley was President, around 1900.

In other words, they would take America back before the trust-busting reforms of the Progressive Era in the early 1900s and before the graduated income tax, back before Teddy Roosevelt enacted the first federal regulations to protect public health and banned corporate campaign contributions. And, incidentally, back to an era of frank imperialism.

Following November 2010 elections that put a Republican majority in the House and Republican governors in many statehouses, one can see a fourth wave of tax-cutting for corporations, dismantling of what remains of the social safety net, and union-busting, all in the name of reducing deficits.

The dictionary word to describe a political or social movement toward a previous condition is *reactionary*. For some reason this word is seldom used in the mainstream media, where reactionary policies and leaders are called conservative—quite a different thing. Greider and others list the following specific economic goals of the right-wing, rollback movement:

- Fundamentally change the role of government, stripping it of social welfare functions and any regulation of the economy. For instance, withdraw the federal role in housing, healthcare, or assistance to the poor.
- Eliminate federal taxes on private capital.
- Shift the burden of taxation from capital to consumption (flat tax).
- Phase out the pension-fund retirement system, not only Social Security but other large pools of savings such as public-employee funds.
- Weaken regulatory obligations on business, especially environmental regulations, by emphasizing voluntary goals and “market-driven” solutions. The eventual goal is to introduce a new constitutional doctrine that government must compensate property owners for any new regulations that impose costs on them or reduce their profitability.
- Continue to weaken organized labor “by a thousand small cuts, like stripping ‘homeland security’ workers of union protection.”

One leader of this rollback movement is Grover Norquist, listed as one of the “Gang of Five” most powerful leaders of the modern conservative movement in a book of the same name by Nina Easton (2000). Norquist co-authored the 1994 Contract with America and is considered the main strategist behind the Bush tax cuts. Norquist said that he hopes to cut government in half over the next 25 years. Federal government would go from 20 percent to 10 percent of GDP, state and local government from 12 to 6 percent, and, when vouchers are available everywhere, public schools from 6 to 3 percent. (In February/March 2011, Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin and several other Republican governors and legislatures seem to be following Norquist’s playbook.)

While aspiring to cut government in half, Norquist is not talking about military spending. As it happens, current military spending at 36 percent of the 2009 federal budget added to the debts from past wars at 18 percent of the budget means that over half of the U.S. budget is past or present military spending (54 percent). These figures from the War Resisters League differ from the usual government pie chart that includes Social Security and other trust funds in the budget although they are raised and spent separately. The past military amount represents veterans’ benefits and 80 percent of the interest on the national debt. Military spending consumes a much greater proportion of national resources in the United States than for most other countries. The

USA accounts for 47 percent of the world's current military spending although it contributes only 21 percent of the world's GDP.

Anarcho-capitalism

There are many varieties of libertarianism, from natural-law libertarianism (the least crazy) to anarcho-capitalism (the most).

Robert Locke, *The American Conservative*

Anarcho-capitalism, in my opinion, is a doctrinal system which, if ever implemented, would lead to forms of tyranny and oppression that have few counterparts in human history.

Noam Chomsky, *Z magazine*

The ultimate expression of rolling back government is anarcho-capitalism (also called market anarchism or private property anarchism), an ideology that combines governance and economics into a single system. Although a theoretical plan, drawing enemies from both right and left (see above), it can inspire pundits and it trickles down in various forms to average citizens. Market anarchism expresses American hyper-individualism, has many influential proponents, and is often promoted to the public without being named.

This political philosophy and proposed economic system would privatize *all* goods and services. In the anarcho-capitalist vision, even law enforcement, courts, and national defense would be provided by competitors in a free market. This is where the Ayn Rand Objectivists and many libertarians part company with the anarcho-capitalists. The first two groups would retain a few state functions.

The theory was developed by economist and libertarian Murray Rothbard about 50 years ago, more recently by David Friedman and others. Rothbard synthesized ideas from classical liberalism, the Austrian School of economics, and 19th century American individualist anarchists such as Benjamin Tucker and Lysander Spooner.

The first part of this synthesis—classical liberalism—was expounded by philosopher John Locke in the 17th century. Locke's ideas about natural rights, human liberty, and the limitations of state power reverberated a century later in the American and French Revolutions, the Declaration of Independence, and statements such as "That government is best which governs least." Classical or *laissez-faire* economics was a core belief of classical liberals, who wanted little or no government regulation of the economy—*laissez faire* means "Leave it alone."

The Austrian School is closely associated with a revival of *laissez-faire* thought in the 1980s. They were the first liberal economists to conduct a systematic challenge to Marxist economists. Their foremost economist, Ludwig von Mises, insisted that it was impossible for a socialist government (command economy) to produce a functional price system. The Austrian School of economics found a ready audience. As Wikipedia says:

Because many of the policy recommendations of Austrian theorists call for small government, strict protection of private property, and support for individualism in general, they are often cited by conservatives, *laissez-faire* liberal, libertarian, and Objectivist groups for support.

The third leg of Rothbard's synthesis was based on the writings of several 19th century individualist anarchists, Tucker and Spooner, who advocated free markets and private defense. Rothbard found common ground with the (long deceased) individualist anarchists on some

things, but not on others. Whether anarchists such as Benjamin Tucker would have agreed with the later anarcho-capitalists is controversial. Like virtually all anarchists, they were anti-capitalist as well as anti-state. For example, Tucker said anarchism demands “the abolition of the State and the abolition of usury; on no more government of man by man, and no more exploitation of man by man.” By ‘usury,’ Tucker meant profit, interest, and rent, the basics of capitalism.

Today’s anarchists generally say that you can be anarchist or you can be capitalist, but not both at once, and that anarcho-capitalism is at odds with the egalitarian ideals and other key ideas of traditional anarchism in its many forms. Anarchists are united in their opposition to authority and they see capitalism as authoritarian. “From individualists like Spooner and Tucker to communists like Kropotkin and Malatesta, anarchists have always been anti-capitalist” insists one anarchist. Incidentally, before the U.S. Libertarian Party organized in 1970, the word ‘libertarian’ referred to the anti-capitalist anarchist tradition and it still does so in other countries. This creates another layer of confusion or muddle.

So which countries actually practice anarcho-capitalism? Well, none. It seems the enforcement of law was handled by private agencies in Iceland from 930 to 1262 and in much of the American Old West between 1830 and 1900. That is not very much precedent on which to build a new economic/social system. In fact, the anarcho-capitalist movement by itself is miniscule, and has no program for how the economic system would get from here (oligopoly and transnationals) to there (a completely *laissez-faire* society). This ideology resembles a computer simulation game. Yet these right-wing libertarian ideas permeate U.S. society, often in oversimplified or cherry-picked form. For instance, the NRA notion that every “law-abiding citizen” should pack his own gun relates to the idea of private defense.

Other examples come from the militia, jural, and anti-government movements of the 1990s that arose from the farm crisis of the 1980s, with its widespread foreclosures and bankruptcies among small farmers especially in the Midwest. The U.S. government historically has not given much support to small farmers, in an agricultural system increasingly dominated by global corporations. Many militant groups formed in the wake of the 1980s crisis that drove farmers off the land. Some “seceded” from the United States and declared war on its government, while others set up their own system of courts and law enforcement.

One could view these attempts to replace functions of the established government with an “Alternate America” as part of the missing plan for anarcho-capitalists to get from here to there. However, besides acts of domestic terrorism, the anti-government forces often subscribe to racist ideologies, Christian Reconstructionism, and conspiracy theories that take them very far from Adam Smith and the theoretical systems of academic economists.

Much more widespread and mainstream is the constant anti-government rhetoric about unleashing the free market from government regulations and taxes: “Let the market decide.” This refrain ignores four aspects of reality (at least). The first is that business depends very much on the infrastructure that is paid for by taxes, such as roads, police, firefighters, water and sewage systems, and potential employees educated by public school systems. This infrastructure is part of the “externalities” that don’t get counted.

The second reality is that corporations are not likely to perform public services at lower cost than governments can, because corporations need to add in dividends to stockholders, big salaries to CEOs, advertising, campaign contributions, and other expenses they require to expand and drive out competition. The third reality is that large corporations are just as bureaucratic as governments. Bureaucracy is a way of ordering large organizations, and government agencies are

not the only large organizations. The fourth reality is that in an oligopoly, the free market is not free. It is usually a small number of large corporations that do most of the market deciding.

The pressure to privatize public services has so far manifested itself in numerous corporate-run prisons, corporate-run schools, and the replacement of many U.S. soldiers by private military contractors (once called mercenaries). In fact, by July 4, 2007 private contractors in Iraq exceeded the number of American combat troops (the majority of them were Iraqis). There has been a great drive to privatize the Social Security system. No Child Left Behind legislation is designed, Thom Hartman says, to kill the public school system and then replace it with tuition vouchers for private, parochial, and for-profit schools.

The idea of a more decentralized society with more local control has a strong appeal to many of us. But that does not automatically or even logically translate into anarcho-capitalism. The anarcho-capitalists say they do not approve of the modern corporation with its pretensions to being a person, yet all the focus of their followers and fellow travelers seems to be about privatizing government services. It does seem that those who want a freer and more competitive marketplace would show an interest in overcoming oligopoly and concentration of wealth. At the least the zealous free-marketers could oppose tariffs and subsidies in their own country, such as subsidies to corporate farms. Just five crops (cotton, corn, rice, soybeans, and wheat) get 93 percent of such payments, which encourage farm consolidation, push out small farmers in the U.S., and hurt poor farmers in developing countries.

While pure anarcho-capitalism never developed naturally anywhere, a somewhat similar ideology has been forced upon a number of countries and locales by the free-market fundamentalist economists of the Chicago School and their local allies and “Chicago boys.”

Neoconservatism

The radical neoconservatives, who appeared in the 1960s, are the first seriously intelligent movement on the American right since the 19th century.

William Pfaff, *International Herald Tribune*, 2003

[Neoconservatives are] *nerds with Napoleonic complexes.*

Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor of the *Nation*, 2004

Neoconservatism is one of the two major ideologies that reared up at the University of Chicago in the 1970s and 1980s (the other is neoliberalism). After 35 years of gestation, it suddenly became powerful during the administration of George W. Bush, who chose two prominent neoconservative allies, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, for his Vice-President and Secretary of Defense. A number of other neocons such as Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Elliott Abrams, and John Bolton held important positions in the Bush administration. Others such as Richard Perle, Norman Podhoretz, and William Kristol were influential as close advisors, magazine writers and editors, members of quasi-official groups, and/or association with neoconservative think tanks, notably the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). George W. Bush, speaking at the AEI in February, 2003, said “You are some of the best brains in the country, [so good that] my government employs twenty of you.”

Most agree that Irving Kristol (now in his late eighties) founded the neoconservative movement in the 1970s, along with his wife, historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, and his son Bill Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*. Jacob Weisberg says of this family: “In their good-natured way, they have probably done more to move the center of American politics rightward

than any Republican politician now active.” The rise to power began with the Project for a New American Century or PNAC, a neoconservative think-tank founded in 1997 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan. Among the “fundamental propositions” of PNAC is this: “That American leadership is good both for America and for the world.”

The core of the neocon movement was a group of formerly radical intellectuals whose views turned rightward in the late 1960s and 1970s. Many had once been Trotskyists (anti-Stalin communists), they were strong supporters of Israel and its right-wing Likud Party, and several of them had studied under Leo Strauss (1899-1973) who taught for many years in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago. They had several reasons to change course politically. Weisberg says that they felt that the Democratic Party had grown dangerously naïve about the Soviet threat and America’s responsibility for checking the spread of Communism. Also, according to Arthur Goldwag

[they were] alienated by the increasingly strident anti-American and anti-Zionist rhetoric of the New Left and the militancy of black separatists....Staunch in their support for Israel, they disavowed the isolationism and anti-interventionism engendered by the perceived failure of the Vietnam War.

Although this original group was Jewish and strongly pro-Israel, many of the most influential neoconservatives are *not* Jewish. Avi Shlaim, professor of international relations at Oxford and a citizen of both the UK and Israel, calls them American nationalists. Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, John Bolton, Jeb Bush, James Woolsey, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, William J. Bennett, Steve Forbes, Francis Fukuyama, Zalmay Khalizad, and J. Danforth Quayle are non-Jewish members of PNAC or signers of its Statement of Principles. Newt Gingrich is sometimes linked with this group and Senator John McCain is commonly associated with neoconservatism according to the conservative journal *National Review*.

The late Sen. Henry “Scoop” Jackson was a very pro-military, pro-Israel, Democratic Senator much admired by neoconservatives such as Wolfowitz. (Jackson was sometimes known as “the Senator from Boeing.”) As far back as the Ford Administration, a group of analysts called ‘Team B’ was chosen by right-wing Republicans such as Donald Rumsfeld to work together with Democratic neoconservatives in Jackson’s office. Another early neocon was Pat Moynihan, Nixon’s ambassador to the UN. “Moynihan was a neoconservative before neoconservatism became a doctrine of foreign policy hubris,” says George Will. But why would all these non-Jews support Israel’s right-wing Likud governments? In a convergence of interests, American nationalists support the expansionist aims of Israel’s leaders as a way to assert American supremacy and advance American geostrategy in the oil-rich Middle East. Shlaim says there are two separate agendas which converged in the invasion of Iraq and other Middle East policies.

Although some neoconservatives are so closely tied to Israel that they are often accused of dual loyalties, it confuses the issues to blame American Jews for this. A 2007 opinion survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee found that only a small minority of American Jews support neocon principles. A majority of those polled (57 percent) opposed military action against Iran to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons, and more than two-thirds (67 percent) said they believe the United States should have stayed out of Iraq, which is a slightly higher percentage than the U.S. public at large. Glenn Greenwald says that neocons have an “unrelenting and exclusive fixation on the Middle East” which puts them in the middle of foreign policy debates, giving the false impression that they are spokespeople for the Jewish viewpoint.

Meanwhile, some conservative columnists label as anti-Semitic anyone who criticizes neoconservatism. For instance a David Brooks column in the *New York Times* takes for granted that ‘neoconservative’ is simply a code word for Jews. Please, let us not conflate Jews, Zionism, Jewish religious fundamentalism, Israel (government), Israelis (people), and neoconservatism (an American ideology). These are all different things.

Neocon Plans: Neoconservatives have produced several policy documents that make their thinking plain. First was the *Draft Defense Planning Guidance Memo* in 1992 drawn up by Wolfowitz for then Defense Secretary Dick Cheney. It presented the so-called Wolfowitz Doctrine that the United States must prevent the emergence of any rival power, even a regional one, and be prepared to take unilateral and pre-emptive action if necessary. Leaked to the press, the memo drew an angry reaction in Japan and Europe. Some believe the doctrine inspired China to restart a strategic missile program.

A second important document was produced for the new Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996 by Perle, Feith, and a married couple, David and Meyray Wormser, and published by an Israeli think tank. Although meant for Israel, it has had obvious influence on U.S. foreign policy. *A Clean Break* advocates stopping any negotiations of “land for peace” with Palestinians, redrawing the Middle East political map, assuming an aggressive stance toward Syria, and overthrowing Saddam Hussein.

The *Christian Science Monitor* says a 1996 manifesto by neoconservatives William Kristol and Robert Kagan set the course for subsequent foreign policy. “Toward a Neo-Reaganite foreign policy,” published by *Foreign Affairs*, linked Reagan’s foreign policy together with neoconservative ideas and moved Republican foreign policy away from Pat Buchanan’s “neo-isolationism” as well as from Henry Kissinger’s “realism.” In 1998, leading members of PNAC, many of whom became part of the Bush Administration, wrote an open letter to President Bill Clinton urging him to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

A very important document, published by PNAC in September, 2000, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* (RAD) outlines an aggressive military plan to ensure that the United States dominates the world in the 21st century. RAD lists four vital missions: provide homeland defense against proliferation of ballistic missiles and WMD; maintain the capability to fight large wars; prepare for constabulary duties (policing) rather than depending on the UN; and transform US Armed Forces with advanced technologies. Some policies promoted in RAD were enacted soon after September 11, 2001, such as setting up the Homeland Defense department. Many ideas similar to those in RAD also appeared in publications of U.S. military colleges in the 1990s.

RAD was the document that contained these words: “The process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event like a new Pearl Harbor.” The fact that the tragic events of 9/11 were very much like a new Pearl Harbor has not escaped the attention of conspiracy analysts.

The National Security Strategy Report of 2002 is strongly influenced by neoconservative thinking and it advances themes from RAD in a post-9/11 world. It calls for preemptive military action against hostile states and terrorist groups that seek to develop weapons of mass destruction. The report announces the US will not brook challenges to its global military strength, and that despite a commitment to multilateral cooperation, it will act unilaterally if necessary. It also proclaims the goal of spreading democracy and human rights around the world, especially in Islamic countries.

Straussians

Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues.

Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, 1651

Next we come to the ideology behind the ideology. The ‘godfather’ of neoconservatism was political science professor Leo Strauss, who was born in Germany, moved to the United States in 1937, and taught political philosophy at the University of Chicago from 1949 to 1969. A sort of cult formed around him. Several prominent neoconservatives were among his students, including Paul Wolfowitz, Zalmay Khalizad, and Abram Shulsky (Pentagon Office of Special Plans). Several other neoconservatives count themselves as disciples of Strauss. Ahmad Chalabi received his PhD in mathematics at the U of C during the same period and was acquainted with the Straussians. Former Attorney General John Ashcroft received his law degree there in 1967. According to Francis A. Boyle, Professor of International Law at the University of Illinois, many of Ashcroft’s lawyers were members of the right-wing Federalist Society which originated in part at the University of Chicago. Boyle says “Feddies” wrote the original USA Patriot Act and the draft for USAPA II.

Professor Shadia Drury at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan has written several books about Strauss, describing him as a dualist who divided the history of political thought into the ancients, whose wisdom he praised, and the moderns, especially the natural rights liberals of the Enlightenment, whom he regarded as foolish. They were foolish because they wanted to spread liberal democracy. Drury says “The ancient philosophers whom Strauss most cherished believed that the unwashed masses were not fit for either truth or liberty, and that giving them these sublime treasures would be like throwing pearls before swine.”

According to Drury, Strauss believed that an elite group of wise persons should rule society. Plato, his favorite ancient, described the ideal state in *The Republic* as rule by philosopher-kings. But since rule by the wise is an unlikely prospect, Strauss thinks we need *covert* rule by the wise. Not only should the elite rule secretly, but they should guard the essential truth of human reality because most people cannot face the truth. [This point of view was also expressed by the character of the Grand Inquisitor in his fictional confrontation with Jesus Christ in the great novel by Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*.] Strauss analyst Robert Locke says about this perpetual deception, “The people are told what they need to know and no more.”

In his writings Strauss repeatedly defends the political realism of Machiavelli. Francis A. Boyle received his undergraduate degree from Chicago’s Political Science Department where, he says, he and “innumerable other students [were trained] to become ruthless and unprincipled Machiavellians... The Bible of Chicago’s Neo-Con Straussian cabal is Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. We students had to know our Machiavelli by heart and rote at the University of Chicago.” Drury notes that “This [Machiavellian] view of the world is clearly manifest in the foreign policy of the current [G.W. Bush] administration in the United States.”

Drury says that Strauss had “huge contempt” for secular democracy, believing that individualism, liberalism, relativism, and dissent all weaken society in the face of external threats. “[Straussians] really have no use for liberalism and democracy, but they’re conquering the world in the name of liberalism and democracy.” Strauss believed that religion was essential to maintain morality among the masses. People need to believe in absolute truths or else they will fall into a state of anarchy. However, while religion was politically useful, it was not necessary for the rulers to accept this “pious fraud.”

For Strauss, the rule of the wise is an antidote to modernity and the rule of vulgarity, or what we might call consumer culture. Wealth, pleasures and amusements trivialize life and turn people into little better than beasts. Strauss saw this shallow life as a great danger for American culture; even worse, globalization threatens to spread this subhuman culture around the world. So far some might agree; but Strauss's answer for this problem was war. Drury describes his view as follows: "Only perpetual war can overturn the [modern] emphasis on self-preservation and 'creature comforts. Thus war restores man's humanity." [I'm afraid that sounds to me like curing a cold by cutting off your head.]

Strauss agreed with Thomas Hobbes that human beings are so aggressive that they need a strong, authoritarian state to restrain them, saying: "Because mankind is intrinsically wicked, he has to be governed. Such governance can only be established, however, when men are united—and they can only be united against other people." Strauss said that if no external threat exists, then one must be manufactured.

Truly, this ideology sounds like a warmed-over stew of Hobbes, Machiavelli and Benito Mussolini. Il Duce said things like this: "War alone brings up to their highest tension all human energies and imposes the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to make it." Michael Ledeen, considered the leading neoconservative theoretician, has long shown an interest in Italian fascism, although he criticizes Mussolini for not being revolutionary enough. Ledeen advocates "creative destruction."

Strauss's ideas appeal to a certain kind of person who thinks of himself as much smarter than most people—even though he may lack common sense and street-smarts. Since he knows what is best for everybody, he proposes to run the show from behind the scenes, using lies and trickery as necessary. It is almost unbelievable that a cabal of such people was running United States policy for eight years: chicken-hawks promoting war, secularists pushing fundamentalist absolutes, right-wing elitists warning the unwashed masses against liberal elitists. Neoconservatism means "new conservatives" but neo-cons are not actually any sort of conservative. They are neo-imperialists. We could call them neo-imps but that makes them sound a whole lot cuter than they are.

The Unitary Executive is a theory first proposed by President Ronald Reagan that only a strong president could limit big government. Succeeding presidents have expanded the powers of the president, to give him (or eventually her) undivided control over the entire executive branch and its agencies, while maintaining an adversarial relationship with Congress. According to Dana D. Nelson, a professor of American Studies at Vanderbilt, conservatives at the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society provided a constitutional cover for this theory:

[They produced] thousands of pages in the 1990s claiming—often erroneously and misleadingly—that the framers themselves had intended this model for the office of the presidency. [They] want to expand the many existing uncheckable executive powers—such as executive orders, decrees, memorandums, proclamations, national security directives, and legislative signing statements—that enable presidents to enact a good deal of foreign and domestic policy without aid, interference or consent from Congress.

Nelson notes that every president since Reagan has used the legislative signing statement, not only to give their own interpretation of the law, but to make "unilateral determinations about the validity of the provisions of particular statutes," in other words, to decide not to enforce enacted legislation. But George W. Bush greatly increased use of this power, and in 2006 the

American Bar Association denounced the practice as a great threat to the separation of powers and system of checks and balances that have served the nation since its inception.

Here are two things about this and other practices of the unitary executive, and the ideology contrived to support it. First, it is a reversion to the idea of monarchy. Like Strauss's ideas, this ideology embodies an underlying contempt for the legislative branch and the concept of representative democracy. Keep this in mind whenever someone makes Congress into a scapegoat. Congress may work imperfectly, but it is the one branch of government most directly responsible to the people.

Second, having a strong leader can reassure the public in times of crisis such as 9/11 or the current financial crisis. This is particularly true of people whose outlook is basically authoritarian with an overlay of belief in democracy. As I pointed out in the previous book, monarchy was practiced for thousands of years while democracy is relatively new, only 200 years old. Many people do not yet fully understand it, especially if their outlook is strongly colored by ideas of military and/or religious obedience.

Claes G. Ryn, professor at Catholic University and president of the Academy of Philosophy and Letters, says intellectual arguments that favor increased presidential powers disguise "a creeping coup....by already powerful people who want to consolidate and expand their power. [They are] strongly entrenched in both major parties and in other influential American institutions, [where they] employ different ideas and symbols to woo and co-opt different constituencies." For instance, they can at one and the same time propose to increase the powers of the president and executive branch while attacking 'big government.'

They tell Americans that their society is in great danger...threatened domestically...by lack of virtue and patriotism...and multiculturalism [and] from abroad by Terrorism and "Islamofascism." [But] their notion of America reveals its alien origins even in strange-sounding language, as in the name "Department of Homeland Security." They are popularizing un-American ideas of governance, notably the so-called "unitary" executive....Their goal is wholly at odds with the constitutionalism of the framers.

Beware of those who insist that America needs one-man-rule. Many other countries have learned this lesson the hard way.

CHAPTER 9: MYTHS OF DEMOCRACY

When once a republic is corrupted, there is no possibility of remedying any of the growing evils but by removing the corruption and restoring its lost principles; every other correction is either useless or a new evil.

Thomas Jefferson, letter to Joseph C. Cabell

Some common myths or assumptions about democracy either contribute to or reflect the sorry condition of our form of representative government. This is not by any means a complete list, and the political situation keeps changing.

Democracy=elections. The minimalist definition of democracy is that it consists of voting every two or four or six years for the candidates of your choice: that and nothing more. For many, this is the only duty of citizenship, and even so only half of us manage to accomplish this task. It is to the advantage of those in political power to promote this definition, especially if they are not great believers in democracy. It is especially useful to those who have found ways to manipulate elections.

It is unlikely that a country can turn the counting of its votes over to electronic machines owned by a private, partisan company with proprietary rights over its software, machines that do not leave a paper trail, so that there can be no recount—yet still remain a democracy. Electronic voting machines have now resulted in disputed elections not only in the United States, but also in Ukraine, Mexico, Scotland, and France. The election of Nicolas Sarkozy in France led to angry criticism there about chaotic vote counts that always seem to favor right-wing candidates.

Paul Craig Roberts, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during President Reagan’s first term, says: “There are now enough [U.S.] elections on record with significant divergences between exit polls and vote tallies that a stolen election can be explained away. The Democrats have been house trained to acquiesce to stolen elections. The voters, whose votes are stolen, dismiss the evidence as ‘conspiracy theories.’” Another way to dismiss the evidence is to say: “Oh, there’s always been voter fraud. Remember the dead men voting in Chicago?” However, past wrongs do not condone present wrongs, particularly not as endemic, sophisticated, national voting fraud.

Many local election officials liked the machines because they made their job easier. However, several states such as California, Ohio, and Florida have stored or scrapped their electronic voting machines, at some expense, because of their susceptibility to fraud. From 2006 to 2008, the percentage of U.S. voters using touch-screen technology dropped from 44 percent to 36 percent. That still leaves more than a third of the electorate using e-votes. Some of the disused machines may be sold to third-world countries, where they are also subject to manipulation..

A media-manufactured myth suggests it is wrong to recount votes in a close election that shows evidence of voting irregularities, or at least so said the Supreme Court and the mainstream media in the 2000 presidential election. They told us that Americans are too impatient and easily rattled to wait for a full recount, needing closure even more than we need the truth or for the majority to prevail. The 2004 election was apparently not as close as the one in 2000, but there was evidence of widespread voting irregularities, especially in Ohio sufficient to have changed Electoral College results if not the popular vote. Anybody who brought up this evidence was treated as a conspiracy theorist. Media bias also implied that a recount would be wrong in the Mexican election in 2006, by portraying the candidate who wanted the recount as a leftist demagogue. On the other hand, a recount was fine in the Ukraine in 2004, because the U.S.-

backed candidate was losing. Election fraud can be detected by exit polls. They have been accurate in the Ukraine and other parts of the world, working very well most of the time—except when you don't want them to.

Low voter turn-out has long been a problem in the United States. People in some countries risk even death in order to vote, but in America only half the population votes in national elections. In the 1952, 1960, 1964, and 1968 elections U.S. voter turnout was at its postwar peak at 60-62 percent. Our recent average turnout in presidential elections is 48 percent of eligible voters compared to 77 percent in Western Europe, 68 percent in Eastern Europe, and 90 percent in Cambodia. A government does not fully represent a people if only half of them vote in national elections.

In the United States, this pattern of low voter turn-out has lasted over a century, since a realignment of political parties in 1896. Historian Richard J. Barnet says that after this shift, America changed from being the most democratized political system in the world in the middle of the 19th century to become, in the words of election expert Walter Dean Burnham, "a rather broadly based oligarchy." Some scholars believe that the Electoral College system tends to suppress voter numbers.

Citizen attitudes have contributed to, or rationalized, this lack of engagement. Cynics follow the campaign only for its entertainment value, and assume that politics is a game that will not affect them personally. They suggest that an appropriate response to electoral and political problems is cynical laughter and inaction, saying "Don't vote, it only encourages them." Others think it is more spiritual to stay above the fray, or they find that none of the candidates are up to their standards. Cynics may be right that there is only one party in Washington—the Money Party—but cynicism can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. What may seem to be small differences between candidates can have large repercussions (the Butterfly effect?). For instance, a President Gore would probably not have invaded Iraq. By blanket condemnations one fails to make distinctions or support those in Washington—even when they are in a minority—who still have some integrity and foresight. Cynics do not notice that by making Congress into a scapegoat, they are weakening the branch of government most responsive to citizens and indirectly giving more power to the executive branch.

Because of low voter turnout, during an election "landslide" only a quarter to a third of *potential* voters actually votes for the winning candidate. However, the 1964 victory of Lyndon B. Johnson over Barry Goldwater was accomplished with 37 percent of the potential voters, in the second highest turnout since World War II. Many voters believed, fairly or not, that Goldwater would start a nuclear war with the U.S.S.R. Reagan's landslide victory over Walter Mondale in 1984 was achieved with 31 percent of the potential vote, and the first George Bush's landslide over Michael Dukakis in 1988 garnered only 26 percent of possible voters.

Larger votes tend to favor the Democratic Party, so in recent years the Republican Party has tried to suppress the vote by means such as challenging voters at the polls, 'caging,' insisting on picture ID cards, and felony disenfranchisement. Eight states practice felony disenfranchisement, which means about 5.3 million U.S. citizens are not allowed to vote because they were once convicted of a felony. This includes 13 percent of African-American men. However, the states of Maine and Vermont, along with Canada and many other countries allow prisoners to vote even while they are incarcerated.

In 2008, Michigan saw an attempt to make voting difficult for people who had recently lost their homes to foreclosures. In the same election, The Department of Veterans Affairs banned non-partisan voter registration at VA hospitals, nursing homes, and homeless shelters, effectively

disenfranchising many veterans who after they move into a VA facility or become homeless are required to register with new addresses. Legislation was pending in Congress to make sure that wounded, ill, disabled, and homeless veterans have the opportunity to vote.

Political disenfranchisement and old cop-out attitudes can improve neither our democratic system nor our human survival prospects. However, the historic election of President Barack Obama in November 2008 may have changed the trend of low turnouts. Voters came out in record numbers, an estimated 62.5 percent, the highest since Kennedy's election in 1960. Much of this new participation was attributed to Obama's message of the possibility of change and his encouragement of wider participation in politics by supporting voter registration drives.

Majority Rules: According to a letter to the editor, June 3, 2008: "An overwhelming majority of Americans claim Christianity as their religion. Democracy is defined as majority rules. Yet we as Christians are in many instances losing our voices to the desires of the ruling minorities." Leaving aside religious assumptions, the simplistic notion that democracy means majority rule ignores minority rights or the problem of how to govern after a vote that is 51% to 49%. The American statesman John C. Calhoun said this in the 19th century:

The government of the absolute majority is but the government of the strongest interests; and when not effectively checked, is the most tyrannical and oppressive that can be devised. [To read the Constitution is to realize that] no free system was ever farther removed from the principle that the absolute majority, without check or limitation, ought to govern.

The idea of majority rule is simple and even young children pick up that part, seeing it as a tug of war that one side wins. But many adults still do not understand the rest of it, the limitations on power or the necessity to compromise and cooperate after the vote. Apparently many citizens have never really understood checks and balances. The checks and balances created by the U.S. Constitution, and the individual rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights are all about limitations on majority power. The United States Constitutional system of checks and balances has suffered greatly during a period of Republican dominance of all three branches of government while at the same time promoting a stronger role for the chief executive.

Understanding of the rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights is apparently at low ebb. A yearly survey by the First Amendment Center found that slightly more than half of those polled in 2008 could name freedom of speech as one of the five freedoms listed in the First Amendment, while 15 percent or less named freedom of religion, press, assembly, or the right to petition. About 40 percent could not name any of the freedoms. These were the worst results in the history of the survey.

Media Are Neutral Observers of Our Political System

Consider the plight of a typical Athenian trying to imagine his way forward to our time. Would he not be stunned by a democratic nation whose citizens are asked to consider issues of war and peace through the medium of sound bites and photo opportunities?

Robert Zaretsky, historian, "It's Still All Greek to Us: on the Timelessness of Thucydides"

Another myth is that a democracy can thrive alongside a compromised press owned by a few mega-corporations. A free press is supposed to be the government's watchdog, not its lapdog. In fact, Thomas Jefferson expressed the opinion that the existence of a free press was more

important than the form of government itself. However, Jefferson did not anticipate the seductive technology of two centuries later, nor the monopoly conditions that would concentrate powerful media in the hands of a few people.

Election campaigns have devolved mainly into expensive television ads that require candidates to raise huge sums of money, so that they are beholden to corporate interests and wealthy people. Long primary campaigns are very lucrative for television broadcasters, who also control the process by biased coverage and by arbitrarily excluding some candidates from debates. In my opinion the predominance of television ads in political campaigns, more than any other single factor, has corrupted our political process. The Supreme Court in *Buckley vs Valeo* decided that the expenditure of money in elections is a form of speech (and thus entitled to free speech rights). Law professor Patricia Williams says of this decision: "It puts reality up for sale." Some recent candidates have used the Internet to raise money from a broader base.

Many Americans view election campaigns as entertainment or sporting events, albeit a sport that allows quite a few fouls—sort of a cross between a horse race and a bar fight. Election fans are aided by the media tendency to present campaign events as tournaments or duels between the evident front-runners. In order to cast the Democratic campaign as a dramatic contest between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, it was necessary to marginalize John Edwards, who was polling close to the other two. Thus the media insured that the frontrunner would be either a woman or a black, with all the well-known electoral liabilities of either. Media figures often showed contempt for candidates such as Ron Paul and Dennis Kucinich or third-party candidates who had virtually no chance of winning, without noting that these people may have joined the race in order to publicize divergent views and expand public discussion of the issues.

A year or more ahead of the election, the media reported on the 2008 presidential campaign in terms of the relative size of war chests, what the polls said (although much could change in a year), and the day's score on the game of "Gotcha!" They paid a lot of attention to nebulous personality characteristics—this one's frown and that one's laugh. As of January 2008, media emphasized the drama of political rivalries during two early primaries in Iowa and New Hampshire, two relatively small, mostly rural and white states not very representative of the nation as a whole. By May 2008 the media had dug up or contrived some mini-scandals, mostly guilt by association. In the last months of the campaign, ads went negative and the media dutifully reported on how the McCain-Palin campaign, in particular, was indulging in the politics of personal destruction. When one campaign is clearly more negative than the other, the media usually demonstrates its neutrality by blaming both campaigns for negativity.

But was anybody talking about the most important issues? As of January, 2008, not one of the major candidates was saying anything about climate change and reporters had asked them virtually no questions about this issue. However, once the primary was over the two major candidates did offer programs. Bruce Gagnon of Global Network asked:

Which of the candidates mentions that we've been taken over by the military industrial complex, or offers a plan for conversion of military industries to environmentally sustainable production? Which candidate is talking about the weapons industry's plan to move the arms race into space, which the Pentagon predicts will be "the largest industrial project in the history of the planet Earth?" Which candidate discusses Pentagon plans to occupy the Middle East permanently, invade Iran, fight to control oil in Africa, and surround Russia and China? Which candidate talks about the fact that the United States military is the largest polluter on Earth?

Entertainment coverage did not create well-informed citizens. In June, local political columnist John Brummett said: “You’re hearing only two things these days. One is disdain for the unholy mess the Republicans have made. The other is dread that Obama may be some kind of weirdo. There’s your election. The Republicans only hold the one card, the weirdo card.”

The United States is the Embodiment of Democracy. Another set of myths owes something to a bombastic patriotism which assumes that the United States all by itself invented democracy or representative government, with no credits to the ancient Greeks, English, continental Enlightenment thinkers, Icelanders, the Iroquois Confederacy or anybody else. Not only that, but we still do it by far the best and have nothing to learn from anybody else.

Furthermore, as the world’s foremost example of democracy or representative government, the United States has a mission to bring democracy to the rest of the world, by force if necessary. The defining characteristic of this gift of democracy is introducing regular elections. This myth assumes that one country can impose democracy on another, regardless of the second country’s history, ethnic and religious divisions, or socioeconomic condition. It assumes that elections are always fair and uncorrupted. It also assumes that one size fits all.

Recent attempts by the United States to spread democracy seem to be having the opposite effect, according to Joel Brinkley, a former Pulitzer winner as foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*. Organizations that promote democracy around the world report the most hostile conditions in 25 years. They’re perceived as spies or advocates of regime change through military action. Says Brinkley, “For all his devotion to this issue, Bush has poisoned the brand...his staff has essentially given up.”

U.S. Democracy Is Healthy and Thriving: Augustus B. Cochran III, a lifelong Southerner and professor of political science at the University of North Carolina, said in 2001: “I wish to challenge the conventional wisdom that all is well with democracy in the United States and the world.” Cochran says that U.S. political life has been degenerating for several decades. Problems are evident in the lack of healthy party competition, low citizen participation in politics, and issueless, racialized campaigns. Specifically, he says, the dynamics of national politics has come to resemble the “irrational and undemocratic politics of the old Solid South” in the first half of the 20th century. That dysfunctional system was built on one-party dominance, white supremacy, disenfranchisement of large segments of the population, demagogues, ‘bread and circuses,’ and corruption, while serving the interests of a small elite of planters, bankers, and industrialists.

While to some extent there has been a ‘Dixiefication’ of America, Cochran takes pains to point out that other more significant factors are at work. These include the expanding role of mass media, especially TV; the overwhelming importance of money in elections; heightening racial and ethnic conflicts [even greater since he wrote because of immigration issues]; U.S. transformation from a manufacturing to a service and information economy; and globalization.

In fact Southern states have long exerted an influence over the United States out of proportion to their numbers. Slaves were written into the Constitution to give greater representation to slave-holding states, which lasted until the Civil War. The allocation of two senators to each state regardless of population favors rural states with smaller populations. The tendency of the South to vote as a bloc makes this section the ultimate ‘swing vote.’ Lawrence Velvet, dean of the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover, says:

The South has been a conservative to reactionary stronghold for at least 175 to 180 years....It makes a considerable practical difference, when it comes to war or any other policy, if you start with a large, diehard committed bloc on your side, a bloc that will argue for you, work for you, and needs no convincing, but instead will push for you. The South is such a bloc when it comes to war.

Over the past 40 years the one-party aspect of Solid South politics turned 180 degrees from Democrats to Republicans as a result of the ‘Southern Strategy’ or racial politics begun under Nixon. There is still a strong racial undercurrent underlying the modern Republican ‘base’ of social conservatism that dominates the former Confederacy and some Midwestern and Western states (Neo-borderers). This is also a group strongly disposed to think in totalistic terms of us and them, good and evil. As economist-columnist Paul Krugman commented on the McCain-Palin campaign in October, 2008: “For a long time we have had a substantial fraction of the Republican base that just does not regard the idea of Democrats governing as legitimate.”

The Obama campaign, aided by an economic crisis, successfully made inroads into some of those states considered part of the Republican base. The election of a (self-identified) Black man as President surely marks a turning-point in racialized politics. As conservative columnist Thomas L. Friedman said, “The Civil War is over. Let reconstruction begin.” However, the extreme and often absurd criticisms and conspiracy theories regarding Obama began soon after his inauguration, suggesting a hidden racism.

It can’t happen here. Many people blithely assume that democratic nations just keep rolling along even when their citizens know very little about history or the way their government is set up with checks and balances. Democracy is supposedly also strong enough to survive the belief of many conservatives that government is a bad thing that should be drowned in a bathtub, and that national affairs would work out better if corporations ran everything.

Naomi Wolf, author of *The End of America*, in an interview says that Americans live in a bubble of illusion that

Somehow democracy will just take care of us, and we don’t have to fight to protect democracy. They can mow down democracies all over the world, but somehow we’ll be just fine. [But] we really don’t know what democracy is anymore [and] we’ve let a pundit class take it over. [We] don’t read history in America, so we don’t notice warning signals. We tend not to pay attention to the rest of the world or the past, so we don’t know what the classic scenarios are.

Wolf describes societies that are losing freedoms as “closing.” One classic scenario in closing societies is corrupted elections. Wolf notes that 99 percent of Austrians voted in favor of annexation by Germany, with Nazi agents standing outside the voting booths and next to the people counting the vote. Also she says a common ploy in the past has been to exaggerate threats (such as terrorism) close to an election so that people will be scared and not worry about having a transparent election. Many Democrats feared ‘an October surprise’ in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, perhaps a staged terrorist incident, or else massive, unreported voter fraud, but happily such tactics did not materialize.

Voting is not enough. Citizens must act for deep change in a number of areas of governance if we want to hang on to our democracy in the United States. Professor emeritus Dick Bennett notes that “You and I exemplify We, the People, the fourth branch of government—the civil society—intended to check and direct the other three.”

Part III: Economic Ideologies

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood....Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.

Lord John Maynard Keynes, British economist, 1883-1946

The following will be only a brief sketch of a vast subject. The distribution of Earth's resources and of the income derived from working them is a matter of vital interest to everyone. The problem here, as elsewhere, is that there are a great many different collections of ideas about what the pie is, how it is cut up, and how it should be cut up. My plan here is to identify some ideologies while pointing out a lack of definitions, various contradictions, and a narrow focus that plagues public discussions about economics. I am no economist, but hopefully can at least supply some clarification and context in the following areas:

Chapter 10 has to do with private property. Many people believe that property rights are sacred. Let us consider some aspects of how property came to exist in the first place. That takes us back several centuries to the Enclosure Acts, among other dramas of history, and the idea of the *commons*. The concept of "the tragedy of the commons," based on an article by a scientist, has become a widespread frame based on unexamined assumptions. Also, the enclosure of various kinds of commons is related to *commodification*.

Chapter 11 suggests a broader view of the economic systems that we are constantly comparing. Many assume there are just two opposing economic systems called capitalism on the one hand and socialism or communism on the other. In fact, virtually all nations have *mixed economies*, although the mix is different from one nation to another. Nor is socialism the same thing as communism. Nor is the 'welfare state' the same thing as socialism.

Another confusion is that capitalism is necessarily accompanied by democracy, or that a socialist system cannot also be democratic. Also, the scale of common ownership is important. A city-owned utility or a communal settlement such as a kibbutz is socialism on a different scale from that of a nationalized oil or steel industry. Many oversimplifications and distortions contaminate political-economic discourse. We need definitions.

The section *Cherry-picking Adam Smith* attempts to answer some questions seldom asked, such as how close is modern "free-market capitalism" to the ideas of the eighteenth-century economist Adam Smith, revered by modern conservatives in the United States? Trade is supposed to be free but much of economic activity is controlled by *monopolies*, virtual monopolies, or shared monopolies. How does the existence of monopolies fit in with Adam Smith's ideas about supply and demand, and with the modern ideology "let the market decide"?

In Chapter 12 we survey the *history of corporations* and how they came to be so dominant in our national economy and the world. We then consider the effects of *globalization*. Three different aspects or ideological forms of modern capitalism are *neo-liberalism*, *anarcho-capitalism*, and *disaster capitalism*. These 'kissing cousins' are aggressive ideologies and very dominant in today's world.

Chapter 13 is about the history of working people, and how economic ideologies, monopolies, corporations, globalization, and other aspects of today's economic set-up affect the working person.

CHAPTER 10: PROPERTY

Meum et Tuum, frigidam illad verdom. (Mine and thine: that is a frigid word.)

St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, 347-407

Some consider private property a sacred right. Two hundred years ago, a starving man who stole a sheep to feed his family was likely to be hanged if he was caught. Even today individuals have been known to kill others caught stealing from them, and some juries will acquit them. The very subject itself can rouse people's ire. So where did all this start?

Many kinds of animals demonstrate territoriality, in which the individual or group defends an area that is about the right size to support it. A male bird sings to warn other males away from what he has staked out as his own tree or grove. A band of monkeys may patrol their perimeters daily, screeching a warning at any other monkeys they sight. However, territoriality is not the same as property, which may be either land or something more portable.

Our hunting and gathering ancestors (judging by what is known of modern hunter gatherers) probably concerned themselves more with group territorial rights than with personal property rights. They might defend the rough boundaries, the landmark hills, trees, or rivers of a hunting territory against another tribe's invasion, but it was not usually necessary to defend personal possessions against other members of the same small group of relatives. Their possessions were few, since they moved often and had to travel light, as yet without pack animals.

These early ancestors undoubtedly shared food with other members of the tribe and especially individuals in greater need because of their age or infirmity, or their status as pregnant and nursing mothers. They did not regard private property as a sacred right since the actual owner of the land and of its fruits was believed to be the Great Spirit or animistic spirits of the place, who were kept favorably disposed by various rituals. However a German anthropologist, Wilhelm Schmidt, suggests that a type of individual or family ownership had already begun:

Not the soil itself is directly bequeathed, but rather certain categories of objects which are all somehow related to the soil or directly represent a particular part of the soil... This property is acquired by the acquisition of the first occupant, a man who was the first to discover a valuable and at the same time rare good which, however, is not required for sustaining the life of the community, and therefore in a way permits him individual ownership. He must only inform the community... and everywhere this information is respected by the other individuals and families.

One can imagine this object as a strangely twisted branch, a tortoise shell, a brilliant feather, or a shiny rock. Many of us still collect such things. Schmidt also notes the importance of gift-giving in tribal cultures, especially during family visits in other villages and even encounters with distant tribes. He and others propose that such exchanges of gifts evolved into trade.

After eons of hunter/gatherer societies, animal herding cultures developed in places such as the Near East where tamable animals were available. (Such animals did not exist in most of the Americas or Pacific islands, for example.) Domesticated goats, sheep, and cows are valuable property that easily stray—barbed wire wasn't invented until the 19th century—although the danger of theft in the distant past was probably more from neighboring groups than from within one's own cohesive tribe or clan. Often the tribe might own the herd collectively, as they had hunted and distributed the spoils of the hunt collectively. But later on, larger groups, less closely related and putting more pressure on the land might develop something like "rustling." This

would be a new cause of division between people and lead to violence including feuds, raids, and warfare between tribes or villages.

As for land itself, Schmidt suggests that the real origin of soil ownership began in the early days of agriculture when women began to prepare the soil for planting, sow the seed, and nurture the emerging plants. “The labor she has thus invested in the soil makes the woman the first individual soil owner, which is the entire basis for matriarchy,” says Schmidt. However, a woman’s claim to her own garden patch would be the right of using, not of absolute ownership, and still a very long way from any current notion that everything in the world must be owned by somebody, or from a situation where a few families own almost all of the land, the historical case in most of Latin America.

In the 14th century, the philosopher William of Ockham and Pope John XXII debated whether it was true that Franciscans owned no property, either as individuals or as an order. Pope John said that *dominium* or ownership was established not by human law but by divine law. Even Adam and Eve had *dominium*. However, after the fall, God established individually divided *dominium*. Thus, John insisted, Franciscans logically could not renounce all property but must have *dominium* at least in consumable things such as food and drink.

Ockham replied with his usual close reasoning. (Science still makes use of the principle of “Ockham’s Razor” or parsimony, which basically says that the simplest explanation of an event is more likely to be true than a complicated one.) Ockham noted the difference between natural or moral rights and legal rights. He said that in the state of innocence everyone would have had a natural right to use anything, that this natural right still exists, and it cannot be renounced. But once property has been established by human law, it “tied” that natural right so that except in a situation of extreme necessity, one cannot use another’s property without asking permission.

In actual practice, even a “situation of extreme necessity” does not always trump the property rights established by human law. For instance, in New Orleans after Katrina, people who waded through the flooding to deserted stores for bottled water, food, and medicine were still termed “looters,” especially if they were black.

One of the radical thinkers of the French Revolution, Jean Jacques Rousseau, blasted the entire idea of private property as follows:

The first man who put a fence around a piece of land and put it in his mind to say: this is mine! and who found simpletons who believed him, was the true founder of bourgeois society. How many vices, how many wars, how much murder, misery and grief the person might have prevented who would have torn down the fence posts, filled in the ditches and cried out to his fellow men: Do not believe this trickster! You are lost if you forget that the fruits belong to you all, the soil to no one.

Rousseau was certainly aware of the misery caused by the enclosure movement, which in England lasted from about 1450 to 1850, during which land owners fenced or hedged property to prevent the common people from using the gleanings or firewood as they had done traditionally. In more ancient times the rite of ownership often came through force exerted by enterprising bands of horsemen or by agents of the king who claimed the land or a regular proportion of its fruits as tribute. Pierre Joseph Proudhon, 19th century social critic and one of the founders of anarchist theory, condensed Rousseau’s idea to three words: “Property is theft!”

However, U.S. Libertarians, who on the surface seem related to anarchists such as Proudhon, have quite a different idea, namely that government interference with private ownership is theft. Translated to the words of libertarian economic theory, the first women agriculturists “mixed their labor with” the soil; it was an “original appropriation.” Basic libertarian belief, following

statements by John Locke in the 17th century, is summed up in two axioms. First, every person is a self owner, with absolute jurisdiction over his or her own body. A second axiom is that each person owns whatever resources—not owned previously—he appropriates or “mixes his labor with” (‘homesteading’). These two “natural rights” are then the basis for property rights in a free-market society.

There is one difficulty in applying the second axiom to our densely populated, virtual-reality, modern world. The developed world is composed of land that originally belonged to tribal peoples who did not divide it up into private property. This is true in Europe as well as the United States, although there the transition occurred centuries earlier. Thus “homesteaders” did not *appropriate* empty land but *expropriated* it from hunters, gatherers, and herders. In most cases one group with military superiority seized the land of another group and then devised the structure of ownership over the land they seized. Only the latest structure of ownership is what is ‘sacred.’ This process has been going on since time immemorial and is not over yet.

In fact, there are hardly any places and nature-given goods left that a person could appropriate because it is unused. Entrepreneurs have their eyes on Antarctica and even on planets and other heavenly bodies. There is also a catch in the word “unused.” Historically, agricultural peoples and colonizers have displaced hunter/gathering peoples with the justification that the hunters were not using the land efficiently. Note that by the same argument, putting up condominiums might be more efficient or at least more profitable than single-family residences. That is very close to the argument the Supreme Court used in the *Kelo v City of New London* eminent domain case.

It is still a common idea that the most intensive technology is (in real estate terms) “the highest and best use.” But as it usually happens, the more intensive the technology, the more destructive it is of the land and natural resources, and the faster everything is used up. Meanwhile, the consuming population grows.

The natural rights concept also leads to the idea that we should put everything on earth to immediate productive use. Yet there are reasons to hold some things in reserve, for instance, agricultural land left fallow to restore its fertility. This agricultural method is at least as old as the Bible, which recommended it every seven years. Wilderness should be left as is not only to preserve certain species but also genetic diversity itself. As the great conservationist David Brower pointed out, “The wilderness we have now is all that we, and all people, will ever have.”

Libertarians recognize that most or all property was at some point seized in violation of the homestead principle (stolen), but they blame this entirely on the state and have few practical suggestions except to ‘privatize’ everything—which in the present state of affairs actually means ownership by corporations.

The Property Rights Movement

As soon as the land of any country has all become private property, the landlords, like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed.

Adam Smith, Scottish moral philosopher, 1723-1790

Property-rights advocates say that the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution have been greatly eroded over the last century by regulatory restrictions. Steven J. Eagle, law professor at George Mason University, says this occurred in large part because of a Supreme Court decision in 1926 that upheld restrictive zoning.

A rebuttal to property-rights arguments comes from Donovan D. Rypkema who describes himself as a “real estate capitalist Republican type.” Rypkema points out that from the business viewpoint, real estate is unique because of the impact of land use on surrounding property, and the fact that the main source of a parcel’s economic value is external to its boundaries. “It is a property’s location which provides most of its economic value. [This value] comes from beyond the property lines from the investments others—usually taxpayers—have made.” This value includes infrastructure such as roads, bridges, utilities, and parks.

Land-use regulations also affect property values. For example, a friend who was recently elected mayor of a small town says that property values in his town are very much depressed compared to the adjoining town due mainly to a number of junkyards on the highway leading into the town. Rypkema says that 150 years of U.S. court decisions support public regulation of private land, and that most land use restrictions are local rather than federal. He accuses property-rights advocates of hypocrisy:

Those who loudly proclaim, “It’s my land and you can’t tell me what to do with it” are quick to appear before City Council when... a sanitary land fill is proposed next to their cottage. And their argument [will be] “That action will have an adverse effect on my property value, and you, City Council members, need to prevent that.”

On the other hand, property owners do need protection from overuse of eminent domain and aggrandizing entrepreneurs seeking mineral or gas rights`. Governments in many parts of the world are quick to condemn the property of relatively poor people in order to build a giant dam or a tourist mecca. They often fail to protect the communal property rights of indigenous people against the loggers, miners, and ranchers who would take over their land. A coalition of Texas community leaders recently sued the Department of Homeland Security concerning part of the Mexican boundary fence, claiming that the government trampled rights of property owners in acquiring land. The suit also included news reports that the fence will bypass a resort owned by a billionaire friend of President Bush.

Many people who would not consider themselves property-rights activists were disturbed by the 2005 Supreme Court decision in *Kelo vs. City of New London* allowing a city government to replace a viable working-class neighborhood with new business development that could raise greater revenue for the city. Clearly, there should be legal clarity and limits on what governments on any level can do to regulate or take private land.

Let us give Ambrose Bierce the last word on the subject of private property as real estate (from *The Devil’s Dictionary*):

Land, n: A part of the earth’s surface, considered as property. The theory that land is property subject to private ownership and control is the foundation of modern society....Carried to its logical conclusion, it means that some have the right to prevent others from living; for the right to own implies the right exclusively to occupy; and in fact laws of trespass are enacted wherever property in land is recognized. It follows that if the whole area of terra firma is owned by A, B, and C, there will be no place for D, E, F, and G to be born, or, born as trespassers, to exist.

Bierce seems to have found the basic paradox at the heart of this concept.

The Commons

*The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose.*

Anonymous, 18th century

Joy Hanson describes the commons as “any resource used as though it belongs to all. In other words, when anyone can use a shared resource simply because one wants or needs to use it, then one is using a commons.” The commons is defined by Jonathon Rowe as “the part of life that lies outside both the market and the state” and is more basic than either because it is part of our life support and social systems. It is sunshine and the air we breathe.

In *Models, Myths, and Muddles* we described the historical process of enclosure, especially in England from the 15th to 19th centuries, in which landowners fenced off common land and turned it into private property, often to raise sheep. Government aided this early form of privatization despite the great social cost to the poorer half of the population. Scottish law professor James Boyle says the enclosure movement “offers irresistible ironies about the two-edged sword of ‘respect for property.’ And lessons about the way in which the state defines and enforces property rights to promote controversial social goals.”

We are in what some call a second enclosure movement. Boyle says “once again things that were formerly thought of as either common property or uncommodifiable are being covered with new, or newly extended, property rights.” Examples of this are the human genome, the oceans, and electromagnetic frequencies.

Some of the resistance to economic globalization is about privatization of the commons especially of poorer countries. Vandana Shiva, an Indian intellectual and environmental activist, is concerned about global corporations which patent biological materials from less-developed nations. She believes corporations are stealing and making profits from the Earth’s common biological inheritance shared by all humanity. Shiva is also concerned about corporate attempts to privatize water. She has written about these issues in *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (2001) and *Water Wars: Pollution, Profits and Privatization* (2002).

In this process of enclosure or privatization, how much “mixing” is necessary, in the Libertarian view, to produce a property right in an unclaimed resource—is it enough to plant a flagpole on the Moon? There is already a movement to promote private property rights in space. The United States, Russia, and China have not yet signed nor ratified the 1979 international agreement that declared the Moon to be “the common heritage of mankind.” Few other nations have done so, according to Space.Projects.com.

Commodification

To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

Revelation 21:6

Commodification is the assigning of economic value to something, or turning something not previously thought of in economic terms into something to trade. For instance, farmers sell plain field stones to city folk who want to decorate their yards, and bags of topsoil are for sale in home improvement and big box stores. In my childhood nobody thought of selling stones or bags of

dirt (and during the Depression, they would have if they could have). A slogan for this trend would be, “Everything’s for sale.” People who think of new things to sell are highly regarded in American culture, although the something commodified was often previously part of the commons that belonged to everyone. Expansion of market trade into new areas can also have serious social consequences. Some controversial issues of commodification have to do with selling organs for transplants, commercial surrogate motherhood, and the sale of human ova.

Commodification of sex refers not only to prostitution and pornography but also to advertising that depends on sexual images, films containing soft-core porn, and the sale of inappropriately sexy clothing for little girls. Not only does the Internet spread frank pornography far and wide; the abundance of hyper-sexual images on billboards, television, films, and magazines have transmitted the "Girls Gone Wild" memes for sexual exhibitionism to young women, many of whom, obsessed with being ‘hot,’ have the notion that posting nudity and sex acts online somehow empowers them.

‘Commercialization’ of holidays is one form of commodification. People used to make their own Valentine cards and Christmas decorations and sing their own Christmas carols instead of hearing them incessantly from store loudspeakers until the once lovely songs start to drive them crazy. Holiday sales account for much of the nation’s retail earning, which in turn drives the economy. For many years people have complained about the commercialization of important holidays, yet every year the length and intensity of special decorations and sales increases.

The commodification of information threatens everyone’s privacy. For instance, Google and Microsoft are taking steps toward the new industry of managing electronic health records that may also contain your personal genetic sequence. Jesse Reynolds, who directs the project on Biotechnology in the Public Interest, says potential problems include the fact that important personal information will move outside your control, possibly divulged to employers, insurers, and spouses. “What if a father learns that he is not genetically related to his child? What if these results are inaccurate?” Without medical counseling, you may find it hard to deal with the implications and sometimes inaccurate results of what you learn from this industry, for example, if you discover you have the gene for a fatal condition.

There is a race to commodify those parts of the Earth which have so far escaped. For instance an article in the Sunday supplement *Parade* describes competition to control the Arctic, “a key to global wealth and power in the 21st century.” Harper’s Index says that an estimated one-fifth of the world’s undiscovered petroleum lies under Arctic ice. Ironically, the reason that the region’s vast oil and gas reserves are now becoming accessible is that global warming is melting the ice that covered it, allowing shipping routes. Thus global warming would allow us to accelerate global warming, if we are so short-sighted.

Five nations—Denmark, Canada, Russia, Norway, and the United States—are saber rattling over the Arctic. In another irony, the United States is falling behind in this race because it is the only nation connecting to the Arctic that has not ratified the Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty supported by oil and shipping companies, the Bush administration—and also by environmentalists because of provisions for protecting the Ocean. A group of Senators has long blocked ratification because, according to Sen. David Vitter of Louisiana, it would “hand a portion of our national security matters to the UN.”

Richard Morgan says in *Wired* that this “Cold Rush” to the Arctic is a prelude to colonizing the moon, which could be mined for a rare isotope, helium-3 that might be an ideal fuel for fusion reactors. Joanne Gabrynowicz, an expert in international space law, says: “The seabed, high seas, Antarctica, and space are, as a matter of law, global commons. What happens in one

can be argued to be legal precedent in the others.” The United States, Japan, and Russia have already announced plans to set up moon bases between 2020 and 2032, and China is interested. Besides the helium-3 and possibly other ores, Morgan says “The moon is perfect practice for conquest of Mars, the Asteroid Belt, and moons of Jupiter, Saturn, and beyond. In human history, anywhere there’s value, there are eventually property rights.”

Some commodification issues are so important and so far-reaching that they need to be dealt with on a species level, that is, by some mechanism that transcends even the UN. One of these is the patenting of living matter.

“Tragedy of the Commons”

The population problem has no technical solution; it requires a fundamental extension in morality.

Garrett Hardin, American biologist, 1915-2003

Garrett Hardin's 1968 essay in *Science* magazine titled "The Tragedy of the Commons" has been a source of controversy ever since it was printed. Although Hardin's subject was population growth, some have read his essay as advocating the privatization of the commons. This is odd because several parts of his essay explicitly reject the privatization approach. Since so many misunderstood his use of the word “commons,” Hardin later said that he should have titled the essay “The Tragedy of the Unregulated Commons.” In fact, the most common solution to over-exploitation of a resource is regulation rather than privatization.

Hardin's basic point was that the combination of free access and unrestricted demand for a finite resource ultimately dooms the resource. That is the effect on various local and global commons of a continually increasing population. However, some resources are depleted due to large-scale economic exploitation of the resource rather than directly to population growth. Some examples of unsustainable use of resources are overfishing, slash and burn agriculture, the destruction of the Amazon forest by loggers, gold-miners, and poor farmers, and depletion of petroleum deposits to the point of Peak Oil, after which prices rise inexorably.

Hardin's basic metaphor was the grazing commons, an unfortunate choice because the historical commons in England that ended with enclosures was indeed regulated. It was not open to everyone but only to local people in the parish who had grazing rights—‘commoners’—and it was governed by custom and tradition that limited the number of grazing beasts according to yearly conditions.

Psychologist Dennis Fox says that cooperative behavior is more common in smaller groups, and that “the upper limit for a simple, self-contained, sustaining, well-functioning commons may be as low as 150 people.” This upper limit has been called ‘Dunbar's number,’ because a similar number was proposed by British anthropologist Robin Dunbar in 1992 to describe the number of people one knows and has social contact with. Dunbar said “this limit is a direct function of relative neocortex size.... the limit imposed by neocortical processing capacity is simply on the number of individuals with whom a stable inter-personal relationship can be maintained.” Dunbar's number demonstrates the overlooked importance of the ‘human scale’ in human affairs.

CHAPTER 11: ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

The truth is we are all caught in a great economic system which is heartless.

Woodrow T. Wilson, 28th U.S. president, 1856-1924

First, let us define some terms. Way too much propaganda surrounds the words ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’ which are laden with ideological and emotional connotations. In the United States, many associate ‘capitalism’ with Christianity or democracy, and ‘socialism’ with atheism or authoritarianism. On the other hand, dissident cartoonists in the 1930s depicted capitalists as fat men in top hats who sit on a money bag like an exercise ball, while socialists are muscular saviors. Conservatives often use the word ‘socialist’ to mean any unwarranted government regulation or interference, or even as an equivalent to ‘fascist.’ However, a political scientist says that simply as an economic concept, socialism “is independent of political concepts like democracy and authoritarianism as well as of theological notions like atheism (as in ‘Godless Marxism’) or religiosity (as in Christian or Jewish socialism).” Here let us describe these two systems simply in terms of their economic structure.

Capitalism is an economic system based on voluntary wage labor, in which the means of production (factory, machines, and supplies) are mostly owned privately and operated for profit, and in which production and pricing of goods and services occurs through the operation of a free market. Because of capitalist emphasis on a market which ideally coordinates everybody’s individual decisions, modern capitalist countries are often called ‘market’ economies.

The first defining characteristic of capitalism is that humans sell their potential to do labor, for a definite period of time, to an employer in a ‘market’ large enough so that the worker is free to choose among employers. This contrasts with the previous economic system of feudalism, where the serf had no choice of job or employer. Capitalism is named for the fact that some people (the owners or employers) have accumulated capital; that is, they have wealth to invest. This allows them to hire others and provide them with tools and raw materials to work with. The third characteristic of capitalism, the free market, we discuss below.

Capitalism replaced feudalism in the 16th to 19th centuries to become the dominant economic system of the Western world and the main engine of industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the term ‘capitalism’ has been applied to a great variety of historical cases from mercantilism to globalization. It also gave rise to a number of different theories that explain or justify it. At the same time that some economists describe the current economic system of the West as ‘monopoly capitalism,’ others increasingly promote the idea of free markets and competition as if monopolies did not exist.

Socialism is defined as an economic system based on collective or public ownership of the means of production and distribution of wealth. There are many different interpretations of the term ‘socialism.’ Before Karl Marx, early 19th century socialism, as proposed by social critics such as Louis Blanc, Robert Owen, Saint-Simon, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, was utopian and gradualist. Later examples of non-Marxist socialist movements are: syndicalism, built on worker’s unions (in the American version, the Industrial Workers of the World or IWW); Fabian Socialism in Britain; decentralized or ‘village socialism’; democratic socialist parties that participate in elections; and, to some degree, the New Left.

For Marxist socialists, socialism requires nationalization of natural resources, basic industries, public utilities, and banking facilities. National ownership means central planning, in a system described as a ‘command’ economy. Some other socialists favor decentralized collective ownership such as worker’s collectives or cooperatives. Social democrats and advocates of ‘market socialism’ would nationalize only key industries or would exert social control within the framework of a mixed economy.

Modern social democrats dropped the Marxist idea of revolution a century ago, preferring to work through the parliamentary process to create a more egalitarian society. They support fair trade over free trade, an extensive system of social support (welfare state) with moderate to high taxes to support this, and the regulation of business in the interests of consumers, workers, environment, and greater competition. They also value a secular, progressive social policy, multiculturalism, human rights, and civil rights. Sweden is an example of a social democracy with a mixed economy that has prospered in recent decades. Sweden currently has low unemployment, low national debt, low cost of living, and low infant mortality, with one of the world’s longest life expectancies.

Communism: Many Americans fail to make a distinction between socialism and communism. Anti-communism has existed in this country since the early 1920s and it became a national faith during the Cold War. Meanwhile, people have forgotten an era in the early 1900s when home-grown socialists were winning elections. However, there are basic differences between socialism and communism:

- socialist plan of reform versus communist strategy of revolution
- socialist aim of gradual evolution to socialism or a welfare state in a mixed economy versus communist aim of full collectivization of all resources and production
- socialist concern for democracy and democratic procedures versus a communist tendency to develop a bureaucratic ruling class or become frankly totalitarian.

Socialist-inspired governments evolved mostly in western, industrial democracies in Europe and Canada. Communist governments arose in underdeveloped, feudalistic countries with no experience of parliamentary democracy, where peasants demanded land reform. Most socialists would regard the USSR as having been a totalitarian government that never achieved socialism.

With the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Communist Party became a separate branch of the broad socialist movement, and it in turn grew several branches or interpretations of communism such as Leninist, Maoist, and Trotskyist. The Communist revolutions in Russia and China were widely imitated in other countries that had a large peasant class where a few families owned most of the land. In the early 1980s almost one-third of the world’s people lived under Communism in countries such as China, U.S.S.R., Cuba, North Korea, North Vietnam, Laos, Angola, and Mozambique.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, about one-fourth of the world’s people still live in communist states. Marxist revolutionaries currently conduct insurgencies against the governments of India, Philippines, Iran, Turkey, and Colombia. It is obviously incorrect to act as if communism disappeared from the Earth when the USSR broke up. However, communist countries such as the People’s Republic of China, Laos, Vietnam, and Cuba have lately introduced market-oriented enterprises to stimulate economic growth. China’s rapidly growing economy has been called ‘market socialism’ and ‘state capitalism.’

Small ‘c’ communism: Quite distinct from Marxism or communist governments is the religious communism or communalism practiced by monks and nuns in several world religions. This type of communism characterizes the family and also many utopian religious societies throughout history including the Essenes and the Apostles: “All who owned property or houses sold them and lay them at the feet of the apostles to be distributed to everyone according to his need.” (Acts 4:32-35). Such communalism reflects family love and mutual obligations or a similar spiritual kinship, with shared commitments and principles. It seems to be limited to relatively small groups (perhaps Dunbar’s number applies here).

While not specifically religious, the Diggers—a group of agrarian communists in mid-17th century England—did abjure the use of force. After the English Civil War ended in 1651 with the execution of Charles I, the Diggers movement advocated communal ownership of land and they began to cultivate the common land. Like several other groups, the Diggers expected social reforms after the war ended. Enclosure was still underway and food prices were very high at the time. But local landowners wanted to claim the common lands. Legal harassment and mob violence finally defeated the Diggers.

Such small ‘c’ and small-scale, idealistic communism may seem far removed from 20th century Communist regimes. But despite the horrors committed by the likes of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, it is worth noting that the *ideal* of modern communist movements is actually a noble and ancient one. The ideas of sharing resources and “from each according to his ability to each according to his need” are very attractive to people subsisting at the bottom of an economic pyramid. Those Americans who view every aspect of communism as evil should ask themselves if some poor peasant family living on marginal land is likely to find inspiration in the idea that everybody acting selfishly is by some Divine Providence guided into the greater good for society. These *laissez-faire* notions do not fit their experiences.

Mixed Economies: There is hardly a pure market economy or pure command economy in the world today or even in the past. Almost all the world’s economies are mixed economies that combine aspects of both governmental enterprise and private enterprise to varying degrees. The United States is a mixed economy tilted towards capitalism. In the last two decades, most of the world’s planned economies such as China and Russia began to move toward a market economy. The mix is different—but all were and still are mixed economies. Even the most collectivized country allows a certain amount of small-scale buying and selling, peddlers and street markets. Even the most capitalist country has some regulation or corporate subsidies as well as government-run schools, police, and road-building. In the financial crisis of fall 2008, the U.S. government made a number of moves, such as ‘bailing out’ shaky industries and purchasing bank securities to free up credit, that led some observers to suggest that the country’s economic system was actually “corporate socialism.”

The economic mix in the United States is evident from even a superficial look around your own community. For instance, in my town of about 70,000 people the biggest employer is a state university funded by public tax money as well as by tuition. But colleges, like the public school system, library, and the city’s parks, are hardly socialist in the traditional sense. Schools are not industrial ‘means of production’ unless you are one of those who want to view school graduates as ‘products.’ (In which case, who is the ‘consumer’?)

In this country, water and sewer systems are, so far, regarded as a service better managed by municipalities than by capitalists. That may be changing. Thom Hartmann says that one in

twenty Americans gets tap water from a private, foreign-owned corporation. My town still provides its own water. Some cities own their own electric utilities; these usually offer lower electric rates than corporate owned utilities. Our local utilities are privately owned.

Road construction and maintenance is another service funded by taxes (city, state, and federal). The city bus system, like those in most other cities, is heavily subsidized. My city supports and manages its police, firefighters, trash collection, recycling, and animal services. The University has its own small police department. County and state law enforcement officers usually work in the smaller towns and unincorporated areas. People in the countryside have volunteer fire departments.

Our court system is located in the County Courthouse. Here in the Southern states, the county is a more important governmental entity than elsewhere in the nation. The federal government is visible here in the form of two post office buildings, a large VA hospital, and a federal building that includes the Congressperson's office. The state maintains several local offices such as the Employment Office and Department of Human Services.

There are a few factories in my town, but most businesses are retail—small, locally-owned stores, restaurants, and services, or chain outlets with all the old familiar names. Some local stores are not capitalist enterprises. When a small chain of supermarkets was going out of business, its employees bought it. Someone might consider this now-thriving, worker-owned grocery business to be socialist although nobody has publicly expressed any ideological objection to their neighbors owning these stores. Several smaller businesses are worker collectives owned by their employees.

Cooperatives, owned by and with input from their customers, are a “third way” between capitalism and socialism. There are at least three successful cooperatives in my town. One is a large natural foods grocery that has been operating for almost 40 years and has several thousand members. Another is a credit union associated with the university. A third is a farmer's coop that sells feed and farm supplies. There are also non-profit businesses including the city's main hospital. Half a dozen secondhand or ‘thrift’ stores are set up as non-profits to raise money for a charitable organization, and there are probably other examples.

Some local economic exchanges are not counted or taxed, including informal barter trades, lemonade stands, garage sales, baby-sitting, lawn mowing, and snow shoveling. Also, people are often paid ‘under the table’ to avoid taxes or regulations. Certain common transactions are illegal: the sale of marijuana and illegal drugs is estimated to be one of the largest businesses nationally and internationally, and probably is locally. Prostitution exists here, and probably illegal transfer of weapons. All these activities together, both legal and illegal, are known as the underground economy, defined as “Commerce that escapes notice by the government.”

A great deal of work is not even considered to be part of the economic system. Everything that people do at home for their families, from cooking a meal, fixing a car, changing a diaper, weeding the garden, painting a room, or taking out the trash, is unpaid and performed out of love and mutual obligations. Child-raising and taking care of sick or disabled relatives demonstrates communism with a small ‘c’ according to the ideal: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.” Helping friends and neighbors, volunteering—these are other ways that people perform work without monetary recompense. It is neither capitalism nor socialism, and comprises a large amount of all work that is performed.

I have no way of knowing how many people in our town receive Social Security checks or military pensions, Medicaid, college loans and grants, mortgage exemptions, food stamps, and other forms of benefits or subsidies from various levels of government. Most food stamps go to

low-income families with children. In my county and the next one there are an estimated 14,000 children living below poverty level and eligible for food stamps. Note that Social Security is not a “giveaway” program but rather a mandatory annuity plan to which each employee contributes throughout his or her working life. College loans are meant to be repaid. Mortgage exemptions were intended to encourage home ownership but they are not limited to first homes and have almost no cap. Froma Harrop notes that “You can deduct all the interest paid on a \$1 million mortgage, whether it bought a McMansion, a beach house or both.”

In my town certain unpopular decisions about land-use, the location of new schools, or the erecting of tall buildings out of scale with their surroundings are attributed to the political or corrupt influence of developers. A variety of special interests interfere with the free market. Agricultural subsidies sometimes reach family members living in towns; several local individuals are listed as receiving these. (The USDA spends almost ten times more on corporate farm subsidies than on food stamps.) With more knowledge of financial matters, I would be able to demonstrate various tax-dodges, corporate hand-outs, and regulations originating at the state and federal level that favor certain individuals, businesses, or types of businesses in my town.

One thing that makes an economy not only mixed but also mixed-up is the way that standard economic accounting eliminates “externalities.” Economists don't count the infrastructure that makes a business possible—the existence of roads and railroads, water systems and utilities, educated work force—much of this paid for by public taxes. Neither do they count consequences as part of the equation—pollution, depletion of scarce resources, or the social results of manufacturing firearms or sugary cereals. In a truly ‘free’ market with proper accounting, social and environmental costs and other externalities would be factored into the cost of products.

The Welfare State: The concept of the welfare state goes back at least to 11th century China, during the Sung Dynasty, when Prime Minister Wang Anshi became the most famous reformer in Chinese history (although many of his reforms were resisted and sabotaged by traditionalists). Anshi strongly felt that the state should provide its citizens with the basics of a decent living, so he set up boards to regulate wages and plan pensions for the elderly and unemployed. He introduced a more equitable taxation based on the land’s productivity. Anshi also offered peasant farmers agricultural loans at low interest rates to help them through years of crop losses, instead of interest rates of 60-70% from money-lenders. Although welfare is a perfectly good word, appearing in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, it has developed very bad connotations. It is identified with specific programs in the United States such as AFDC and food stamps, not with middle-class subsidies such as the mortgage exemption, nor with corporate subsidies.

Americans generally know little about how social welfare works in Europe or even Canada. Modern welfare states developed gradually from the late 19th century in Bismarck’s Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, and after World War II in the UK, France, and other countries. Social Democrats or Labor Parties often lead countries with extensive social welfare systems. Common benefits are health services, mother’s allowances, old-age pensions, and unemployment payments. A mother’s allowance is given to all mothers of young children, not only to the poor ones. Also there are often generous provisions for parents to have paid leave during a child’s infancy. Social welfare is usually provided by a combination of charities or other non-profit organizations, mutualist or cooperative organizations, state-sponsored agencies or companies, and a central or local government

Economist James K. Galbraith lists some of the myths about European welfare states, such as that they have more unemployment. He says that while poorer countries with greater income

inequalities such as Spain, Greece, and Poland do have high unemployment, the countries that have more equality (Denmark, Norway) have slightly less unemployment than the United States.

One would expect developed countries to have more welfare provisions than poor countries; this is generally true. But a table comparing developed economies with each other does not show much correlation between economic performance and welfare spending. Galbraith points out:

The higher levels of social expenditure in the European Union are not associated with lower growth, lower productivity, or higher unemployment, nor with higher growth, higher productivity, or lower unemployment. Likewise, the pursuit of free market policies leads neither to guaranteed prosperity nor to social collapse.

A table accompanying Galbraith's 2005 article compares each country's percentage of GDP used for national welfare expenditures with its per capita GDP, that is, what proportion of national income goes for welfare (2001). Belgium and Australia both have a per capita GDP of about \$25,500, yet Belgium spends 27.2 percent of national GDP on welfare, while Australia spends only 18 percent. In another example, Luxembourg and Hungary both spend about 20 percent of GDP on welfare, although the average person in Luxembourg has \$53,780 as his/her share of national income while the average person in Hungary has only \$12,340.

The United States in 2001 shows the second highest per capita income at \$34,320, but is fourth from the bottom of a list of 29 developed nations in the amount of national GDP spent on social welfare (14.8 percent). The idea of the welfare state is especially controversial in this country, opposed from viewpoints ranging from moral and religious to economic, especially by libertarians, Calvinists, business people, advocates of the free market, and other conservatives. Nevertheless, quite a few social welfare institutions remain in effect from the Progressive Era in the early 1900s, the New Deal in the 1930s, and the War on Poverty in the 1960s.

Arguing against another myth, Galbraith says that European welfare states don't actually transfer more wealth to the poor than the United States does. For one thing, while about one-third of U.S. retirees rely largely on private pension plans or savings plans, in Europe pensions are almost all public. This includes pensions of workers with top incomes. Thus a greater proportion of public benefits go to the top 20 percent or 10 percent of earners than do here, because they have paid more in. (Presumably it would be the same in this country if Congress removed the cap from the amount of income subject to Social Security. Some claim this action would also solve any problem of Social Security insolvency during the years of Baby Boomer retirement.)

Public spending on healthcare is almost as much in the United States as in Europe, but here it covers only the poor through Medicaid and the elderly and disabled through Medicare. Galbraith says, "Here again, European workers are paying mostly for their own care, while the U.S. system takes from those who work to care for those who don't [which] may help explain why Americans tend to resent their system and Europeans do not."

Galbraith says that while there are admirable social programs in some European countries, Europeans do not have an ideal model. On the other hand, we often overlook what the United States does have in the way of good public institutions. (He is in favor of improving and expanding these.) They are built on past social welfare measures dating back to the homesteads and land-grant universities established in 1862, and include Social Security, minimum wage, TVA that brought electricity to an economically-depressed region, civil rights and voting rights in the '60s that helped bring Blacks into the mainstream of society, Medicare and Medicaid, and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—"a middle-class housing subsidy." He notes that "Free-market fundamentalism isn't what got [suburbanites] into their houses. Love the suburbs or despise

them, they were built and maintained by the American welfare state.” (These two financial corporations between them had supported the spread of middle-class housing since 1938. As of 2008, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac owned or guaranteed about half of the U.S.'s \$12 trillion mortgage market. But since Galbraith wrote, the two institutions developed grave financial problems and were put under federal conservatorship.)

The Managed Economy: As previously mentioned, because monarchies have predominated in history, so have command economies. The managed economy is neither new, nor is it limited to socialist governments. *Mercantilism*, the first form of capitalism, involved a good deal of government intervention and control over the economy. Mercantilism was the main economic view from the 16th to 18th centuries in Europe. The mercantile system depended on each ruling government playing a protectionist role, to encourage exports and discourage imports by using tariffs. For mercantilists, it was all about keeping a stockpile of money at home (bullion). Mercantilists favored a positive balance of trade with other countries so as to increase capital in one's own nation. Obviously, trade was a matter of winners and losers, a zero-sum game.

The theory reflected and influenced other beliefs of the time that pitted some against others, such as Niccolò Machiavelli's *realpolitik* and the works of Thomas Hobbes. Wikipedia notes “This dark view of human nature also fit well with the Puritan view of the world, and some of the most stridently mercantilist legislation, such as the Navigation Acts, was introduced by the government of Oliver Cromwell.” The nation against nation competitiveness of mercantilism served to encourage European wars, and there were many such wars in this period. Also it promoted imperialism, with the European powers fighting over possible markets, resources, and sources of gold and silver in newly discovered parts of the world.

The United States did not at first follow the classical economics of Adam Smith and others, but rather held to a form of neo-mercantilism called the “***American School***” in the policies of Hamilton, Clay, Lincoln and the Republican Party, up until the New Deal. Southern economic thinkers such as John Calhoun promoted free trade because they believed it helped the agrarian South in the sectional competition with the industrial North. Modern economists generally reject mercantilist ideas, and “protectionism” has become a bad word. However, the prominent economist John Maynard Keynes supported certain mercantile ideas such as the importance of a favorable balance of trade and the necessity for some government intervention.

Since World War II, one finds many examples of government intervention, neo-mercantilism, and economic nationalism in countries that are basically capitalist, for instance, “***dirigisme***” in France. In order to reconstruct their war-torn country, modernize, and to move from a pre-war economy of many smaller, family-owned companies to a more internationally competitive system like that of the United States or Germany, successive French governments for over three decades strongly regulated and participated in the economy. They encouraged mergers and “national champions” or large industries backed by the government. In other words, France deliberately went from a more freely competitive, Adam Smith type of economic structure in order to compete with nations that were more monopolistic.

Also the French government, mostly under center-right governments rather than socialist ones, sought control over basic infrastructure, transportation, electric and gas utilities, defense, and the aerospace and nuclear industries. For instance, the government owned the national railway company and the national airline, Air France. During “Thirty Glorious Years” from 1945 to 1975, France saw unprecedented economic growth, but setbacks in the early 1980s led the government to reject *dirigisme*, although it still operates in many areas.

Most modern economies exhibit some degree of *dirigisme* in subsidizing research and development of new technologies, giving tax breaks and subsidies to certain industries, and setting up government procurement policies. However, favoring individual firms, failure to oversee or prosecute firms under existing laws, allowing representatives of industry to draft legislation, and many other practices we have seen recently in the United States might be regarded as a negative form of *dirigisme*, more corrupting than directing.

Economic dirigisme characterized historic fascist regimes such as Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, but those regimes also exhibited many other distinctive traits such as militarism, hypernationalism, and totalitarianism.

Government intervention to a lesser degree than dirigisme is described as *economic nationalism* and may involve various means to protect the domestic economy such as tariffs, currency controls, or preventing takeovers by foreign firms. These measures are the opposite of unrestricted free trade on the international level (globalization). Some recent examples from the United States are the use of tariffs to protect domestic production of steel; Congressional opposition to a takeover bid for Unocal by a Chinese company and its subsequent takeover by Chevron; and political opposition to selling port management of six major seaports to a company based in the United Arab Emirates.

Military Keynesianism

When war production finally started up in late 1940 it became a huge engine for the reemployment of the American work force, the real cure for the depressed job markets of the 1930s. Subsequently, American world power and full employment would align in a way that won the loyalty of several generations of working-class voters.

Mike Davis, "Can Obama See the Grand Canyon?"

An economy may become so dependent on military spending that successive governments continue the nation's military and imperial ambitions in order to avoid economic recession or collapse. Chalmers Johnson says such an economy often leads to actual war. The original Keynesian prescription was rather different. English economist John Maynard Keynes, a liberal capitalist, developed policies during the 1930s Depression that would smooth out the boom-and-bust cycles so prevalent in past history with its recurrent 'panics.' Keynes proposed using government spending—even taking on debt—in order to put people back to work in hard times (this was called "pump-priming" after the technique of running water through the system to get the pump going). When prosperity returned, the idea was that government would cut this spending and pay down its debt. This is the ideology behind 'stimulus' bills.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt put Keynesian measures into effect including large public works projects and other government-financed jobs in the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) and Work Projects Administration (W.P.A.) Not only did these jobs keep a lot of families afloat (my own father taught in a W.P.A. adult education program) but such projects also built and repaired a lot of infrastructure. However, conservative capitalists opposed and oppose this counter-cyclical spending as interfering with Adam Smith's "invisible hand."

World War II brought a new situation. Both Germany and the United States overcame their part of the global Depression in large part because of increased government spending—on weapons and military goods. By raising the incomes of workers, this manufacturing had a multiplier effect on consumer spending. Also, armies absorbed many workers, to become an employer of last resort for many young men with few skills or education, "like Roosevelt's

Civilian Conservation Corps, but on a much larger scale” says Johnson. Soon after World War II ended, the Cold War and the Korean War began. The arms industry did not wind down and government spending did not stop. In his 1961 farewell address, President Eisenhower warned:

We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone more than the net income of all United States corporations. This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. . . . We must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

As Eisenhower feared, prosperity became increasingly dependent on the war machine. In the minds of voters, says Johnson, “military supremacy and economic security became increasingly intertwined. No one wanted to turn off the pump.” Some of the same people who were outraged by New Deal instances of plowing under corn or killing pigs in order to keep farm prices up, did not object to pointless and dangerous manufactures to keep the whole economy growing. The self-interest of manufacturers and attachment to the military industrial complex because of economic fears together led to the aggressive nationalism and recurring wars of the last 60 years.

Today military spending has reached the highest levels since World War II and consumes 40 percent of every tax dollar, according to the National Priorities Project, a non-profit research organization. In addition, the United States is the world’s largest arms dealer, accounting for more than half of the global trade. In 2005 this country exported \$18.55 billion worth of tanks, fighter planes, and other military equipment.

As but one example of the vast amounts of money spent, Johnson says that between 1940 and 1996 the United States spent almost \$4.5 trillion dollars on nuclear weapons. In 1967, the country owned 32,000 deliverable bombs, yet none were ever used. Today the reported defense budget of the United States, large as it is, does not include \$16.4 billion for DOE spending on nuclear weapons in 2006, \$69.1 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, \$69.8 billion for the VA to cover lifetime care of the seriously wounded, or an estimated \$206.7 billion in interest payments on defense-related debts that go back to World War I. Such expenditures almost double the official budget.

Since military Keynesianism does not cut back spending during good times, as the original prescription requires, it is the main cause of the United States’ ballooning national debt. And while military spending creates economic growth, it also wastes huge amounts of finite resources, ultimately impoverishing a country. It can crowd out the civilian economy and lead to the loss of manufacturing jobs to other countries. Johnson cites a report in May, 2007 by the Center for Economic and Policy Research indicating that a significant rise in military spending has negative economic effects by about the sixth year:

Sooner or later, higher military spending forces inflation and interest rates up, reducing demand in interest-sensitive sectors of the economy, notably in annual car and truck sales. Job losses follow Most economic models show that military spending diverts resources from productive uses, such as consumption and investment, and ultimately slows economic growth and reduces employment.

Despite all the talk about free trade, one could see the United States as having a form of managed economy that is based on military Keynesianism.

CHAPTER 12: MODERN CAPITALISM

Liberal trade is nothing but enhanced competition.

The Economist, June 28, 2003

To allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment...would result in the demolition of society....Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled. [No] society could stand the effects of such a system.

Karl Polanyi, economic historian, *The Great Transformation*, 1944

The Economist magazine has supported free trade for over 160 years (it began publishing in 1843), but even their editors admit of a few problems in modern-day liberal capitalism. (The terms ‘liberal trade’ or ‘liberal capitalism’ have to do with freedom from government restrictions on economic activities, not with political liberalism.) Along with many successes claimed for modern capitalism, notably a rise in living standards in both the rich and poor world, the *Economist* mentions some problems, such as overblown executive pay, scandals of corporate corruption, and growing income inequality especially in the United States.

From 1970 to the late 1990s, the average yearly pay of chief executives rose from about \$1.3 million (in today’s dollars) or 39 times what workers earned, to \$37.5 million, or 1,000 times what workers earned. As of 1998, figures indicated that the top 0.01 percent of U.S. taxpayers, 13,000 people, received over 3 percent of all income. (Thirteen thousand people would fill a medium-sized stadium such as Gibbs Stadium in Spartanburg, North Carolina.) Also, corporate pension funds are under-funded by \$300 billion in the United States and \$100 billion in large British companies. “It would take many years of high share returns to wipe out the deficits,” says Bill Emmott in *The Economist*.

Other aspects of capitalism also deserve a closer look. First, we look at some basic underpinnings: growth, development, and usury. Modern capitalism harkens back to the 18th century writer Adam Smith—but what did he actually say? Then there is the question of monopoly. We consider the history of corporations, which play the dominant role in economic life today, and economic globalization, which is touted by some as the miracle cure for every country and condemned by others as the engine of the planet’s destruction, as well as of its increasing inequalities between the rich and the poor. Then we consider three versions of the modern capitalist ideology: neo-liberalism (sometimes called “free-market fundamentalism”), the Chicago School, and “disaster capitalism.”

Growth

Most economists today, and all but the most politically conservative of their public interpreters, recognize very well that the world has limits and that the human population cannot afford to grow much larger. They know that humanity is destroying biodiversity. They just don’t like to spend a lot of time thinking about it.

E. O. Wilson, “The Bottleneck,” *Scientific American*, February 24, 2002

Two words that are used constantly in economic news are “growth” and “development.” Growth is supposed to be a very good thing, absolutely essential for capitalism. But what exactly is the economy growing? Growth means that more and more people will buy and sell more and

more products and services. However, this will use up the Earth's resources more quickly, crowd out the other species faster, and add more waste-products to the land, water, and air. It is true that in rich nations the economy is dominated by services rather than manufacturing, but services still require resources in the form of equipment or supplies as well as electricity produced by using resources like coal or uranium. A lot of service jobs are in retail stores and restaurants that sell food and other items that require resources to produce. Most services take place in a heated, cooled, electrically lighted building, and these buildings rival transportation for energy use. Transportation is also needed to get to the services and to move products and supplies around..

We think of growth as a good thing in gardens and children but not such a good thing for adults, where it is called an obesity epidemic or cancer. Some economists also favor population growth because it creates more workers and consumers. But when you hear the word growth, think 'more people and more stuff;' or, quantity not quality. It is a strange paradox that what most consider good for the economy is also so bad for the environment and for human health.

'Development' means appropriating the commons or changing the function of something to be more complex, technological, and profitable to somebody although not necessarily to everybody. The assumption is that development is always a boon to the developed, although they may have been merely transformed from poor peasants to poor laborers on a plantation. Or the development of hydraulic electricity through a huge dam may bring electricity to city-dwellers and factories, while at the same time depriving thousands of peasants of their land and livelihood. You may notice that peasants often get the short end of the stick in 'development.'

I am no economist and don't understand why capitalism absolutely depends on growth and development. Imagine if you will a village of 100 people which is neither growing nor losing population. People in the village live much as they have for centuries. The villagers have their butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker along with weaver, potter, and blacksmith. What the village lacks in the pace of innovation is counterbalanced by stability and job satisfaction. Since they all freely trade among themselves and at regional markets with other villages, they are not socialists—but are they capitalists? Must we seek to constantly expand wants and desires, engage in cutthroat competition, and strive to get richer and richer, in order to be capitalist?

Usury

O you who believe, you shall not take usury, compounded over and over.
Qur'an

Another aspect of growth is the growth of money especially due to the miracle of compound interest. This is the process by which the interest is added to the balance so that you earn (or pay) interest on the interest on the interest, and so on. This is a paradigm, if you will, that we rarely question although the practice of charging compound interest is very much implicated in several of today's most pressing economic problems such as the sub-prime lending crisis and the third-world debt crisis. The charging of simple interest is calculated only on the original principal and is generally used for loans of shorter duration, less than a year.

Taking interest is an ancient practice in which money makes more money as if it were alive and able to reproduce itself (although Aristotle insisted that "Money does not breed)." People living in the Eastern Mediterranean 5,000 years ago lent out money or food tokens and charged simple interest, but most societies have had a conflicted attitude toward 'usury' ever since. Usury originally meant any kind of interest, although today it means excessive interest or interest above the legal limit.

Several passages in the Bible condemn usury in the original sense; other passages indicate that it happened anyway (moneylenders in the Temple); and one or two seem to favor it (such as the story of the ten talents). In Luke VI 32-35, Christ commands us to lend without expecting anything in return. Among those who denounced the use of interest were Plato, Aristotle, Moses, Gautama Buddha, Cato, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Muhammad, and Aquinas.

In the fifth century, the Roman Catholic Church prohibited the taking of interest. Of course that did not completely stop the practice. According to Wayne Visser and Alastair McIntosh of the Centre for Human Ecology, intense debate about usury continued for a thousand years or more after this prohibition. By the 13th century, expansion of trade increased demand for credit, yet opposition was at its peak in 1311 when Pope Clement V declared usury to be a heresy and voided all secular laws that allowed it. Dante's *Inferno* put usurers in the "Seventh Circle of Hell" along with blasphemers and sodomites. However, loans were still necessary for commerce or for a ruler who wanted to finance a war, and few lenders would make a large loan without any benefit to themselves. Meanwhile Jews were allowed by their religion to charge interest on loans to non-Jews.

An important side-effect of usury prohibition was to direct hatred against the Jewish population who were not permitted to practice most professions but were allowed into a few socially-despised occupations such as collecting taxes and rent, or money-lending. A peasant might well resent the Jew who collected his taxes and rent, though that person was only an agent of the local lord. Debtors have never been fond of their creditors. In the late Middle Ages Jews were expelled from many regions, sometimes massacred, and their assets seized. Since merchants and kings still needed loans, Lombard bankers and pawnbrokers from northern Italy—"the pope's usurers"—replaced the Jews. Their usury was disguised as payment for possible loss and injury, payment for delay, and so on. In this guise, the Lombards might charge 250 percent interest, according to historian Walter Laqueur. Nevertheless, a persistent meme to this day associates Jews with money-lending and usury, and few have ever heard of the Lombards.

As commercialization and trade expanded, leaders looked more favorably at interest. In 1545, Henry VIII of England passed an act permitting interest on loans. However the law fixed a legal maximum rate and anything above this was termed usury. Scholar Charles H. George notes:

The interesting change in the Protestant Christian viewpoint on the taking of interest on loans.... was consummated in the seventeenth century [and was] one of the crucial events in the modernizing of the Western Christian ethic.... Nearly all modern writers on usury are agreed that the change in opinion was associated with Calvin and Calvinism and with coordinated capitalistic economic and social developments [especially in England].

Western capitalism bloomed with the Protestant Reformation and its acceptance of interest. Meanwhile Islam has kept its prohibition against usury and developed alternative financial institutions. Muslims also devised ways to circumvent the ban, such as charging higher prices for goods when payment is deferred. It may be that the Islamic attitude toward usury is one of the things that anti-Islamic Western leaders want to change in order to 'modernize' the Arab world.

Some modern critics of usury maintain that it is a mechanism for redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich, and that it is a major factor in the instability of economies based on interest, the cycles of boom and bust. Specifically, William Greider notes that predatory lending practices led to the U.S. "Housing Bubble" that recently burst, and that these schemes came from the sin of usury. "It is rich people taking advantage of poor people by lending them money on terms that

are sure to fail... People of great wealth and their institutions, like banks, naturally have the power to overwhelm people of lesser means. And you can't allow that in a decent society."

Another argument advanced by Visser-McIntosh is that financial economies operate on compound interest, while nature's economy operates on simple interest. "The result is either the progressive destruction of nature, or in the absence of redistributive social justice, an inbuilt necessity for periodic financial crashes throughout history."

Speculation

The bill was never gonna come due because God, in His wisdom, had deemed that capitalism would defy the second law of thermodynamics and expand forever.

Joe Bageant, *Counter Punch*, October 2008

One could look for the roots of our virtual reality economy in the distant past. Risk-takers, swindlers, and pie-in-the-sky dreamers have always been with us. Gambling is an ancient preoccupation, and many indigenous peoples invented their own games using stones or shells. Prehistoric people traded goods, but the invention of money allowed a symbolic intermediary that eventually could be part of a game of speculation. Levels of abstraction grew until people traded in 'fictitious capital,' Karl Marx's term for a financial claim existing only on paper.

Not until the modern era of capitalism did we have large-scale economic speculation with consequent manias, bubbles, panics, and crashes. The Tulip Mania in 17th century Holland was a speculative frenzy about the sale of rare tulip bulbs from Turkey. The *Britannica* notes that by 1610 just one bulb of a new variety served as dowry for a bride. At the height of this craze in 1633-37, people mortgaged their homes and estates to buy bulbs in order to resell them at higher prices. All of a sudden the meme spread that prices might no longer increase, and overnight the bubble burst, ruining many ordinary families as well as some who lost great fortunes.

Such economic bubbles occur when prices rise dramatically above the underlying worth of an item. Prices rise because of speculative buying, and speculative buying continues in hopes that prices will continue to rise—constituting a positive feedback loop. Everyone is betting on the future. It is not just Wall Street wizards—a great many of us could qualify as speculators because of long-term investments in our IRAs, or by taking advantage of temporary bubbles in trading cards, comic books, or Beanie babies. Early stock market bubbles were the Mississippi Scheme in France and the South Sea bubble in England which both collapsed in 1720, bankrupting thousands. The 1920s stock market bubble and the 1990s Dot.com bubble were based on the development of new technologies. Collapse of the U.S. housing bubble is now affecting many other areas of the U.S. and global economy. In October 2008 we had what is called a *panic*.

A panic is a large-scale commercial crisis that often follows "general injudicious speculation in lands or inflated securities" according to a history website. United States history is dotted with them, often at 20-year intervals, for instance, the Panics of 1816-1819, 1825, 1832, 1836 and 1837, 1857, 1869-1871, 1873, 1893, 1901, and 1929. The economic crises of 1837, 1873, 1893, and 1929 were especially severe. The panic is usually followed by a depression in which many lose their jobs. The History Box defines a depression as a "massive collapse of the economy that *normally* follows a period of prosperity [my emphasis]." We don't like to think of a depression as normal. Perhaps that is why the same speculative behavior recurs over and over. In this case, a bipartisan ideology, promoted by mainstream media, became the conventional wisdom and was used to justify behavior that history had shown over and over could lead to disaster.

The New Deal put into place a number of regulations that were supposed to prevent another crash such as 1929. People came to believe that it could never happen again, but many of the New Deal safeguards were dismantled in the fervor for deregulation. For instance, in 1980 Congress repealed the law against usury. Another landmark in deregulation was repeal of the Depression-era Glass-Steagall Act which had prohibited investment banks—institutions that combined lending and investing. Such businesses with their built-in conflict-of-interest had led to the 1929 disaster. By the 1980s the banking industry was lobbying for repeal of Glass-Steagall, with Citigroup, the U.S. bank with largest assets, playing a major role. In 1999 this was accomplished by a bipartisan bill that passed both houses by a veto-proof majority. Repeal allowed commercial lenders such as Citigroup to underwrite and trade mortgage-backed securities and collateralized debt obligations.

Many big financial institutions took on a large amount of debt backed by highly inflated assets such as derivatives. Edward Ericson, Jr. explains: “Derivatives are contracts based not on an underlying asset, but on the contract that’s based on the underlying asset. They are shadows. They derive their value from the full faith and credit of the parties who make the contract.” The face value of a derivative can multiply by many times the worth of the underlying asset.

As local columnist Grady Jim Robinson notes, when he was growing up, the family fortune was held in his father’s bulging wallet. “We had no idea people in New York made millions of dollars a year selling our mortgages to each other.” This virtual reality or shadow economy of debts and bets on the future is actually larger than the real, productive economy. For instance, the \$62 trillion in credit derivatives is greater than the estimated \$50 trillion representing the entire world economy. For most of us it is hard to see how a bunch of paper can be worth more than everybody’s food and shelter put together. And it is not, but the motions of a bunch of worthless paper can have drastic consequences.

Cherry-picking Adam Smith: Capitalism as an ideology harks back to Adam Smith, a contemporary of the American Revolution, and the founder of political economy. In 1776, Adam Smith published his classic work, *The Wealth of Nations* in protest of the mercantilist economic system of the time. This was basically an assortment of monarchies, each with an “imperial command economy.” Since most governments until quite recently have been monarchies, command economies have been the historical rule. Adam Smith’s ideas were the beginning of classical economics and are still strongly associated with capitalism. However, modern-day ideologues tend to pick and choose what they like from Adam Smith’s words. Retired economics professor Gavin Kennedy produces a blog called “Adam Smith’s Lost Legacy” that challenges false ideas about Adam Smith and provides a forum for those who have actually read his books.

Smith believed that a free market is the fairest and most efficient way to distribute resources, but Kennedy says that Smith hardly believed that the “invisible hand” of the market takes all the individual pursuits and turns them into a collective good for society. Smith actually used the term “invisible hand” only once (Book IV) although he often mentioned the idea that everyone pursues self-interest. Smith was not *advocating* self-interest, but describing what he observed. His description has been taken for prescription as in “Greed is good.” Smith did not claim that all self-interest is beneficial to society, but only that it is not always bad. Kennedy says that Smith gave over 50 examples of cases in which individual self-interest worked against social interests.

Adam Smith was a moral philosopher as well as a political economist. An earlier book by Smith titled *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) emphasized sympathy rather than self-interest as a basic force in human nature. In *Wealth of Nations*, he often criticized those who act solely from

greed: “All for ourselves, and nothing for other people, seems, in every age of the world, to have been the vile maxim of the masters of mankind.” Smith assumed that humans were motivated both by benevolence and self-love, and explains that it is simply more efficient to appeal to the merchant’s self-love rather than his charity.

Despite human greed and selfishness, Smith believed that competition in a free market would tend to benefit the community. This idea became the basic principle of the *laissez-faire*, classical economists in the 19th century, but Smith himself never used the terms *laissez-faire* or capitalism, nor did he foresee an ‘industrial revolution.’ According to Gavin Kennedy. “Smith wrote for the 18th century.” In Smith’s time the term ‘economics’ was not yet in use, the feudal corporations he knew were quite different from modern ones, and despite mercantilism the state’s role in the economy was much smaller than it is today.

Also, Smith did not assert equilibrium economics, the idea that markets are self-stabilizing. This is a theory of classical economists but not of Adam Smith. Kennedy would agree with a blog poster (Mungowitz) who says:

Perhaps the most profound thing Smith ever said...was the title of Chapter 3, Book 1 of *Wealth of Nations*: “That the Division of Labor is Limited by the Extent of the Market.” [The market] is a dynamic, ever-changing limit, as Smith recognized. There is no such thing as market demand, or market supply, or a total number of consumers. It is all constantly changing with market conditions, costs of transport, cost of inputs, and political interference...And, there is clearly no equilibrium.

David Korten notes that Adam Smith’s ideal economy was based on small enterprises in which the worker was also the owner and manager. Smith assumed that these enterprises would be locally owned and owners would share community values. In his day, foreign trade dependent on sailing ships or land caravans was uncertain and costly, so it was logical to assume that most markets would be local. Korten says “He took an especially dim view of large corporations with absentee owners that used their political and market power to extract monopoly profits.”

Smith came out strongly in favor of imposing an interest rate ceiling, according to McIntosh, so that low-risk borrowers could access loans instead of “the greater part of the money which was to be lent [being] lent to prodigals and projectors [speculators] who alone would be willing to give [an unregulated] high interest rate.” He also accepted the need for some government spending and taxation in a free society. Appropriate spending included defense, justice, public works, education, public health, and basic administrative expenses. Nadia Weiner notes that fully one-third of *Wealth of Nations* discusses the subject of government revenue and taxes. The Adam Smith cherry-pickers do not mention that Smith advocated progressive taxation:

The necessities of life occasion the great expense of the poor [while] the luxuries and vanities of life occasion the principal expense of the rich....It is not very unreasonable that the rich should contribute to the public expense, not only in proportion to their revenue, but something more than in that proportion..

Weiner says that Smith recommended two types of taxation: a tax on luxury consumables such as tobacco and a tax on ground-rents [which sounds similar to what we call property taxes]. Smith condemned excise and customs taxes, taxes on profits, any taxes that involve the invasion of privacy, and especially taxes on labor.

Wealth of Nations also changed the view of economic transactions from “win/lose” (under mercantilism) to “win/win.” Smith stated that “a voluntary, informed transaction always benefits both parties.” That seems to be generally true, but I wonder what he would think about the brain-

washing techniques of modern advertising. According to Juliet Schor, the average American child receives 40,000 advertising messages a year, and corporations spend an estimated \$15 billion in ads for children age 12 and under.

I doubt Adam Smith would regard children begging their parents for toys or sugary cereals pitched to them on television as part of an “informed transaction.”

Monopolies

People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.

Adam Smith, 1723-1790

Classical political economy in the first half of the 19th century, from Adam Smith to John Stuart Mill and even Karl Marx's *Das Capital* was based on the assumption that multiple firms produce the same commodity. These many producers all respond to price and profit signals coming from impersonal market forces. But Marx predicted that such free competition would decrease: “The battle of competition is fought by cheapening of commodities [which depends] on the productiveness of labor, and this again on the scale of production. *Therefore the larger capitals beat the smaller.*”

The dominant neoclassical economic theory, despite the emergence of ever-larger corporations, still assumes that free, competitive markets are the rule in capitalist societies. However, what we usually find—and this has been true for about 125 years—is some degree of monopoly. In a true monopoly there is only one seller or provider of a product or service. Unless regulated by government, this monopoly can set prices and make product decisions without much concern for its customers, who have only the choice whether or not to buy. If the product is a necessity, there is little choice. Public utilities are often such monopolies.

More common than monopoly is oligopoly or shared monopoly, in which the market is dominated by a small number of firms that together control more than 40 percent of market share. Each business influences but does not fully control the market. For instance, General Motors and Ford together produce almost one-third of all the world's vehicles, and the five largest auto firms produce half of them. Four companies trade 40 percent of the world's coffee.

In a virtual monopoly, a few businesses hold 80 or 90 percent of the market share. For instance, in the U.S. meatpacking industry, four firms produce over 85 percent of beef. Four appliance firms produce 98 percent of U.S.-made washing machines, according to John Perkins. Monopolies dominate in the communications field, says Hartmann, with phone and Internet use increasingly monopolized by AT&T. Microsoft monopolizes computer software, and computer hardware is manufactured by “a handful of oligarchs.”

Several historical factors account for concentration of economic power. Marx said that since cutting costs and expanding production was the way to succeed in competitive markets, this required constant accumulation of capital. The credit system transformed itself into “an immense social mechanism for the centralization of capitals” says Paul M. Sweezy, a radical economist.

Another reason for the growth of monopolies was technological innovation. New technology was often expensive and forced enterprises to become bigger in order to achieve low-cost production with optimal economy of scale. Large-scale steel mills, factories, railroads, and freighters survived, while the smaller enterprises went under.

Monopolies or virtual monopolies may arise in several ways. One is by government favoritism or the granting of state franchises. Another is by collusion among several businesses to drive

others out of the field, forming a trust or cartel, described by Kit Sims Taylor, economist and educator:

In the United States, during the last quarter of the 19th century, businesses avoided competition by forming trusts. The leading firm in one industry would hold voting stock in its former competitors. Output could be limited and prices kept high. In many parts of Europe, cartels were legal. Firms in the same line of business would enter into a formal—and enforceable—agreement to limit production and thus maintain high prices.

This type of trust-cartel was not a popular or lasting business structure. The United States entered a “trust-busting” era in the early 20th century, and European governments also imposed greater regulation. Oligopoly then became the dominant big-business structure, according to Taylor. Instead of a formal arrangement, the dominant firm in a field is usually the price leader.

The form of shared monopoly/oligopoly with which consumers are most familiar is the retail chain. Wal-Mart is the biggest, but far from the only one. Stacy Mitchell in *Big-Box Swindle* says that chains have increasingly dominated the market, driving out independent businesses ever since they began to receive massive tax breaks and subsidies in the 1950s. These included road construction (\$130 billion for the interstate highway system), federal mortgage guarantees that favored homes in suburbia, and 1954 changes to the tax code that made shopping centers good tax shelters. Shopping centers are the natural habitat of chain stores. The top ten chains now get almost 30 percent of what Americans spend in stores (total \$2.3 trillion yearly). Mitchell says chains are driving the contraction of manufacturing. “Most big retailers have their primary procurement offices in China, where they contract directly with low-wage factories.” Thus a handful of powerful corporate chains act as gatekeepers of the consumer economy. They can determine “what goods the global economy produces, how they’re made, and by whom.”

There are many ways in which one or a few businesses can drive other competitors out of the market. For example, a business owner with “deep pockets” can deliberately set out to destroy competitors by pricing his product below cost, since he can sustain debt longer than his competitor can. While illegal, this “predatory pricing” or “dumping” is hard to prove. Such tactics appeared to be part of a newspaper war in my state that destroyed a newspaper that had lasted 150 years, leaving the capitol city with one newspaper instead of two competitors. The winner had offered free want ads and greatly reduced subscription rates in the course of driving the other out of business.

Obviously a chain with numerous stores has deeper pockets with which to compete with independents. Some chains, notably Wal-Mart, even eat up other chains. Mitchell says that 30 supermarket chains filed for bankruptcy between 1995 and 2005, and of these, Wal-Mart was a catalyst in 26 cases. One version of chain store oligopoly is the “category killer”—a superstore which carries a big selection of one category of items such as toys, home improvement supplies, or consumer electronics—which can easily wipe out smaller competitors. Chains such as Toys “R” Us and Circuit City have driven out many independent businesses. According to Mitchell, “Two category killers, Home Depot and Lowe’s, account for nearly half of all hardware and building supply sales.” Borders and Barnes & Noble sell about half of all books bought through bookstores. These are shared monopolies.

Mitchell points out that two main supports for the middle class are working in the manufacturing sector and owning a small business. But as chains drive manufacturing to low-wage countries and push independent stores out of business, the middle class that depended on these also shrinks. “The economic structure that mega-retailers are propagating represents a

modern variation on the old European colonial system.” However, the chains extract wealth and resources from communities in their home country as readily as any other.

A large market share within one industry is often the result of merger or acquisition. Size in itself is a source of power. Taylor notes that “*ease of entry* is one of the factors by which we measure competition. Very few of us could raise the \$8 billion or so that it takes to start an automobile firm.” Taylor also says that creditors are not as likely to force a large firm into bankruptcy. As an example of the advantage of size, there were over 100 auto manufacturers in the U.S. in 1929, but only eight survived the Great Depression, including the seven that were largest in 1929.

A firm’s economic power also grows when it has global operations and when it controls more steps of production through vertical integration. By operating globally, companies can shift production from one country to another with lower labor costs, proximity of raw materials, or a more compliant government regarding environmental pollution and labor treatment.

Many large firms have ownership or other kinds of working relationships with other firms within the industry. For example, Taylor says that Ford owns Jaguar, half of Aston Martin, 25 percent of Mazda, and 10 percent of Kia. Ford has technology-sharing agreements with Fiat and Nissan. Kodak made a strategic alliance with Canon, Minolta, Nikon, and even its arch-rival Fuji to develop a new film format. “These agreements among supposedly competing firms certainly appear to restrict the range of competition.”

John Bellamy Foster says that the goal of corporations in this mature or late period of capitalism is to create or perpetuate monopoly power, in other words, “the power to generate persistent, high, economic profits through a mark-up on prime production costs.” Keynesian economist Myron Gordon found that through the 20th century, there has been a rising surplus of capital in manufacturing firms. In other words, capital accumulation is growing faster than the wages of production workers as determined at the level of production. Gordon says:

The shift in the employment structure of manufacturing firms, from one that was geared primarily to the employment of production workers to one in which production workers are vastly outnumbered by non-production workers, is closely associated with this rising surplus within production and with the pursuit of monopoly power and profits.

Corporations devote these extra resources to struggles over relative market share. As an example of how much they spend to achieve monopoly power, Foster says that Microsoft’s 1997 sales revenue was divided as follows: less than 10 percent for production costs, 47 percent for profits, and 43 percent for the costs of pursuing monopoly power. Another example he gives is Nike. Poorly paid workers employed by Nike subcontractors in China, Indonesia, and Vietnam produce the shoes. Meanwhile, Nike’s own employees in management, sales promotion, and advertising pursue monopoly power. Criticized for the labor conditions in its shoe factories, “Nike has responded that it is simply a marketing company, uninvolved in production. In the words of its vice-president for Asia, ‘We don’t know the first thing about manufacturing. We are marketers and designers.’”

These struggles for market share by fewer, bigger, and ever more powerful companies have enormous economic, political, and social effects on the rest of us. Take, for instance, our dependence on personal automobiles for transportation. The 20th century oligopoly of three major automobile firms—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—not only came to dominate all forms of U.S. motor transport (producing 97 percent of autos, 84 percent of trucks, and 75 percent of city buses) but they forced the growth of automotive transport instead of more

efficient and ecologically sane modes of travel. By 1949, GM had replaced 100 electric transit systems in 45 cities with GM buses. Finding GM guilty of criminal conspiracy, a federal court fined the company \$5,000 and its treasurer one dollar. Korten notes other unsustainable patterns of world production and consumption have been shaped by powerful corporations including the use of chemicals in agriculture and throwaway products generating a lot of garbage that cannot be easily recycled.

Corporations today have record amounts of surplus dollars to throw around. For instance, the industrial companies in Standard & Poor's 500 Index (which do not include financial, transportation, and utility companies) have \$643 billion in surplus funds. Howard Silverblatt, an equity market analyst at Standard & Poor's, says this is "out of whack with all historical numbers. People are demanding [to know] why corporations need so much cash, what are they going to do with it?" Historically, companies have spent much of their excess money for mergers and acquisitions. In 2007 *The Economist* said that "the current takeover frenzy" was led by big private equity firms, some of which have giant war chests close to \$20 billion.

One place where capital surplus resides is the trillion-dollar, U.S. hedge fund industry. Hedge funds are huge pools of capital that are allowed to operate secretly, unlike other kinds of investment firms. It is estimated that they account for about one-fifth of all U.S. stock trading. Having gained access to money from pension funds, mutual funds, and university endowments, they "swoop in and out of markets like day traders, investing millions in complex derivative securities and assets ranging far beyond stocks and bonds." Many critics warn that they pose a risk to workers' retirement security and market stability. Hedge fund executives donated at least \$2.3 million to various political campaigns in the 2004 election

To show how concentrated (monopolistic) the world's economy is, according to David Korten (*When Corporations Rule the World*): the top 300 trans-national corporations own some 25 percent of the world's productive assets (this excludes financial institutions). He says:

The Economist recently reported that in the consumer durables, automotive, airline, aerospace, electronic components, electrical and electronics, and steel industries the top five firms control more than 50 percent of the global market, placing them clearly in the category of monopolistic [oligopolistic] industries.

Korten adds that the top five firms in the oil, personal computers, and media industries control more than 40 percent of sales. This makes them oligopolies as well. The combined assets of the world's fifty largest commercial banks and financial companies add up to almost 60 percent of an estimated \$20 trillion global stock of productive capital on which rests the economic system of capitalism.

History of Corporations

They [corporations] cannot commit treason, nor be outlawed, nor excommunicate, for they have no souls.

Sir Edward Coke, English jurist, 1552-1634

Percentage of global economic activity accounted for by the world's 200 largest corporations:
27.5

Percentage of the world's population that these corporations employ: 0.8

Harper's Index, *Harper's Magazine*, March 2001

The ancestor of the business corporation was the maritime firm in Renaissance Italy, which typically lasted through only one voyage. By 1553 a new variation, the joint stock company, had arrived to stay. Jeremy Rifkin notes that capitalism and nation states developed in tandem. The great trading companies such as the Dutch East India Company began around 1600 as instruments of state conquest. The British East India Company eventually ruled almost all of India and had the largest professional army in the world, along with 43 warships. Rifkin says “the state, the corporation, and the professional military together make up the trinity that to this day exercises near complete dominion over the earth, its resources, and its inhabitants.”

Of the world’s 100 largest economic entities in the year 2000, 51 were corporations and 49 were countries, compared on the basis of annual sales or GDP. Since a corporation’s income may be included in the GDP of the country within which it mainly operates, these figures are not strictly comparable. However one notes that the year’s sales for General Motors, Wal-Mart, Exxon Mobil, Ford Motor, and Daimler Chrysler are each larger than the yearly production of Poland, Norway, Indonesia, South Africa, or numerous other countries.

The year 2005 was a good one for the world’s corporate giants. According to *Forbes* magazine, the largest 2,000 public companies as a group gained 10 percent in sales, 32 percent in profits, and 17 percent in market capitalization. Of the top twenty companies, eleven are in banking or “diversified financials” (four of the top five are in banking) and five are in oil and gas operations. Nine of the twenty, including the top four, have headquarters in the United States.

Yoshi Tsurumi, professor of international business at Baruch College and former instructor of George W. Bush at Harvard Business School, says that in 2004, because of Bush’s tax cuts, more than 80 percent of America’s most profitable 200 corporations paid nothing in federal and state income taxes. This business professor castigates the study of economics, U.S. business education, and the resurgence of “robber baron culture”:

American economics study has increasingly become a pseudoscience of mathematical formula manipulation that is devoid of humanity. This economics has conquered America’s business education and become fused with the robber baron culture of greed supremacy....Financial games and hostile takeovers of competitors are taught to accomplish corporations’ sole objective—to make money and manipulate stock prices....Nowhere in his 900-page book, *The Wealth of Nations*, does [Adam] Smith even imply that those who knowingly harm others and society in their pursuit of personal greed also benefit their society.

Was this concentration of wealth and economic power an inevitable result of the Industrial Revolution? There were warnings. That careful observer of 1830s America, Alexis de Tocqueville, in his book *Democracy in America* wrote about a country that was the most egalitarian and the most interested in self-governance of any in the world—perhaps ever. But de Tocqueville, seeing a threat to this new democracy in its rising commercial class and new industries, said. “The friends of democracy should keep their eyes anxiously fixed [on an] industrial aristocracy....For if ever again permanent inequality of conditions and aristocracy make their way into the world it will have been by that door that they entered.” Tocqueville also noted that an industrial aristocracy might be even more brutal than the old land-based one, which at least felt some obligation to relieve the distress of its servants. But the industrial aristocracy “when it has impoverished and brutalized the men it uses, abandons them in a time of crisis.”

Jeffrey Kaplan says that in the 1840s, state legislators still closely supervised corporations, permitting their creation only for very specific public projects such as building a road or canal. Corporations had a limited period of existence, a limited amount of property they could own, and

they were prohibited from owning another corporation. But over succeeding decades, legislators and courts then did a 180 degree turn. (There must have been some mighty lobbying efforts.) Most states by the 1860s had granted limited liability to the owners of corporations, ending personal accountability for a firm's actions. By the early 1890s, states had ended most restrictions on corporations owning each other. The General Revision Act in 1896 removed limits on size. States changed corporate charter laws to eliminate provisions for "public good," to allow more than one purpose, and to exist forever.

The most startling and far-reaching change was the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1886 ruling for corporate owners in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*. This was the ruling that allowed corporations to be considered "persons." The idea of treating corporations as persons began in England, so that they could be sued in court. But the Robber Barons and courts they controlled greatly expanded this idea, giving personhood to legal fictions so that eventually corporations could have free speech rights, privacy rights, 5th Amendment rights against self-incrimination and double jeopardy, and 14th Amendment rights against discrimination (by local communities that favor small, local businesses). As a result, corporations have both human rights and non-human rights, such as living forever, that give them advantages over flesh-and-blood.

The really bizarre thing about this 1886 ruling is that the Supreme Court didn't actually make the decision—the court reporter wrote it in the headnotes of the case, which had no legal power. "Subsequent generations of corporate attorneys claimed it was so. Over time, it became so," says Thom Hartmann. What is the untold story about this court reporter (what Hollywood star should play him in the movie?) this anti-hero or corrupt villain who let the beast in the door. And there's another missing story about generations of judges and lawyers who allowed a mistake to remain the law of the land. Were they bribed?

John Perkins says "Modern corporations have all the rights of individuals but none of the responsibilities. In fact, they are licensed to steal." Some suggestions for taming the corporate beast will appear in Book 3.

Globalization

Societies [will] adapt to an era of widespread abundance as a global middle class emerges....In an economic sense, history really has 'ended.'

Thomas Barnett, newspaper column May 4, 2008

All the conditions of life are imperiled or degraded through globalization and other forms of speeding up production and consumption.

Theresa Brennan, *Globalization and Its Terrors*

Although the word 'globalization' came into common use over the past decade, Andrew Jones says that "few people have a clear or consistent view of its precise meaning." Here the term refers to the development of a world-wide, capitalist free market economy. Growing economic interdependence of countries across the globe means that prices, products, wages, interest rates, and profits are converging towards those of developed nations. However, this convergence does not apply to everybody. John Perkins points out that half of the world survives on less than \$2 a day, and that this has not changed much in the last 30 years of increased economic globalization.

In the opening quotes, Thomas Barnett presents the dominant, conservative view that economic globalization is creating and will create abundance for everybody in the world. Theresa Brennan presents one of several arguments against this economic expansion.

The process of globalization is not new but it has accelerated greatly in the last half century. Before modern times, one could describe the integration of trade and knowledge during the Roman Empire, Arab Empire, Mongol Empire, and the Portuguese and Spanish Empires as a form of globalization. The first “multinational” was organized in 17th century Netherlands as the Dutch East India Company. It was the first in the world to issue shares—the interests of shareholders help drive globalization. The 19th century is called “The First Era of Globalization” because of a rapid growth in international trade and investment between the European imperial powers, their colonies, and later in the century, the United States. Such an increase in trade and relaxation of laws regulating it is called “liberalization,” but this has little to do with current political meanings of the word ‘liberal.’

You may have noticed that globalization usually has something to do with empires and colonies. A 1916 book by Vladimir Lenin—*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*—described 19th century globalization as exploitation of the third world by the first world. Current critics of globalization such as Perkins believe the situation today is basically the same, although the direct agents of exploitation are corporations rather than old-fashioned imperial powers, working through international institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) rather than gunboats. Perkins calls the engine of globalization “the corporatocracy” saying it has “created a de facto American Empire.”

One rarely hears much debate about globalization in the mainstream media. Some prominent critics are Martin Kohr (director of a Malaysian-based think tank), Walden Bello, Naomi Klein, Vandana Shiva, and Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist of the World Bank and a Nobel laureate in economics. Kohr in *Rethinking Globalization* (2001) argues that globalization has failed to bring peace and prosperity to the world, and poorer countries have not benefited from it. He suggests that globalization is just a new word for re-colonization. Stiglitz wants to reform the Bretton Woods institutions that were set up after World War II, in particular IMF and WTO. His views are summed up in Brennan’s *Globalization and Its Discontents*, published in 1999. Brennan sums up the “free trade” agenda as follows:

Globalization is about cheap labor markets and forcing down wages and salaries. It is about reductions in corporate tax, increases in taxes for the employed, and cuts in social services. Most of all it is about using up the earth’s resources at an increasing speed and at a massive environmental price.

Brennan says that globalization continues a process that began with the division between household and workplace, through specialization in production, “then through colonialism, concentration in land use, through urbanization and suburbanization, and through other forms of *spatial reach* [my italics].” Brennan analyzes the process in terms of time and space, focusing on economic globalization as a speeding up of production and trade that requires ever more resources and markets. This increasing speed of production and consumption outstrips the biological ability of the natural world and humans to regenerate. “In the short run, profit is made by consuming the sources of long-run profit (nature and labor) faster than they can adequately reproduce themselves.” This is, indeed, eating the seed corn.

Naomi Klein notes that Milton Friedman is generally credited with “writing the rulebook for the contemporary, hyper-mobile global economy.” Despite the contradictions and dangers,

conventional wisdom holds that economic globalization is “the only path.” Even ‘Third Way’ liberal-centrist Democrats or Social Democrats such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair promote globalization while cutting back spending for human needs. As in Victorian England, where harsh poor laws were followed by liberalization of free trade, Brennan sees “the same double move” today, when treaties extending free trade coincide with drastic cuts in social programs.

Barnett expresses the conventional wisdom that globalization is supposed to ‘lift all boats.’ However, economists Jared Bernstein and Josh Bivens note studies showing that trade with Mexico under the NAFTA agreement has increased wages for U.S. college graduates about three percent and lowered wages for all other American workers by about four percent. This increase in inequality is contrary to the story that Americans are told that everybody will benefit from trade with poorer nations.

Brennan says that those in the First World have made “an empty promise” to those in the Third World and the former Eastern Bloc that the global path will lead to prosperity for them too. She adds, “The promise is false not only because the North’s prosperity, in large part, is made at the expense of the South. It is also false because life, for more and more of the North’s inhabitants, is increasingly insecure, unhealthy, ill-educated, and impoverished.”

Globalization’s speed-up causes biological stress for living systems. This manifests not only in ecosystem failures such as climate change but also in worsening human health and mental health—from immune-deficient, stress-related, and depressive illness—in the developed countries that supposedly benefit most from globalization. Brennan notes that deregulation has progressed farther in the United States than anywhere else, and that U.S. health conditions are worse than in any other advanced nation. For instance, the United States is 24th on a global measure of longevity and good health.

James Gleick asks “Are we sacrificing longevity to get glut?” Can our bodies take the strain of the constant increase in things, information, sensations, and choices? Although he does not connect it with globalization, Gleick says we have “hurry sickness” and we live in a Type A society. Not only are we overly conscious of time, but we measure ourselves against our machines and worry about lagging behind.

One effect of the general speeding-up is society-wide sleep deprivation. The National Sleep Foundation estimates that average sleep time dropped 20 percent over the last century. Working on the graveyard shift has been found to correlate with higher rates of cancer, probably because overnight work disrupts the body’s natural circadian rhythm. Speeding-up also affects our thinking, as we lose the all-important time for quiet reflection. The result is, as Jeff Greenfield says, we are “caught up in this maelstrom of semi-informed, uninformed windbagery.”

Brennan points to the negative effects of globalization on peasants in third world countries. It leads to migration when villages based on subsistence agriculture are uprooted by larger-scale, export-oriented production, or by trade agreements that put small growers out of business. Brennan also sees terrorism as a direct response to globalization. In addition, she says, free trade is leading to war just as the 19th century trade expansion led to World War I. “Capital needs rapid, unimpeded access to all global spaces, and this it secures either through trade agreements or through war.” Perhaps instead of free trade it should be termed “free-for-all trade.”

The ‘anti-globalization’ movement includes many diverse groups and individuals who work together to oppose the power of transnational corporations to make trade agreements in their own interests and without any participation by the people of affected nations. They say this power overrides national sovereignty and democracy, and damages the environment, labor rights, and

the welfare of people in third world countries. Some common goals of the movement are an end to the legal fiction of “corporate personhood” and radical reform or dissolution of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO. Their own names for this movement include the “Global Justice Movement,” “Another Way is Possible” and “Globalization from below.”

In 1994, the 50th anniversary of the IMF and the World Bank was celebrated in Madrid and a coalition of anti-globalization movements formed there to protest under the banner “50 Years Is Enough.” Since then, a number of protests have occurred at meetings of the WTO, Group of Eight, World Economic Forum, and other such corporate venues. Broadening the scope of the movement, on February 15, 2003 many members joined with millions of others in global protests against the Iraq War. Drawing eleven to twelve million participants, this was the largest anti-war or any other kind of demonstration to date.

Without going here into all the arguments of and influences on the Global Justice Movement, let us just note that mainstream media does not give much space to this kind of ‘people power.’ Newspaper accounts of protests rarely give any explanation of the issues motivating the protesters, but focus largely on any violence which results. This emphasis on clashes leaves the casual reader with the impression that demonstrators are just a bunch of rebels without a cause, something like outlaw motorcycle gangs or soccer rioters. If more people were able to connect the concerns of this movement with their own job insecurity and working conditions, with war and climate change, it would draw a great deal more support.

It is true that out of dozens of protests, several have involved a good deal of violence, notably Seattle in 1999, Montreal in 2000, and Genoa in 2001. Some fringe groups have rioted and destroyed property even while the great majority of demonstrators were peaceful, but police over-reactions and hostility appear to account for much if not most of the violence.

Brennan says that current responses to globalization are not well-integrated, since some demonstrators are bitterly opposed to the ideas of others. But the movement is working to develop a new challenge to globalization that will also be a clear alternative to the terrorist response to globalization.

Neo-liberalism or Free-Market Fundamentalism

The benefits of free market liberalization depend on who you are, where you are and how much money or assets you had to begin with.

Phillip Blond, senior lecturer University of Cumbria (UK), in *International Herald Tribune*

The dominant economic ideology today promotes the classic liberal economics of the 19th century as envisioned by Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and others: maximum market freedom, minimum intervention by the state. George Monbiot describes this ideal: “The role of government should be confined to creating and defending markets, protecting private property and defending the realm. [Thus] enterprise is liberated, rational decisions are made and citizens are freed from the dehumanizing hand of the state.” The ideology of neo-liberalism is constantly presented to the public as if it were a panacea for all economic ills and a magic cure for countries everywhere. Some give economic competition an almost religious value, as if everybody started on an equal playing field and the free market actualized everybody’s best potentials.

George Monbiot places the origin of neoliberalism at a meeting in a Swiss spa resort in 1947, when Friedrich von Hayek founded the Mont Pelerin Society to promote classical liberalism and a free society. Thirty-nine scholars attended, most of them economists, who included Ludwig von Mises and Milton Friedman. Eventually MPS members would win a total of eight Nobel

prizes in economics, and many high officials have belonged to it. The Society also seeded a number of international think-tanks, including the Heritage Foundation and Manhattan Institute in the United States. Hayek said that the battle for ideas would take at least a generation to win

Monbiot says that wherever implemented, neoliberal policies have caused a massive shift of wealth to the very wealthiest—the top tenth of the top one per cent. The later 19th century was characterized by a great concentration of wealth into a few hands and this seems to be happening again a century later. The hard-won gains of working people through social legislation—as in the U.S. “Progressive Era” of the early 1900s as well as the 1930s and the 1960s ‘War on Poverty’—have eroded. Monbiot says “In the U.S., for instance, the upper 0.1% has already regained the position it held at the beginning of the 1920s....In practice the philosophy developed at Mont Pelerin is little but an elaborate disguise for a wealth grab.”

With conservative Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 election as Prime Minister in Britain, “neo-liberalism first emerged in its decisive form” according to Phillip Blond. In the United States, Ronald Reagan came to office in 1981, “and the Anglo-Saxon countries have pursued and advocated free market liberalization ever since.”

The Chicago School and Disaster Capitalism

Friedman dreamed of depatterning societies, of returning them to a state of pure capitalism, cleansed of all interruptions—government regulations, trade barriers and entrenched interests.

Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 2007

The Chicago School of Economics became famous in the 1960s led by George J. Stigler and Milton Friedman, and its policies remained influential through the 1990s. The Chicago School is roughly synonymous with Neo-liberalism and Free Market Fundamentalism. Speaking more technically, this school of thought is associated with: “Neoclassical price theory in its economic analysis, ‘free market’ libertarianism in much of its policy work, and a methodology which is relatively averse to too much mathematical formalism.” Not all economists in the University of Chicago’s Department of Economics subscribed to this theory; some economists elsewhere did.

Many of the policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund—international economic institutions dominated by the United States—have been based on Chicago School theories. These institutions promoted or imposed free markets as a universal recipe for countries with economic problems. Between the mid 1980s and the mid-1990s, a number of Third World countries privatized many state-owned companies according to this prescription.

The “Chicago Boys” were a group of several dozen young Chilean economists who trained at the U of C under Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger, and then worked under the dictator Augusto Pinochet to create a free market economy in Chile. In 1982, Milton Friedman coined the phrase “Miracle of Chile” to describe these economic reforms, but investigative reporter Greg Palast says of this economic transformation:

In 1973, the year General Pinochet brutally seized the government, Chile’s unemployment rate was 4.3 percent. In 1983, after ten years of free-market modernization, unemployment reached 22 percent. Real wages declined by 40 percent under military rule...In 1970, 20 percent of Chile’s population lived in poverty. By 1990, the year “president” Pinochet left office, the number of destitute had doubled to 40 percent. Quite a miracle.

Some have seen Chile as a model for privatized social security, but the country is now overhauling its system. Its system left out a third of its work force such as the poor and self-employed, housewives, street vendors, and small farmers. The private pension plan was established in 1981 and required salaried workers to deposit a minimum of 10 percent of their wages into personal accounts managed by private pension funds. This created a large pool of capital and help drive growth in the “miracle” economy.

Radical free market reform was imposed in Russia under Yeltsin, a ‘shock therapy’ recommended by the United States and IMF. The result was economic collapse, as millions were plunged into poverty and a few became obscenely rich. These new ‘oligarchs’ who took over newly privatized industries were often crime bosses who paved the way to wealth with the help of extortion or assassinations. By 1996 the Russian economy had contracted in half, in the worst peacetime industrial depression of the 20th century.

Economic historian Karl Polanyi could have predicted these disasters. In his classic book *The Great Transformation* (1944) he traced the social and economic hardships produced by unregulated markets during Britain’s period of industrialization. (For examples of such hardships, read the novels of Dickens.) Polanyi said:

To allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment... would result in the demolition of society.... Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled. [No] society could stand the effects of such a system.

The term “disaster capitalism” was introduced by Naomi Klein in her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. This describes the current stage of neo-liberal capitalism, which she says not only takes advantage of disasters but actively creates them. For instance, Klein claims that the goal of the war in Iraq was “to bomb into being a new free trade zone.... Not just oil, but water, roads, schools, hospitals, private jails, anything that can be turned into a commodity and sold.” The following may qualify as an example of such disaster capitalism at its most surrealistic. According to Jim Shea in the *Hartford Courant*, the Pentagon has prepared a \$6 billion plan to turn the Green Zone in Baghdad into a shopper’s paradise with luxury hotels and condos. Yes, that is the same heavily fortified, frequently bombarded Green Zone in which Western officials live today. In a separate proposal, a Los Angeles company would build a \$500 million amusement park just outside the Green Zone, with plans to open as a skateboard park in summer of 2008.

CHAPTER 13: LABOR

Labour was the first price, the original purchase - money that was paid for all things. It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all wealth of the world was originally purchased.

Adam Smith, Scottish philosopher and economist, 1723-1790

The United States and world are in a serious recession with high unemployment. For now, let's look at the larger context in ideological and historical aspects of labor. First, how does labor fit into the capitalist system (**Labor Costs**)? Taking the long view, we might consider how the average person is faring today compared with how our grandparents or great-grandparents used to fare economically (**Are You Better Off Than You Were 100 Years Ago?**)

Our economically competitive society seems to encourage us to compete with one another both as individuals and groups, and to envy or scorn people who make too much or too little (**Competing with Each Other.**) The story of labor unions, labor struggles, and the labor rights gained throughout U.S. history from the beginning of the Republic are all part of our hidden history: **U.S. Labor History.**

Labor Costs

I am owed. I've never got paid. A dude with a pencil is worse than a cat with a machine gun.

Bo Diddley, 1929-2008, guitarist and rock pioneer

Capitalist firms are always concerned with labor costs, and modern global capitalism uses a number of ways to decrease these outlays: automation, downsizing, using temps and part-timers, relocating and off-shoring, home-sourcing, out-sourcing, and union-busting. By 'home-sourcing' I mean both the greatly increased employment of women (over the last forty years), who as a group are paid less than men and who historically are less likely to unionize, and the recent increase in employment of immigrants in low-wage jobs.

Automation was widely discussed in the 1970s, when some predicted that eventually computers and robots might make most human workers unnecessary. Economists tried to imagine how the world would be organized when there were so many unemployed people or conversely, when humans were not constrained to work and could cultivate themselves in relative leisure. Some economists and politicians proposed a guaranteed basic income separate from work, since machines would be doing most of the work. Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov, who created widely read stories about robots, warned in 1986 that when technological change comes, there must be matching social changes. "As industry becomes roboticized, we must make that the occasion not of unemployment and welfare but of new education, new kinds of work, new sorts of creativity...the re-humanization of human beings." You rarely hear automation discussed in public forums anymore, but one assumes that pronouncements about the increasing 'productivity' of the American worker have mostly to do with the integration of machines into the production process.

The term **downsizing** basically refers to the idea that fewer workers will cover the same amount of work. The result is noticeable to the consumer who enters a big box store and tries to find a clerk somewhere in the expanse. It is also evident to many white-collar workers who find themselves stressed and stretched by taking on extra work previously done by somebody else. When factories run the assembly belt at faster and faster rates, it is called 'speeding up the line'

and the increased pressure can result in injuries. Speed-ups are opposed, of course, by unions. Downsizing white collar workers is something like a speed-up, not as likely to result in injuries, but certainly increasing time pressures and mental stress. Theresa Brennan describes the entire process of globalization as a speed-up of production that stresses humans beyond their biological capacity to regenerate.

Many companies make extensive use of *temps and part-timers* who don't get the same benefits that full-time workers are entitled to. Ellen Goodman points out another trend that we might call *customer out-sourcing*. This ranges from self-service gas pumps and automated telephone menus, to sending surgical patients home from the hospital the same day or expecting people to be their own pension planners and financial analysts. In my own town I have noticed that there are virtually no full-service gas stations anymore, where somebody else besides you might check your oil and anti-freeze levels.

Home-sourcing that depends on women and immigrants must construct them as more or less temporary workers, recruited when needed and pushed out when the economy slumps. "Last to be hired, first to be fired." One subtle sign of this cycle occurred during the mid-seventies oil recession, as women's magazines stopped carrying articles about dressing for success in corporate management and started to carry a lot of articles about home crafts and gardening. The carrots and sticks are not always so subtle. As described in *Models, Myths and Muddles*, Mexican immigrants have repeatedly gone through the cycle of being welcomed for their cheap labor, then enduring hostility and forcible removal later when the U.S. economy went sour.

Worldwide, women increasingly work outside the home but the director of the International Labor Organization says "The bottom line is that while more and more women are working, the great majority of them are simply swelling the ranks of the working poor." Across the world, women earn between 50 percent and 80 percent of what males are paid for the same (non-agricultural) work. Teresa Brennan notes that the relatively lower wage rates for women in Third World countries makes them even more attractive employees for global corporations.

Widespread *offshoring*—the relocation of manufacturing from areas with higher wages to those with lower wages—first occurred in the United States from the states around the Great Lakes to the 'Sunbelt.' Southern states have historically had lower wages and fewer unionized workers, and they have often had state laws that favored employers over employees. Later, corporations were attracted to other, poorer countries with much lower wages, such as Mexico. Soon new factories or *maquiladoras* lined the southern bank of the Rio Grande. Since then, many manufacturers have closed these factories and moved to places such as China, where workers receive even lower pay. This process of finding cheaper and cheaper sources of labor is sometimes called "The Race to the Bottom" and is an important part of globalization.

It is not only factory jobs. In 2007 a former vice chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Blinder, told a Congressional committee that one of every four jobs in the United States, especially those in science, technology and engineering, is vulnerable to off-shoring. Chip design is probably next.

Paul Craig Roberts, former Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, says that current statistical data are misleading about how well the U.S. economy is doing. Productivity increases achieved by U.S. firms that move their factories offshore are miscounted as GDP growth for the United States—"phantom GDP." He cites a story in *Business Week*, June 18, 2007 that estimates 40 percent of the supposed gain in US manufacturing output since 2003 is phantom GDP. Roberts thinks that estimate is low.

Another side-effect of globalization is increased migration/immigration. Brennan says that in many countries, globalization displaces village people when their economy changes from subsistence agriculture to export-oriented production. Remember that about one-third the world's people are peasants. Disruption of their lives leads them to seek work abroad, and that leads to resentments in the receiving countries such as we see today in the U.S. about immigration from south of the border

Out-sourcing refers to moving not the whole company but only certain jobs to another entity that gives a better price or is regarded as more skilled. In 2005 the newly incorporated city of Sandy Springs, Georgia (100,000 population) became the first to out-source all of its municipal services except for police, fire, and E911. Since then three other newly incorporated Georgia cities have retained the same multinational, CH2M Hill, to provide their government functions. Apparently the new provider saves money by leaving out some services usually provided by cities but now regarded as nonessential.

Then there's **union busting**. Although the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 made it illegal to fire employees for trying to form a union, the penalties for doing this are small, and employers have regularly violated this law for three decades, according to *Washington Post* columnist Harold Meyerson. He says that slightly over half of employers illegally threaten their workers with closing the plant if workers unionize. According to Cornell University professor Kate Kornfenbrenner, one percent actually carry through this threat. Meyerson says that when unions do win elections to represent the workers in a company, 45 percent of the time they are unable to secure contracts from employers. Union-busting together with the decline of manufacturing in the American economy results in a unionized work-force in the private sector about one-fourth to one-fifth the size of what it was in the decades after World War II.

Conservative columnist George Will gives a different reason why unions have lost U.S. membership and now claim only 7.5 percent of private-sector workers: they are simply not "persuasive." However, as I write this in March 2011, a number of Republican-dominated state legislatures and governors are attempting to bust public-sector unions and suppress collective bargaining rights. Public opinion polls indicate that a majority of the public do not favor these policies.

Are You Better Off Than You Were 100 Years Ago? John Gatto claims that allowing for inflation, the purchasing power of a working couple in 1995 was only eight percent higher than it was for a single workingman in 1905. "This steep decline in common prosperity over 90 years has forced both parents from many homes and deposited their kids in the management systems of daycare and extended schooling." Gatto claims that wealth was 250 percent more concentrated at the end of the century than at its beginning.

However, while urban workingmen such as those in the building trades did quite well in 1900, there were still vast numbers of rural poor, seasonally-employed and unemployed people, new immigrants working in sweatshops, and elderly people dependent on family and charity. One estimate of average U.S. income 100 years ago is \$438 a year. Of course prices were much lower to match.

Contrary to popular beliefs about the good old days on streets lined by elms, it was sometimes necessary for all family members including young children to work, or to take in lodgers, for the family to just get by. In Illinois almost eight percent of wives worked, and almost 19 percent of children. Twenty-two percent of families took in boarders and lodgers. Reports from the Illinois Commissioner of Labor at the turn of the century show averages earned from all

these sources of income as \$620 from the working husband, \$114 from the wife, \$334 from children, \$240 from boarders and lodgers, and \$139 from other sources. The average annual income for a family in Illinois (4.91 persons) was \$756.) Illinois citizens undoubtedly lived better than those in the rural South.

Over the century from 1900 to 2000, the cost of living rose approximately twenty times, while family incomes rose more like seventy times. However as Gatto pointed out, this income rise required both parents of a family to work, even in middle class families. Incomes also rose because segments of the population such as the wave of Ellis Island immigrants and rural poor, especially blacks, became more integrated into the U.S. economy by century's end. The New Deal and War on Poverty legislation, the GI Bill, the Housing Act of 1949, and civil rights laws all helped directly or indirectly to raise the average income.

However, the real question may be, “Are you better off than you were 35 to 55 years ago?” Mid-century America was, relatively, an economic golden age for the average working person. Not coincidentally, unions were strong and corporate taxes were much stiffer. Corporations used to pay about one-third of U.S. taxes—now they pay less than one-eighth. Unions used to include about one-third of U.S. workers—now it is closer to one-eighth. Government statistics indicate some of the changes in income and living costs. Decade-by-decade figures show average income in 1950 more than doubled that of 1940. Then in 1960 the average income jumped again from \$3180 a year to \$4816 a year, while staple food costs stayed level. But after 1970, inflation started to wipe out income gains.

The major component in the cost of living is housing. The average price for a 6-room house (without modern amenities) in an urban area in 1900 appears to have been about \$3,000. Half a century later, in the 1950s housing boom, a new home on average still cost only \$11,000, or roughly 3.5 times what it had cost in 1900. However, by 2000 the average cost of a new home was \$206,400 or *sixty* times greater than in 1900. That suggests housing was rising three times faster than the rule-of-thumb rise in the cost of living, and in the 2000s it started to rise even faster. Michael Klare, author of *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet*, noted that for example in the Los Angeles area, the median sale price for existing homes went from \$290,000 in 2002 to \$446,400 in 2004. He says that other major cities and suburbs had similar increases.

Klare says that cheap oil had as much to do with the housing bubble as fraudulent mortgages. Few affordable homes were being built within easy commuting range or near public transportation. As a result, many first-time home buyers signed up for crushing mortgages far from their workplaces, gambling that gasoline prices would not go up too much.

An article by the chief executive of a large home-building company says that subprime loans are symptoms of a deeper problem—“the bursting of a 40-year bubble and the failure of the mortgage loan system to meet the needs of the marketplace.” Michael Hill notes that 40 years ago, the median price of a house was twice the median household income or less; 20 years ago the price was about three times income; and it has now jumped to four times income. People just can't afford homes, especially in the places where the jobs are. Hill suggests too many lending institutions may have been too focused on quick bucks: “Now it is time for more trustworthy capitalists, more focused on long-range outcomes, to meet this demand and reopen the door to homeownership to millions of Americans.”

Columnist Mark Weisbrot says that the U.S. built up an \$8 trillion housing bubble during the decade from 1996 to 2006, and a third of it has yet to burst. So what happened to the sacred laws of supply and demand? What creates a 40-year bubble, or a ten-year one? Who never noticed this

was happening? As Bill Moyers asked, “Where were the gatekeepers? Where were the watchdogs?” Some critics blame Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve from 1987-2006.

At the same time the cost of houses went up, incomes stagnated or declined. A recent analysis of Census data shows that between 1974 and 2004, American men in their thirties lost 12.5 percent of income. In 1974 they had median annual incomes of about \$40,000, but in 2004 they made about \$35,000 adjusted for inflation. Household incomes rose, because more women were working full-time. The report, from the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Economic Mobility Project, also found that many Western European countries and Canada had more economic mobility, as measured by income differences between generations, than the United States.

A paper published by Ian Dew-Becker and Robert Gordon of the National Bureau of Economic Research paints a similar picture, while focusing on growing inequality. (“Where did the productivity growth go?”) Becker and Gordon show income inequality in the United States rising beyond where it was a century ago, after a steep decline in mid-century after World War II. That is, economic *equality* was at its height in this country immediately after World War II, but has been declining since 1970.

Brennan says that almost everywhere in the world the fraction of GDP that goes for wages has fallen, with a corresponding fall in real wages (adjusted for inflation). “The sharpest contrast between real wages and economic growth is in the United States.” According to British writer Martin Wolf, over four decades (1966 to 2001) the income share of the top one tenth of American wage earners went from 27 percent to 38 percent and that of the top 1 percent doubled, from 6 to 12 percent. Meanwhile, the top 0.1 percent (about 300,000 individuals) saw their income jump from 1 percent to 5 percent of the total.

Notice that this rising inequality occurred *before* the George W. Bush administration, with its sharply increased tax benefits that favor higher earners. Inequality has undoubtedly increased still more since then. In 2005, then-Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said, “The income gap between the rich and the rest of the U.S. population has become so wide, and is growing so fast, that it might eventually threaten the stability of democratic capitalism itself.”

Economically, at least, most of us may be better off than we were 100 years ago, but fifty years ago is another matter entirely, especially for Americans.

Competing with Each Other: The media drives a certain resentment and envy about those people who articles say are “overpaid.” Popular dislike attaches especially to sports and entertainment figures with high incomes. One might ask: in comparison with whom are they overpaid? If, for some reason, the free market does not guarantee that they are paid the correct amount, on what criteria should earnings be based? This bottom-line approach to labor is evident in a *Forbes* article about actors it says are overpaid, such as Nicole Kidman, Russell Crowe, and Jim Carrey, because their last several films did not do well at the box office. The article assumes that the star is supposed to carry the film, regardless of its script, direction, and other factors. But what if a top actor picks a film because of its message or its opportunities to expand acting skills? What if this film is a minor classic, while some other film with lots of explosions, car chases, and nude sex scenes does much better at the box-office?

In the case of sports, people forget that the athlete may have only a few years of peak production and earnings, no experience in the non-sports work force, and no training or advice on how to invest his money. Take the NFL, for instance. A news article reports that “Most players are bounced out of what they call the ‘Not for Long’ league after about three years. They

have earned an average of \$1.6 million annually and are typically in their 20s. Within two years of retiring, 78 percent are bankrupt, divorced or jobless.”

The salaries of private college presidents are going up, with the median in 1998 about \$179,000 a year but higher for research universities and those that offer doctorate degrees. Meanwhile, it has become the norm for college football coaches to earn \$1 million a year and some earn two or three times that amount.

Another article lists the ten most overpaid jobs in the United States, in ascending order, as wedding photographers, major airline pilots, West Coast longshoremen, skycaps at major airports, real estate agents selling high-end homes, motivational speakers and ex-politicians on the lecture circuit, orthodontists, CEOs of poorly performing companies, washed-up pro athletes in long-term contracts, and, most of all, mutual fund managers. But those overpaid longshoremen and skycaps earn maybe \$125,000 or \$150,000 a year, while mutual-fund managers and CEOs earn half a million or several million a year—they’re not exactly in the same league.

A few years ago I combed through a list of richest Americans and found only one person who could be called either entertainer or pro athlete—Oprah Winfrey. However, Oprah’s fortune comes from shrewd investments, not from her earnings as television host. In 2008 *Forbes* listed the world’s 1,125 billionaires and multi-billionaires of whom 469 or 42 percent are Americans. Warren Buffett is the richest man in the world and Bill Gates number three. In terms of creating billionaires, the magazine listed media/entertainment as the second largest industry after finance/investments (9% cf. 28%) but these wealthy individuals came out of the business end and did not include celebrities except for Oprah. Few other women were listed; and in answer to bigots with their conspiracy theories, Jewish names were not very prominent either.

All this business about who is overpaid seems designed to create envy and divisiveness. It would be more useful to record what jobs are underpaid. That would be a much longer list of occupations held especially by women and minorities.

The latest version of the envy game comes in the wake of protests against state officials in Wisconsin and other states, who would ban collective bargaining by public sector employees in the name of deficit reduction. Many letters and blog comments in my Southern, ‘right-to-work’ state express dislike of union workers who enjoy higher wages and greater benefits than theirs..

U.S. Labor History: James Webb claims that the Scots-Irish express the spirit of American labor, saying “In this culture’s heart beats the soul of working-class America.” Webb locates the Scots-Irish worker’s individualism and independence in the phrase “You can take this job and shove it.” However, such an attitude is not feasible and has not been feasible in the past for many workers who had to support families, or who competed with each other for jobs during times of high unemployment, or who lived in one-company towns.

The Borderers and American frontiersmen were largely poor farmers. Like most peasants everywhere, they preferred their freedom over long days in a factory controlled by a machine. But the simple desire to stay out of the industrialized capitalist system does not give any guidance to those who are stuck in it. Webb could make his statement only because the general public currently knows so little of American labor history. It took many struggles to gain shorter working hours (which once were “sunrise to sunset”), the weekend, safer working conditions, a fairer share of the profits, an end to child labor, and other advantages we take for granted. According to the Illinois Labor History Society, the United States has “the bloodiest history of labor of any industrialized nation” but these struggles are part of our hidden history.

The actual spirit of American working-people over the last 225 years is better described as “In union there is strength.” A few primitive labor unions of shoemakers, coopers, and others already existed in Colonial America. Working women organized for the first time in 1765 as an auxiliary of the Sons of Liberty, calling themselves the Daughters of Liberty. The largest union or guild before the Revolution was the Carpenter’s Company of Philadelphia, founded in 1724. This group was active in the Revolution. Carpenters disguised as Mohawk Indians “hosted” the Boston Tea Party. The Declaration of Independence was signed in Carpenters Hall in Philadelphia. More unions began to form as soon as the ink was dry on the new Constitution, composed of craftsmen such as cobblers, printers, tailors, cabinetmakers, and masons.

Organizations of sailors were the most militant. Murolo and Chitty note: “Work stoppages are called strikes on account of sailors; they would ‘strike’—that is, lower—a ship’s sails when they were no longer willing to work.” This often occurred because of safety issues. In the 1780s and 1790s, several unions went on strike for shorter hours and higher pay, for instance New York shoemakers in 1785, Philadelphia printers in 1786, New York printers in 1794, cabinet makers in 1796, Philadelphia carpenters in 1791 and 1797, cordwainers in 1799.

Priscilla Murolo and A.B. Chitty describe this period in *From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend*. They say that in the mid-1790s white craftsmen, seamen, and farmers formed a large network of political clubs that advocated the extension of voting rights, more openness in law-making, and the establishment of public schools. They merged into the Democratic-Republic Party led by Thomas Jefferson and helped elect him to the presidency in 1800.

The age of industrialization began about the same time as the nation did with textile mills in the Northern states. In 1775 a Philadelphia factory employed 400 women. The invention of the power loom in 1814 made weaving a factory occupation instead of a cottage industry—these same power looms were the target of destruction in England by Luddites who were resisting the factory system. Many of the early factories employed only children or only women, typically young, unmarried women. In the 1830s about one third of the New England workforce was made up of children under 16.

In the 1820s women began to join in strikes. The first all-women strike was by the United Tailoresses of New York, a women-only trade organization. The first all-women factory strike occurred in 1828 when millworkers in Dover, New Hampshire rebelled against new rules that banned talking on the job. They staged a parade with a brass band and firecrackers.

The Federalist Party which dominated politics in the early 1800s constructed a legal system based on British law. Union members were often brought to court on charges of criminal conspiracy, emphasizing “injury to trade.” Philadelphia cordwainers were convicted in 1806, destroying their union; New York hatters in 1823. The threat of conspiracy lawsuits was finally lifted by a court decision in 1842. By the 1820s unions began to show interest in a federation of unions for a more effective voice. In 1829 they formed the Workingmen’s Party of New York.

This is only the beginning of the history of labor in the United States and does not touch on many dramatic stories, the large-scale and violent struggles of the post-Civil War period, the increasing scope of labor organizations, or the long, successful campaigns for a 10-hour day and ultimately an 8-hour day. Unions once called forth the drive and camaraderie associated today mainly with soldiering. It should be evident at least that labor unions are as American as apple pie.

Anti-Union Ideology: Two hundred years ago, a reform bill in England—the Factory Act of 1819—mandated no employment of children less than nine years old, and *no more than a 12-*

hour working day for ages nine to sixteen. Can you imagine your own nine-year-old operating a machine every day from daylight to dark? Two hundred years later, and mainly because of the actions of organized labor, both the UK and U.S. have ended child labor and gained the 40-hour week, the weekend, paid vacations, pension plans, and other improved working conditions. However, many Americans particularly in the Southern states are opposed to unions on principle.

They base anti-union ideology on the following arguments: union leaders are corrupt, Big Labor (AFL-CIO) is too powerful, we now have labor laws so that unions are no longer needed, labor unions may use my dues for political campaigns with which I disagree, union membership restricts my rights to make independent decisions, strikes are anti-social, and unions—especially when they call strikes—are unscriptural and immoral.

Those who defend unions point out that while it is true some labor leaders have been corrupt, so have some business leaders. Yet the public exposure of Enron, Halliburton, and many other firms did not bring forth general anti-business sentiments among those who dislike unions. As for the boogeyman called Big Labor, Jo-Ann Mort wonders “how far organized labor has to fall before the *Wall Street Journal* and other anti-union voices retire the phrase ‘big labor.’ Doesn’t falling below the 10 percent mark count for something?” In the 1950s, 35 percent of workers belonged to unions, while today about 8 percent of private-sector workers belong. Mort also notes a recent split in the AFL-CIO that cost it two large unions with 3.2 million members, reducing labor’s power further.

The AFL-CIO and other unions donate to the campaigns of candidates who are pro-labor. In the 2004 election, organized labor gave \$61.6 million to federal candidates and parties, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. That is a lot of money, but in the same election, business interests donated \$1.5 billion, or 24 times as much. While campaign contributions by corporations and wealthy individuals don’t come from union member dues, they may come from the company’s excess profits which some say rightfully belong to workers who are working harder because of down-sizing or have lost their pension plans. If industries also accumulate money for politics because they benefit from government subsidies, then it is the taxpayers who are paying for corporate donations to political campaigns. Those who object strenuously to political donations by unions should note that working people or the public in general may pay indirectly for corporate contributions to political campaigns with which they also disagree.

A Christian website contains some anti-union sentiments based on Bible passages, for example that the sixth chapter of Ephesians presents “God’s ideal for labor relations. It talks about the proper behavior of both masters and servants, which corresponds to employers and employees.” Other posters mention a passage in which John told soldiers to be content with their wages. Such interpretations depend very much on specific words. My version of the Bible translates the Ephesians, Peter, and Colossians passages as “Slaves, obey your earthly masters...” But slaves are not the same as servants, and not all employees are servants. In fact, other parts of my Bible refer to “hired men” who would better correspond to modern employees. In Luke 15:15 the prodigal son hires himself out to a citizen of a distant country. Verses in Matthew 20:1-16 describe “hired men” who appear to be day laborers, like those who today wait at the local employment office for pick-up work. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 counsels: “Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy...” These passages about hired men do not support anti-union ideology or promote the idea that employees should be subservient to their employers as slaves are to their masters.

Anti-union sentiments often seem related to an ideology that regards working class people as much as ante-Bellum mythology regarded slaves—irresponsible, lazy, child-like creatures. In

early February, 2008, the Senate was considering whether to add provisions to the economic stimulus package that had been forwarded to them by the House (with the Administration's okay and warnings not to change it). Specifically they were to vote on a plan to extend unemployment benefits for about three months to people who had run out of their original 26 weeks of benefits. A large number of Senators are lawyers and few have any working class experience. Many Republican conservatives were opposed to the above provision and saw jobless benefits as a drain on the economy. Sen. Judd Gregg claimed that most people on unemployment do not find a job until their last two weeks of benefits. "That's human nature. [They] will stay on unemployment even though there may be a job out there that they could take." Similar stereotypical attitudes were common in the early years of the 1930s Depression, as conservatives insisted that jobs were available for any who wanted them.

As one who has actually experienced unemployment, I would use a different frame. At the beginning, you are trying to find a 'good job' that not only pays well and has benefits but also makes use of your particular talents and skills. As weeks go by, expectations go down. Faced with the end of benefits or savings, in desperation you settle for anything. Thus we find college graduates driving cabs and clerking in convenience stores. Sen. Gregg apparently assumes that every job seeker should quickly settle for anything—as if we are interchangeable parts.

PART IV: SCIENCE AND REASON

Development of modern science and scientific thinking over the last four centuries is one of the glories of the human mind. It is also a very large part of the modern paradigm. Yet there are basic confusions about precisely what science is and who scientists are. Many in the public do not understand scientific methods. In particular, at least half of the American public is ignorant of, confused about, and/or opposed to the underlying theory of biology which is evolution.

Several ideologies are related to science and technology. Such ideologies are expressed by some scientists but not others and perhaps more by those who follow or identify with science without themselves being practicing scientists

Chapter 15 discusses some problem areas in the larger realm of reason, logic, and argumentation, or how we defend our own ideas against others.

CHAPTER 14: SCIENCE-and-TECHNOLOGY

Is science objective, a disinterested reflection of reality, as Karl Popper and his followers believed? Or is it subjective, a social construction, as Thomas Kuhn and his students maintained?

Michael Ruse, philosopher of science

Science is nothing but trained and organized common sense.

Thomas Huxley, 1825-1895

The term ‘science’ can be a confusing concept. It has at least three common meanings. The first meaning has to do with its method—the scientific method—and science’s general approach of objectively looking for evidence. Scientists are not the only people who objectively look for evidence; detectives, philosophers, lawyers, scholars, journalists, and others may withhold judgment until they find evidence to support their argument or hypothesis. In fact, all of us are capable of critical thinking. Science, however, has a specific method and has built up a tradition of systematic inquiry. Scientific inquiry relies on experimentation and testing of hypotheses. It has behind it a world-wide community of people who share the scientific method and scientific ethic of truth-seeking. This method and ethic is what some consider as the essence of science.

Second, science is a body of knowledge that many people mistake for a collection of immutable truths. On the contrary, it is one of the glories of science that no past truth is written in stone and, as Einstein said, “No number of experiments can prove me right, and one experiment can prove me wrong.” Theories can never be proved, only disproved. According to philosopher Karl Popper, any scientific hypothesis or theory must be falsifiable, or capable of being proven wrong. When new phenomena do not fit existing theories, scientists know they must modify or even discard the theory.

Although scientific belief and theories change throughout time, much of the scientific body of knowledge is well-established and is thoroughly interwoven. Theories mesh with other theories. Anti-evolutionists do not seem to understand this point. Also, use of the word ‘theory’ as in the theory of gravity or the theory of evolution means something quite different from what

people mean by it in ordinary life (“just a theory”) when it may refer to a hunch or a bright idea off the top of your head.. A scientific theory or law represents the results of a hypothesis or series of such hypotheses which have undergone many experimental tests. In science a theory such as the theory of gravity is more like a paradigm, an overarching concept.

The third confusion about what science means, and probably the most problematic, is this: are science and technology one thing or two different things? Is science the dispassionate search for knowledge, while applied science or technology is its sometimes evil twin? Or are they one and the same? Neither scientists nor the general public is making this very important distinction between science and technology.

Using Google, one finds a number of definitions of science, few of which even mention technology:

- Systematized knowledge derived through experimentation, observation, and study. Also: The methodology used to acquire this knowledge
- The method of inquiry that requires the generation, testing, and acceptance or rejection of hypotheses
- Systematically acquired knowledge that is verifiable

One such definition lists the studies which constitute science as follows: biology, chemistry, earth science and geology, physics, resource sciences, space and astronomy, biotechnology, engineering, computer and information technology. With the possible exception of biology, these are all ‘hard sciences’ and applied sciences, leaving out anthropology, psychology, geography (unless that is a ‘resource science’), or other social sciences. This definition by inclusion and exclusion suggests a certain bias about what science “really is.” It includes technology and excludes attempts by humans to understand ourselves in a systematic way.

Let us start with the scientific method, the process by which scientists as a group and over time try to construct an accurate representation of the world. By using standard procedures and criteria, they attempt to reduce the influence of bias and preconceptions in the experimenter. These are the idealized steps of the scientific method:

1. Observe a phenomenon or phenomena.
2. Formulate a hypothesis to explain the phenomena. This hypothesis must be testable.
3. Use the hypothesis to predict the existence of other phenomena.
4. Perform experimental tests of the predictions by several independent experimenters who use properly performed experiments.

Of course, that is the ideal, while the actual practice of science raises thornier issues. First of these is the question whether the methods of physics and chemistry, which deal with inanimate matter, are the best methods for biology, psychology, and social science, which deal with living beings. If a science cannot proceed entirely by the methods of physics and chemistry, mathematics and experimentation, is it therefore not a science?

People tend to speak of science as one monolithic entity, but that is misleading. In the first place, a number of sciences exist, they deal with different subject matters, and so they necessarily deal with them in different ways. Until fairly recently, the field of biology developed more by classification and observation than by experiments. You cannot learn about the behavior

of live bats the same way that you learn about protons, just as you cannot easily experiment with tectonic plates and monsoons.

Each science also has further subdivisions. In biology, biochemists and molecular biologists work with test tubes rather than with living animals, whereas ethologists or animal behaviorists may study wild animals while actually living among them, as did Jane Goodall (chimpanzees) and Diane Fossey (gorillas). The process of subdividing science proceeds apace, especially since the 1970s, with an acceleration in scientific knowledge. Psychologist Nicolas Charney says:

The fragmentation of culture...has now moved within science itself. Biologists have difficulty talking to anthropologists. Physicists have difficulty talking to geologists. Mathematicians have difficulty talking to anybody. The fragmentation is evident even within the psychological community, where almost every day a new specialty seems to arise and promptly isolate itself.

Physics was the first scientific discipline to develop fully. Isaac Newton's theory of mechanics not only dominated physics for over 200 years but made it the model science. A hierarchy developed among scientists with physics at the top as 'Queen of the Sciences,' chemistry next, then biology, and at the bottom, the late-blooming disciplines of psychology and social sciences. The latter two, the sciences of the individual and collective human being, were often disparaged because they are not and cannot be as solidly based on experiments and mathematics as physics and chemistry are.

In an effort to be more like the queen, some scientists in the disparaged fields plunged into experiments and statistical methods that were sometimes less fruitful for their particular subject-matter than previous methods such as direct observation, introspection, and speculation. Behaviorism in American psychology was part of this trend. It made psychology "scientific" by drastically limiting the conception of a human being.

At one time I considered studying for a degree in psychology until learning that the local university's psychology department was preoccupied by experiments with white rats. This was the legacy of an ironic twist early in the twentieth century. Just as the once-mechanistic, model science of physics was entering strange metaphysical realms with the new theories of relativity and quantum mechanics, American psychology went into a long period of mechanistic theory and 'rat-running.' The psychologist John Watson led this change and his influence dominated the field of psychology for about fifty years.

People commonly define scientific statements as "testable" and capable of being falsified. Thus they implicitly use the model of physics and chemistry as the model for all science. But some sciences rest more on careful observation than on laboratory experimentation. Jared Diamond at the end of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* refers to these as "historical sciences" and includes history along with astronomy, climatology, ecology, evolutionary biology, geology, and paleontology. Diamond notes that "the word 'science' means 'knowledge'...to be obtained by whatever methods are most appropriate to a particular field."

Diamond notes several major differences between the historical and non-historical sciences. They differ in their methodology, causation, prediction, and complexity. First, laboratory experiments can play little role in historical sciences, since "One cannot interrupt galaxy formation, start and stop hurricanes and ice ages...or rerun the course of dinosaur evolution." However, besides the basic observation and comparison, scientists may look at "natural experiments." For instance, several populations of the same species may live on different islands, with environments differing in ways believed to cause variations in the populations.

The second difference concerns causation, which in the historical sciences may involve long chains of proximate and ultimate causes. These may be so long that the final effects and their ultimate causes are studied in different fields of science. Causation involves different concepts for the two types of sciences. For instance ‘function’ is meaningless in most physics and chemistry, but is essential for understanding living systems and human societies.

A third difference between historical and non-historical sciences is the degree to which one can predict the future behavior of a system. Diamond notes that each subject of historical sciences, whether it is a glacier, nebula, biological species, individual, or cell, is unique. But for physical scientists, elementary particles or isotopes are all identical to each other. Chemists and physicists can predict, but evolutionary biologists and historians cannot, because living creatures and human societies are extremely complex with many independent variables and feedback mechanisms. “As a result, small changes at a lower level of organization can lead to emergent changes at a higher level.” Diamond says that even though biological systems are ultimately determined by their physical properties, this does not translate into predictability.

In similar vein, Michael Shermer writing in *Scientific American* laments the tendency to rank sciences from ‘hard’ to ‘soft.’ Assuming this refers to relative difficulty, he says if there *must* be a rank order let it reverse the current one:

Even the difficulty of constructing comprehensive models in the biological sciences pales in comparison to that of modeling the workings of human brains and societies. By these measures, the social sciences are the hard disciplines, because the subject matter is orders of magnitude more complex and multifaceted.

Shermer also defends the roles of theory and narrative as being just as important to science as data. If observations are to be useful, they must be tested against “a thesis, model, hypothesis, theory or paradigm.” Facts do not speak for themselves. As pattern-seeking primates, we need to explain them and their relationship to other facts.

Science and/or Technology: Besides the fact that science is actually a number of sciences, there is that other, thornier question about its identity. Scientists like to align themselves with the ideals of pure, disinterested science but to most of the public, science-and-technology is one and the same. As a woman at the public library said when the automated book-checking machine failed to work, “I never did understand modern science!” In fact, many people like science better when it is associated with new products than when scientists use their skills to point out that humans are doing something that is about to ruin the planet, or when scientific evidence points to the fact that the planet is several billion years old, contrary to literal readings of the Bible.

Pure science is the product of curiosity about the natural world. Science seeks to understand everything; it is the idealized form of curiosity. Science also uses a highly systematized form of critical thinking that depends on initial doubt (even as Descartes did) and very strict rules of evidence. Curiosity and skepticism are keys. Scientists are also supposed to be disinterested, that is, to have no attachment, material or psychological, to the outcome of their experiments. Insofar as they are detached from the results, this keeps out bias and allows science to progress.

Applied science or technology, on the other hand, is more about control and profit. Science-and-technology seeks to understand nature in order to master it, to break it into its constituent parts and reassemble them in profitable ways. It is practical, mechanical, materialistic, and industrial. Dennis Fox points out the connection between technology and other forms of power: “The Internet provides more power to those who already have too much. *This is true of most*

technology (my emphasis).” Even though science and technology coexist, they seem to operate from different world views.

Modern technology depends on inventors, although historically few great inventors have been scientists or the reverse; they have different approaches. Technology also depends on engineers and science technicians, and above all, on industry. Somebody has to invest money. No one will support research and development and technological infrastructure unless there is an expectation of profitability to the manufacturer. Most modern scientific research is conducted by industry or by academic scientists with grants funded either by industry or by a government for military purposes. According to Jeremy Rifkin, one-third of the world’s scientists work on military related research, while many of the rest work directly or indirectly for multinationals. This is true even within academic institutions, where science departments look to grants from government and industry.

When government funding focuses only on fields with immediate technical applications, this is damaging to scientific research. Some fields of science have few or no industrial, military, or foreign policy applications, and so they remain ‘pure’ but also relatively unfunded. When the government does issue grants for basic research that does not have clear application to industry or medicine, and the public learns about it (as through Senator Proxmire’s ‘Golden Fleece Awards’ a few decades ago) there is usually an outcry about wasting taxpayer’s money. What do we care about the reproduction of butterflies?

Yet here is just one example of how basic research does relate to humans. Biologist Ken Catania studies a strange-looking, little-known, semi-aquatic creature called the star-nosed mole (its nose has 22 digits). Catania noticed these moles blowing air bubbles at objects and quickly sucking the bubbles back in, which suggested to him that they were smelling odors. But that would contradict the scientific assumption that mammals cannot smell underwater and breathe at the same time. However, further research found that in fact, these moles do use smell to find food under the water. So, what do we care about star-nosed moles? It seems that the evolution of the mammalian (and human) brain is closely related to the olfactory sense, and this information will help us understand our own brain. Similarly, “A giant nerve in the squid has helped us understand much of what we know about how nerves work, and barn owls, with their acutely sensitive ears, have helped us understand the sense of hearing.” And *that* understanding of the brain, the nerves, and the sense of hearing underlies improvements in medicine and other fields.

Science and Technique: Another way to view science-and-technology is to look at the wide range of motivations of those who ‘do science’—which sometimes means individual scientists, those in a particular scientific discipline, or science teachers, but also motivations of social institutions and society as a whole, those who support scientific endeavors.

1. Curiosity—one may call it “divine curiosity”—to understand the nature of the Universe. As botanist Luther Burbank said: “The scientist is a lover of truth for the very love of truth itself, wherever it may lead.”
2. To add to the sum of human knowledge.
3. To protect and preserve the planet which is the habitat of our species.
4. To contribute to human welfare and happiness.
5. To provide humans with comforts, conveniences, and novelties for which they will pay.

6. To provide one's own nation or national elite with economic advantages for instance by the exploration of commons (Ocean, Arctic) and of less developed regions without strong governments. Such economic development may slide over into frank imperialism.

7. To make money on the large scale from the economic development provided by #5 and #6. This occasionally applies to scientist-entrepreneurs such as J. Craig Venter but more generally to the corporations that support research and increasingly to universities.

8. To provide better weapons for one's own tribe or nation in order to conquer other tribes or nations or prevent its own conquest by them.

The first four motivations are the ideal of science, while the second four are the pragmatics of technology. These motivations apply unevenly to different disciplines. Sometimes motives are mixed. For instance, one might help a business save money by saving energy or conserving resources and aid the planet too. An individual scientist might explore the Arctic in a government-funded expedition which has the purpose of mapping commercial passages, while he personally is more interested in discovering new forms of sea life.

Another source of confusion is the definition of 'scientist.' Besides scientific researchers, a much larger number of professionals and semi-professionals work with scientific matters by applying a framework of rules and protocols to individual cases. Take, for instance, the profession of medicine, which is based on a long and growing tradition of knowledge. Very few physicians do their own direct research. I was impressed, several decades ago, by a European-trained doctor who kept a microscope in one corner of his examining room. Instead of telling a patient that she had "that bug that's going around" he took a throat swab and identified it for himself. As pharmaceuticals become increasingly important in the practice of medicine, doctors are increasingly dependent on those who do the research (often the drug companies themselves) and those who are supposed to oversee and review that research (a politicized FDA).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics lists scientific occupations separately from healthcare occupations. While doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists are not listed as scientists, medical researchers and epidemiologists are. Also listed as scientists along with astronomers, engineers, geologists, and the like are economists, foresters, market research analysts, urban and regional planners, and technicians in many scientific fields. I think the average person would be more likely to call a medical doctor a scientist before a market research analyst or urban planner. What definition is the government using?

One often hears the statement that there are more scientists living today than in all the rest of history put together, first uttered by De Solla Price in the 1960s. But 30 years later Caltech physicist David Goodstein disputed this, saying:

The era of exponential growth in science is already over....It is probably still true that 90 percent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today, and that statement has been true at any given time for nearly 300 years. But it cannot go on being true for very much longer.

By U.S. government estimates, there were about 10.6 million scientists and engineers in the workforce in 1997. This undoubtedly includes technicians. Census estimates are much lower. It is difficult to estimate how many scientists there are world-wide because of differences in definition. In Germany, for instance, the term scientist might apply to a researcher in ancient literature, but a computer programmer would not be included as a scientist or engineer.

Public Misunderstanding of Science

The primary reservoir of objective thinking in human society is professional science.

John McCarthy, computer scientist

What is the public image of a scientist? It may be the doctor or engineer. People are more in contact with those who apply science and with whom they can identify as ‘practical.’ Or it may be the heroic figures, founts of knowledge, or mad scientists portrayed in the movies. Besides the confusion between pure science and technology, scientists and technicians, many people simply do not understand how scientists think or how science progresses. They are unable to distinguish between possibilities and probabilities, between probabilities and certitude. Attached to either/or thinking, they do not appreciate how the gradual accumulation of evidence adds up to a greater degree of probability but *not* to absolute proof.

Many in the public assume that scientists as a group should be like Thumper in the story, or crows in a clearing, giving us an unequivocal signal of danger. They expect a unified doctrine from the Church of Science. It is confusing and exasperating for the public to hear different messages from time to time, not realizing that the media often report on possibilities rather than probabilities, on single experiments or studies that need to be repeated, or on theories held by a minority of scientists. A great many people like to have things nailed down and don’t appreciate the tentative nature of scientific knowledge that advances by doubt and new experiments. To them it seems that scientists are always changing their mind, and therefore don’t really know what they are doing.

However, on some occasions scientists do speak with virtually one voice, as for instance in their acceptance of evolutionary theory as the basis of modern biology or in current scientific consensus that climate changes are occurring and that they are related to human activities. In each case, a substantial segment of the public doesn’t like that particular consensus. Those who disagree for ideological reasons will find a few contrarian professors here and there who dissent from the scientific consensus. For them, that one percent of disagreement will outweigh the other 99 percent. In such cases, the voice of Science is seen as authoritarian and oppressive.

The word ‘theory’ has a very different connotation in science than on the street. It is the difference between a paradigm and a hunch. So the attack on evolutionary theory as “nothing but a theory” has been transferred to climate change. A letter to the editor says: “Global warming is a theory, unproven.” As so many other letter writers do, he regards it as a political agenda and a scam to make its proponents rich. Because of such reactions, physicist Helen Quinn suggested in *Physics Today* that scientists should use the word ‘law’ instead of the word ‘theory’ when describing well-established science.

Another confusion about science results from the public’s attraction to drama and the media’s tendency to satisfy this desire. That is why startling findings get reported prematurely while more significant ones may never be reported in the mainstream news. It is also why most medical dramas on television portray surgeons, not general practitioners or dermatologists.

At a deeper level one sees the misunderstanding between ‘common sense’ and a science that deals with phenomena unavailable to common sense. Richard Dawkins notes that the sizes, distances, and speeds with which we are familiar are only part of a “gigantic range of the possible, from the scale of quantum strangeness at the smaller end to the scale of Einsteinian cosmology at the larger.” Our brains evolved to adapt to a way of life in the middle range of events. Part of that adaptation is what we call common sense. But Dawkins says: “Science in general, as opposed to technology, does violence to common sense.”

On many occasions I have seen letters to the editor that demonstrate a kind of contempt for scientists who draw conclusions that contradict what the writer knows from common sense. For instance, the letter writer has experienced unusually cold spring weather and so he calls into question the theory of global warming. He is aware of the cyclical nature of many events, including the weather, so it seems most likely to him that it will get warmer for awhile and then colder again, as it has always done before. However, he ignores the fact that his locale is only a small fraction of the world's land mass, where weather of many different kinds is occurring.

Misunderstanding Evolution

Letter to the Editor, August 14, 2008: *For evolution to even be possible, at some time all species had to have the ability to cross-breed, e.g., fish with birds, snails with snakes, apes with early man. But why can't these species cross-breed today? Truthfully, they never could...All of the manmade methods of calculating the age of things are unreliable. [Evolutionists] have nothing 50 billion years old to compare with.....J.V.*

Several centuries before Charles Darwin, theologians began to realize that there were serious differences between their biblical explanations and the facts arising from new explorations. Notably, it became evident that there were far more species than anyone had imagined. Even more perplexing was the distribution of these species in faraway lands, which they could not possibly have reached on their own after disembarking from the Ark after the Flood.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the great zoological classifier Linnaeus had numbered four thousand species of animals. The consequent problem was, how did Adam name them all, and how did they all fit into the Ark? The number of distinct species kept on increasing. Andrew Dickson White says: "Already there were premonitions of the strain made upon Scripture by requiring a hundred and sixty distinct miraculous interventions of the Creator to produce the hundred and sixty species of land shells found in the little island of Madeira alone."

Several theories tried to explain these anomalies. In 1801 the Chevalier de Lamarck, a French botanist and zoologist, proposed that life possessed an innate tendency to become more complex, and that environmental pressures propelled specific changes in species. Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, published the book *Zoonomia* which suggested that "all animals have a similar origin [with] gradual production of the species and genera of animals." Meanwhile, the uniformitarian theories of early geologists James Hutton and Charles Lyell greatly extended the age of rocks and consequently the time line for Earth's existence.

It was evident to many scientists in the 19th century that fauna and flora, fossils and rock strata did not fit a literalist interpretation of the Bible. White says that by the end of the 18th century, the theological theory had "gone to pieces....By the middle of the 19th century the whole theological theory of creation—though still preached everywhere as a matter of form—was clearly seen by all thinking men to be hopelessly lost....Neither the powerful logic of Bishop Butler nor the nimble reasoning of Archdeacon Paley availed."

The general idea of evolution was widespread, in the dictionary definition of the word: "a theory that the various types of animals and plants have their origin in other preexisting types and that the distinguishable differences are due to modifications in successive generations." But *how* did it occur? While Darwin was working on his theory of evolution, so was another scientist, Alfred Russel Wallace, 1823-1913; Darwin just beat Wallace to publication. In Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) he included evidence from years of his own fieldwork and other research.

The great contribution of Darwin is the theory of natural selection. This is the idea that the offspring of each organism vary, and natural selection favors the survival of some variations over others. Thus the helpful traits spread through the species and the less advantageous ones disappear. New species arise by the same processes, and very different groups of plants and animals have arisen from the same ancestors.

During my first 40 years or so I did not meet anyone who claimed to disbelieve evolution, and so assumed that the controversy was behind us, back in the 1920s. However, the court cases about banning the teaching of evolution in schools began again in 1968, with *Epperson vs. Arkansas*, and have continued into the '90s and new millennium.

I grew up with evolution stories. My father told me about Eohippus, the little horse which over generations and millennia grew gradually bigger and bigger. Other stories were about Pterodactyls—a sort of flying dinosaur—and the strong possibility that all our present-day birds, the robins and blue jays and canaries, descended from them. At first viewing of the Disney classic film “Fantasia,” my favorite part (although it was sad) was about dinosaurs facing extinction when the climate changed. Young children are perennially fascinated by dinosaurs. One of mine insisted on taking dozens of small plastic saurians into the bathtub with her every evening. Unfortunately, as the result of adult ignorance, pop culture, and literal Bible-reading, many adults now believe and teach that dinosaurs and people were contemporaries. At least one Bible-based museum has exhibits based on this notion.

Modern schoolchildren don't seem to know much about the cave-dwellers either, perhaps because their mentors are not clear about how those ancestors fit into the Genesis scenario. Young Earth Creationists believe that the planet and humankind are only about 6,000 years old, a date of origin near the beginning of recorded history in the Near Eastern civilizations. This suggests that Adam and Eve, cave-dwellers, and pre-literate civilizations would have existed together for a few short years before full-blown civilizations arose. This notion offends common sense, not to mention the evidence and combined work of past and present archeologists and historians, evolutionary biologists and geologists.

Evolution is a panoramic view that takes us far back into the past to our one-celled ancestors and helps us envision the future. Evolutionary consciousness is so much a part of the context for modern life that it is hard to imagine thinking without it. For instance, how do anti-evolutionists react to the information that overuse of antibiotics has caused microbes to mutate and evolve into ‘superbugs’? Because bacteria reproduce so fast, their evolution is greatly speeded up. I wonder if people who say they don't believe in evolution realize that this is almost like saying they don't believe in modern biology or modern medicine.

Whatever was said in school about evolution or cave dwellers or old rocks, it did nothing to cast doubt on what I learned at home and in books. (Now I wonder whether some of my teachers avoided those subjects.) Thus it was a shock to discover that as many as half of us in the U.S. don't learn much about evolution in school, don't understand it, and don't believe in it. The letter to the editor quoted above is typical of many such persons who act confident of their knowledge despite a complete lack of understanding. Three of the Republican candidates for President in the 2008 election were among those disbelievers. Also, few anti-evolutionists seem to make the distinction between the general idea of evolution as biological changes over time—an idea which predated Darwin—and Darwin's theory about *how* it occurred with natural selection. They also throw in theories about the origins of life, the planet, and the universe although Darwin didn't say anything about those. Five scientific ideas are thus conflated into one.

Things may be even odder than that, as a recent *USA Today*/Gallup poll indicated that 66 percent of adults said they believed in creationism, while 53 percent believed in evolution. Of the people polled, a quarter believed in *both* the religious doctrine and the scientific theory, which are generally thought of as irreconcilable opposites. Somebody is not too clear on the concept.

As with so many ideologies, a few strong-minded individuals played a major role in anti-evolution attacks. According to scholar Douglas O. Linder, the current anti-evolution movement might not have happened without Baptist minister William B. Riley, a prominent fundamentalist leader in the early twentieth century. Riley invented the label “fundamentalist” and co-founded the movement. He modeled himself on the famed evangelical crusader of a previous generation, theologian Dwight L. Moody. First Riley attacked modernism in general, but he “soon identified the growing acceptance by modernist religious leaders of evolution as the infidelity most threatening to Christian values.” His main target was the teaching of evolution in public schools.

It is now evident that after the Scopes Trial in the 1920s many schools especially in the South and lower Midwest did not teach evolution for fear of controversy. One example is Florida, which in February, 2008 finally changed its science standards so that, as the *Miami Herald* says: “For the first time ever, evolution is to be taught clearly and explicitly in Florida classrooms.” The catch is that it will be taught as “the Scientific Theory of Evolution” because of lobbying by a coalition of conservative groups. Meanwhile, after years without teaching evolution, only 22 percent of Florida residents want public schools to teach evolution-only, while 50 percent want only faith-based theories—creationism or intelligent design.

Anti-Evolution Ideologies

Design must be proved before a designer can be inferred.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, English poet, 1792-1822

Two somewhat different versions of ideologies seeking to replace evolution are creationism and Intelligent Design (ID). Young Earth creationists are strict biblical literalists who believe that the God of Genesis created all the animals in six days and Noah saved them on the ark. They believe that the Earth is not 4.6 billion years old as geologists claim, but only as old as is compatible with the listing of generations in Genesis—about 6,000 years. Young Earth creationists easily dismiss the accepted scientific evidence for estimating the age of the Earth or of a particular fossil or human artifact. Yet scientists use not just one, but a variety of methods of scientific dating, such as: radiocarbon dating, uranium-series dating, potassium radioisotopes, thermoluminescence, Electron Spin Resonance, dendrochronology based on tree rings, paleomagnetism, radioactive decay, argon-40/argon-39 dating, and DNA. Some of these can be cross-checked with each other.

Old Earth creationists are not quite so literal and accept the idea that the six days in the Bible might have been epochs. However, a common argument by all creationists is that there are no transitional fossils or “missing links” to indicate intermediate forms between one species and another. But while only a small fraction of all life-forms are preserved in fossils, scientists insist that indeed they have found many transitional fossils, starting with the discovery of *Archaeopteryx* in 1861. *Archaeopteryx* represents a transitional form not only between species but between two phyla, dinosaurs and birds. According to paleontologist Roger J. Cuffey, transitional fossils exist between other phyla as well: fish-tetrapod, amphibian-reptile, and reptile-mammal.

Other fossil records that include many transitional forms are the evolution of horses from the dog-size *Eohippus* to modern horses, and a succession of species of Hominids. Today, DNA testing makes even more compelling evidence for evolution than do fossils.

Proponents of Intelligent Design (ID) have many ideas similar to those of old earth creationists, but without a commitment to Genesis literalism. ID proponents emphasize that the natural world is too complex to have occurred by chance; it required an intelligent designer. This entity could be an extraterrestrial or other unknown entity, but most advocates of ID are Christians who believe the God of the Bible is the intelligent designer. Some ID proponents accept “microevolution” or the idea that a species may change over time based on natural selection—but not the idea that one species can change into another species and especially not by natural law and chance alone.

ID proponents question how a complex body part such as the eye could have evolved simply by chance, or how it could have been useful in an intermediate stage. Letter writers often use an analogy to human-made technical devices, saying it is obvious that your watch or auto could not have evolved by itself, but required an intelligent designer. However, this is an imperfect analogy, since watches and autos do not have offspring or mechanisms of heredity. Biologists give more technical explanations of how complexity could arise through Darwinian evolution. Unlike Creationism, ID has some advocates with scientific credentials, notably Dr. Michael Behe, a professor of biological sciences, and Dr. William Dembski, a professor of mathematics. With Phillip E. Johnson, a professor emeritus of law, these three founded the theory of intelligent design. The movement has found support among a few scientists who are also conservative Christians, especially among doctors and engineers.

Put very simply, most scientists say that evolution is more like a *bricoleur* than an engineer. This is a person who creates something out of whatever odds and ends are lying around. Evolution uses whatever works. Doubting that there is intelligent design, some non-scientists point out imperfections in the human being such as tonsils, appendixes or gall bladders that often become inflamed and require removal, or teeth whose appearance makes innocent babies cry, yet which even with two sets don’t last a lifetime of use. Or they wonder why an Intelligent Designer would make 350,000 distinct species of beetles.

Creationists in particular use many odd arguments. For example a Creationist website lists Creationist scientists, past and present, including many famous figures such as Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Georges Cuvier, Johann Kepler, Carolus Linnaeus, Blaise Pascal, and Leonardo da Vinci (not all were scientists in the modern sense). But these individuals lived at times when Creationism was the only accepted theory, in some cases centuries before Darwin. What is the point of including them at all?

Evolution is consistent with the religious beliefs of many Christians including Catholics, of Jews and followers of other religions who believe that a Divine Being has chosen to work through evolution in this world. However, the presence in the United States of large numbers of religious believers who disagree with the central theory of biology makes for thorny constitutional issues about what is to be taught in the public schools.

The most recent court decision was *Kitzmiller v Dover* in 2005, when US District Judge John E. Jones ruled against the school board in Dover, Pennsylvania that required teachers to read a statement about ID before teaching evolution. The decision by Jones found that “ID is not science” and had no place in the science classroom. He gave three reasons, first that ID violated the conventions of the scientific method by relying upon supernatural explanations for natural phenomena rather than the scientific criterion of testability. Second, Jones said ID, like

Creationism, is based on a “contrived dualism” that suggests any negative argument against evolution is automatically a proof of intelligent design. Third, the judge found testimony about “irreducible complexity” had been refuted in peer-reviewed research papers published in scientific journals or presented at scientific conferences.

Darwinian evolution is taking a long time for many to accept—so far, 150 years. Some don’t understand what it is, others are confused by the controversy, and in addition, people have underlying psychological reasons to support the strong literalist reading of Genesis. Even more than the idea that the Earth revolves around the sun, evolution detracts from the central place of the human species. It is also hard for many to reconcile what appear to be random changes, based on chance, with their belief in God’s plan. We noted previously that fundamentalists believe the original creation was perfect and any changes can only go backwards—devolution rather than evolution. As fundamentalist Bob Jones put it, “The process of the human race has not been upward from the swamp by evolution, but downward from the garden by sin.” Thus the scientific theory of evolution directly threatens this basic doctrinal belief and entropic worldview that everything is running down and deteriorating.

Then there is the persistent nature of ideologies. Current arguments in the letters column often repeat what was said by the opposition to Darwin’s theories 150 years ago. For instance, writers grow livid over the notion that people are descended from ‘monkeys’ (actually an ancestor common to us and the great apes) without acknowledging that this was supposed to have happened over a span of millions of years. According to DNA evidence, our line diverged from that of our closest cousins—the chimpanzees and bonobos—six million years ago. A basic problem here may be that with their 6,000 year frame, anti-evolutionists cannot imagine very long sweeps of time. Most people are really only familiar with five generations—our parents, grand-parents, selves, children, and grand-children. These known generations cover perhaps 150 years. Indeed, most of us find it hard to imagine big numbers. Our common ancestry with the great apes diverged 1,000 times as many years ago as the age of the entire Earth according to ‘young earth’ believers (6,000,000 years compared with 6,000 years). This is like two and a half years compared with one day.

According to a national survey conducted in 2005 by the NCSE, an organization that advocates teaching evolution, almost a third of teachers said they felt pressured, mainly by students and parents, to skim over or omit the study of evolution. Almost a third felt pressured, when they did teach evolution, to include creationism or intelligent design. As an example of the arguments used by those who pressure schools to change the science curriculum, a junior at a state university wrote to the college newspaper as follows:

Darwinism, or evolutionism, is the religion that says life as we know it came about from the evolution of one organism millions of years ago that proceeded from a huge explosion or a “big bang” billions of years ago. Darwinism is a religious faith and teaching it in a state funded institution at the taxpayer’s expense is a clear violation of our First Amendment rights. Its teachings are offensive to five major world religions and should not be forced on students

This student conflates several scientific theories from different fields of study into one belief system called Darwinism or evolutionism. However, the Big Bang theory is part of cosmology, not biology; and scientific ideas about the origin of life are not part of Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection which focuses on how species develop and change. Followers of ideologies commonly project ideological beliefs onto those with whom they disagree. So we have this assumption that any set of theories or a body of knowledge that contradicts a religious

doctrine is therefore also a religion and a competing one. (This idea could make the medical practice of blood transfusions, opposed by some religious sects, into a religious faith called, perhaps, Transfusianism.)

The student mischaracterizes “five major world religions” for only some Christians and Muslims hold Genesis to be literally true, while few Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus oppose Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. In fact, among developed nations the ignorance of and opposition to evolution is largely confined to the United States. However, it may be spreading abroad. The *Independent* reported in 2008 that a poll of UK teachers found that almost one third of them believe that creationism should be given the same status as evolution in the classroom.

Ideology and Science

The word “science” changed its meaning during the 19th century, from a generic word used to describe all forms of knowledge including theology and philosophy, to one more narrowly focused on an objective, rationalist approach to knowledge based on empirical evidence alone.

Tina Beattie, “The End of Postmodernism”

Science is under attack from Christian fundamentalists and radical right-wingers, both of whom prefer to manufacture their own facts. However, there are other critics of science from a variety of viewpoints, whether feminist, non-white, New Age, postmodern, or something else. The scientific world view is a very large part of the consensus reality that most of us share—our major paradigm. Its current form was not inevitable. Modern science took a certain direction rather than other possible routes with the establishment of the Royal Society in England and other national academies of science. For instance, applied science overshadowed pure science from the earliest days.

Science critic Robert M. Young notes that “Science is a world view, and the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could have made other conceptual choices than it did.” Young says that science cannot claim to be free of ideology and in fact, ideology has always been present in science, medicine, technology and other forms of expertise. Scientific ideas have their own histories and sociologies. Young says “Science is not just—or even largely—about facts; it is about traditions and ways of looking at things.”

Here I propose to explore popular ideologies that have arisen around science and the enthronement of its approach to reason. These common ideas or practices include scientific orthodoxy, scientific literalism, reductionism, and scientism. Next, we consider some ideologies that relate to technology in particular: technologism, technoutopianism, and transhumanism.

Orthodoxies: There are several kinds of orthodoxy in or around science. Some of these orthodoxies relate to epistemology, or how we know what we think we know, some to intuition, ESP or parapsychology, and participating consciousness generally. Some relate to the knowledge of past civilizations and non-Western civilizations, with how to deal with anomalies, to what constitutes a pseudo-science or quackery, to the degree we may say that other animals have intelligence, to which if any alternative healing systems have anything to offer Western medicine, and whether to pay any attention to amateur or non-academic scientists, or those whose approaches are novel and threaten the accepted wisdom. For although scientists accept in theory Einstein's dictum that at any time an experiment can prove him wrong, still in practice they are human and capable of turf battles or dogmatism.

First, science defends its preeminence as a way of knowing against any competing systems. Gibson Burrell suggests that science is as jealous of its superiority as Jehovah. “For if one comes to believe that science is just one form of knowledge amongst many then science’s right to legitimize and de-legitimize what is ignorance from what is logic is lost. Science thus attacks those who seek to question its foundations, charging opponents with unreason, madness, quackery, pseudo-science, obscurity, and the like.” Note that Burrell is talking about Western science as a way of apprehending reality and is not defending Creationism or Intelligent Design, ideologies that seek to insert a literal interpretation of the Bible into science education.

Scientific thinking can run for some time on a Swiss cheese paradigm, as in the case of eugenics, before the preponderance of evidence mounts up against it. Unfortunately, the demands of economics or ideology may delay the process. For instance, Barry Commoner, senior scientist at the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Queens College, CUNY, claims that the entire field of genetic engineering is based on dubious premises. Commoner says that the ‘central dogma’ of genetic science is the assumption that an organism’s set of DNA genes, or genome, is totally responsible for its inherited traits. Yet the two genome research teams reporting their results in 2001 showed that “There are far too few human genes to account for the complexity of our inherited traits or for the vast inherited differences between plants, say, and people.” Commoner adds, “Scientists and journalists somehow failed to notice what had happened.” He believes that money has distorted the scientific process.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many discoveries were made by self-trained amateurs in science who had not gone through a university science curriculum. But today, researchers who use the scientific method without having been academically trained as scientists are often ignored or criticized. For instance, the pioneer photobiologist John Ott has still not received the recognition he deserves. Originally a banker, Ott put more and more time into his pioneering hobby of time-lapse photography, making films of ‘dancing’ plants which became very popular. Then he began to research the effects of light and is now regarded as one of the pioneers of photobiology. It is Ott who discovered the negative physiological effects of ‘malillumination’ and first promoted the manufacture of full-spectrum light fixtures. But it is as if his important discoveries exist in some alternate world.

Here is another example of ignoring information outside the usual channels. As an activist for renewable energies in the 1970s, I ran across a 1976 Congressional Hearing conducted by Rep. Leo Ryan of California, probably the greatest advocate that solar energy ever had in Congress. (He was, unfortunately, murdered only two years later at the Jonestown airstrip while attempting to investigate the situation there.) The hearing concerned an invention by Ernest C. Yater for a rooftop device that could capture the heat of sunlight and convert it into electricity. This was not photovoltaic but thermal electricity using the rectification of thermal noise. Yater holds four patents on various aspects of the converter.

Under pressure from Rep. Ryan, the DOE awarded Yater an R&D grant of about \$50,000. A site on the Internet claims that the government promised a working model within six months of Yater’s demonstration, but instead notified the inventor that the device was impractical. Without a physics background myself, armed with a copy of the Congressional report, I attempted to get an evaluation of the device from three different physics teachers of my acquaintance, one of them an advocate of renewable energy, at three different colleges. None of them appeared to be interested. The reasons for their lack of curiosity, at a time when alternative energies were much discussed, appeared to be that I was not a scientist, Rep. Ryan was not a scientist, they had not heard anything about it through their regular channels, and if the technology were workable, we

would all learn about it. They evidently did not consider that political or economic motivations could be an obstacle to the smooth working out of scientific and technological advancements.

Some thirty years later, information about this invention is on the Internet, along with other speculation and inventions regarding the field of Zero Point Energy Extraction—which I do not pretend to understand. ZPE is fringe science, or cutting-edge science. IBM scientists in the field of nanotechnology are also working on the rectification of thermal noise. Yater may simply have been ahead of his time; his device was not yet cost-effective (and may be so now); or his invention may have been squelched. It would be good to know. How different the world would be today if 20 years ago people had been able to buy a roof-top converter costing about \$200 that would supply their electricity for years, as Yater claimed was possible. A larger version of the Yater device might have powered electric cars. Then there would be no need for electric utilities or electric lines, no need for petroleum or oil wars, no need for nuclear electricity and its attendant dangers, and more time to slow down climate changes. Most people would welcome such a world, but a few would not, if their livelihood or profits depended on the present system.

Anomalies: Scientific literalism is an attempt to limit science to a narrower range of phenomena and to protect it from any endeavors outside the established boundaries of science. This effort involves scientific attitudes toward anomalies.

In common parlance an anomaly is an exception, something odd, abnormal, strange, difficult to classify. In science, an anomalous phenomenon deviates from what one expects according to current scientific theory—or else the reason for its deviation is unclear. For instance, there is a known deviation in the expected trajectories of some unmanned spacecraft in the Pioneer program on visits to the outer solar system. However, the reason is not known. Sometimes such scientific anomalies lead to new theories.

Other anomalies lie outside the boundaries of orthodox science. Fortean anomalies are based on the work and methods of Charles Fort (1874-1932) a journalist and researcher who collected thousands of reports of unexplained events from scientific journals and newspapers. Anomalies that are difficult to explain scientifically tend to get swept under the rug, along with the ‘dark data’ of experiments that didn’t prove what they were set up to prove. Thomas Goetz, editor of *Wired* magazine, says there is “a vast body of squandered knowledge” from dark data that could advance knowledge in many fields.

Attempting to define pseudo-science, physicist Donald Simanek says that one characteristic of many pseudo-scientists is an obsession with anomalies. But classical scientists may have the opposite tendency. Their focus is on events that recur and objects regarded as interchangeable. Science seeks to move observations to laws and reach ever more universal statements by testing propositions that seem to disprove them. Since a large body of knowledge already exists concerning the regularity of events, they tend to ignore or discount anomalous events that do not fit into the body of science. We are not talking here only about things like crop circles or Charles Fort’s compilation of clippings about rains of frogs, but rather a large number of unexplained phenomena in every field of science.

Some examples are: 1) Anomalous optical and magnetic phenomena were reported before and after the Tunguska event in 1908 that left a huge crater in Siberia; 2) Since 2000, the National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena (NARCAP) has collected data regarding reports by pilots and other aviation specialists about encounters with lights or objects that do not resemble known categories of phenomena. They are called Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) rather than UFOs; 3) The fields of archaeology and anthropology swarm with

anomalous information, ranging from groups of people or their artifacts in unexpected places (white Pygmies in Paraguay, Phoenician coins in Bahamas) or peoples of unknown origin (Basques, Ainu), to evidence of advanced technology and remarkable building techniques in ancient civilizations; 4) Based on Google Earth satellite imagery, an Internet group collects anomalous map points such as mysterious earthworks and other unusual geographical features.

The term anomalistics was coined by anthropologist Robert W. Wescott to describe the use of scientific methods to evaluate physical events that seem to defy established science or common sense. It provides a framework for scientific skeptics and debunkers. The burden of proof is placed on those making claims. The more extraordinary the claim, the higher the level of proof required. Chemist Henry Bauer adds that within anomalistics, nothing can be considered proof unless it gains acceptance by the established disciplines of science.

A researcher into unexplained phenomena, Garth Haslam, has a different approach. While believers take stories on faith, he says that pseudo-skeptics bend the facts so that everything looks explainable by current scientific knowledge. He suggests a third way: "It's the rare few who will simply examine all the facts around a story objectively with no pre-chosen opinion they want to prove."

Pseudoscience

How does one distinguish between science and pseudoscience? Perhaps we should first settle on a definition of science. Even that isn't an easy task....whole books have been written on the subject. The scientist might answer: "I know pseudoscience when I see it." But the boundary between science and pseudoscience is murky. Sometimes it's hard to tell cutting edge scientific speculation from pseudoscience.

Donald E. Simanek, physics professor, "What Is Science? What Is Pseudoscience?"

Some introductory courses in science make an effort to distinguish science from pseudoscience, which Wikipedia defines as "any body of knowledge, methodology, belief, or practice that claims to be scientific or is made to appear scientific, but does not adhere to the basic requirements of the scientific method." Since the 19th century, a number of scientists and prominent skeptics have concerned themselves with criticizing pseudoscience. Today, Richard Dawkins, Mario Bunge, and James Randi are among those who regard all sorts of pseudoscience to be actually harmful, because they encourage irrational tendencies. Yet after more than a century of this endeavor, the concept of pseudoscience is unclear and the term is often used as a grab-bag for any sort of belief that is not part of scientific orthodoxy.

For instance, Carl Sagan's list includes UFO sightings, psychic predictions, transcendental meditation, astrology, religions that are strongly supernatural, faith healing, ESP, poltergeists, quack medicine, fortune telling, and ancestor worship. Michael Shermer adds New Age beliefs [all of them?], ghosts, dowsing, the Bermuda Triangle, telepathy, biorhythms, remote viewing, Kirlian auras, emotions in plants, Noah's flood, communication with the dead, Big Foot, haunted houses, perpetual motion machines, clairvoyance, pyramid power, cryptozoology, creationism, and the lost continent of Atlantis. Other skeptics put into the pseudoscience wastebasket any medical system or health practice separate from Western allopathic medicine, including acupuncture, Ayurvedic medicine, chiropractics, herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, naturopathy, reflexology, reiki, and Rolfing. They would also scrap the works of Immanuel Velikovsky, the concept of morphic resonance proposed by Rupert Sheldrake, Jung's ideas of the collective

unconscious and synchronicity, the Meyers-Briggs personality inventory, and popular therapies such as Neuro-linguistic programming, Rebirthing, and Primal Therapy.

One problem is that the term ‘pseudoscience’ covers so much ground. It ranges from folk beliefs, hoaxes and frauds, through religious ideologies and mythologies, to ancient systems of medicine or hermetic philosophy, to the scientific study of parapsychology, outmoded sciences such as eugenics, and fringe sciences at the frontiers of science such as cold fusion. (The theory of plate tectonics was once considered such a fringe science.) Intellectual snobbery may help determine which pursuits are too colorful and plebian, lending themselves to amateurs, sensationalists, and hoaxers.

Yet it is possible to investigate any topic in a scientific way. For instance, archaeological teams have searched for ‘the lost continent of Atlantis’ based on the quite rational belief that our ancestors were talking about *something*, although this might have been an island in the Mediterranean or off the coast of Denmark rather than the storied continent. A UFO sighting, especially by a trained observer, a pilot or a state trooper, is simply an observation and does not necessarily imply any particular explanation of the event. The previously mentioned NARCAP takes pains to separate itself from UFO groups and their concerns.

Pseudoscience is often defined as belief systems that pretend to be science, but many of those listed do not actually make that claim. Beliefs or practices that either pretend to be, attempt to be, or are scientific might include Kirlian photography, Intelligent Design, parapsychology, and cryptozoology (the study of and search for large, living animals that are unknown or thought to be extinct). Cryptozoologists—many of them bona-fide scientists—have not found the yeti or any of the snakelike “monsters” associated with deep lakes such as Lake Champlain, Loch Ness, or Lake Okanagan or spotted off coasts from Alaska to Oregon. However, since 1938 over 200 specimens have been found of the Coelacanth, a large (five foot 127 pound) fish previously thought to have been extinct for 65 million years. A few of the ‘new’ creatures found in the 20th century were the bonobo and the New Guinea tree kangaroo—thus disproving once more the dictum of famed biologist Baron Georges Cuvier in 1812 that all new species of large animals had already been discovered.

Some debunking is based on a narrow and formulaic idea of what science is and must be, in turn based on the model of physics and chemistry. Sometimes it is based on scientism, not recognizing that in many areas of life, science offers people little or nothing. Established science doesn’t bother to help an individual in the major choice of a mate for life, so people try astrology. One can hardly run to the doctor for every stomach upset, yet over-the-counter remedies just because they are produced in factories and advertised on television are not necessarily more scientific than peppermint tea. To condemn old and widely used empirical systems of healing such as acupuncture or herbalism does suggest a turf battle and economic competition with orthodox Western medicine. It also reminds one of the historic take-over of medical practice from women healers, beginning in late medieval times, by witch-hunters, university-trained male practitioners, barber-surgeons, and the AMA.

Parapsychology is another area condemned by dogmatic skeptics. In the United States, tests of abilities such as telepathy have been forced into a mechanistic model such as repetitively guessing numbers on cards. But more imaginative tests could be devised borrowing the concept of ‘domain specificity’ from cognitive neuroscience. According to Jerry Adler, reporting on research with monkeys, this idea is that primates evolved their cognitive abilities for specific tasks, and so their intelligence needs to be tested in a context that is meaningful to them. Applying domain specificity to parapsychology research, one sees that if certain little-understood

abilities have developed in relation to basic needs such as finding mates, detecting enemies, or protecting offspring, these need to be tested in a way that has meaning for the subject.

Generally, scientists in the United States have been inordinately skeptical of any form of parapsychology, associating it with the supernatural. Yet many “extra-sensory” phenomena may be based on perfectly natural abilities analogous to those of other creatures such as the shark that detects an electrical field in the water, various animals that can sense a magnetic field (it is now suggested that cattle may be among these), or insects such as moths and butterflies that navigate accurately while migrating hundreds of miles. Since bees—creatures without any brains—can communicate to each other the location of a distant food source, we of the big brains might well have retained and refined similar abilities we owned before we developed speech and logic.

Neuroscientists discovered “mirror neurons” a mere decade ago. This is a cluster of brain cells in humans and other primates (and probably other species) that allow them to mirror the actions, even sensations and emotions of another. Mirror neurons may explain how we generate empathy and also some of what is called intuition. Japanese scientists have demonstrated that paralyzed people can operate computers using brain waves alone, allowing them to walk and talk in a virtual world. Similar technology is used in video games that allow players to move characters with a headset that monitors their brain waves. Such findings also raise the possibility that one person’s brainwaves could entrain another’s, or that the brain has some kind of transceiver for brainwaves.

An area of knowledge or belief may be rejected as pseudoscience because it does not fit current scientific understanding, and has no known explanatory mechanism. Yet electricity was put to use long before it was fully understood and even today there are a number of contradictory definitions of what electricity is, such as: charge, energy, current or electron motion, imbalance between electrons and protons, a class of phenomena involving electric charges, electric power (watts), electric field (volts), or an invisible force.

Reduction, or “Nothing but...”

Everything we call real is made of things that cannot be regarded as real.

Niels Bohr, Danish quantum physicist, 1885-1962

In philosophy, reductionism is the idea that complex things can always be reduced to or explained by simpler things. ‘Occam's Razor’ was the idea that explanations should be as simple as possible. Descartes went farther, arguing that the whole world was like a machine and its parts like the cogs and wheels of a clock. For Descartes, even animals (although not humans) were automata. Hobbes carried the idea even further, seeing humans through the same frame. Descartes thought everything could be taken apart intellectually and put back together again, understood like a machine. Such *mechanistic* explanations are still widely accepted in science.

Scientific reductionism means that all of the world's phenomena can be reduced to scientific explanations, which proceed in a series of steps. Fundamental chemistry depends on physics, basic biology can be reduced to chemistry, and psychology and sociology reduce to biology. However, there is controversy about the last step. Some scientists claim that complex systems such as humans and their societies are by nature irreducible. This denial of reductionism is *holism*, summarized by Aristotle as "The whole is more than the sum of its parts."

Gestalt psychologists in the early 20th century demonstrated how we humans, who are born pattern-makers, make wholes out of the parts given us by our senses. Most recently, chaos theory

and other modern sciences have cast doubt on reductionism. John M. Bartley, a professor of geology, makes the anti-reductionist argument in answering another scientist:

I am greatly disturbed by a quote from chemist Jacqueline Barton [who says] "DNA is a molecule, and that molecule defines everything that you are. The biological world has now become the realm of chemists." [But] genes do not carry the only biologically important information. . . . Learned information is not stored in DNA. Neurophysiological studies indicate that it is not stored at the molecular level at all but as anatomic changes in nerve tissue. . . . Most fundamentally, chaos theory has exploded the idea that you can understand a beach by studying grains of sand. A complex system like a human being is virtually defined by "emergent" properties that arise from high-level interactions that cannot be inferred from the details: the whole is intrinsically greater than the sum of the parts.

With scientific arguments against reductionism, reductionists cannot insist that the only alternative to their mechanistic ideas is that old-time religion. However, reductionism is also an *ideology* that very much affects us every day, in and out of science. It is a tendency to assume that everything has a simple—and often cynical—explanation, especially if one knows little about it. ‘Nothing but’ is widely used to disparage and discount not only ideas but groups and individuals, and it affects important policy and actions.

Here is one example. The medical profession in the 1950s and several following decades demeaned and poorly served women patients by regarding them generally as “psychosomatic” or, in other words, hypochondriacs and neurotics. (This was actually a misuse of the term ‘psychosomatic’.) Later, people who suffered from several poorly-understood illnesses such as fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome were also put into this diagnostic wastebasket. However, it became clear that reductionist treatment was not limited to women when returning veterans of Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the War in Iraq were stonewalled by the Pentagon about illnesses that were undoubtedly due to Agent Orange, depleted uranium, mandatory anthrax shots, and other military-related causes. Officials suggested that they too were suffering from psychological rather than medical problems. The ideology of ‘nothing but’ in medicine is sometimes used to reinforce male domination, sometimes to cover lack of knowledge, and in the case of the Pentagon and VA, to save money on government benefits and treatment.

Reductionist attitudes ever since Descartes have discounted the abilities and feelings of animals. Biologist Brian J. Ford notes that “We are in an era dominated by computers, artificial intelligence, molecular biology, and micro-electronics. These are all mathematical, precise, reductionist disciplines” that encourage anthropocentric views. Yet Ford notes “even microbes can find their way around, tell friend from foe, and decide when to mate and with whom.”

Reductionist arguments are used by pseudo-skeptics who doubt everything in the least bit complex, subtle, or different from the science they were taught in school, which was already twenty years out of date. You hear pseudo-skeptics saying things such as that organically grown foods aren’t any different from others because “the plant doesn’t know the difference between a molecule of potassium from a factory or one from a manure pile.”

Scientism is the idea that science can and should answer all questions, solve all problems. Philosopher Mary Midgley calls it the myth of omniscience. In the nineteenth century, technological progress seemed to be leading us to utopia. Many people still have an exaggerated faith in the capabilities of science-and-technology, partly fed by popular sci-fi fantasies. But just

because those Trekking Enterprisers and Voyagers in the 24th century seem to have solved the problem of resource scarcity does not mean that their particular future is inevitable.

Actual scientists sometimes claim more for science than science can deliver. Most recently, Oxford University scientist Richard Dawkins has written *The God Delusion*, which exalts science while attacking religion as the source of all our human difficulties. Scientism is not necessarily anti-religious, but may simply dismiss religions, mythology, art, philosophy, and other aspects of human culture that are not strictly scientific as being possibly interesting and enjoyable, though not meaningful. However, this is quite unrealistic, as large areas of human life, practical and emotional, proceed by knowledge that science simply does not address. In daily life we constantly interpret and interact with other human beings without benefit of scientific experiments. Journalism, law, and various other scholarly disciplines and traditions seek the truth and employ critical thinking without being strictly scientific. Although science can study human values and shed some light on them, science simply does not have the tools or the mandate to make value judgments.

In a critical review of *The God Delusion*, Marilynne Robinson points ironically to the clay feet of Science (with a capital ‘S’) as the world’s would-be rescuer from the evils caused by religion or from our problems generally:

The gravest questions about the institutions of contemporary science seem never to be posed, though we know the terrors of all-out conflict between civilizations would include innovations, notably those dread weapons of mass destruction, being made by scientists for any country with access to their skills. Granting for the purposes of argument that Dawkins is correct in the view that the majority of great scientists are atheists, we may then exclude religion from among the factors that recruit them to this somber work. We are left with nationalism, steady employment, good pay, the chance to do research that is lavishly funded and, by definition, cutting edge—familiar motives of a kind fully capable of disarming moral doubt.

An idea related to scientism is that “Anything that can be done should be done.” In the scientific version of Manifest Destiny, the gods of science and truth demand that whatever work can be accomplished scientifically-technologically should be pursued. This ideology emphasizes a sort of intellectual libertarianism, the scientist’s *right* to pursue his interests, and it presents scientists within a certain field as the ultimate decision-makers about what sort of research should be done. For public consumption (or even personal justification) the ideology usually emphasizes benefits to humanity, and assumes that new technologies are always beneficial or at least more beneficial than not. It downplays the demands of businesses for new things to sell or for cheaper production costs, although either business or the military pays for most of those experiments that some people might wish to delay or stop. Naturally, this ideology also downplays risks.

How does this relate to scientific ethics? Many scientists struggle to maintain their disinterested attachment to the truth at great cost to themselves, in the tradition of Galileo. For instance, the current Bush Administration (and the Reagan Administration before it) blatantly tried to suppress scientists working within the government who disagreed with certain policies or beliefs of the Administration regarding, for instance, climate change, or women’s reproductive issues. Some government scientists have resigned over these restrictions. But in some areas scientists do not seem to have established a code of ethics, or the code seems too permissive from the point of view of laypersons—more like ‘whatever can be done should be done’—or it

may be widely flouted and unenforceable. Genome genetic engineering and nanotechnology are two of these grey areas.

As scientific racism has a long history; so does scientific gender bias. Scientists as a group are aware of the effects of past and persistent prejudices, and try to keep them out of their work, with one exception. So far it is not part of the international scientific ethic, at least formally or publicly, that science transcends national considerations. Besides the fact that scientists and technologists design and build weapons, there is another question of exporting dangerous and dehumanizing technologies, such as technologies that can be used or that are even designed to maintain a repressive government. Naomi Klein says that U.S. defense contractors are helping China to build the prototype for a high-tech police state. One such technology is facial recognition software and other biometrics. She notes this prototype technology could then be exported to other countries. Other ethical considerations related to nationalism concern the participation of social scientists as ‘cultural counselors’ to aid in counter-insurgency efforts

Technologism, Techno-utopianism, and the Singularity

Modern technology and religion have evolved together and...as a result the technological enterprise has been and remains infused with religious belief.

David Noble, *The Religion of Technology*

Who chooses which technology to develop in the first place? These are political and economic choices, not scientific or democratic ones. Richard Sclove, founder of the LOKA Institute, notes that “In 1956, no popular clamor for building a new road system pressured Congress to pass the Interstate Highway Act.” At the time only about half of American families owned a car, while the others used public transit. Automakers and realtors who wanted to develop the suburbs were the ones who successfully lobbied Congress. Then public transit systems, competing with subsidized automobiles, declined and in many places disappeared, making car ownership a necessity for going to work or getting around generally.

The result of an auto-centered transportation system, says Sclove, is “daily traffic jams, air pollution, suburban sprawl, tens of thousands of annual road fatalities, and dependence on nonrenewable and insecure sources of imported oil.” Additional consequences are road rage, a very large chunk out of the family budget for buying, insuring, and fueling the car, and a major contribution to climate change. Our technologies have other consequences as well. As Daniel Dinello says, “Technological imperatives propel war and the politics of domination.”

The idea that technology is always better than systems that involve a greater number of human decisions surely motivated the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002. But besides the ill-considered mandate to switch over to electronic voting, with machines that were not tamper-proof and did not leave a paper trail, more recently there is a problem with new state registration systems also mandated by federal law. Centralized, computerized databases may reject voters, for instance, because of typos or a missing middle initial. A few weeks before the election, Democrats accused Republicans of attempted disenfranchisement. Hundreds of thousands of voters were affected—many in swing states—and a dozen lawsuits filed.

Technological choices have psychological roots. Science may be the major repository of rational thinking in the world, but technology elicits a great deal of magical thinking. After all, the 16th and 17th century origins of science-and-technology were not completely separated from magic. Today techno-magic is permitted but not nature’s magic, or the incantations of wizards. Take for instance our relationship with antibiotics, pesticides, and herbicides. Zap! There go the

germs. Zap! There go the pests, the roaches or flies or mice. Zap! There go the weeds and even the ‘weed trees’ to make room for faster-growing pine plantations. War, civil war, and guerrilla war use techno-magic too. Zap! There goes the enemy, whether a city of civilians, a rout of retreating soldiers, a cluster of those believed to be terrorists, or the ‘wrong kind’ of people in the form of a wedding party, religious procession, or shoppers in a market or store. Just like in a videogame, or an ad for bug-killer.

Of course techno-magic owns more spells than Zap! Others are novelty, Progress (the religion), membership in the inner circle/being cool, and bells and whistles. Here let us redefine techno-magic as *Technologism*: a preoccupation with and favoring of tools and toys that are novel and complex. These tools and toys are sometimes described as “sexy,” and the attraction to them resembles a Supernormal Stimulus although it is hard to see how this evolved. Here are two examples of technologism: first, the convergence of consumer electronics, advertising, and adolescent conformity so that ownership of certain gadgets and the ability to use them is the entrée to adolescent society; second, the tendency of many people, especially men, to prefer lots of added functions—bells and whistles—with their tools and toys, even if this makes the items more prone to break down. Magazines such as *Popular Science* support this preference with exciting descriptions of the latest developments.

Perhaps the sexiest idea of all is the human exploration, industrial development, and residential settlement of space. Many science-fiction writers—although by no means all—have supported this project and provided it with imagery, scenarios, and a mythos. Sir Arthur Clarke, who was one of the field’s great writers as well as being a working scientist, declared that “Space exploration is merely a continuation of our biological imperative. As polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen noted, when men cease to explore, they will cease to be men.” Clarke also speaks of the necessity for developing a defensive system against asteroid impacts. But these reasons do not account for the relish with which so many people, especially young men, consume space battle films, stories, and games, and collect miniature fighting men and monsters for acting out these battles. Also, official United States policy appears less interested in space exploration than in preparing to dominate space militarily. Historically, exploration has preceded military conquest and economic exploitation.

Techno-utopianism is the ideology that ever-advancing technology will create a heaven on Earth (or beyond Earth) for humanity. It may not be everybody’s idea of heaven. One scenario for techno-utopia, presented by Michael G. Zey in *The Futurist*, is similar to the background depicted in many futuristic science fiction works. The human race will develop and perfect the entire universe, which Zey claims is currently dead, spreading human consciousness and organic life throughout. This involves the four processes of dominionization, or enhanced ability to manipulate matter and control the physical universe; species coalescence in which a global transportation grid and universal communications network help lead humanity to total unity; biogenesis, or “improvement of the physical shell,” through bioengineering, nanotechnology, bionics, and other technologies; and cybergenesis, the interconnection of humans with machines “to advance human evolution.”

Techno-utopianism converges with economic optimism. Socialists in the 19th century were advocates of progress and industrialization, while capitalism relies on the continual expansion of transactions and new products. For instance, here is science and technology writer G. Harry Stine in an article 25 years ago—but the ideas expressed are by no means all in the past:

The infamous ‘limits to growth’ was nothing more than a gigantic intellectual fraud perpetrated for the primary purpose of permitting politicians to gain power over your private lives...Limits, shortages, and ‘sacrifices’ are unnecessary, unreal, and unnatural. The universe isn’t built that way. Limits and shortages are artificial, created by human beings for their own purposes....It turns out that we live in a limitless universe with plenty for all if we’ll work for it.

Stine goes on to cite with approval the findings of “Global 2000 Revised” by economist Julian Simon and futurist Herman Kahn, including these: the climate shows no unusual or threatening changes, there’s no cause for worry about the disappearance of world forests, no evidence for the imminent extinction of many species, air and water pollution threats have been “vastly overblown.” In similar vein, *Time Magazine*, December 29, 1997 notes that the microchip, like previous advances such as the steam engine, electricity, and the assembly line, propels a new economy. It has “ended the sway of decline theorists and the ‘limit to growth’ crowd.” But just a decade later, more than one bubble has burst.

In the Dot.com culture of the 1990s, especially on the West Coast, a form of techno-utopianism arose centered on digital technology. Proponents believed that digital communications would free knowledge workers from bureaucracies, government interference, and the modern city. Technological growth in this postindustrial age would eliminate economic scarcity, and this in turn would eliminate most social evils. These techno-utopians tend toward the libertarian right and free markets, and they form the leading edge of WAMLIC (white affluent male libertarian Internet culture). However, the Dot.com crash required this ideology to adapt, and the current economic crisis will doubtless require other changes.

Daniel Dinello writes in *Technophobia* about the dramatic contrast between the techno-utopia promised by many scientists and the techno-dystopia or techno-hell predicted by many science fiction writers. He sees technological utopianism as more than an ideology—it is a *religious* ideology, with “a cult of techno-priests” whose faith is that “the god Technology will eliminate the pain and suffering of humans by eliminating humans” and creating posthumans, approaching perfection and immortality. Dinello gives a fascinating account of the roots of this religious belief, going back as far as Revelation and the vision of a geometrically precise Heavenly City, which architect Michael Benedikt says is like “a religious vision of cyberspace.”

The Singularity

Within a few decades, machine intelligence will surpass human intelligence, leading to The Singularity—technological change so rapid and profound it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history. The implications include the merger of biological and nonbiological intelligence, immortal software-based humans, and ultra-high levels of intelligence that expand outward in the universe at the speed of light.

Ray Kurzweil, “*The Law of Accelerating Returns*,” 2001

Several science fiction writers, computer scientists, systems theorists, futurists, and others believe that somewhere between 2025 and 2150, machine intelligence will surpass human intelligence in an “intelligence explosion.” Technological change will then accelerate to the point that humans would be left behind. Mathematician and science fiction author Vernor Vinge first named this moment *the Singularity*, predicting “the human era will be ended.” A number of brilliant people argue whether the Singularity is or is not probable and whether it would mean the end of humanity, or on the contrary, if safely guided, would bring us to a techno-utopia. In fact

there is an ideology called Singularitarianism that finds this outcome not only possible but so desirable that followers dedicate themselves to bringing about the safe implementation of the prophesied spike in technology.

It is possible that what we have here is an intellectual bubble something like an economic bubble and even allied with it. It is possible that artificial intelligence (AI) is far from supplanting us. Some 30 years ago, many predicted that automation would mean the end of work. Some economists and even Richard Nixon considered a guaranteed annual income for all the people to be unemployed by machines. Since then productivity has increased, but in the industrial countries wages are stagnant, and across the world millions are unemployed and billions are poor. However, one seldom hears about either automation or the guaranteed annual income today. As for AI, by 2007 David Eagleman could say:

We all grew up with the near-future promise of smart robots, but today we have little better than the Roomba robotic vacuum cleaner. What went wrong? Either we do not know enough of the fundamental principles of brain function, or we have not simulated enough neurons working together.

Whether an AI named Watson, the all-time winner on “Jeopardy”, will change this situation is unclear. However, other technologies besides AI are changing rapidly and, as Kurzweil says, “There’s even exponential growth in the rate of exponential growth.” These ideas have profound implications for the future of our species, and we need species-wide discussions in which we compare various visions of the future and decide how we can prepare for or prevent them.

A Different Science

Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life.

Immanuel Kant, German philosopher, 1724-1804

Not everything called science should be wrapped in that shining cloak. It makes a great deal of difference whether we view science-and-technology as one thing, or science and technology as two things. If we choose S&T, then science is inextricably wedded to systems of economics, politics, nationalism, the status quo and the powers-that-be, whether that is western capitalism or eastern communism or even nationalistic terrorism. Those who work for and serve the interests of industry or the state will tend to see humanity’s welfare within narrower frames. For example, science-and-technologists assume that developing nations *must* industrialize—but this is an ideological assumption, not a scientific one. Also, in the S&T view the world’s people ‘demand’ more electricity therefore we must supply new electricity factories using nuclear energy, mammoth dams, or hopefully cleaner coal burning

But perhaps electricity is not the only way to meet some needs (for instance, air-conditioning and lighting). Perhaps renewable technologies, conservation and improved energy efficiency would greatly reduce the need for more power plants. The U.S. government funds relatively little research about alternatives. Washington correspondent Ann McFeatters says it currently puts less than \$4 billion yearly into clean energy R & D. Furthermore, even this often focuses on technologies that fit present industries and institutions, such as large-scale power towers that can make use of existing utility structures. Very little is said about passive solar architecture, which has a long history and could greatly reduce heating requirements for houses and buildings, or

about solar water heating, a technology over a century old. On the other hand, scientists who are not wedded to areas of industrial specialization will be open to a wider range of possibilities

Scientific Literacy and Participation: Besides making a clear difference between science and technology, citizens need to be vastly more aware of the scientific method, scientific knowledge, and the consequences of technology. Susan Jacoby in *The Age of American Unreason* speaks about “stunning scientific illiteracy.” Jacoby says that in the United States over two-thirds of adults cannot identify DNA as the key to heredity. One in five believes the sun revolves around the Earth. About 90 percent do not understand radiation and its effects on living creatures including humans. It is really hard to understand why this should be so, and it can’t all be blamed on the schools. Several excellent magazines popularize science news, and television programs such as Nova also make it accessible. Even the daily newspaper is doing a better job of reporting new research than it used to. Yet somehow most people apparently see science as isolated facts and findings that do not closely relate to their daily lives and future.

Climate change is the first scientific issue that not only involves the entire planet and a number of scientific disciplines, but also strongly threatens human survival. As a result, many people have become more interested in science that is related to the environment. This concern is a welcome development, yet such understanding needs to include even more people and go even deeper. One difficulty may be the very emphasis on the technology in science-and-technology, and the idea that if you can manipulate and control something, you know all there is to know about it. People who have learned how to work the bells-and-whistles may falsely assume that they understand science. Jacoby says that Americans have an “endemic predilection for technological answers to nontechnological questions.”

An antidote to this might be greater attention to ecology, both as a science and as a symbol for the interconnectedness that we have lost. Some scientists have objected to this second interpretation of the concept; they think that ecology should only be a scientific endeavor pursued by trained specialists. The idea that large numbers of people would view it as a tenet of their religion disturbs them. Bioregionalists are somewhere in between, taking a close look at the place they live and how it all fits together—soil, watershed, weather, hills and mountains, plants, animals, and human culture. They see no opposition between scientific truth and a deep attachment to their natural home and relatives in nature.

A number of ways to increase scientific literacy are hands-on and local. Birdwatchers, gardeners, and those who set up habitat in their own backyards pay closer attention to the motions of nature. There are amateur astronomers, amateur geologists, and cave explorers. Also, many individuals directly participate in scientific endeavors such as bird counts, butterfly counts, archeological digs, habitat restoration, and the like. For instance, in my bioregion a number of citizen scientists team up at an annual “Secchi Day” named for a simple device they use to measure water clarity in the large lake that supplies water for several counties. Another citizen scientist mission involving many children is Cornell entomologist John Losey’s Lost Ladybug Project. In an attempt to find out why some species of the beneficial insect are declining, people all over the country have sent thousands of photos of ladybugs with details on their location.

The Internet’s impact on bird watchers is described by Jill Bamburg, author of *Getting to Scale*. For a decade, the National Audubon Society has worked with Cornell University’s ornithology lab to move its annual Christmas Bird Count to the Web. This made it possible to compile and analyze individual counts quickly and to produce accurate maps of what is

happening. “Imagine your nightly weathercast with its satellite photos of high and low pressure zones, but with comparable images of the numbers and migrations of grosbeaks and warblers.”

A new form of scientific participation is electronic activism. For instance, Internet sites show citizens how to estimate their own carbon footprints. Instant feedback leads to action, whether improving backyard habitat or pressing change on large landowners such as International Paper Company and the Department of Defense, which have changed their practices in order to improve bird habitat. Bamburg quotes John W. Fitzpatrick, who directs the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell:

This is a fundamental power of the Internet. It drives a huge growth in citizen engagement. All of this is being done by school kids, families, retired folk....People are now noticing change, searching for bio-indicators, and then fixing the problem. Our thesis is that the Internet is the first point in human history in the creation of consciousness at a massive and biologically meaningful scale.

Richard Sclove says that other countries are finding ways to make technology more socially responsive, noting that the public is more likely to accept decisions made by a broad range of citizens. In developing new technologies Japan and Germany, among others, seek collaboration between industrial engineers, university scientists, technicians, workers, and end-users. In Sweden, a government Council that promotes innovative and interdisciplinary research includes a majority of non-scientists. In Denmark, panels of citizens cross-examine experts, deliberate, and then announce non-binding recommendations for science and technology policy. For instance, 20 years ago a Danish citizens’ panel on the social implications of the Human Genome Project influenced the Danish Parliament to ban the use of genetic information in employment and insurance decisions. A number of other countries are borrowing the Danish process, including a few pilot programs in the United States.

The Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland began to smash atoms in March 2010, trying to recreate conditions in the Big Bang despite a lawsuit and possible apocalyptic scenarios listed in a book by Sir Martin Rees, president of the UK Royal Society. CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, said chances the experiment would create black holes or ‘strangelets’ was tiny, 50 million to one. However, *Ecologist* writer Jill Thomas asks “Who decides what level of technological risk is acceptable when total annihilation may be the outcome?” She points out that if the public had been given a referendum on whether or not CERN should smash atoms, they might have asked some questions overlooked in the official report, such as whether the \$10 billion cost would have been better used to deliver universal primary education. Thomas says, “The black holes we should worry about are...the yawning vacuums in our democracies over how to govern complex technology.”

An important part of citizen participation rests on the precautionary principle, summarized in the 1998 Wingspread Statement as follows: “When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.” This has become a formal principle of German law (*Vorsorgeprinzip* or “forecaring principle”) and later of international law. However, this idea is often opposed by economic interests or just plain inertia. The precautionary principle is an important part of getting ready for the future, and we will deal with it at greater length in the last book.

CHAPTER 15: THE RATIONAL ANIMAL

The rational mind of man is a shallow thing, a shore upon a continent of the irrational, wherein thin colonies of reason have settled amid a savage world.

Wilford O. Cross, American philosopher

Humans are *capable* of thinking rationally, but that's not exactly what we're doing the majority of our day. (Do a little introspection and you will realize that there is a lot more about moods, memes, and free associations than syllogisms.) Even reasoning itself may be misused, overused, or serve to cover something else. Since ancient times, people have been attacking the arguments of other people for being deceptive, fallacious, or "mere words." Some Greek philosophers attacked other philosophers of a school known as *sophists* for using rhetorical techniques to support fallacious arguments. Whether or not this criticism was justified, the word *sophistry* has come down to us with a derogatory meaning—the heavy use of specious arguments and persuasive tricks in order to confuse or deceive someone. However, sophistry is not the same as demagoguery, which applies more particularly to political rhetoric designed to 'push the buttons' or manipulate emotions of the crowd in order to get them to follow or vote for the demagogue or his idol.

A *specious* argument is one that has the ring of truth or seems quite plausible but is actually fallacious and deceptive. *Casuietry* describes the pattern of using specious arguments or rationalizations. *Equivocation* is a way to use the differing meanings of words to deceive and to avoid committing oneself to what one says. Obviously, a literalist who assumes that every word has a single, specific meaning would be especially vulnerable to the manipulations of those who equivocate. Another derogatory term relates to the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic order founded in 1534 as an intellectual institution combating the Reformation. With the aid of Protestant propaganda, the term *Jesuitical* came to mean a cunning form of argument more concerned to make a case than to find the truth—an argument often equivocal or deceptive. Cullen Murphy says, "To characterize a lie as an 'economy of truth' would be a Jesuitical formulation. To say that one had smoked marijuana but did not inhale would be a Jesuitical distinction." Murphy notes that Bill Clinton's undergraduate years were spent at Georgetown University, a Jesuit school.

Ideology Adopts the Form of Reason: Because reason and logic are so widely accepted, people feel constrained to follow the forms of scholarship whether or not they understand or care about what they are doing. Like the phonics-trained children whose reading advanced three grade levels while their comprehension level stayed flat, they use the trappings of reasonable discourse but leave out its essential components. Their method is to start with the conclusion and then look for supporting evidence—or make it up. Intelligent Design is one example. (The basic problem is not that it is untrue but that it is an ideology masquerading as science.)

Recently YouTube published an audio of Oklahoma state legislator Sally Kern giving a talk to a group of Republicans in which she claimed that homosexuality was a bigger threat than terrorism. Kern also said "Studies show no society that has totally embraced homosexuality has lasted, you know, more than a few decades." The problem is: what are these studies and who conducted them? In fact, what historical societies ever did "totally embrace homosexuality"? The ancient Greeks tolerated relationships between older men and young boys. However, Greek civilization lasted for quite a while and is considered to have reached the heights of literature and

art while starting up Western democracy, science, and philosophy. If Kern refers to European nations and Canada which have lately legalized gay marriage or civil unions, they do not seem to be declining, but of course we may have to wait for decades to know for sure. Someone can say “studies show” without giving any further information, and the message flashes around the Internet like heat lightning. But despite the promise of rain, the intellectual drought continues.

Increasingly, people pass around statements purporting to be evidence that look like something they made up on the spot. Or they deny other evidence on the basis of just because. And just because somebody says it, somebody else repeats it. If they say it loud enough and often enough, and repeat it on the radio, soon it will be true. Put on your ruby slippers, click your heels three times and repeat after me: “There are no transitional fossils, they don’t exist, and there is no evidence for evolution anywhere.”

Another habit of ideology aspiring to be argumentation is to ignore obvious contradictions—simply ignore them as if they weren’t there. Let’s look at an article titled “A Calvinist Defense of Anarcho-Capitalism.” by Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995) an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The website says the essay was submitted as an M.A. thesis at Simon Greenleaf School of Law. This argument appears to be an attempt to combine two ideologies into one greater ideology because some people want to believe both of them. Thus it shows how such chimerical belief-systems may arise.

First, Bahnsen criticizes the State (any nation-state) from a Christian point of view because it practices sins on a vast scale such as theft (taxes), murder (capital punishment and war), and kidnapping (conscription and imprisonment). Bahnsen also makes the dubious claim that “The purpose of the State is to take vengeance.” However, the formal rationalism of this document falls apart near the beginning when Bahnsen says: “Our thesis stands on two *presuppositions* which we will not attempt to defend.” Presuppositions are simply unexamined assumptions, a fancy way of saying “Because I said so!”

Bahnsen’s first presupposition is that it is “unchanging economic law” that centralized government planning is fundamentally inefficient compared with free market decision-making. Some of his terms cry out for definition; for instance, a “centralized government” could be as small as a village or as large as a nation. And is regulation the same as planning? Also, examples of truly free markets are few and far between. Some real-world comparisons would help Bahnsen. For example, he could show how six competing street-car companies in City A are more efficient than a single company owned and operated by City B.

Bahnsen’s second presupposition is the “Theonomic thesis.” Theonomy is God’s law. Since Bahnsen doesn’t describe it further here, we may assume that this is Mosaic law.

The author at one point lauds anarcho-capitalism as “a radically consistent capitalism, *seeing all human action as an economic function*, and therefore appropriately directed by market forces [my italics].” He does not attempt to integrate this view with the teachings of Jesus or even the Old Testament. It is difficult to find Bible texts that support the idea that all human action is an economic function. While the writer strongly opposes the State’s violence and vengeance, he also says that in his ideal society “capital punishment could be effectively meted out under a stateless free market.” I will not further critique this text which is filled with similar contradictions and logical gaps as well as presuppositions, but the point is that the author assumes he is making a reasoned argument when he is not.

Is It Reason or Rationalization? Something similar happens in a much subtler and more intellectually sophisticated way throughout our culture and in the professions. For instance, law

professor Patricia J. Williams writes that legal language assumes the myth that there can be a purely objective perspective expressing universal truths that transcend cultures. Williams says: “Legal language flattens and confines in absolutes the complexity of meaning inherent in any given problem. [But] much of what is spoken in so-called objective, unmediated voices [judges and lawyers] is in fact mired in hidden subjectivities and unexamined claims.” As a black woman as well as a legal scholar, Williams has personally experienced some of the complexities that are glossed over.

Williams also observes that “children are taught not to see what they see.” Or, one might add, not to feel what they feel. For the adult, the formulas of one’s own profession or society may become more ‘real’ than one’s own experience (participating consciousness). Another form of this is *false consciousness*, which NYU psychology professor John Jost defines as “the holding of false or inaccurate beliefs that are contrary to one’s own social interest and which thereby contribute to the maintenance of the disadvantaged position of the self or the group. [Sometimes] people will hold false beliefs which justify their own subordination.”

Dennis Fox, with an academic background in both law and psychology, notes that mainstream psychology generally endorses the status quo of its society and legitimacy of its government. He promotes the field of *critical psychology* to analyze the myths and false consciousness underlying supposedly rational institutions such as the law. One such false belief is that procedural justice is more important than substantive justice. Such beliefs allow prisoners to remain in prison or even move toward execution after another person has confessed to the crime for which they were convicted; or they refuse justice to a person on the basis that she failed to submit her case soon enough or that her lawyer made a mistake in filing.

The field of psychiatry also uses a system of categorizing people using diagnoses that do not really describe complex human beings. Psychiatrist Eileen Walkenstein says psychiatrists are step by step fitting patients, by their words and actions, into the categories they have been taught to respect from years of medical training. She likens them to the ancient king Procrustes who lopped or stretched his guests to fit the bed set out for them. Walkenstein says that to diagnose multifaceted, evolving human beings is a contradiction in terms. However, she says psychiatry is only part of a much larger condition of society:

The Grand Illusion, which defines us as geographical inhabitants and then separates us from one another on the basis of defined nationalities, cultures, statuses, together with all other illusory separation, adds mountains to our mythologies but hardly a pebble to our understanding.

As some of our most rational institutions are thus limited by their definitions and categories, to that degree such professions are ideological.

Treating abstractions as if they were real things is common in ideologies. Another word for this process is *reification*. This term has several different meanings in fields such as computer science or statistics, but our concern here is a logical fallacy which treats an abstraction as if it were a real thing. In the 19th century, philosopher John Stuart Mill defined reification as follows: *to believe that whatever received a name must be an entity or being, having an independent existence of its own*. For instance, I might spin a phrase such as ‘Disneyland cannibalism,’ and immediately on hearing it someone begins to think that there actually is such a thing. To flash it in one’s mind is to half believe it already.

John Jay Gould suggests reification is not only a common cognitive error but one that even scientists must beware. In *The Mismeasure of Man*, Gould tells the story of several major 19th and early 20th century scientists who developed hereditarian theories about intelligence—theories

that subsequently supported Social Darwinism, scientific racism, and eugenics, leading to many negative social consequences. A series of scientists made the mistake of thinking that statistical artifacts were real things, and thus that intelligence is a single, measurable entity. (Note: I do not understand statistics, but here is a summary of Gould's explanation. Factor analysis is a mathematical technique used to reduce a complex system of correlations into fewer dimensions. The researcher may be tempted to *reify* or give a physical meaning to components that stand out, but this can't (or shouldn't) be done based on the mathematics alone. It requires additional information about the physical nature of what is being measured.)

The power to define is a political power. In part because of this strong human tendency to turn abstract words into real things, whoever gets to define something has the advantage, and putting the definition into law gives even greater advantage. Some examples are the Supreme Court's definition of corporations as persons over a century ago, and a more recent decision by the Supreme Court that money spent in elections is speech and entitled to the rights of free speech guaranteed by the Constitution. The politics involved in the power of definition show up in a regulation by the Bush administration that purportedly protects individuals and health care entities from being forced into participating in abortion services against their beliefs. However, the proposal is so vague that it could undermine women's access to birth control. It defines 'abortion' as anything that affects a fertilized [human] egg. An earlier version leaked to the press defined abortion to include most hormonal methods of birth control.

Rationalism

Cogito cogito ergo cogito sum.

Translation: I think [that] I think, therefore, I think [that] I am.

Ambrose Bierce, 1842-1914

The above paraphrase of Descartes' famous saying suggests that this rationalist manifesto has some logical holes in it. The overly rationalist mindset is that there is nothing of any worth besides human reason. Over-valuation of the intellect and of pure reason was described by John Maurice Clark as "an irrational passion for dispassionate rationality." However, while putting a high value on human reason, one can also value other things such as love, intuition, courage, and good will. When reason becomes your only value, reason itself becomes an ideology, an 'ism.'

Perhaps a personal example can show what I mean about the limits of reason. Some years ago I met an engineer approaching forty and still unmarried who showed me the detailed checklist he had printed up with all the qualities he looked for in a mate. Some of those qualities seemed relatively trivial to me. Gently, I tried to suggest that finding a compatible partner is not an engineering problem. A checklist is an attempt to systematize something that most people would leave at least partly to their intuition. (This engineer said he didn't believe in intuition.)

Of course, the opposite problem occurs—far too frequently—when people decide that they want to believe a certain thing and then insist that the facts must follow. I certainly don't recommend that either. Let systematic technique be applied where that is useful, and intuition where that is appropriate. Human beings should be able to shift gears!

Many rationalists disparage any sort of emotion but fail to notice their own pride, prejudices, and ego defenses. By identifying their Self with rationality, they can justify and rationalize attitudes such as superiority of one's own group and all sorts of policies that favor one's group over others. It works very much like self-righteousness, where one identifies one's Self with

moral rightness. Those who deprecate “softer” emotions such as compassion fail to recognize that a drive to power, including the desire to control nature, is also an emotion.

A brief item in *Science* magazine says that humans show "irrationality" because we are disproportionately sensitive to losses compared to gains. We won't accept a gamble unless the potential gain is at least twice as large as the potential loss. There are specific brain regions that reflect such choices. However, this finding suggests to me that long evolutionary experience has 'taught' our species that setbacks can have devastating consequences. It is something like a built-in precautionary principle. To call this tendency "irrational" means that we measure ourselves against mathematics and machines rather than against human experience.

Brain worship is a special case of identification with the purely mental. I think of those old sci-fi movies in which disembodied heads in glass jars direct major events, much as Hal the Computer does in the film “2001.” The geeky kids who were bullied by the school’s jocks may fantasize their revenge here. Cleverness combined with competitiveness—a high value in capitalist societies—manifests in computer hacking, often by a lone teen-ager but increasingly by criminals creating zombie networks or botnets. Cybercrime investigator T.J. Campana notes, “There are a lot of very smart people doing very bad things.”

One aspect of brain-worship is over-reliance on the IQ as a measure of intelligence although the IQ measures academic aptitude rather than intelligence, and certainly not creativity, special talents, or drive. It is very difficult to make IQ tests so objective that they are fair to those of different cultures and subcultures. However, IQ is an important part of some ideologies. We take up the question later in connection with Social Darwinism and eugenics.

Radical Anti-Intellectualism: Protestant fundamentalism organized itself in the 1920s in opposition to the ‘higher criticism’ that interpreted the Bible according to various fields of scholarship, and to evolution. According to the Britannica’s article on fundamentalism, they “practically abandoned the universities” and placed their faith in Bible Institutes. The article also notes that “The anticommunist activities of the mid-20th century virtually duplicated the history of the anti-evolution crusade of the 1920s.” An entire book could be written about the background of anti-intellectualism in the United States, and Susan Jacoby has done so in *The Age of Unreason*, but here I would just point out the explicitly anti-intellectual influence of one currently active, theocratic, fundamentalist ideology known as Joel’s Army and its forerunners. As far back as 1958, a Canadian preacher named William Branham began teaching “Serpent Seed” doctrine, the belief that Satan and Eve had sexual intercourse, leading to Cain and his descendants—“all the smart, educated people down to the antediluvian flood.” In this teaching “smart, educated people” are by their very nature evil. In the 1980s, the Kansas City Fellowship was a center for pastors following Branham’s teachings and developing Joel’s Army theology. One of them, John Wimber, prophesied that Joel’s Army would both conquer the Earth and defeat death itself.

Pooh, Pooh

Unbridled gullibility can destroy science, but unbridled disbelief is no less a threat because it brings both the excessive preservation of the status quo and the suppression of unconventional ideas.

Jon Eriendsson, “Closeminded Science”

Skepticism is a crucial aspect not only of science but also of critical thinking, so one does not take statements on blind faith but determines their source and examines the evidence for them. But skepticism itself can turn into an ideology and a dogmatic tendency to discount unusual or minority opinions. A skeptic by definition is supposed to question—not to condemn. There is a difference between reserving judgment, on one hand, and assuming that most other people are gullible fools or frauds, on the other. Sociologist Marcello Truzzi noted: “Since ‘skepticism’ properly refers to doubts rather than denial—nonbelief rather than belief—critics who take the negative rather than an agnostic position but still call themselves ‘skeptics’ are actually pseudo-skeptics.” Pseudo-skepticism is an ideology.

Some who think they are skeptics are simply cynics, while many would-be skeptics mainly resist any new or dissenting ideas. In the name of skepticism they defend orthodoxy. Or, wearing the mantle of skepticism, they freely attack not only the views but the perceptions and individuality of others. A certain amount of male chauvinism masquerades as scientific skepticism. The inveterate skeptic may also depreciate people in the past (our benighted ancestors), non-Western civilizations, and indigenous tribal and traditional peoples. He is also vigilant lest someone “anthropomorphize” any animal behavior.

Biologist Jonathan Balcombe says that up until recently most scientists followed Aristotle and Descartes by insisting humans are the only ones that think and feel, and that we are totally apart from other creatures. But the subject of animal thinking and feeling, first introduced by Darwin, has increasing scientific credibility. In the last decade, researchers in cognitive neuroscience have found “theory of mind” not only in apes but macaque monkeys. Theory of mind is the ability to assign thoughts and intentions to another individual. (I am sure that my dog does this, but have not conducted any lab tests about it.)

Debunkers assert their own intellectual superiority to the gullible masses. Brian Dunning—who is himself a noted debunker—says that true skepticism is not really about debunking and “has nothing to do with doubt, disbelief, or negativity. Skepticism is the process of applying reason and critical thinking to determine validity....Everyone is a skeptic to some degree.” However, I believe that Dunning claims too much for science and has things backwards when he further says “The scientific method is central to skepticism. The scientific method requires evidence, preferably derived from validated testing.” Skepticism is central to the scientific method, not the other way around. Critical thinkers may be skeptical about many things that are not available to experimental evidence and that are not dealt with by scientists. For instance, one may be skeptical of statements by a politician and look for evidence in the form of his previous statements and positions on actual votes. This is testing but not scientific testing. Critical thinking has its own domain apart from the scientific method.

Dunning notes correctly that “anecdotal evidence and personal testimonies don’t meet the qualifications for scientific evidence.” However, in the many areas of our lives not available to experimental evidence we rely heavily on this kind of information, which informs most of our personal interactions. This is how we find out that we, personally, are intolerant of certain foods, or need eight hours of sleep in order to perform well. This is how we learn techniques from other cooks, or parents, or gardeners, or car mechanics. An experience that involves unique events is not available to experimental evidence; and many areas of life have not drawn scientific attention because nobody was interested in funding research unless there was potential profit. To expect people to back up all their personal decisions with scientific evidence is mixing two domains. A similar leap assumes that a person who cites his or her own experiences to support personal decisions is thereby attempting to make a scientific argument.

Recently the defenders of science have hardened their position and drawn followers in response to attacks on science by fundamentalist Christians. Science is publicly defended by some scientists and by prominent skeptics including former fundamentalists and retired stage magicians, while organizations of skeptics attack a wide range of “pseudosciences” that include not only Creationism and Intelligent Design but also New Age practices, the vestiges of hermetic wisdom, virtually all alternative medicine, fringe sciences such as cryptozoology, and, for good measure, conspiracy theories. Debunking popular beliefs in the name of science especially appeals to the White Affluent Male Libertarian Internet Culture (WAMLIC).

One might question the relative importance of this effort. The proliferation of nanotech, before its possible consequences are fully understood, is a threat to the species of greater importance than the recurrence of Bigfoot hoaxes. And it seems more urgent to put a world-wide ban on the development of Domsday weapons than to stop people from using homeopathy. Organized skeptics perform a constructive service by exposing scams, charlatans, and junk science. They remind people to be skeptical (in the neutral sense) and to look for evidence before committing to a belief. But when they assume a dogmatic position of attacking anything that is not orthodox science, or claiming more for science than it can deliver, they do not really act as skeptics, scientific observers, or critical thinkers.

Part V: American Exceptionalism

Best they honor thee

Who honor in thee only what is best.

Sir William Watson, English poet 1858-1935, "The True Patriotism"

The United States is different in many ways from other industrialized nations. This is sometimes a matter for pride, sometimes for chagrin or agonized analysis. Several national myths contribute to the differences or reflect them. The following interrelated myths have been crucial in the history of the United States and still operate today in various guises. American Exceptionalism, Borderer and Southern Myths, Manifest Destiny, Social Darwinism, and Eugenics are powerful memplexes by themselves, and even more so in various combinations. We may also consider whether the United States is uniquely spared the possibility of turning fascist, or whether this has been and is a distinct possibility.

By *American Exceptionalism*, we mean the idea that began even before the American Revolution that the country which became the United States was somehow unique in world history. A number of actual social, economic, and political differences have developed between the United States and other industrialized nations, particularly those in Europe. Exceptionalism has also combined with Fundamentalist beliefs that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, and even that it is uniquely Christian. Various statistics demonstrate that the United States is in fact very different from most other industrialized nations, often in ways that are not to our credit. Yet a number of ideals that remain symbolic to people across the world were first fully developed in the United States.

The term *Borderer* refers to the largest number of immigrants to the colonies in the eighteenth century, a distinctive group originally from the northern counties of England and lowland Scotland. Many had previously migrated to Northern Ireland, so the whole group is commonly called Scots-Irish. Descendants of this migration are numerous and many have been politically prominent, including a number of U.S. presidents beginning with Andrew Jackson.

The Borderers settled in the 'back-country' or frontier, and as settlement progressed westward, their folkways and values greatly influenced the South as a whole, also the Southwest, and also the Rocky Mountain West. Borderer and Southern ways have increasingly influenced the entire nation. This group, this section, and their dominant religion have a number of myths and ideologies peculiar to them; the 'red-state, blue-state' dichotomy mentioned so often during the 2004 election campaign is related to these belief systems.

Throughout history, conquerors have justified their actions as divinely ordained—as inevitable as if God has granted permission. *Manifest Destiny* is an idea or ideology popular in America mid-nineteenth century that as the United States moved westward it was destined or fated to cover the whole continental area to the Pacific. This of course implied the destruction of Indian tribes that lived on the land. Belief in this ideology also contributed popular support for the expansionist Mexican War in 1846-1848, which led to the United States acquiring 522,568 square miles of land, about one-sixth of modern continental United States.

Some historians see Manifest Destiny transforming into frank imperialism at the end of the 19th century. Shortly after the frontier closed, officially around 1890, the Spanish-American War began (1898). The United States then embarked on a series of imperialistic interventions, mainly in Central America and the Caribbean, called the "Banana Wars." These ended under Franklin

Delano Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy," but covert actions abroad began again after World War II. Now, with current armed interventions in the Mideast, one may wonder if the meme of Manifest Destiny ever really died, or if it simply expanded to cover other continents.

Social Darwinism is not limited to the United States but it has influenced much American thinking. This ideology oversimplifies concepts similar to Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection and applies them to human society in order to justify the socio-economic status quo. Ironically, Social Darwinists who see human society as a struggle between the fit and the unfit (the economically successful vs. the poor) are diametrically opposed to Marxists who also see society in terms of a struggle—a class struggle (working class vs. owners of capital).

Eugenics is the idea of applying supposedly scientific notions to human reproduction, much as breeding is used with domestic animals, in order to encourage birth of the "fit" and discourage birth of the "unfit." Breeding was sometimes used coercively by slave-owners, but the 'scientific' notion of eugenics appeared in the United States along with mass immigrations at the turn of the last century. The new immigration was predominantly from countries in the south and east of Europe, whom nativists considered inferior to earlier immigrants from the British Isles, Germany, and Scandinavia.

CHAPTER 16: WE'RE DIFFERENT

But the fact is, America is the greatest force for good in the history of the world.
Sen. John McCain, 2nd presidential debate Oct. 7, 2008

The most famous visiting observer of the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville, coined the term ‘American exceptionalism’ in 1831 to convey the idea that the United States is different from other developed countries and holds a special place in the world. The term has three aspects: a perception of difference that dates back as far as the Puritans who settled New England, a modern ideology that celebrates and advocates the differences, and actual differences indicated by statistics and historical information.

Many Puritans believed that they were a chosen people with a special covenant with God, and were intended to lead the rest of the nations. Governor John Winthrop expressed the idea that New England’s Puritan community was meant to be a model community for all by using the metaphor of a “City on a Hill.” Today, evangelical and fundamentalist groups that have a Calvinist heritage similar to Puritanism are among the main proponents of exceptionalism as an ideology. However, some spiritual/occult writers also accept the idea of “the metaphysical role of the U.S. in human affairs,” as for instance, Judi Thomases in *Horoscope* magazine:

It will be easily seen that the founders of the U.S. were metaphysicians (i.e., awakened souls), that the purpose upon which the nation was founded was that of an ideal, evolved, pluralistic society under God’s guidance, and that its destiny intends the realization of this purpose.

In describing “America’s cosmic purpose,” Thomases does not mention whether other nations also have cosmic purposes. A term often used in public discourse is ‘American values’ suggesting that they are different from the values held by the other 95 percent of the world’s people—but these values are seldom spelled out.

David Gelernter, a computer science professor at Yale, suggests that Americanism is the fourth great Western religion. Its underlying doctrine is American Zionism which says that Americans are a chosen people in a promised land. “‘America’ is an idea that results from focusing the Bible and Judeo-Christian faith like a spotlight’s beam on the problem of this life (not the next) in the modern world, in a modern nation. The ideas that emerge in a blaze of light center on liberty, equality, and democracy for all mankind.” Gerlenter insists that these three ideas (liberty, equality, and democracy) grew not from the ancient Greeks or the Enlightenment but from the Bible, Judaism and Christianity and concludes that “If there is to be justice in the world, America must create it.” Since he is a contributing editor at the *Weekly Standard*, and neoconservatives Bill Bennett and Norman Podhoretz have given his book lavish praise, one may draw the conclusion that the American religion is at the least compatible with neoconservatism.

More Moral, More Prosperous, More Everything

Let just one hypocritical public figure be caught in Room 871 with someone called Kristen and the very foundations of the state are thought to crack in a way that huge acts of state-sponsored folly and bloodletting could never do.

Humorist Reg Henry, column March 13, 2008

Americans hold their elected officials to a high standard of ethics in regard to sexual behavior and use of illicit drugs, although not necessarily to ethical lapses regarding money or political corruption. A widely held idea is that Americans are more religious, and therefore more moral, than other nations in the developed world. A religions columnist, Terry Mattingly, cites a survey comparing yes or no answers to the statement “Religion is very important to me.” People in Europe, Canada, and Japan give far fewer “yes” answers than do Americans or those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The headline over this article reads “Survey: Europe Lacks Religious Commitment; Continent out of Step with World”—misleading because except for the United States it is not only Europe but rather all prosperous, industrial nations that differ from those in the developing world in this respect. I also wonder if one can compare religious commitment in different cultures using only that one question.

We’re prosperous too. People commonly refer to the United States as the richest nation in the world, but Switzerland’s median household income is quite a bit higher (\$62,000 compared with \$48,000) and our per capita income is third behind that of Luxembourg and Norway. However, the U.S. is certainly close to the top in such measures. The United States has changed radically in the last 100 years as Sam Roberts points out in his book based on U.S. census figures. Compared with the pictures we hold in our mind from the early 1900s or the 1950s, the United States is much more suburban (half of us live there) and isolated (one in four of us lives alone). The proportion of married couples dropped from 4 in 5 in 1950 to barely one in two in 2000. The nation’s population doubled twice over the last century, much of the increase due to immigration.

Rush Limbaugh explicitly supports an ideology of American exceptionalism and superiority. He promotes the commonly-held notion that anyone who does not believe the United States is at the top in all respects is not a patriot. By 2010, other Tea Party figures made similar comments.

I certainly do not hate my country, but can see that actual contemporary differences between the United States and other developed nations, as measured by statistics and other data, often make Americans look like more of a bad example than a model City on a Hill. These differences relate both to domestic matters and foreign policy. For instance:

Health and Education:

- The United States and South Africa are the only two developed countries without universal health care.
- The United States has the highest health-care expenditures, the highest doctor’s incomes, and the lowest percentage of citizens covered by public health care.
- U.S. rates of infant mortality placed it 29th in rank, tied with Poland and Slovakia. U.S. Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians had up to three times higher infant mortality rates than countries such as Japan, Sweden, UK, and 19 others.
- American white men were the tallest in the world (outside of Africa) in 1850 but are now ninth, while the Dutch, Scandinavians, and Czechs are now the tallest. Average height can indicate a society’s well-being. One possible explanation for the American decline is the lack of a social safety net—especially for children—in the U.S. Some researchers suggest that the contemporary American diet is becoming less nutritious. The trend began in the 1950s.
- The U.S. has one of the highest teen-age pregnancy rates among industrialized nations: twice that of the UK, eight times as high as the Netherlands and Japan. U.S. abortion rates are disproportionately high, more than twice that in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands.
- The United States spends the most for education per student among 25 industrialized nations but U.S. students don’t rank among the top ten in math, reading, or science.
- U.S. citizens watch television on average seven hours a day, second only to Japanese viewers.

- News is a much lower percent of TV programming in the U.S. than in Europe or Canada

Treaties:

- The United States has refused to ratify a number of treaties ratified by most other countries, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1996), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1979).
- Of 172 countries, the United States was the only one to vote against a UN resolution opposing the militarization of space (Oct. 29, 2007). Israel abstained.
- In May 2008, 111 nations adopted a treaty that would outlaw all current types of cluster munitions and require destruction of stockpiles, but the United States and other leading cluster bomb producers (Russia, China, Israel, India, and Pakistan) boycotted the talks. A U.S. State Department official said that cluster munitions are “absolutely critical and essential” to U.S. military operations.
- While the United States produces one-fourth of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, and may still be the largest such producer, it is the only developed country which never signed the Kyoto Treaty to limit such emissions.

Economics:

- As of 1991, compared to Europe, Canada, and Japan, the U.S. had more two-paycheck families, higher average household debt, less home ownership, lower average household savings, and the highest number of families headed by single parents.
- The United States has the highest level of poverty and of children living under poverty among developed nations.
- Compared to other industrialized countries, the U.S. has the greatest inequality of income and the smallest middle class.
- The United States has the lowest number of unionized workers. Next to Japan, Americans on average work the most hours per year and have the least days of paid vacation.
- The U.S. has the highest ratio of CEO pay to that of the average worker’s.
- In 1991, the U.S. had the highest employee turnover in manufacturing at 40 percent.

Guns, Crime, Prisons and Executions:

- As of 1991, Americans had by far the most handguns, with 29 percent of households owning one. Among developed nations, German households were second with 7 percent owning a handgun.
- America is one of four countries responsible for 84 percent of the world’s executions. China and Iran executed more people, while the United States was third, ahead of Vietnam and Saudi Arabia.
- Only two other industrialized democracies—Japan and South Korea—still have the death penalty. Ninety-one countries and eleven U.S. states have abolished it. Most of the countries which retain the death penalty are in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The UN passed a non-binding resolution asking for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty in December, 2007. It was opposed by the U.S. and dictatorships such as Syria, Iran, and China.
- One in every 100 U.S. residents is in jail or prison, the highest incarceration rate in the world both per capita and in total numbers.

Let us look more closely at this last difference, the incarceration rate. The explosive rate of growth in prison population occurred since federal mandatory minimum sentencing laws enacted in the 1980s to address an epidemic of crime related to crack cocaine. The Pew Center for the States recently released a comprehensive report on American prisons that showed prisons cost the United States almost \$50 billion a year. Prison costs are rising six times faster than higher education spending, saddling states with expenses they can ill afford. In Kentucky, the state with the largest increase of inmates in 2007, Governor Steve Beshear noted in his budget speech that

the state's crime rate had increased about 3 percent in the past 30 years while its inmate population had increased 600 percent.

Besides having the highest rate of imprisonment in the world, this disproportionately affects black men. More than ten percent of black men between the ages of 20 and 40 are in jail or prison. The high rate of black male imprisonment has devastated black communities. According to Bruce Dixon, since 1988 the majority of new admissions to prisons and jails has come from the black one-eighth of U.S. population. In some states, Blacks are locked up at nine, ten, or even more times the rate of whites. The states with such high racial disparities are not in the South, says Dixon, but are often those such as Iowa and Vermont that have a small percentage of blacks and others that contain or are near large African-American populations in Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia.

Most U.S. prisoners are nonviolent drug offenders. Federal statistics show that the rates of illegal drug use for whites, blacks and Latinos are almost the same. Yet, says Dixon:

African-Americans are an absolute majority of the people serving time for drug offenses. The stark and inescapable fact of double-digit disparity between black and white incarceration rates is hard to miss and harder to explain, except in terms of a consistently applied if rarely acknowledged policy of racially selective policing, sentencing and imprisonment.

One such selective policy is sentencing crack cocaine, the form of cocaine most used by Blacks, much more harshly than powdered cocaine used by whites. For instance, a person with one gram of crack would receive the same sentence as a person with 100 grams of the powdered form. The head of the federal public defender's office in Virginia, Michael Nachmanoff, says "The sentences for crack cocaine have been one of the most corrosive and unjust areas of criminal law [and have] undermined respect for the criminal justice system, not only in the African-American community but throughout the country." However at long last, new federal crack guidelines by the U.S. Sentencing Commission could reduce prison terms or release up to 20,000 inmates whose sentencing was discriminatory.

The United States is the only developed nation in the world with a 200-year history of slavery, followed by another century of partial apartheid, and fifty years of reforms that have not by any means ended discrimination against black people. A continuing racial disparity that contributes to the highest incarceration rate in the world is not the kind of exceptionalism that a country can brag about.

Here's another statistic about illegal drugs. Marijuana is by far the country's biggest cash crop, estimated to be worth about \$36 billion annually to growers. According to Jacob Sullum, marijuana brings in more than corn, soybeans, wheat, or hay because of "the government's biggest price support program: the war on drugs." Sullum says it is the "risk premium" that raises the crop's value, which he illustrates by comparing the production value of illegal marijuana (about \$1,600 a pound) to that of legal tobacco (less than \$2 per pound).

The United States is exceptional concerning several health issues. For instance, medical residents in U.S. hospitals work many more hours than their counterparts in the UK and EU. In the U.S., residents are limited to 80 hours a week and 30 consecutive hours. Limits in the UK and EU are 58 hours a week and 13 hours consecutively. The biggest difference is that except for South Africa and the United States, the rest of the industrialized world has universal health care. Universal health care would, of course, put an entire industry out of business—the health insurance industry which, incidentally, contributes heavily to political campaigns.

Although cigarette ads were banned from US airwaves in 1971, the FDA decided to legalize television drug commercials in 1997. The ads must include possible side-effects, which are sometimes quite serious, but they are listed in a rapid monotone at the end—throwaway lines. Obviously, few viewers are paying attention—the ads sell pharmaceuticals or the companies would not continue to run them. According to the Nutritional Health Alliance (NHA) no other developed nation allows drugs to be advertised on television.

An editorial in *Scientific American* points out that Europe is far ahead of the U.S. in combating antibiotic-resistant pathogens such as MRSA, which kills 13,000 people a year in the U.S. In January 2006, Europe banned all non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in animals and any agricultural use of vancomycin, which is the last-resort treatment in human medicine for deadly pathogens such as MRSA. Hospitals in some countries such as Netherlands isolate all incoming high-risk patients until tests show they are free of MRSA. The result is that in Dutch hospitals, less than one percent of staph infections are MRSA, compared with 64 percent in U.S. hospitals, which are reluctant to adopt this strategy partly because of its cost.

There are many more striking contrasts between this country and the rest of the world. The United States let its passenger trains go to seed, while other industrialized nations developed high-speed rail lines. Most nations subsidize their railroads because they are important to the country's commerce. Passenger trains also assist energy conservation. A BritRail study found that trains emit half the greenhouse gases per passenger mile that automobiles do, and one-fourth as much as a plane covering the same distance while the train carries more passengers.

Most exceptional of all may be the American impact on the rest of the planet. We consume more, pollute more, owe more money, and put more resources into weapons and armies than does anybody else. Several years ago, Frida Berrigan of the World Policy Institute compiled a list of dubious "firsts" related to U.S. energy consumption, debts, and military spending:

Oil Consumption: the U.S. consumes over 20 million barrels per day, equal to the combined consumption of China, Japan, Germany, Russia, and India (5 countries with combined population about 2.66 billion people compared with our 300 million).

Carbon Dioxide Emissions are greater than the combined output of China, Russia, and India (2.45 billion people). [However, China may have surpassed U.S. emissions since Berrigan wrote this.]

External Debt of \$10 trillion is almost one-fourth of the world's total debt of \$44 trillion [now estimated at \$100 trillion].

Military Expenditures are half of what the entire world spends.

Weapons Sales are ahead of any other nation.

Military Training: In 2008 the Pentagon planned to train the militaries of 138 nations at a cost of almost \$90 million.

The United States can be a powerful example for good or ill. In the past the United States has been a world model for its Constitution, stable democracy, technological advances, public education, middle class prosperity, and humanitarian generosity. This is not so true any longer. Amnesty International in a 2007 report strongly criticized the United States and its allies for setting a destructive example for other nations in its response to international terrorism. The report said the U.S. had done little to reduce the terrorism threat, had deepened distrust between Muslims and non-Muslims, and had undermined the rule of law. Other countries following the U.S. lead used the war on terror as an excuse to shut down dissent and to violate human rights.

In the past the United States was a more positive example, and many Americans assume that we are still the nation to emulate. However, it will take a massive turnaround to regain American

credibility with the rest of the world. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 appears to have inspired many across the world. For instance, a Kenyan man, Odihlambo, said “If America can elect a black man, then why can’t Kenya shun tribalism and elect anyone, regardless of tribe?” Obama’s diverse background and platform of change made much of the world more receptive to the United States, welcoming this country into the community of nations but not necessarily as the only model and leader.

Could There Ever Be Fascism in America?

Hold on, my friends, to the Constitution and to the Republic for which it stands. Miracles do not cluster and what has happened once in 6,000 years may not happen again. Hold on to the Constitution, for if the American Constitution should fail, there will be anarchy throughout the world.

Daniel Webster, U.S. Senator, 1851

The possibility of an American form of fascism has been part of the national discourse since the 1930s. The United States has a number of nationalist myths such as Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism that fascism could tap into. In 1935, with fascist governments ruling Italy and Germany, Sinclair Lewis published the novel *It Can’t Happen Here*, a cautionary tale about how a fascist government might take over the United States. Later, the philosopher Karl Popper added: “[The notion that] ‘It can’t happen here’ is always wrong: a dictatorship can happen anywhere.”

For decades, a few critics have said that America is already fascist. However, they exaggerated and over-dramatized the deficiencies of American democracy by using the same word that describes brutal regimes such as Franco’s in Spain. We discussed in the previous book some of the difficulties in defining fascism. It makes more sense to describe the relative openness or closing of a society, as Naomi Wolf has done. Democratic countries at various times under different leadership have closed down their freedoms to some degree without reaching the point of frank dictatorship.

Many people find American fascism an unthinkable idea. Bertram Gross in *Friendly Fascism* (1980) lists three serious arguments used by those who do not think that the United States could ever become fascist. The first, by Corliss Lamont, is that American capitalism is dominant and “does not need fascism” in order to maintain its dominance. Lamont pointed out that radical movements in the U.S. are weak and most trade unions are conservative, actually part of the establishment. But Gross notes that the weakness of radicals and trade unions is a double-edged sword, since “they could not be regarded as serious obstacles to creeping fascism.”

The second, more widespread argument against the possibility of fascism here is that “American democracy is too strong.” Gross acknowledges that old-fashioned fascism has so far never taken root in a country with a solid tradition and history of constitutional democracy such as England and the United States. However, he adds that this fact does not prevent some new form of fascism from appearing in western democracies and specifically in this country. In fact, some commentators have long described the United States in terms such as “incipient fascism,” “creeping fascism,” proto-fascism,” or “pre-fascism.” These are terms for a relative degree of closing down a democracy.

The third argument against a fascist America is that while it is possible, a new form of fascism is too unlikely to worry about. Gross disagrees, saying that the probability is strong enough that we should be on guard and take preventive action. “Friendly—or even unfriendly

fascism” could come in a variety of forms and in 1980 Gross saw it as a significant possibility. Some current commentators see the rise of the Tea Party, increasing corporate influence on elections, and powerful right-wing media as harbingers of a closing society.

Ten steps to close down democracy: Naomi Wolf says that there is a blueprint or shopping list of ten steps that totalitarians use to close down a democracy. The leaders of a military coup in Thailand in late 2006 followed the same steps used by Hitler and Pinochet long before them. Wolf put the United States, in April 2007, at step eight. (This assessment might be different today.) A brief summary of her list with some U.S. examples follows:

Invoke a terrifying internal and external enemy. Unlike martial law during the Civil War, or Japanese internment during World War II, the war against terrorism is open-ended and global. There is no endpoint.

Create a gulag, that is, a prison system outside of law. Gulags in history tend to metastasize, becoming ever larger and more secretive, more deadly and formalized. Most Americans don’t understand that the destruction of the rule of law at Guantanamo set a dangerous precedent for them too.

Develop a caste of thugs who can bully and beat up people without fear of prosecution. Mussolini had Blackshirts, the Nazis had Brownshirts, Latin American dictators had paramilitaries. Wolf notes that security contractors in Iraq are immune from prosecution. After Hurricane Katrina, the Department of Homeland Security employed hundreds of armed private security guards in New Orleans, one of whom told an investigative reporter that he had fired on unarmed civilians. Also, groups of angry young Republican men, dressed in identical shirts and trousers, menaced poll workers counting the votes in Florida in 2000.

Set up an internal surveillance system, with the excuse of “national security.”

Harass citizens’ groups. The Department of Defense has infiltrated American anti-war and environmental groups and keeps a secret database about their peaceful political activities.

Engage in arbitrary detention and release. Wolf says this is “a kind of cat-and-mouse game” to scare people. The Terrorist Watch list at airports has delayed or prevented many people from flying although they are far from being terrorists. In some cases they had been in peace marches or active in peace organizations, with other detentions simply cases of mistaken identity.

Target key individuals. Civil servants and academics are the first to be penalized or fired for criticism. Wolf gives several examples, such as the following: The Bush administration derailed the career of one military lawyer who spoke up for fair trials for detainees, while an administration official publicly intimidated the law firms that represent detainees pro bono by threatening to call for their major corporate clients to boycott them. A CIA contract worker who said in a closed blog that “waterboarding is torture” was stripped of the security clearance she needed to do her job.

Control the press. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, arrests of U.S. journalists are at an all-time high, including a blogger in San Francisco jailed for a year for refusing to turn over his video of an anti-war demonstration. The United States is now at this point, according to Wolf: “The stream of false information...is so relentless that it is increasingly hard to sort out truth from untruth. When citizens can’t tell real news from fake, they give up their demands for accountability bit by bit.”

Dissent equals treason. Wolf says every closing society casts dissent as ‘treason’ and any strong criticism as “espionage.” The Military Commissions Act of 2006 gives the president the power to call any U.S. citizen an “enemy combatant” and to define what that means. ***Wolf says according to the blueprint, we are at the point just before some high-profile arrests of opposition leaders on charges of treason or espionage.*** [Note: as of March, 2011 this hasn’t happened.]

Suspend the rule of law. The John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007 gives the president new powers to send one state’s National Guard to enforce a national emergency that he has declared in another state. Critics believe this is a violation of the Posse Comitatus Act (1878) meant to keep the federal government from using the military to enforce domestic law.

Had a new administration similar to the G.W. Bush administration been elected in 2008, these steps might have continued to develop further—but this didn't happen. The election of Obama stopped or reversed several of the steps above. Also, unforeseen developments can occur such as WikiLeaks, which provides more international transparency. But the United States has not been inoculated against fascism.

From the viewpoint of the whole species, the continued closing down of American society would be extremely dangerous for our shared survival because the United States has such great economic and military power in the world. Fascist traits that especially threaten the species are: militarism and the tendency to use military solutions; the merger of government and corporations that put profit above human and planetary health; and the reactionary tendencies of closed societies to look backward rather than forward toward solving our many serious problems.

CHAPTER 17: BORDERERS AND SOUTHERN MYTHS

Wherever they traveled, they would bring with them an insistent independence, a willingness to fight on behalf of strong men who properly led them, and a stern populism that refused to bend a knee, or bow a head, to anyone but their God.

James Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*, 2004

The term ‘Borderers’ refers to somewhere between a quarter million and a half million people who came to colonial America during the sixty years before the Revolution, becoming most of the frontiersmen and a third to one half of all Revolutionary soldiers. James Webb describes it as “the movement and relocation of virtually an entire people” from Northern Ireland and the border region between Scotland and England, to the mountainous areas from Pennsylvania to Georgia. Many were Lowland Scots who had first settled in Northern Ireland (Ulster) before sailing for colonial America, giving rise to the term ‘Scots-Irish.’ However, I prefer the term Borderers because some of these immigrants were Lowland Scots who had never moved to Ireland, and some were people from the six northernmost counties of England. Historian David Hackett Fischer in his classic study of 17th and 18th century settlers from the British Isles (*Albion’s Seed*) uses the word to describe this group. He found the heaviest emigration came from the lowland Scottish counties of Ayr, Dumfries, and Wigton; the English counties of Cumberland and Westmorland; and the Irish counties of Derry, Antrim, and Down.

For seven centuries the families of these people had been forced to fight and survive in the midst of wars between the Kings of England and Scotland. Constant violence shaped their culture and social system: they developed a warrior culture and were well-known for a fierce and stubborn pride. Also, Fischer says “the quarrels of kings became a criminal’s opportunity” leading to powerful outlaw clans and large gangs of professional rustlers in the border region, where people settled disputes by feud violence, and paid protection money to powerful families. They had little regard for formal law and central authority.

Then England and Scotland joined together in the Act of Union 1706-7. Entrepreneurs and absentee landlords replaced the old warrior families. Most Borderers became even poorer; they experienced high rents, low wages, heavy taxes, famine, epidemics, crop failures, and starvation. There were riots, insurrections, and assassinations of landlord’s agents. Pacification of the border region involved outlawing and sometimes killing whole families, and forcibly relocating others to Ireland—where conditions were no better—and so there was a mass exodus to America. Fischer notes, “The so-called Scotch-Irish who came to America thus included a double-distilled selection of some of the most disorderly inhabitants of a deeply disordered land.”

Webb’s book *Born Fighting*, gives a longer view of Scots-Irish history starting with the Celtic tribes of several thousand years ago up to the contributions and vicissitudes of their descendants in the United States today. While he gives an excellent overview, I find Webb less than objective about post-Civil War and recent U.S. history because he identifies so strongly with Scots-Irish Southerners as they were victimized by history and denigrated by “elites.” However, Webb’s bias in itself provides insights, not only into Scots-Irish descendants but a whole nation influenced by them.

The Borderer notion of kinship could be extended to other groups, says Webb: “In the Celtic societies if one stepped forward to serve, he was ‘of the kin’ so long as he accepted the values and mores of the extended family.” Thus (white) foreigners could become part of the dominant group, which on the frontier was Borderers. It is evident that Borderer memes have been both

persistent and contagious, as they followed the pioneering trails of the original settlers across the South, including southern Ohio and Indiana, into Texas, the Southwest, Southern California, and mountainous West. The South as a whole very much reflects Borderer folkways. Fischer points out that other early settlers in the same regions tended to copy their traits, because this warrior culture was well-adapted to frontier conditions. They were survivors who had lived for centuries with armed conflicts in a hardscrabble landscape of thin-soiled farms and moors. Fighting Indians was nothing new after constant wars in the border region between England and Scotland.

So we are talking here about *convergences* and *overlaps* between an ethnic group, a larger number who copied their memes, a section of the country (especially those states that were part of the Confederacy), Calvinist Christianity (Protestant fundamentalism), and political attitudes of the so-called ‘Red States’” I will try as much as possible to make it clear which of these is the immediate subject of discussion.

Webb’s book demonstrates how family heritage and old sectional conflicts—often categorized in ways that are dualistic and simplistic—tend to be highly important to Scots-Irish descendants and Southerners. The symbolic history and myths of the American Civil War and Reconstruction are still in play, framed in terms of yet more ancient conflicts. It is the North against the South as it once was the Norman-English against the Scots. It is also Northeastern elites against Middle America just as it was snooty New England Calvinists who looked down on the poor but proud Borderers and their own version of Calvinism back in the 18th century.

Un-hyphenated Americans: Southerners and reportedly Borderers before them like to position a stranger within their culture before accepting him or her. Who are his clan or what section is he from, what is his religion, and to whom does he give his loyalties? Many local letters to the editor suggest that Borderer descendants regard themselves and their culture as the essence and definition of America, to which newcomers should assimilate. So let me include some of my own bona fides that apply here. As it happens, my paternal grandmother’s maiden name was Webb, her family lived in Southern Ohio, and they called themselves Scots-Irish. My paternal grandfather’s side was plain-vanilla English.

On my mother’s side the family is German, from the disputed edges of Germany such as Alsace-Lorraine (France), Schleswig-Holstein (Denmark), and Eastern Germany (Poland). They settled in Wisconsin, in an area so fertile that my mother’s hometown was named Black Earth and the county’s dairy cows gave milk with the highest butter-fat content of any in the nation. With such rich soil, my immediate ancestors if they had been of a different religion might well have felt they were part of God’s elect.

James Webb says that in these days of hyphenated Americans, the Scots-Irish have been overlooked. So have Americans of German descent, whose ancestors also began to arrive in the colonies several hundred years ago and who now comprise a fraction of the population slightly larger than the fraction descended from English settlers (about one-fifth, in both cases). Because of two World Wars in which Germany was the enemy, German-Americans don’t often advertise their background.

My ancestors were not warriors—in fact, most came here in order to escape conscription by German barons for their interminable wars before Germany was unified. However, they were soon caught up in the Civil War. One great-grandfather’s Civil War rifle hung on the parlor wall along with the family portraits. Grandpa never had occasion to take it down, although he once threatened to use it against any New Deal bureaucrat who would try to tell him how to run his shoe and leather-mending shop.

Brought up in the upper Midwest and industrial Great Lakes regions, and after stints in such outposts as Florida, San Diego, Rochester (New York), and Oregon, I have lived for a total of 35 years in the Arkansas Ozarks. Ironically, I came to the Ozarks in a wave of '70s 'back-to-the-landers' who in many ways tried to emulate the early Scots-Irish settlers in their self-reliance and independence, and even their musicianship (folk and blue-grass, not country-western) although not their warrior culture or patriarchal attitudes.

The next question is, am I an elitist because I'm college-educated? Like many Borderer descendants, James Webb objects to elitists whom he locates mainly in the Northeast, academia and Hollywood. Nobody in my family ever belonged even to the upper middle-class. My father worked some years as a rod-catcher in a steel mill before he became a college teacher at the age of 40 (with only a bachelor's degree—and that completed in night school). I consider myself an intellectual of sorts—but does being well-educated or intellectual automatically make one elitist? Those who define the elite as college-educated people who live on the coasts or Northern states are mistaken. According to the 2000 Census, fully half of the 50 cities with the largest percentage of college-educated people are in the South or mountainous Western states, cities such as Atlanta, Raleigh, Denver, Anchorage, Dallas, Memphis, Phoenix, and Oklahoma City.

The Borderer/Southerner's continuing mistrust of intellectuals and learning is unfortunate. By an irony of history, they just missed the Scottish Enlightenment, a period of remarkable intellectual and scientific accomplishments between about 1740 and 1790. The towering figure was philosopher David Hume, who has been called "the most important philosopher ever to write in English." Many of Hume's empirical and skeptical ideas are incorporated into modern science. He also influenced a number of other thinkers including his close friend Adam Smith, the patron saint of capitalism. Other important thinkers and writers of the time were philosophers Thomas Reid and Francis Hutcheson (who first devised the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number), historian Adam Ferguson, and of course the poet Robert Burns.

The Scots at the time (1750) were among the most literate nations in Europe, with an estimated 75 percent able to read. It might be that the Borderers were too poor, illiterate, and isolated to partake of this intellectual flowering, but in any case, most of them had already left for the colonies. The one book that they brought with them to the New World was the Bible. It is not surprising that they came to rely so heavily on that one book for intellectual sustenance.

Many Southerners are highly sensitive about the stereotypes to which they feel media elites have subjected them, for instance "hillbillies," "rednecks," "crackers," "poor white trash," and "trailer trash." Fischer says many of these words came from Britain. For instance, 'redneck' was a name for Presbyterians or religious dissenters in general, and 'cracker' meant a vulgar braggart. I suspect these insulting terms were reinforced by genteel, middle-class Southerners anxious to separate themselves from those of lesser status. As an outsider to the South, I notice distinctions here between middle-class and working-class people are sharper than in the Midwest.

To this one may add a very old tradition in literature and popular culture that makes fun of the 'country bumpkin.' More recently, the comedy film "Borat" found the country bumpkin visiting from a distant country in Central Asia that is practically unknown to Americans (therefore, fair game). However, I never found amusement in the corny shows that caricatured hillbillies. Notions about what defines a people are especially superficial and narrow in the form of popular consumer culture disseminated by the electronic media. Along with country western music and the Elvis Presley cult, NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Racing) although it only really began in 1948 is now considered a sacred institution of Southern/Borderer culture. Car racing is the nation's second most popular spectator sport. But I suspect the

NASCAR-watching Southerner with gun and hunting dogs in the pickup is to some extent a media creation too. The media makes clowns of us all, because stereotypes and lowest-common-denominator entertainment are profitable.

My idea of an ‘elite’ is the 13,000 people who receive over 3 percent of the nation’s income and can fit into a medium-sized stadium. But however you want to position me as to ethnicity, sectionalism, religion, or elitism, I will propose here that there are Borderer memes, some of them contradicting other Borderer memes, which today are no help to Borderer descendants, the nation as a whole, or the species. Yet Borderer descendants have the talents and spirit that could, if they would, help lead us all out of the difficulties we have made for ourselves.

Celts, Calvinists, and the Ascendancy: Celts were once quite widespread throughout Europe before being confined to the British Isles by expansion of other ethnic groups. Webb notes these Celtic qualities: warlike, emotional, loyal to individuals rather than principles or institutions, and “adamantly tribal.” However, Fischer says that by the time of their migration to America those in the Scottish border area referred to themselves as a mixed people, and their customs owed as much to the Angles, Saxons, Danes, and Normans as to the Celts. Nor did they demonstrate kinship with Scottish highlanders or Gaelic-speaking people from Ireland, Cornwall, or Wales.

Most of those who joined the great migration were farmers and farm laborers who worked as tenants and undertenants; others were semiskilled craftsmen and petty traders. A few were independent farmers—yeomen. Only one or two percent were gentry, a group which supplied most of the individuals who later became important in American political life. A handful of Borderers from Scotland and about 20 percent of those from Northern England came as indentured servants. There were more indentured from Northern Ireland, but they had a bad reputation as proud and ungovernable. The very poorest stayed behind in the old country.

Fischer describes Borderer folkways at the time of their emigration based on historical documents, including what their contemporaries thought of them. The Quakers with their belief in brotherly love were particularly unhappy about the invasion of Borderers through the port of Philadelphia because they brought with them their habit of belligerence toward other ethnic groups. The New England Puritans, although fellow Calvinists, found that Borderers flirted, gambled, drank, and fought too much. Webb says the Puritans were also repelled by Borderer illiteracy, physical slovenliness, and “notable divergence from Puritan customs, habits, and outlook.” The Virginians weren’t fond of them either (the feeling was mutual, as the Borderers saw the flatlanders as yet another Anglican aristocracy). However, earlier settlers agreed that these newcomers would make a good buffer between themselves and the Indians. So the Borderers were sent to the dangerous edge of society.

The Protestant Reformation, especially Calvinism, had a greater impact in Scotland than elsewhere, because the Catholic Church had become especially corrupt there. Webb says: “Much of Calvinism’s harsh discipline could be attributed to the attempt by church-leaders to tame this highly spirited...emotional, and combative people.” The two main religious denominations among Borderers in the 18th century were Anglican and Presbyterian. In America, however, they were often hostile to the established church and “hireling clergy,” preferring camp meetings. Fischer says that the theology of Protestant fundamentalism and born-again revivalism appeared in the Southern highlands by the middle of the 18th century. He notes:

Sectarian conflicts became commonplace in the backcountry.... Various groups of Presbyterians outnumbered all others, and outrivaled them in religious bigotry.... Military metaphors abounded in backcountry sermons and hymns. Prayers were invoked for vengeance and the destruction of enemies. When these Christian warriors were not battling among themselves, they fell upon the Indians with the same implacable fury.

Borderers did not get along with Scottish highlanders, either. The highlanders often became Tories during the American Revolution, mainly—according to Fischer—because Borderers were on the other side. “The fighting between them was as savage as any conflict in North Britain.”

Having just missed the Industrial Revolution and the Scottish Enlightenment that was leading Scotland into a “golden age,” backcountry people were not much interested in formal education, and levels of schooling remained lower in the regions they settled than other parts of the United States, a pattern persisting until today. Child-rearing of boys was quite different from that of the strict Puritans. Fischer says “Its primary purpose was to foster fierce pride, stubborn independence and a warrior’s courage in the young. An unintended effect was to create a society of autonomous individuals who were unable to endure external control and incapable of restraining their rage against anyone who stood in their way.”

The small minority of settlers in the backcountry who were gentry came to the New World to preserve their status, threatened by changes in the border areas after the Act of Union. The families of Andrew Jackson, his opponent John Calhoun, President James Knox Polk, Patrick Henry, and Sam Houston were all from this elite class known in the borderlands and Ireland as the “Ascendancy.” Fischer adds: “Other elite groups in the backcountry included three of the most prominent raiding, reiving and rustling families on England’s northwestern frontier: the Grahams, Bells and Bankheads. All were expelled from England and forcibly resettled in Ireland” before they emigrated across the Atlantic. In the United States, members of all three families held many high offices.

Fischer says it is a common myth that the frontier promoted economic equality. Instead, the system of land tenure that created great inequality in the Scottish borderlands was transferred to the Americas. Most men in the Southern highlands were landless, and a few families owned large tracts. There was a large underclass of tenants and squatters who raised cattle and swine in the woods—these were the people who received the denigrating names. Meanwhile, the wealthiest ten percent owned 40-80 percent of the land, and Fischer says this pattern persisted at least through the 19th century.

Poor families did not resent the borderland gentry as elites. This is partly explained by the following, which Webb quotes from Mackie, *A History of Scotland*: “Scottish rural society was so largely organized to face war and feud, and was so closely bound in blood and duty to its lords that it had no conception of itself as divided along other lines by economic interest.” This goes far to explain why Borderer descendants have been less likely to join labor unions and more likely to identify with the interests of wealthier people.

Borderer Memes

Whenever a culture exists for many generations in conditions of chronic insecurity, it develops an ethic that exalts war above work, force above reason, and men above women. This pattern developed in the borders of North Britain, and was carried to the American backcountry, where it was reinforced by a hostile environment and tempered by evangelical Christianity.

David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*

Qualities of the Scots-Irish according to Webb include these: “insistent individualism... intense competitiveness... infinite stubbornness,” tendency to live in isolation, hard luck, shunning formal education, “a naturally populist people” who mistrusted and even hated any form of aristocracy, “a culture founded on guns,” ability as musicians, writers especially poets, and actors. Charles Oliver in a review of Webb’s book adds:

The Scots-Irish came to prize aggressiveness and cunning, and they insisted on choosing their own leaders based on those traits. They developed a distrust of government, which seemed to exist only to burn their homes, seize their property, and kill their kin. And they reserved to themselves the right to judge the laws they lived under and determine whether they would obey them or not. They lived in rough, simple, ill-kept shacks. They saw no reason to build better homes when they were only going to get burned down eventually. They were at once fervently religious and intensely sensual.

Other tendencies include an honor culture quick to take offense, a paradoxical authoritarianism coexisting with love of personal liberty and admiration of outlaws, and a strong ethic of self-reliance (actually reliance on the extended family). By accidents of history, in the last four centuries a pattern arose in which Borderers harshly treated certain other groups—often while acting as agents of a higher social class—such as Catholics in Northern Ireland, Native Americans, Blacks, immigrants, and foreign people during U.S. imperialist wars. In many cases, their poverty, xenophobia, and fighting spirit were exploited by those who would use them as buffers, shock troops, and straw bosses to displace or control another religious or ethnic group.

The most important Borderer institution is Christian fundamentalism, including modern-day Southern Baptists and other Calvinist-inspired groups. Politically organized as the “Moral Majority,” “The Christian Coalition,” or simply as the Republican Party increasingly using its “Southern Strategy,” many fundamentalists easily add property rights or the right to own and carry handguns to the tenets of their religion. In fact, Southern fundamentalists seem to make little distinction between their folkways, politics, and religion

President Andrew Jackson was the model of a Scots-Irish leader, a fearless soldier who first made his mark as an Indian fighter. Webb says that ‘Jacksonian populism’ with its distrust of elites and emphasis on individual self-reliance is still the basic philosophy of the South and Ohio River Valley. Did Jackson’s disdain for Indians and blacks, and his lack of respect for the Constitution become part of the same ideology? Jackson introduced the spoils system, now a fixture in this country’s party politics. We have already noted Borderer support of expansionism, imperialism, and jingoism, often in the name of defense. Energetic imperialists William McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt were two of those presidents with some Scots-Irish ancestry.

A noted legal authority, Lawrence Velvet, points out that the South has been more inclined to war than the rest of America, from as far back as the early 1800s. Velvet says: “The South wanted the War of 1812, it wanted war with Mexico, it wanted the Civil War, it wanted to invade and take over Cuba and parts of Central America... The South became militaristic at least as early as the 1830s or so if not before—it started creating military academies to train men against the day it might be necessary to fight the North.”

At one point, the Borderers identified with states’ rights, later with the Confederate states as a group, and now with the American nation as a whole, the Super Tribe. Their strong identification with their nation however defined, and their willingness to fight for it, adds to the intensity of American nationalism and its tendency to militarism and war.

Borderer descendants have done far more than their share of fighting and dying in every one of America's wars through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and now into the twenty-first. They also provided a disproportionate number of American political and military leaders, including a dozen presidents, as well as many talented musicians and writers. To a large degree, this group has determined the hard-to-define 'American spirit.' But I would not go as far as Webb does in saying "They did not merely come to America, they became America." This is a problematical belief that can be used to support nativist and racist attitudes, among others. Webb also tries to equate Scots-Irish attitudes with the working-class as a whole, and this I have disputed elsewhere.

Borderer Effects: Fischer says that people in the backcountry were deeply conservative and suspicious of 'foreigners.' In the Civil War some fought against both sides. In the early 20th century their descendants were strongly negrophobic and anti-Semitic; in the late 20th century they were "furiously hostile" to both communists and capitalists. (Contemporary additions are Muslims, aliens, and 'liberal elites.')

Xenophobia and extreme partisanship in both politics and religion are related to intellectual patterns of either/or thinking.

Borderer memes seem especially persistent. Modern cultural descendants of the Borderers may not be Scots-Irish and may not live in the South, but many of their traits are evident in our present-day culture, and others have been deliberately courted by political propagandists. It often seems that whatever the neo-Borderer believes, he believes with passion and will fight for, even if it contradicts something else he believes, or what he believed yesterday. Ideology is used as a weapon, so its truth and consistency are of less importance than its effectiveness.

The following is an attempt to look at the ambiguous nature of some of these persistent ideological components, such as this group's well-known love of liberty. Is it that they want liberty for themselves and their own kind of people, or is liberty a general principle that applies to everybody without exception? Historically, women, Indians, slaves, and many minorities were left out. The rights of other peoples to self-determination are easily flouted for a number of reasons—we help them by occupying their country, or they are threatening our interests.

State's rights were at issue during the founding of the national government over 200 years ago and for some, they are still at issue, as if the state and its bureaucracy was an entirely different animal from the federal government and its bureaucracy. Neo-Borderers also have an intense attachment to national sovereignty, an idea that goes back to the time of warring kings, but seem oblivious to the ways in which multinational corporations might threaten national sovereignty. Also, while attached to national sovereignty, they tend to be anti-government.

This is a people whose ancestors for almost two thousand years were beset by would-be conquerors such as the Romans and the English. On several occasions some general or king massacred tens of thousands of them, including women, children, and elderly—but they would not be subdued nor surrender. The Celtic tribes of the British Isles displayed a noble, indomitable spirit, the stuff of legends. However, this is a different time and place. Borderer descendants now tend to see current events in the frame of that dangerous and heroic past, even though new events don't fit the mould. That may be why many of them have contempt for negotiations and diplomacy, and always insist on a symbolic 'victory.'

It may be that their history predisposes them to feel threatened by groups different from themselves, to hate and fear Communists or Muslims or liberals, or to perceive immigration as an invasion. This earlier history reinforced by the Civil War and Reconstruction may lead them to nurse a grudge against the U.S. North or Northeast as a distinct section—almost a separate

country, to believe that most other nations are trying to take advantage of us, and that Europe or the UN is a dangerous threat to Americans.

But is it possible that underneath the heroism, those massacres and defeats led to depression and feelings of victimization that are today projected onto scapegoats and fantasized enemies? Are Borderer descendants easy to manipulate politically because of these unacknowledged emotions? Many neo-Borderers view the United States as a victim. This has been true since Vietnam but especially since 9/11. They perceive America as unappreciated or unfairly blamed by the rest of the world, especially Europe. And within the United States they view regular Americans like themselves as victimized by free-riders, cheats, and traitors who have not joined the social pact or contract—outsiders such as secular humanists, welfare chiselers, communists, socialists, and immigrants.

Again, because of that long history of warfare and local feuds that developed a warrior culture, it is possible that the neo-Borderer's first solution to national conflicts is force. Glorification of the ancient warrior past may predispose them to support the modern militarized state with its weapons of mass destruction that can massacre great numbers of civilians, even as Borderer ancestors were massacred in the Scottish lowlands.

Borderer descendants often seem to lack discernment about choosing and following national leaders in a modern world, instead applying the criteria of how a Celtic warrior would choose a cunning, aggressive leader to follow into battle—sometimes basing this on actual heroism, more often on an image manufactured by the media. Many fail to see any tension between the warrior virtues of loyalty and obedience to superiors, and the ideals of democracy. Neo-Borderers may show a similar lack of discernment in choosing many religious leaders who constantly request donations and who show a strong propensity to commit the very sexual sins they preach so much about. Christian fundamentalism as the Borderer faith has become an adversarial and xenophobic religion that predisposes its members to find enemies, demons, and scapegoats. Many do not find any contradictions between such judgmentalism or exclusiveness and the teachings of Jesus.

The combination of several developments resulted in a belief-system different from other developments in Christianity, almost a new religion. These were: Calvinist doctrine as adapted to Borderer culture; an emotional revivalist tradition that began in the early 19th century; religious accommodation to slavery; and a disdain for scholarship and foreign ideas. Webb spoke about Calvinist church-leaders and their attempt “to tame this highly spirited...emotional, and combative people.” The harsh teachings and the guilt they would inspire may have succeeded too well and encouraged a psychic split. This could lead to denial, self-righteousness, projection, hypocrisy, belligerent ignorance, disregard for evidence, acceptance of contradictions, and confusion. For instance, a man recently wrote Billy Graham's column for advice because he worries a lot and thinks that Jesus called worry a sin—so now he is worried about worrying. Graham reassures him, but how many others are afraid of committing sins that were never even sins? It is easy to manipulate people by their religious beliefs for political purposes if they don't understand those beliefs very well.

Perhaps in the attempt to avoid incapacitating guilt, believers focus on specific sins that are relatively easy to avoid. In the past it was dancing, drinking whiskey, card-playing, and going to the picture show on Sunday. It may be harder to keep from committing adultery, but it is certainly easy enough to not be gay if you are already heterosexual. It also seems to me that Calvinists are especially prone to use the ‘blame’ locution for human agency. Because any discussion of causation then seems to involve personal guilt, people influenced by this tradition are likely to resist historical responsibility. They also resist any attempt to look for causes for

somebody else's negative behavior—for example—because that seems to evade that person's direct moral responsibility. If people are out of work during an economic depression, it is their own fault (they are to *blame*).

Borderers have contributed to nativism—the resistance of earlier immigrants to later ones—which has been an important influence in United States history for 150 years. If America is a melting pot, there has been a good bit of xenophobic boiling over and the turbulence is not by any means over. In colonial times, the other three main groups of settlers from England had a negative response to the Borderers (and the other three didn't always get along with each other either). But there was a lot of room, everybody spoke English, and the Borderers could serve a useful purpose on the frontiers. However, Borderer descendants tended toward nativism because of their cultural traits and history. The next large influx of immigrants to this country was Irish-Catholics, who were a traditional enemy from Ulster days as well as having the 'wrong' religion. The 2002 film "Gangs of New York" gives a fictional account of the battles between nativists and Irish Catholic immigrants in the notorious Five Points Slum during the 1840s to 1860s.

Borderer attitudes heavily contributed to the anti-Catholic Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s, jingoism resulting in the War with Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century and the Spanish-American War at the end of it, the romance of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, opposition to most immigration, the Ku Klux Klan, and modern-day survivalist and militia groups. Neo-Borderers can swing elections in their original strongholds in the Appalachians, eastern Pennsylvania, and southern Ohio and Indiana. A recent news article treads lightly as it analyzes reactions to the 2008 presidential campaign in "rural" areas (apparently referring to the aforementioned Borderer strongholds). Noting that "religion and race are still powerful forces in rural America," the article says the election here "could hinge on whether voters focus more on economic issues or cultural values." Apparently racial prejudice is one of those "cultural values."

Because of their general poverty and poor education, and a tendency to place honor above economic status, Borderers and their descendants were exploitable by elites who often used the race card. The poor white may have been living in hardship, but at least he had the status afforded by the color of his skin. One time this almost didn't work was during the Populist movement of the 1890s, and again in the 1930s Depression, when many poverty-stricken white and black sharecroppers made common cause. But they were unable to budge the system. Augustus Cochran III, a Southern political scientist, notes that "Raw racism may not taint our politics as overtly as it once did in the Solid South of old, but it lies just below the surface of many of the social issues and 'culture wars' that rage so furiously in American politics today." Yet the U.S. presidential election of 2008 found many Borderer descendants voting in their perceived self-interest for the Black candidate. They focused on economic issues. Many historians and other social scientists see this election as "a pivot point" and "a realigning election."

CHAPTER 18: CRUCIAL MYTHS

Old memes never die, they just mutate and adapt. Several ideologies that have been important in America's history may not be currently acknowledged but still very influential are Manifest Destiny, Social Darwinism, and Eugenics. All three of these ideologies quite transparently use the notion that God, Fate, Destiny, Science, or the Laws of Nature put the stamp of approval on an ideology which happens to favor some selected portion of the human race.

Manifest Destiny

“Resistance is futile—you will be assimilated.”

Borg statement to victims on “Star Trek, the Next Generation”

People were able to relate to Pacman, one of the very first computerized games, or to the implacable behavior of a cyborg race on a television show precisely because brutal conquest and colonization are such ancient themes. To describe the behavior of a population expanding its territory let us go back to the very beginning. Bacteria as a life form are much older than humans and greatly outnumber us. One could easily argue that they are more successful from an evolutionary standpoint than we are. Bacteria have spread from one end of the Earth to the other including the Ocean and freshwaters. Microbes have been found living in the boiling water of Yellowstone geysers, in salty brines, in the driest deserts, and at the bottom of deep gold mines in South Africa, where they thrive on hydrogen. Each of us contains bacteria as intestinal flora that help us digest food, and these bacteria actually outnumber the cells within our own bodies. Also, their ancestors moved in to become an essential part of each cell as the *mitochondria*. Stewart notes, “Stephen Jay Gould suggests that we are living in the age of bacteria, and that since life began on earth, it has always been the age of bacteria.”

While bacteria were the first to spread themselves, they are not the only ones. Opportunistic species are those that are particularly energetic in finding more places to live. Some opportunists with which humans are most familiar are rats, cockroaches, thistles, and dandelions. From our point of view they are pests, while from the point of view of many other species, we would be the pests. Coyotes are opportunistically spreading across the American continent, even into cities, and armadillos are extending their range in the United States. Perhaps every sort of plant and creature has its own Manifest Destiny, but only humans could put theirs into words and justify them with deities or high-sounding principles.

Today, the second greatest threat to Earth's biodiversity (next to habitat loss) is invasive alien species—plants and animals that are transported by humans to parts of the globe where they have never been before. Most introductions are deliberate, intended for economic use, but sometimes they are accidental—perhaps bivalves clinging to the hulls of ships or “crazy ants” now swarming across Texas. The latest invasion is venomous red lionfish decimating native species and stinging divers in the Caribbean. They are believed to have escaped from a Florida fish tank. Nutria rats liberated from fur farms infest Louisiana and giant pythons which once were exotic pets live by the thousands in the Everglades. But whether it is rabbits in Australia, rats on Pacific islands, or kudzu in the American South, the invasive species promptly begins to spread and out-compete or destroy the local flora and fauna, creating chaos in the established ecosystems.

There are two general ways to expand your range, find a niche or displace some life form that already occupies that niche. The birds and the earthworms do not compete for a territory, because they find different niches; but two herbivores that eat grass, or two predators that eat herbivores will compete for the same range. This vocabulary is often used in business, where some look for a “market niche” where they can supply a new or underutilized product or service. Meanwhile, others will simply try to drive their competitors out of business.

Up to twenty different hominid species have lived on our Earth but only one of us survives (unless Bigfoot or Yeti is no myth). Anthropologist Ian Tattersall says the fossil record shows multiple species of hominid typically shared the Earth. For instance, two million years ago, at least four species of hominid coexisted on the shores of a lake in Kenya. But *Homo sapiens* emerged between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago and eventually all other hominids disappeared. “Being alone in the world as a species, as we are today, is the exception, not the rule. The only obvious reason for the current state of affairs is that *Homo sapiens* is an unusual creature, intolerant of competition by close relatives and able to do something about it.”

Scholars still disagree about how our ancestral Cro-Magnon people displaced the Neanderthals, who actually had a larger brain than we did. Many once believed that our Cro-Magnon ancestors fought the Neanderthals in numerous small-scale battles that added up to genocide, a primeval Cain slew Abel story. This theory is now a minority opinion. Some believe there was intermarriage (although DNA analysis doesn’t support this), others that Cro-Magnons were simply better suited to survive—perhaps because of a more advanced grasp of language. However it happened, the competitive success of our type of hominid must be another form of Manifest Destiny. It happened: therefore God must have willed it, is that not so?

In Genesis the Lord tells the human race to go forth and multiply. However, if this command was given 6,000 years ago, it should have contained a sunset provision. Since then, many human groups have multiplied until they forcibly took over the territory of some other human group. Sometimes this resulted in wholesale carnage; sometimes the winning group kept the losing group around to chop its wood and carry its water.

Everyone has heard of the Roman Empire and the British Empire, but empires have been very common throughout human history. In the usual definition, an empire is a state that extends its dominion over areas with populations which are culturally and ethnically distinct from it. Some empires are land-based, others colonize using their navies. An early model of the former was the Akkadian Empire that began in the 24th century B.C.

So far, the largest empire based on contiguous lands was the Mongol Empire under Kublai Khan in 1268. It covered 33.2 million square kilometers. The Qing Empire (the last Chinese empire, 1644 to 1911) contained more than a third of the planet’s people in 1820, and it is estimated the Maurya (Indian) Empire also held one third of the world’s population in the second century BC. However, the British Empire, sometimes called a *hyperpower*, holds the record for total landmass (about one quarter of Earth’s land) and total population (531.3 million in 1938).

The Nazi German Empire started late and their version of Manifest Destiny was “lebensraum”—they claimed they needed and deserved more living room.

Jewish religious Zionists not only believe that their imperialism is religiously justified, but they point to specific passages in the Old Testament. Christian Zionists are in the unique position of aiding and abetting another country’s imperialism based on sharing the same Holy Book.

Most American citizens are blissfully unaware that their nation has had many imperialist episodes in the past and that since World War II, U.S. imperialism appears to be a permanent posture, closely tied to military Keynesianism.

The Mexican American War, 1846-1848

[The war was] *one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation. It was an instance of a republic following the bad example of European monarchies, in not considering justice in their desire to acquire additional territory.*

Ulysses S. Grant, 18th U.S. President, 1822-1885

The United States had its first imperialist war in the middle of the 19th century. U.S. President John Tyler had annexed Texas in 1845. Meanwhile, the 1844 campaign platform of President James K. Polk supported Manifest Destiny. Once in office, Polk tried to buy California and New Mexico for \$30 million, but when Mexico refused to negotiate, Polk sent American troops to Texas to provoke a war—which they did.

Many Americans disagreed with Polk's action. Northerners believed that Polk (a Southern Democrat) was trying to gain more land for slaveholders. Young Congressman Abraham Lincoln spoke against the war in the House of Representatives. Writer Henry David Thoreau refused to pay his taxes because they would support the war, and he was briefly jailed for this refusal. Thoreau then wrote a famous essay "On Civil Disobedience," which later inspired Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King to develop massive campaigns of civil disobedience.

From this war the victorious United States gained a huge territory that included the present-day states of California, Nevada, and Utah, along with parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Wyoming—all this in return for \$15 million to Mexico. This acquisition, which halved Mexico and contributed about one-third of today's contiguous United States, had several important consequences. Many historians believe that controversies about what to do with this land, specifically in terms of slaveholding, made the Civil War inevitable. Also, the success of an expansionist war under the banner of manifest destiny gave a precedent and a model for later actions for the next 160 years. Neoconservatives have developed a new version of the doctrine that includes the entire Earth and also the space surrounding it.

Clash of Civilizations: The idea that Western liberal society is at war with Islam has many elements of manifest destiny doctrine. Here not just one country but an entire civilization supposes itself so superior to another civilization that it is appointed by 'history' to prevail over the other, peacefully or not. One example is *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle Between East and West* by historian Anthony Pagden. He is not talking about the East of India, China, Korea or Japan but only about the Middle East. Nor is he arguing the superiority of Christianity to Islam, saying he strongly prefers "an enlightened liberal society" to religious ones.

Pagden begins with the ancient Greeks, conceived as our intellectual ancestors. The Greeks of course fought the Persians at Thermopylae, and a lot of back-and-forth followed over the next several millennia: Alexander the Great conquered Persia as well as parts of central Asia and India. Hurray for our side. Then Arabs got a new religion—Islam—and reconquered large parts of the Middle East as well as taking Spain. There followed the Crusades, then the sack of Constantinople and other conflicts between the two regions.

But that wasn't the whole story. Pagden downplays that a lot of fighting and conquering went on within Europe as well: barbarians taking down Rome, Vikings raiding England and northern Europe, wars between France and England, centuries of English attempts to conquer the Celts in Ireland and Scotland, the Hundred Years' War, Thirty Year's War, English Civil War, and many other conflicts unrelated to East/West. One could say that sometimes West conquered East and

the reverse because war and conquest was the order of the day—not because there was a fated difference between them.

However Pagden argues that West/East battle lines were hardened by the development of Christianity and then Islam, both of them religions of conquest. Pagden is not fond of any of the monotheistic religions, saying they “have caused more lasting harm to the human race than any other single set of beliefs” but he has a special distaste for Islam. He declares a strong preference for Enlightenment values of the West, saying that when Europeans (and Americans) finally managed to separate religion from government, society flourished. Pagden maintains that despite the wars of the 20th and 21st centuries and other evils, the majority of the world’s population is better off today than it ever was before, due to the influence of the secular West.

While I too prefer Enlightenment values to theocratic ones, Pagden seems to have stacked the deck against Islam. He sees the great flowering of Arab culture in the 11th and 12th centuries as an aberration, he too closely links Islam with Arabs, and he underestimates the capacity of Arab or Islamic countries to change. Also, it is quite possible that the majority of the world’s population is today better off in some ways and worse off in others. I would not do too much boasting about the western civilization that brought us two world wars, the Holocaust and other genocides, nuclear bomb, Sixth Extinction, and climate change.

Final Frontier: Some visionaries and science fiction enthusiasts have extended manifest destiny into the stars, believing humans are compelled to explore, exploit, and then populate space because it is our destiny to do so (techno-utopianism). In a different view, Sylvia Earl, a marine botanist and deep-sea explorer, suggests that Earth is actually the final frontier:

Anyone who thinks that space is the only frontier remaining to be explored by humans lacks a realistic appreciation of the size and diversity of his home planet. Many people have the impression that the planet is fully explored, that we’ve already been to all the forests and climbed all the mountains. But in fact most of the forests have yet to be seen for the first time.

In 2001, scientists found a number of new species of sea creatures such as crustaceans, snails, and anemones thriving at deep-sea warm water vents in the Indian Ocean. Biologists discovered at least 52 new species of animals and plants in Borneo in 2006, including a catfish with protruding teeth and suction cups on its belly. In December 2005, a research team discovered a pristine “lost world” in the isolated Foja Mountains of New Guinea, complete with a new, orange-faced honeyeater bird, tree kangaroos, and 20 new species of frogs, among them one about half an inch long that was detected by its call.

A recent scientific survey of ocean life found a couple thousand new species, a dozen new species in the Sargasso Sea alone. One find was a single-cell creature big enough for humans to see. An estimated 80 percent of the world’s insects have not yet been identified. Among other ‘new’ creatures, the woodland bison was discovered in 1960 and the blue Timor monitor (lizard) in 1999. This doesn’t include fossils of extinct creatures such as the bus-sized reptile discovered last year on a remote island in the Arctic.

Some indigenous people in remote places such as the Amazon have not yet been contacted by civilization. Brazil’s National Indian Foundation believes as many as 68 such groups live in the jungles of Brazil and Peru. But loggers are closing in and contact is likely to cause up to half of the Indians to die from common diseases such as colds and flu to which they have no natural immunity.

I hope and pray that we can refrain from any ‘manifest destiny’ to exploit or destroy all these people, creatures, and remaining refuges of Earth’s magnificent diversity.

Social Darwinism

Old arguments never die.

Stephen J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*

Social Darwinism was an intellectual movement of the later 19th century that applied the idea of “the survival of the fittest” to the social structure of society. According to Robert C. Bannister, in *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth*, a Social Darwinist interprets human society mainly in terms of biology, struggle, competition, or natural law (the idea that there are permanent characteristics of human nature).

Not only did many American intellectuals and businessmen support Social Darwinism in the early 20th century, but such notions are still alive after 150 years, especially in the United States, which was always the most receptive to this concept. Many ideas about the superiority of some races, genders, and classes to others were current even among scientists throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century. Stephen Jay Gould’s 1981 study *The Mismeasure of Man* shows how widespread was such thinking. Even today, as an old ideology type B, Social Darwinism is often hidden inside other ideologies or it forms part of the conventional wisdom.

Modern manifestations of social Darwinism include tendencies to ‘Blame the Victim,’ denigration of poor people, white supremacy, an attitude of ‘No Welfare for People (Just Corporations),’ scientific racism supported by right-wing foundations, and continuing support for a strong military and foreign expansion (although rationalized as self-defense) combined with thinly veiled contempt for the third-world .

Social Darwinism was actually conceived by English philosopher Herbert Spencer several years before Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* appeared in 1859. Spencer then borrowed the name ‘Darwinism’ and his ideas rode on the intellectual tide created by Darwin’s theory. The common phrase “survival of the fittest” was Spencer’s. Charles Darwin himself did not show any interest in applying his theories of biological evolution to the sphere of human society, but some people today who oppose evolutionary theory apparently associate it with Social Darwinism. The two theories are only distantly related. Social Darwinism misapplied a biological theory to serve national, religious, racial, and economic agendas, in the following ways:

- To support racism, including the idea that European groups from eastern and southern Europe were inferior to those from northern Europe. SD was an important part of the arguments and policies against immigration during the great tide of immigration at the turn of the century. SD has also been used to support the idea that white, Protestant, English-speaking people were the most ‘fit’ people on Earth.
- To support the ideology of cut-throat capitalism and the ascendancy of robber barons in the late 19th century. SD assumes the successful made a lot of money because they were superior—more biologically and intellectually fit than the rest of the population. These ideas, a natural extension of laissez-faire capitalism, were compatible with Calvinist ideas about the ‘elect.’
- To support the idea that relative economic success entirely reflects native abilities and morality, and to oppose any sort of social welfare for the poor because it would allow them to survive and transmit their hereditary inferiority to new generations.

- To justify colonialism, since native peoples were regarded as less fit. Spencer's notion was put forward during the peak of the British Empire and could well serve as justification for it, or for any empire.
- To support foreign expansion and a strong military. The 'struggle school' of sociology, represented by English journalist Walter Bagehot, argued that nations evolved mainly through success in conflicts with others. For military strategists and political scientists in the 1890s, this idea justified imperialism. It implies that military winners are the most fit to survive.
- To support the idea that biological inheritance is by far the most important contribution to human intelligence and character (hereditarianism). Since environment is considered relatively unimportant, this would tend to limit measures to improve public welfare. The idea that "biology is destiny" has also been used to restrict women's activities.
- To develop eugenics, the improvement of human heredity through various kinds of social intervention

Lifeboat Ethics began as concern about overpopulation but often devolves into an America First or anti-immigration position. In 1967, two authors argued that population growth was about to overtake food production. Brothers William Paddock (an authority on tropical agriculture) and Paul Paddock (an experienced Foreign Service Officer) wrote *Famine—1975! America's Decision: Who Will Survive?* They saw the population-food collision as inevitable and near term, saying that the only solution for the United States to share its limited resources was to practice a version of medical triage systems used in war and disasters. They suggested for instance that Haiti, Egypt, and India could not be saved, while Tunisia and Pakistan should receive food aid. Forty years later, the Paddocks might revise these national evaluations. Widespread famines predicted for the '70s and '80s did not occur then because of the Green Revolution and a decline in population growth rates—although such famines might still occur as population increases. Currently there is a food crisis in many countries attributed to the high cost of oil causing general inflation and also to the diverting of corn crops from food to making ethanol.

Garrett Hardin's famous essay appeared in 1974 as "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case against Helping the Poor." He discarded the then-popular metaphor of Spaceship Earth because, he said, a spaceship has only one captain, while humanity does not and is not likely to. His basic metaphor of the lifeboat assumes that "each rich nation can be seen as a lifeboat full of comparatively rich people" while many poor people are swimming outside it. If those in the lifeboat take in more than a few passengers, and thus exceed the vessel's carrying capacity, all passengers will drown. He noted as well that the people outside the lifeboat were doubling their population more than twice as fast as those within it (even while swimming!). So those in the lifeboat have to think first and foremost of their own survival.

Hardin was a distinguished scientist with great concern about population growth but he sometimes ran into trouble with his metaphors. For instance, since rich nations draw so many of their basic resources from the poorer nations, one could see the lifeboat as a pirate ship full of booty. Some suggest it is a luxury liner. And rather than being swimmers, the poorer people may be on rafts or leaky rowboats, albeit with stashes of diamonds or coltan that the rich people on the big boat want, at their own price of course. Hardin is also prone to dramatic "either/or" frames. Allen Stairs points out that not all nations are rich or poor—many are in between—and notes that Hardin "paints with a very broad brush." Another 'either/or' is the assumption that there are only two choices: giving unlimited aid to other countries or none at all.

Hardin seems to be unconsciously expressing persistent ideas of social Darwinism, merged with ‘selfish gene’ scientific concepts, in an argument based more on metaphors than hard evidence. A blog poster notes:

Hardin suggested that people would breed as long as there was a supply of food—like yeast cells that keep on multiplying as long as you keep dumping in sugar [but this argument] has knock-down empirical falsification. The most affluent countries have the lowest birth rates and, to everyone’s amazement, birth rates in developing countries have fallen as they become more affluent and women become educated. People aren’t yeast cells.

Even as Hardin wrote, a number of developing nations had developed family planning programs and lowered their birth rates. A 1975 letter to *Science* magazine from Roger Revelle at Harvard’s Center for Population Studies responds to Hardin’s essay. Revelle says that in the 15 years since 1960, birthrates in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, West Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Trinidad, Tobago, Puerto Rico, and Costa Rica were declining at faster rates than those experienced by the currently developed countries in their own ‘demographic transition’ a century ago.

Another important consideration is that carrying capacity depends not only on numbers of people but also their ecological footprints. Lifeboat capacity would be much greater if rich people consumed less.

Similar lifeboat ideas persist today—but with less relevance to population growth—in terms of American aid to other countries. The idea is self-reliance on the large scale: “Let’s take care of our own people first, and let other nations take care of themselves.” In a strange and cartoony way of thinking, every nation is an isolated entity—forget about globalization and free trade—and all the inhabitants of one country deserve the same fate. This assumes that people get the government they deserve, and if their leaders are crooks and tyrants it must be their fault. We expect other nations to do better than we do at democracy even if they were under colonial rule until 60 years ago and most of their people live on a dollar or two a day.

Second, people who complain about U.S. foreign aid tend to vastly overestimate its share of the budget, and also don’t know that most such aid is strategic or serves U.S. economic interests rather than being humanitarian. Aid usually comes with strings attached, such as the requirement to buy U.S. equipment and supplies and to hire U.S. experts. One-third of U.S. aid goes to two countries, Israel and Egypt, and most of that is to buy armaments.

Scientific racism began in the 19th century when writers claimed some races were superior to others. In the years leading up to the Civil War, early anthropologists tried to prove scientifically that Negroes were actually of a different species from Caucasians, and that mixing the races made offspring weak or infertile. Post-Darwin, the idea of recapitulation became very influential among scientists, serving as a general theory of biological determinism. According to Stephen Jay Gould, recapitulation led scientists to compare ‘inferior’ groups with the children of white males. For instance in 1887 the noted American paleontologist E.D. Cope identified four groups of lower human forms: nonwhite races, all women, southern as opposed to northern European whites, and lower classes within the superior races. All were seen as like children, or as Gould says “literally mired in an ancestral stage of superior groups.”

Writing racist propaganda with a veneer of science became something of a cottage industry in the latter half of the 19th century which coincidentally was the heyday of British imperialism and a period generally of colonial expansion. Two of these writers were the Frenchmen Arthur

Gobineau (*An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, 1853-1855) and German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who theorized that whites were superior to darker peoples because they had first emigrated to the north where they “had to develop all their intellectual powers and invent and perfect all the arts in their struggle with need, want and misery...brought about by the climate.” That theory should make Inuits and the indigenous people of Siberia the most superior of all. But many contradictions and distortion of data characterized this type of thinking. For instance, E.D. Cope particularly disliked the Irish poor, but were they not northern European?

Such ideologies clearly served Europeans and whites, slavery and colonial expansion. Other writers spoke of “national races” such as French and Germans. In the United States, racist theory developed around immigration as well as slavery, positing that the English and German groups that dominated early settlements were superior to immigrants of other ‘races’ such as the Irish, Italians, and Eastern Europeans.

Today, our current understanding from DNA studies is that the ancestors of both modern Europeans and Asians began to migrate from Africa about 60,000 years ago. Skin color and other adaptations to climate occurred since then—in evolutionary terms, a very short time. Our species is in fact rather remarkable for its *lack* of diversity compared to most other species. We simply haven’t had that many isolated populations with enough time to change in major ways.

The Eugenics Movement

A rigid system of selection through the elimination of those who are weak and unfit—in other words social failures—would [enable] us to get rid of the undesirables who crowd our jails, hospitals, and insane asylums....The state through sterilization must see to it that his line stops with him.This is a practical, merciful, and inevitable solution of the whole problem, and can be applied to an ever widening circle of social discards, beginning always with the criminal, the diseased, and the insane, and extending gradually to types which may be called weaklings rather than defectives, and perhaps ultimately to worthless race types.

Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916

Many ideologies arise from one or two people, but eugenics had several founders, most of them scientists. It fitted the zeitgeist or spirit of the times. Not only did Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* indirectly helped propel social Darwinism, it also inspired the idea of eugenics. In fact it was Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, who was stimulated by the book to propose eugenics (a word he coined) as a substitute for traditional religious dogma, a new religion of improving the human race. Galton preferred positive eugenics, or encouraging the gifted to produce more children, over negative eugenics which discouraged reproduction of the weak and unfit. His ideas caught on. By the early 1900s, leading American universities offered courses in eugenics, then considered a legitimate science. The era’s most popular biology textbook, *Civic Biology*, contained a section praising selective human breeding. Its main author, high school biology teacher George W. Hunter, also included scientific racism. Of the five human races, four were clearly less evolved, he said. Hunter concluded that “the highest type of all, [were] the Caucasians, represented by the civilized white inhabitants of Europe and America.”

While the first aim of American eugenicists was to reduce immigration of supposedly inferior populations who were weakening the breeding stock, American proponents also advocated some coercive measures such as forced sterilizations of the mentally handicapped. These were in fact carried out for several decades. Later, Adolf Hitler borrowed American ideas of eugenics and

carried them to a horrible extreme and scale, deciding that whole ethnic populations such as Gypsies or Jews were not only “unfit” to reproduce but even to exist.

The Nazi use of eugenics pretty well discredited the idea but it certainly did not end ethnic bigotry, in the United States or elsewhere. Nor is the idea of eugenics completely dead. Genetic genome engineering as applied to humans could be considered a new, voluntary form of eugenics. We are talking about ‘designer babies’ purchased by parents. A remote possibility is that GGE could be applied on a mass scale by a coercive government in order to make permanent changes in future humans, for instance, breeding better warriors, more high-IQ scientists, or gorgeous Stepford wives.

Eugenics became a popular idea in the Progressive Era. Progressive reformers early in the 20th century were motivated by humanitarian impulses and an ideology of social progress. They worked to regulate corporate monopolies (trust-busting) and to safeguard consumers and working people from corporate excesses. Some progressives were concerned with the problems created by rapid urbanization. But according to Ted L. Decorte, Jr. at the University of Nevada, there were also conservative elements in the progressive movement who took advantage of the tendency toward social reform in order to promote the idea of a more racially pure nation based on scientific research that purported to show that some populations were biologically inadequate.

Charles B. Davenport—the most influential geneticist in the U.S. at the time—said that the eugenicist should “improve the race by inducing young people to make a more reasonable selection of marriage mates; to fall in love intelligently.” Davenport’s friend Madison Grant, a wealthy New York lawyer, built on Davenport’s ideas to produce a plan for solving American social problems by sterilizing and restricting immigration of poor people—the “weak and unfit.”

Such ‘scientific’ ideas appealed to a wide range of people such as Theodore Roosevelt and Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. Only in 1927 did a biologist, Raymond Pearl, criticize eugenics publicly. Unfortunately immigration restrictions had already been passed on the basis of the eugenics ideology, and the Supreme Court in *Buck vs. Bell* had upheld the state’s right to sterilize a poor woman against her will.

Race and Intelligence: Psychologist, primatologist, and eugenicist Robert Yerkes (1876-1956) was president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1917. Yerkes developed the Army’s Alpha and Beta intelligence tests (the Beta test was nonverbal) and gathered a team which tested well over a million army recruits in World War I. From the tests Yerkes concluded that recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe scored lower than earlier immigrants from Northern Europe because they were genetically less intelligent. This idea helped motivate harsh restrictions on immigration in the 1920s. However, later critics noted that the scores correlated almost exactly with the number of years those tested had spent in the United States. Obviously, the tests measured acculturation rather than hereditary ability.

Intelligence testing became the main basis for comparing races after World War I. Current arguments concerning the supposed superiority of whites to those of other skin colors often couch this in terms of IQ scores. In the United States there are some racial and ethnic differences in test results as given nation-wide to schoolchildren. However, the interpretation of these facts is full of controversy and heated debates, and has been for decades. Educational testers, geneticists, anthropologists, psychologists, and other scholars are involved with complex issues.

For example, anthropologists point out that a racial category such as ‘Black’ or ‘White’ refers to populations already so varied and mixed that they cannot be compared in any scientific way. The indigenous peoples of the African continent are extremely diverse, comprising five major

groups, while the term 'White' refers to populations ranging from Canada to the Middle East and Northern India. Also, Europeans have been interbreeding with both Africans and Asians for millennia. When the armies of Alexander the Great reached India, when Hannibal crossed the Alps, and when Genghis Khan swept into Europe, one inevitable side-effect was intermarriage.

Such interbreeding goes much farther back, even preceding modern humans, according to the newest statistical/genetic studies used by anthropologist Alan R. Templeton (Washington University in St. Louis). Templeton says there was recurrent genetic interchange between populations of *Homo erectus* in Africa and Eurasia from as far back as 1.9 million years ago. "So the idea of pure, distinct races in humans does not exist. We humans don't have a tree relationship, [it's] rather a trellis. We're intertwined."

Nor is the racial background of U.S. schoolchildren always obvious. In the past, Blacks and Native Americans often intermarried, and slave-owners took advantage of female slaves. By one estimate, American Blacks are on average at least twenty percent white. I knew an accomplished family of mixed race some of whose members identified as black while others passed for white. An increasing number of Americans are proud to be of mixed race, like Tiger Woods and Barack Obama, leading to a new U.S. census category to account for people who do not fall into the old racial categories—which are, of course, unscientific anyway. "Hispanic" is a particularly ambiguous term since it refers to language and culture rather than genetics. Spanish-speaking people come from a number of countries and racial backgrounds. Argentina's population is largely of European descent, Andean countries contain majorities of indigenous Indians, while Caribbean countries and Brazil have greater African admixture (if you include Portuguese-speaking Brazilians as 'Hispanics').

American Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are poorer than other groups, for historical reasons. So are test differences due to socioeconomic class or to ethnicity? Environmental influences may include differences in health care, nutritional deficiencies of elements such as iodine and iron, or exposure to toxic industrial chemicals such as lead or mercury. Poor and minority populations often receive greater toxic exposure because of substandard housing or because industries and transportation hubs are sited near inner-city areas. Since U.S. Black women are disproportionately poor, they receive less prenatal care and have higher rates of low birth-weight babies, as well as higher infant mortality.

The I.Q Wars

The hereditarian theory of IQ is a home-grown American product.

Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*

Not only is race a slippery concept, but nobody knows exactly what the IQ test measures. French psychologist Alfred Binet developed the test in 1904 solely to screen for intellectually handicapped children in the school system so that they could receive special education. Binet did not consider intelligence to be a unitary, fixed, inborn trait, and he cautioned that his scale should not be "a general device for ranking all pupils according to mental worth." But once the test arrived in America it was misused in just this way. Many of the hereditarians who founded the modern testing industry, such as H.H. Goddard and Lewis M. Terman, advocated eugenics and they saw testing as a useful tool for this.

The intelligence quotient does *not* reflect creativity, wisdom, critical thinking, or those personality traits that link with success in life. Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner theorizes

the existence of about eight intelligences rather than one. In an article in the Journal *Heredity*, K. Richardson says flatly that

The average IQ of a population is simply an index of the size of its middle-class...IQ tests are not constructed on the basis of any scientific model of intelligence: they are simply created (by statistical manipulation of item content) to identify individuals who have already been deemed to be 'intelligent' by other, more subjective criteria.

There is agreement that some (socially defined) racial-ethnic groups in the United States test differently on IQ. Blacks and Hispanics *as groups* test somewhat lower than English-speaking Whites do. Ashkenazi Jews and East Asians *as groups* test somewhat higher. In any case, the normal distribution curve assures that most individuals of whatever ethnic background have a similar range of IQs. Most of us are in the overlapping areas. That means, for instance, that many Blacks score higher than many Whites do.

Various ethnic groups score differently on subtests of the standard intelligence tests. Ashkenazi Jews (Jews from Europe) have high verbal and mathematical scores but average or below average visuospatial scores, while East Asians have high visuospatial scores, but average or slightly below average verbal scores. Thus it seems that the relative emphasis put on different abilities might affect the scores of various ethnic groups.

The academic disputes are mainly about how much difference is due to heredity and how much to environment. Statistical studies indicate that intelligence test scores are determined about half by heredity (40-80 percent of variability). Twin studies indicate that environment accounts for 20-60 percent. Some psychologists conclude that the ratio between the influence of heredity and environment is approximately 60/40.

There are contradictory findings about whether the U.S. Black-White gap is closing. The gap increases with age, from baby to adult, a fact that suggests environmental influences. Also, the "Flynn effect" discovered by James R. Flynn, a New Zealand political scientist, shows that average IQ scores are increasing world-wide, for all ethnic groups, about 3 points each decade since World War II. But everybody does not register 15 points smarter than his grandfather, because the test designers score IQ tests so as to eliminate the Flynn effect, which may be due to improved nutrition, schooling, or some other environmental factor. One possibility is that children are now exposed to sophisticated visual images that help them solve the kinds of visual puzzles used in IQ tests. Some scholars believe that if environment can cause such large changes in IQ over time, an unknown environmental factor or several may also account for contemporary differences between groups.

It is interesting that the two American ethnic groups with the highest average scores, the Ashkenazi Jews and East Asians, come from cultures that historically value reading and scholarship. We may note that Koreans invented printing several centuries before Gutenberg independently invented it in Europe, and that China has the longest continuous civilization in the world. Children of these cultures would most likely have different experiences at home than children who grow up in housing projects, trailer parks, and day-care, with television as a babysitter. Again, this suggests environmental effects.

Even if it actually proved true that some ethnic groups are born a few test points smarter (defined as academic ability) than other ethnic groups, it is not clear how this information helps us. Most people of whatever ethnicity would still show a similar *range* of intelligence. There would be Nobel Prize winners in each group (there already have been). Suppose your child has only an average IQ and your neighbor's child is a prodigy. Both children are capable of leading

happy and productive lives, contributing to society. I hope you and I want the best possible future for both children.

The Bell Curve was a best-selling book about race and intelligence. Written by Richard J. Herrnstein, a professor of psychology for many years at Harvard, and Charles Murray, a political scientist associated with right-wing think tanks, it was published in 1994 and launched directly to the public in a well-organized, well-funded campaign, with cover stories in national magazines. Within the first few months about 400,000 copies sold worldwide. A basic argument of the book is that American society is becoming stratified by intelligence (as measured by IQ) and that this “cognitive gap” has serious social consequences. The most controversial chapters suggest that low IQ correlates with low socioeconomic status and anti-social behavior, racial differences on IQ tests are largely genetic, and social policies such as affirmative action are wrongheaded.

The media blitz which introduced the book was financed by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the nation’s leading funder of ultra-conservative causes. Jim Naureckas of FAIR says that *The Bell Curve* received attention out of all proportion either to its merits or the novelty of its thesis. “Media accounts showed a disturbing tendency to accept Murray and Herrnstein’s premises and evidence even while debating their conclusions.” Among other things, this story illustrates the vulnerability of our intellectual life and media to propagandizing pretenders with deep pockets.

The Bell Curve was widely criticized for its data, analysis, and the conclusions it drew from them. The American Psychological Association set up a task force of experts to review the issues, concluding that much of the data are wrong, and that the policy recommendations do not follow from the book’s arguments. The task force called the book a “political” rather than a “scientific” work. Some of the book’s major criticisms were collected in *The Bell Curve Debate*, edited by Russell Jacoby and Naomi Glauberman.

Most of the research the authors relied on, by scholars such as Richard Lynn, Arthur Jensen, and Thomas Bouchard, was funded by the Pioneer Fund.

The Pioneer Fund, a non-profit foundation incorporated in 1937 for the purpose of research into “racial betterment,” has for over 70 years supported research related to eugenics and studies of IQ variation among races, controversial projects that might not be funded by other foundations. Major beneficiaries have included Dr. William B. Shockley, a Nobel prize-winning physicist and proponent of eugenics and white intellectual superiority, and Arthur Jensen, an educational psychologist at the University of California who theorizes that racial IQ differences are largely hereditary. Roger Pearson, a British-raised economist, reportedly received more than \$1 million in grants in the eighties and nineties, despite his earlier history editing an anti-Semitic magazine and founding an organization in England that supported Nazi ideologies.

Another Pioneer Fund recipient is J. Philippe Rushton, who measures head and brain size, and also the size of breasts, buttocks, and genitals, in the belief that evolution shows a negative correlation. “It’s a trade-off: More brain or more penis. You can’t have everything,” he told an interviewer.

The Pioneer Fund’s founder, Wickliffe Preston Draper, was heir to a large fortune. He believed in black racial inferiority and eugenics; was staunchly anti-union, anti-immigration, anti-Semitic, and anti-Communist; and donated freely to right wing politicians and efforts to oppose immigration and desegregation. For the purpose of keeping certain ideologies in play, one could do no better than a wealthy philanthropist who has the shrewdness to support those

with scientific credentials and similar prejudices, whose projects give cover to his more direct political funding. The Pioneer Fund was described by the London Sunday Telegraph as a “neo-Nazi organization closely integrated with the far right in American politics.” However, some scientists who have received grants from the Pioneer Fund claim that the current administrators do not impose an ideological litmus test.

Critics accuse the Pioneer Fund of influencing legislation and public policy (such as Proposition 187 in California) despite the Fund’s non-profit status.

Why Do Europeans Dominate the World? To answer this and related questions, let us look at two recent books with quite different perspectives. One view accepts and searches for racially-based differences based on statistical data from 81 countries, not quite half of the world’s 185 nations. The other perspective is informed by the study of history, anthropology and other sciences. The first book is *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* (2002) by Dr. Richard Lynn, an Irish psychologist, and Dr. Tatu Vanhanen, a Finnish political scientist. Their thesis is that differences in national income (per capita GDP) correlate with differences in the average national IQ. They assume intelligence is mainly inherited. By their rankings, the highest estimated IQs were found in Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, followed by a number of European nations, while the lowest estimates were in sub-Saharan Africa.

Lynn and Vanhanen borrow Schopenhauer’s theory that the challenges of cold, northern winters led to higher IQs in Europe and East Asia. However, a review by Gene Callahan points out that “Every foundational culture—the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians, the Indians, the Chinese, the Incas, the Mayans—arose in an area where winters were either mild or essentially non-existent.”

This book became the focus of controversy. Some scholars severely criticized the authors’ data and methodology, making charges of inadequate models and inappropriate use of statistics. The authors drew their conclusions based on a very limited number of IQ tests, and for those nations that had no tests the authors estimated IQ based on surrounding nations. Also, since some nations include a number of ethnic groups, a small group in one area is not likely to be representative. K. Richardson describes some of the “motley tests” used: “A test of 108 9-15-year olds in Barbados, of 50 13-16-year olds in Colombia, of 104 5-17-year olds in Ecuador, of 129 6-12-year olds in Egypt, of 48 10-14-year olds in Equatorial Guinea, and so on, and so on, all taken as measures of ‘national IQ’.”

Even within a single country, IQ tests may not be culturally neutral, and they are even less likely to be equivalent across cultures and languages. Also, says Prof. Thomas Volken of the University of Zurich, average IQ is not what turns into wealth and growth, but rather cognitive capacity which has been trained. IQ is only a potential, and education is of principal importance in creating human capital.

Lynn also received criticism because he received funding from the Pioneer Fund.

Jared Diamond, professor of geography and physiology at UCLA, proposes a very different thesis to explain the differing fates of people on different continents and islands. In *Guns, Germs and Steel*, he explains why Eurasian civilizations have generally survived and conquered others over thousands of years, arguing that this happened not because of any inherent genetic superiority but because of geographical factors. Four sets of differences were especially important. The first was continental differences in wild plant and animal species available for domestication. Diamond says most wild species such as hippos and African water buffalo are unsuitable for this purpose. For instance, the zebra may look like a horse but it has a very bad disposition that makes it virtually untameable. Societies needed a system of food production to

build up a surplus in order to support specialists. They also needed increased numbers in order to have a military advantage.

The second set of differences between continents concerned how easily innovations moved within a continent, since “Most societies borrow much more than they invent.” Eurasia had the advantage of an east-west axis and a relative lack of forbidding ecological and geographical barriers across that axis. Some other regions were isolated by mountains or deserts. So by diffusion and migration people could spread technological improvements and social institutions.

A third factor involves diffusion between continents, with Native America and Australia more isolated from other continents and unable to borrow their innovations. (Note, for instance, how quickly Native Americans in the Western states became skilled horsemen once they had access to Spanish horses.) A fourth major factor concerns continental differences in area or the total size of population. Small continents and large isolated islands that can not support a large population are unable to develop as much specialization or to have a military advantage.

Diamond describes other environmental differences as well as accidents of history that contributed to the relative dominance of some regions of the world.

PART VI: Still Swimming

In this section we consider the relationship between men and ideology, touching on the meanings of ‘honor’ and of ‘warriors’. Then we look at a number of dueling ideologies. Many idea-systems arise for the express purpose of shooting down other ideas and ideologies. The following chapters discuss ideological controversies about environmentalism, feminism, and the UN.

To call some collection of ideas a ‘conspiracy theory’ is generally a put-down, but we suggest in chapter 23 that there are in general two different kinds of conspiracy theories—classic and political, with some overlap—and that the second type should be taken more seriously.

CHAPTER 19: MEN AND IDEOLOGY

The central problem of every society is to define appropriate roles for the men.

Margaret Mead, American anthropologist

The old Eskimo hunters she had known in her childhood thought the riches of life were intelligence, fearlessness, and love. A man with these gifts was rich.

Jean Craighead George, author of over 100 books

On a recent plane trip, my daughter and I noticed a large proportion of big, muscular men squeezed into the ever-shrinking airline seats. Men evolved to run miles after game, to swim rivers, to hurl projectiles, to climb trees—as if preparing for triathlons. Now they sat working laptops. “But have you noticed what many of them are doing on their computers?” said my daughter: “Games of mortal combat.”

New ways often include the old ways. Besides mortal combat there is intellectual combat, in which ideology is often wielded as a weapon. Squeezed into modern society, men are especially involved with ideology in a number of ways. Having assumed leadership, men developed the ideologies to justify their leadership and to inspire action.

The ancient patriarchal paradigm is an over-arching ideology that places men as the dominators and protectors of subordinate women. Beside this, patriarchy assumes authoritarian leaders and a hierarchy of dominance and subordination among men as well. Some contemporary ideologies idealize this ancient patriarchal pattern and promote it as “biblical” while not recognizing that patriarchal societies have existed in a number of places and times besides ancient Israel. Patriarchy may simply be a form of governing that developed in herding societies and marauding groups at the beginning of civilizations. The role of the male warrior and the pattern of hierarchical governing were emphasized at a time when people were living in larger aggregations than they were used to or comfortable with; and when groups of people were expanding their territories and conquering other peoples. Based on studies of modern indigenous people, anthropologists believe our earlier ancestors—hunter-gatherers who lived in small tribal groups—were more egalitarian than these first civilizations.

A little over two centuries ago, Enlightenment ideals of democracy and human rights undermined patriarchy before there ever was an organized feminist movement. Even though the United States Founders did not see fit to give women the vote or any part in governing, the seeds of the Declaration of Independence and other Enlightenment writings here and abroad did take root. They provided the words, the intellectual and moral power to expand participation in society by the formerly enslaved and disenfranchised, including women. Civilizations were outgrowing the ancient model of authoritarian rule.

Today, the grip of patriarchy is declining, at least in the West. However, even here women still do not have full equality of opportunity, and male-dominated society is still hierarchical and driven by warrior codes and modes. The old masculine roles are threatened for many reasons besides feminism, yet changes driven by technology or economics or geopolitics often end up being played out on the field of interpersonal relationships and gender symbolism. When there are stresses and strains in society, people tend to work them out by struggling with each other on the basis of gender, race, or some other division unrelated to the basic nature of the problems they face together.

While some specific ideologies are related to masculinity, men are closely involved with many ideologies—such as nationalism—that are not specifically about them. It appears that men are still more likely than women to devise or immerse themselves in ideologies, although radical feminists and other feminist theorists burst onto the ideological stage starting in the 1970s.

This discussion centers on males in the United States, who have a special affinity with American ideologies such as patriotism, militarism, Christian fundamentalism, technogism, capitalism, and libertarianism. Another rich source of ideologies is the White affluent male libertarian Internet culture or WAMLIC.

Honor

Reputation is what other people know about you. Honor is what you know about yourself.
Character in the novel *Civil Campaign* by Lois McMaster Bujold

Throughout centuries of Western civilization men have considered honor to be one of their highest values, sometimes the overriding one, and it is still operative among us today. However, honor is another of those equivocal words with many meanings, and some interpretations so different that they may actually contradict each other. First, as noted by Carla Joy, the actual qualities of honor contrast with the outward appearance of it:

The standard dictionary definition of honor first lists public regard and esteem under the word, with ethical conduct or high standards of justice and responsibility appearing much further down the list. This is reflected in the way the modern world treats the issue of honor. In ancient times, honor was the manner of being that we now describe as having integrity. In plain language, an honorable person avoids deception whenever possible, treats others with respect and sticks to her beliefs no matter how others think or act.

Let us focus first not on reputation but on the ancient ideal itself. Honor involves *integrity*, a quality that is described in the dictionary in terms of “incorruptibility” and “wholeness.” A person of integrity has some kind of ethic that unifies his or her responses to events. Integrity is not the same thing as *honesty*, but honesty is also part of honor. Sophocles said, 2500 years ago, “Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud.”

Also, an honorable person (in this first sense) does not dwell on petty or “low” emotions and motives such as envy, rage, and revenge. She does not try to ‘get even’ with her ex-boyfriend’s new girlfriend. He does not conduct smear campaigns against political opponents. He or she does not plot and connive and play office politics to get ahead.

An honorable man attends to his duties and responsibilities, that is, he honors commitments and promises that he has already made. Courage is another quality of honor, not only physical courage but the courage to stand by one’s convictions, promises, commitments, or unifying ethic. The minority of one or the hold-out juror displays the courage to resist the strong social drive toward conformity.

While this ideal of honor has long been associated with men, women can also be honorable in the very same senses and especially now that they participate more fully in public business. The ideal also applies to personal life. For instance, for either gender there is an honorable and a dishonorable way to end a romantic relationship or a marriage. No matter how angry one is, it is dishonorable to wipe out the joint bank account or simply disappear (unless one has good reason to fear bodily harm from the partner). An honorable mother does not play favorites among her

children or ignore their needs. An honorable friend does not gossip about you or avoid you when you have problems.

But let us return to the more conventional definitions of masculine honor, in this case the lower interpretations of it, which all depend on *other* people rather than the man of honor and his own sense of integrity. For instance, his honor may depend on his wife's being faithful. In some societies, the honor of all the male members of a family is besmirched by the unfaithfulness of one female member—even if she is raped. Consequently she may be abandoned or even killed for an incident over which she had no control.

Another interpretation of honor is that one must be respected by hierarchical subordinates, by adversaries, or by everybody. In its lowest, 'chip on the shoulder' form, honor demands a violent reaction from a gang leader at being 'dissed' or insulted. The mean drunk expects a respectful attitude from everyone in the bar or he is ready to fight. This type of honor is often personified and applied to the attitude of a nation-state. "They can't do that to us."

The final interpretation of individual honor is the most problematical. It is the combination of physical courage and the readiness to do battle 'for one's country,' as ordered by 'duly constituted authority.' His duty is more clear-cut if the man has entered the military voluntarily, and must now live up to his commitments. But what if he comes to believe that the military action he's engaged in is not for the good of his country but serves narrower interests? Suppose that he becomes involved in actions against civilians that offend both the military code and his own sense of morality. What if those who command him to fight or who start the war are not themselves men of honor? He is allowing them to hold his conscience for him. This is exactly the issue that played out at the Nuremberg Trials. In my definition, true honor must include private conscience and critical thinking.

Warriors and Warrior Cultures

Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier.

Samuel Johnson, lexicographer and author, 1709-1784

Masculine modeling of the warrior role surely relates to civilization's history of constant wars with ever more destructive weapons. Is the ideal of the warrior an obsolete model that only leads us into wars? Or does it simply call for redefinition? First let us look at this question from some long-range viewpoints.

Why are there male warriors? Among our species and many others, male warriors had the original function of defending the females and offspring against real threats, to assure species survival. Continuation of the species is the most basic drive of all. But for some humans, being a warrior becomes an end in itself and a warrior's honor in battle his ultimate value. Some peoples in an intense competition with other groups for land and resources developed their whole culture around the warrior. So it was in the ancient Greek city-state of Sparta and among the ancient Celts. The Borderers, menaced by constant invasions, were forced to become a warrior society and they still project those memes. The "Star Trek" series vividly portrayed such a warrior society in the Klingons, especially in the sympathetic character Whorf who had been rescued and raised by a human family, thus providing a bridge between Klingon and human cultures.

Among us humans, many a boy or man becomes fascinated with weaponry, the details of historic battles and war strategy, military heroes, and ideological enemy-making. Instead of protecting the reproductive future of the species, he is obsessed with games of mortal combat.

Some say that the History Channel has become the War Channel—especially focusing on World War II. Many role-playing games involve wars between fantastic or futuristic opponents.

The deep male commitment to protect one's own family and one's own tribe or community is today stretched to include one's nation. A nation-state is a somewhat abstract entity defined by lines on a map—lines which change from time to time. However, by propaganda and rationalization a man is brought to believe he is protecting his own women and children by dropping bombs on somebody else's women and children. ("We are fighting them over there so that we don't have to fight them over here.") When he is part of this traditional male institution, his courage and prowess in fighting become more immediately important than the protection of women and children of his own species.

Another view of the warrior role is as a rite of passage. For tens of thousands of years, our tribal ancestors had initiation rites for their pubertal males, to connect them with both their community and the cosmos. Paul Shepard says this rite became an essential part of human development, and we ignore it at our peril. But successive civilizations have truncated the adolescent rite of passage until it hardly exists today—except for the military experience, which is supposed to "make a man of you." However, as an adolescent rite of passage military induction is at least five years too late and it does not connect a young man with his actual community but instead with an all-male brotherhood of battle. Even less does it provide any connection with the natural world or the cosmos.

Soldiers

*"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do or die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred."*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, from "Charge of the Light Brigade," 1854

*"Twenty broken troopers who lacked a bed for the night....
You wrote we were heroes once, sir. Please, write we are starving now."*

Rudyard Kipling, from "The Last of the Light Brigade," 1891

Soldiering is a very old occupation or profession that dates back to early civilization. It is an occupation that is unique because of the degree of continuous danger and risk to life, an extreme hierarchy and discipline with expectation of absolute obedience, close bonds of camaraderie, and a certain mystique. We may note that the warrior role has analogues among the higher primates; it is deeply rooted in us.

Soldiering has gone through many changes but armies are still used as extensions of the ruler's will, what Hans Hass called "artificial organs." Also, most of us are not aware of how much military thinking is part of modern civilization. For instance, the mass production of guns was the beginning of modern mass production methods in our industrial society. Warfare has driven technology through the ages. And it has driven it in certain directions.

Soldiers, even more than civilian populations, are subjected to propaganda. "Theirs not to reason why" means they are not encouraged to think contextually but only instrumentally (not why but how?) The soldier is not a slave, since he (or she) has a time limit on the term of service, as well as a few rights. He is not quite like an indentured servant either, because of the extreme

danger he is in and his strong bonds with his comrades. Neither is he truly a voluntary employee even where there is no draft. As a blog poster notes: “The military has been voluntary since about 1972. However, if something is voluntary then when the something is unbearable the volunteer should be able to quit.”

Living in dangerous conditions, soldiers develop a strong *esprit* and comradeship. But there are signs that robots may come to replace soldiers just as slaves replaced indentured servants in colonial America. Science fiction envisions both robots and robotized (drugged) soldiers in near-future wars such as those depicted by science fiction writer Joe Haldeman. From the military viewpoint, robots would be more dependable than humans, and they do not question orders even if they are self-destructive or contravene the Geneva conventions.

However, our subject here is the armies of modern nations. There are basically three kinds of armies, conscripted (drafted), volunteer professional, or mercenary. A professional volunteer army is part of a national government, while a mercenary army is private and extra-national. Insofar as military contractors such as Blackwater and Halliburton affiliates perform duties that would otherwise be done by the regular army, they are mercenaries.

There are repeated problems with both conscripted and volunteer armies which we may see more clearly by looking first at countries other than the United States. The first systematic draft began in 1705 in Russia under Peter the Great. Every twenty peasant households had to provide the tsar with one soldier, who would serve for 30 years. Other European kings continued to rely mostly on mercenary armies until late in the 18th century. Today, Russia still has a large conscripted army—and one that badly needs reform.

The Soviet army was about 2.7 million strong when Mikhail Gorbachev ended the war in Afghanistan and encouraged demilitarization. His successor Boris Yeltsin slashed military spending by 90 percent (from 30 percent of GDP!) and reduced the army to less than one and a half million. But, says Leon Aron, it is still too big by half, “impoverished, incompetent, sullen, and sluggish,” and top heavy with 2,000 generals and more colonels than lieutenants. All attempts to switch to a professional army have foundered on the lack of money to pay competitive salaries and the strong resistance to change of army generals and traditional nationalists.

The lack of professional noncommissioned officers such as the veteran sergeant that American soldiers know means that Russian army conscripts are ruled by second-year draftees, the *dedy* or “grandfathers.” As a result of brutal hazing, beatings, robbery of personal possessions, and humiliations by the *dedy*, many conscripts are killed, commit suicide, or desert. An official under Putin estimates that Russians spend \$7 billion each year on bribes to get their sons into college to keep them out of the army.

The Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers of Russia formed in 1989 to end the hazing and to reform the military. The Soldiers’ Mothers lobbies, pickets, holds demonstrations and marches, and collects and publicizes information about the armed forces, for instance, producing much higher figures for soldier casualties in Chechnya than the government provided. They have held hunger strikes and appealed to foreign governments and international organizations. In 1996 the group was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and won the Alternative Nobel. Most recently, in 2004, they formed a political party, United People’s Party of Soldiers’ Mothers, with their major goal to abolish the compulsory draft system.

Here is another example of mistreated soldiers: 25 years after the war in Malvinas/Falkland Islands, former Argentine soldiers have filed a collective lawsuit against their officers for murder and torture. The abuses were known but never acknowledged by the government. Veterans’

testimony agrees that the great majority of Argentine soldiers in the war were hungry and cold. Punishments such as staking out soldiers on the ground naked in winter were mostly meted out for stealing food. Some soldiers actually starved. Pablo Vassel, an Argentine human rights official, commented that “It’s a complicated issue because in war, international humanitarian law protects combatants against abuse by the enemy, but there aren’t any laws against systematic abuse of soldiers by officers of their own side.”

In the United States we rarely think about soldiering as a form of labor, much less unionized labor, but military unions have existed for many decades in Europe, especially Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Norway, France, Finland, and Belgium. These unions began in the 1970s, were at their height during the 1980s, and joined together in the European conference of organizations of soldiers (ECCO) which operated from 1979 to 2002. However, the trend toward volunteer armies has weakened this movement. According to David Cortright and Max Watts, European soldier activists oppose the volunteer trend, supporting conscription as a safeguard of democracy. The English-speaking countries of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia have led the way toward professional armies, all of them now relying totally on volunteer recruitment.

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), an AFL-CIO union, announced in 1975 its intention to organize American soldiers. The AFGE already had thousands of members among military civilian employees. The idea was vehemently opposed not only by the Pentagon, veterans’ organizations, and “patriarchs of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee” such as Senators Strom Thurmond and John Stennis, but also by liberals, pacifists, and leftists. So it did not happen in the United States as it had in Europe.

In the ideology of patriotism, a great deal of symbolism surrounds the American soldier. Especially is this true when the country is in the midst of an unpopular war such as Vietnam or an occupation framed as a war such as today in Iraq. According to the prevailing ideology, the role of the American soldier is somewhere between that of a superhero, a Christian martyr, and an indentured servant bound to his contract.

Two common arguments in favor of an unpopular war are based on civilian responsibility to soldiers. The first is that civilians must support the war in order to support the soldiers who are fighting and risking their lives in it. The second argument is that the nation cannot disengage from the war without something defined as “victory” because otherwise, those soldiers who have already died will have died in vain. (Or, everyone will become painfully aware that they did die in vain.) The mythology that American soldiers are always fighting to defend their country from a real threat demands at least a symbolic victory to conclude the hostilities and protect the myth. In the case of the Iraq Occupation, many think at least two symbolic victories already occurred: the “Mission Accomplished” event on an aircraft carrier and the capture of Saddam Hussein.

Let us go back to the parallel of the soldier and the indentured servant. The indentured servant signs on voluntarily, as does the volunteer soldier and the National Guardsman (although the latter did not expect to serve in a foreign war). But unlike the mercenary who can leave his job, the volunteer cannot. In both cases, there is an agreed-upon term of service, at the end of which the servant or soldier receives certain promised benefits such as a small farm for the servant or the GI Bill for the soldier. In the meantime, the servant or soldier is expected to obey his superiors in everything lawful.

However, during recent years the U.S. government has not held up its side of the contract. The term of service is arbitrarily extended, necessary safety measures are neglected, medical care

is often substandard, soldiers are used as guinea-pigs in pharmaceutical experiments, and benefits are eroded. A few examples among many:

Hundreds of U.S. Marines have suffered injuries or death in Iraq from roadside bombs because bureaucrats in the Marine Corps refused an urgent request in 2005 from battlefield commanders for blast-resistant vehicles. An internal study that accused the service of “gross mismanagement” says that cost was a driving factor in the decision.

Military statistics indicate that almost half of active-duty National Guard members, 38 percent of Army soldiers and 31 percent of Marines report mental health problems after tours in the Middle East, with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) the most common problem but traumatic brain injury (TBI) also widespread, affecting about one in every five returning troops. Reintegration into civilian life may be difficult for these soldiers, often resulting in domestic problems, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, suicide, and murder.

The stop-loss policy is an involuntary (one-sided) extension of a soldier’s enlistment contract that has caused many soldiers, Air Force members, and Marines to be sent back to Iraq for two, three, four, and even more deployments. At least 58,000 Army soldiers have been redeployed to war zones because of this policy.

The Pentagon released new guidelines in 2006 allowing commanders to redeploy soldiers suffering from PTSD and other psychiatric disorders if they are “in remission, or whose residual symptoms do not impair duty performance.” In one case the military forced a soldier out of the hospital where he was being treated for bipolar disorder and alcohol abuse with “some paranoia and possible homicidal tendencies” in order to send him to the war zone with his combat team. In Kuwait, health care professionals agreed he should not have been deployed and sent him back.

Another way the military saves money is to give dishonorable discharges to soldiers who begin substance abuse or show uncharacteristic misconduct after deployment. This disqualifies them for any benefits, including disability payments. Aaron Glantz, an independent journalist, says that some of the soldiers would rather receive a dishonorable discharge than return to Iraq. Glantz quotes scout sniper Garrett Reppenhagen: “The military, rather than take the responsibility that these guys have actually just fought in a war and are possibly damaged from that, is allowing them and almost helping them get these discharges to get rid of a problem.” According to Pentagon data Glantz received through an FOI request, 11,407 soldiers have been discharged for drug abuse after serving in Iraq or Afghanistan, 3,365 for “personality disorder,” and 14,841 for “discreditable incidents,” “serious offenses,” or “the good of the service.”

Perhaps the most important difference between the indentured servant and the American soldier is the reason that soldiers sign on for their term of service. Patriotism and a desire to serve their country is a major reason for many of them—national ideology assumes it is the motivation for all of them. In return, most soldiers expect their nation to engage only in justified wars and to conduct itself honorably according to international standards. As blog posters say on a veteran’s website:

I am from a family which has fought in every war since 1795.... I believe that sometimes war is necessary, but only to defend yourself.... in all the past wars we were attacked, we didn’t start them [this is incorrect]. In this war, we started it with Iraq.WrestlingCoach1, Feb. 23, 2008

Soldiers sign on to defend the Constitution—the CONSTITUTION, sir—and the other side of that contract is relied upon to NOT use the military for personal gain, lunatic schemes of world domination, or fritter their lives away in incompetently planned...exercises in ego....Charles Winant, Feb. 22, 2008

Founding father Thomas Paine described Winter Soldiers as those who stand up for the soul of their country, even in its darkest hours. The 1971 Winter Soldiers gathering of Vietnam War veterans who testified about their war experiences is not widely known. What is known of it was distorted for political purposes in order to make it seem that presidential candidate John Kerry was the only one who testified. I have seen a film of the 1971 event and highly recommend it for viewing, perhaps on PBS.

Similarly, in March 2008, almost 300 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan testified in a Winter Soldier event organized by Iraq Veterans Against the War in Silver Springs, Maryland. Organizer Kelly Dougherty said, “We’ve heard from the politicians, we’ve heard from the generals, we’ve heard from the media—now it’s our turn.” Once more, there was little or no coverage by mainstream media.

U.S. military bases overseas often organize outreach programs to help the local civilian population by, for instance, repairing schoolrooms. David Graeber says that this sort of thing is shown to be very good for soldier morale. Soldiers would like to think that their efforts are doing good in the world. In the last book of this series, *Thinking Toward Survival*, we will consider how to redirect the ancient warrior drives our species developed to protect the women and children, moving them away from nationalistic mutual destruction and toward protection of the species. To reframe the warrior role we need species consciousness and a new definition of ‘warrior.’

Hypermasculinity: Among other animal species, including our distant relatives the apes, there are at least two types of gender patterns. In one pattern, the males are distinctly larger than the females, they look and act differently from the females, and very often they fight over the females. This competition may lead to a situation where one older, powerful male acquires a number of female followers; meanwhile, many young bachelors do without female companionship for most or all of their lives. Sea lions with their harems are a good example.

With other animal species, however, the males and females are close in size and have few distinguishing characteristics such as manes and crests. These species tend to be less combative and to share more of the same activities such as food foraging and childcare. Bonobos are like this, in contrast to their very close relatives, the chimpanzees. Humans of course are not limited by their inherited habits to this degree. Instead we have hundreds of world cultures and subcultures that seem to have experimented with every possible way to be human. This cultural diversity may be as important for the survival of human culture as biological diversity is for the survival of life. Conditions change, and some cultural habits will be better adapted to changed conditions than others.

Compared to most other developed nations, the United States demonstrates a high regard for hypermasculinity, that aggressiveness and toughness known in some cultures as machismo. It may come from the frontier experience, it may be the Borderer influence, or it may be something artificially inspired by those who want a reservoir of warriors ready and willing to fight for the nation. In my personal experience, U.S. machismo is stronger now than it was, for instance, during WWII.

Men and Guns: The subjects of honor and the warrior bring us to guns and other weapons, as well as to violence in videogames, films, television shows, rap music, and other popular forms of entertainment. Violent popular entertainment connects not only with our violent past but also

with the military Keynesianism that supports our economy. In the case of videogames that simulate combat situations, the military helped fund their development.

Borderers, frontiersmen, and Southerners historically have had a gun culture. This culture of weapons developed in the lawless border regions between England and Scotland, then in the American borders between European settlers and Native Americans, and in the South, where a relatively few plantation owners were outnumbered by their slaves. (In fact more slave insurrections occurred than the standard school histories ever mention—more of our missing history). There is definitely a black/white component in the Southern devotion to guns. Another thread in the gun culture goes back to colonial times and the Whiskey Rebellion. Backwoods farmers never liked the revenueurs, and their descendants don't like the ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives).

The Supreme Court for the first time in history recently decided that the oddly-worded and ambiguous Second Amendment gives citizens the individual right to own guns for the purpose of self-defense in the home. I am willing to cede that the Founding Fathers probably intended the Second Amendment to let men keep their muskets at home—if they had not done so, it is likely that the backcountry farmers and Revolutionary War veterans would have rejected the new Constitution. It is also true that an armed populace has more ability to resist tyrannical government or a foreign occupation—armed, that is, with the weapons actually used in guerrilla warfare, not little pearl-handled revolvers.

Those in favor of widespread gun ownership view Switzerland, where every man is part of the militia and keeps his own weapon at home, as the ideal situation. However, Switzerland is a small country in the middle of a continent where larger nations have been fighting around it for centuries. The United States, on the other hand, is a large, powerful nation protected by oceans on two sides and bounded by two countries which are no military threat whatsoever. What are Americans supposed to be warriors about? Must we manufacture wars because they are “good for us” (ala Mussolini or the Straussians)? Or is it all about conflicts with each other?

Here let us limit ourselves to one issue, permits to carry concealed weapons (handguns)—or open carry, which is legal in most states. Recent shootings in college classrooms, churches, restaurants, and other public places have brought forth the following sentiments: *If only more people were armed, we would be safer. Where somebody in the threatened group has a concealed weapon, they make short work of the criminal shooter. Thus more people should carry concealed weapons, including airplane pilots, teachers, and others in authority.* In fact, the Republican Governor of Texas, Rick Perry supports the decision of a Texas School District to allow teachers and staff members (school secretary? janitor? cafeteria workers?) to carry concealed firearms to protect against school shootings.

This argument is based on the assumption that there are good people—most of us—and then there are bad people: criminals. It's either/or, with no in-between personalities, no good people who sometimes get drunk or flaming angry. Yet the person who suddenly opens fire, whose depression has turned suicidal and homicidal, is often described by neighbors and friends as somebody they never would have suspected of such acts. According to a Harvard study, in a given year one-fourth of us have some kind of diagnosable mental health problem. Even good people can ‘lose it.’ There is no obvious dividing line between the sane and insane, and this is true even of people in authority.

Whatever the defenders of gun culture such as Richard Poe say about heavily-armed Switzerland or Canada having lower rates of violent crime than the U.S., it does not seem that people in those countries go about city streets packing handguns, or feel the need to. Poe makes

it pretty clear what that's all about here—it's fear of crime by inner-city minorities, especially African Americans—or the perception of it. In that case, as alternative to everybody packing guns, maybe the nation could make more of an effort to reduce racial inequities in housing, employment, education, and the legal system.

That still doesn't deal with angry white guys who suddenly massacre a bunch of children or fellow-workers. We might ask why the suicidal male so often feels the need to take down other people with him. It would help for men to get in touch with what they're really angry about. A large part of the problem with male violence probably has to do with widespread depression and with the depressed person's self-medication with alcohol and other substances. One problem for men's mental and physical health is the high degree of competitiveness American culture encourages in school, work, and other areas of life. Wouldn't it be better to deal with some of these root causes of violence than to turn our public places into Saturday night at the OK Corral?

Here are a few arguments against the idea for everybody to carry handguns. First, men who believe they must be physical warriors in order to realize their identity may tend to see more criminals and enemies to defend against—or even to manufacture them. Of those men who believe they need guns to express their masculinity, we could expect that at least a few would carry and even use those guns for the purpose of proving their manhood rather than for protecting the community. Second, whatever scenarios gun proponents imagine of tyrannical government or invasion from abroad, handguns are not the typical weapon of choice for guerrilla warfare. Third, there are other examples of a well-armed nation besides Switzerland and Canada, such as Somalia and other African countries where just about every man and boy carries an assault weapon (thoughtfully provided by wealthier nations) in order to carry on some version of Hobbes's "war of all against all."

Fourth, it just so happens that those who are most in favor of everybody carrying guns tend to be among the most xenophobic, racist, ideological, and authoritarian members of the population. They are not reading Thomas Paine but rather listening to Rush Limbaugh. I would not trust them to fight against a tyrannical government, if it ever came to that, but more likely to do its bidding by targeting dissenters or minorities. At best they might divide the population into warring factions.

Let the warriors keep their rifles at home like the Swiss—but forget the holsters full of handguns.

Men and Technology: In the division of labor that seems close to universal in the past, men worked with tools for hunting and preparing meat, later for building boats and structures and making implements of war. While women also developed basic subsistence aids probably including netting, basketry, bone needles, digging implements, and pottery or other receptacles for carrying water, men seem to have stayed more identified with the role of tool-maker and the perfecting of techniques. At any rate, the American man today tends to identify with modern technology. In many cases this may lead to the ideology of technologism. In an extreme form, it is expressed in post-humanism.

At the same time, technology especially in the form of automation threatens work itself. Men traditionally identify with their work, but often work itself is no longer a craft that they can be proud of. What happens to the independent craftsman who turns into a wage-slave, driven by the clock, producing components of something he hardly sees as a whole—and then into somebody shuffling papers and numbers or pushing a keyboard? He knows that globalization threatens him, as much as it does a third-world worker, with the loss of his fundamental ability to make a living

and provide basic support for his family. While he may be persuaded to lash out at working women or Mexicans, he should know they are fellow victims of larger forces.

WAMLIC: It is hardly surprising that many ideologies devised by men reflect masculine traits. From an evolutionary point of view, men developed to be more mobile, more free-ranging, and more promiscuous than women who were encumbered by pregnancy, nursing, and the care of young children. In most indigenous cultures, the pubertal males undergo a ritual overseen by older males that takes them away from the mother and places them within the culture of males, as well as within the larger community and cosmos. But we no longer have clear-cut adolescent rites. One result of missing those rites may be an exaggerated individualism and concern for personal liberty—in opposition to the “nanny state” (the female culture)—that we see in the white, affluent, male, Libertarian, Internet culture or WAMLIC. (I have adapted this concept from James J. Hughes.) Libertarianism is only one manifestation of this group.

WAMLIC is an ideology type B, an unconscious consensus. It is not at all counterpoised by Move-On, a conscious and programmatic organization that expresses a type C ideology. Instead, WAMLIC is a sub-group of society whose members promote reason while being unaware of their own ideological biases. Various members of this culture are drawn to free-market fundamentalism, Social Darwinism, technologism, pseudoskepticism, scientism, and for some, transhumanism. WAMLIC may even be developing into a new paradigm.

Male/female relationships in this country obviously have not reached a good balance point, and we can look at the rising sea of pornography as one manifestation. Pornography, according to those who should know, is increasingly dominated by images of brutal humiliation of women. This may be just a reflection of the general violence. Or maybe men are deeply angry about something and looking for a handy scapegoat to take it out on, virtually or otherwise.

Last, we may consider **men's health** and the little-known details of how chemicals in the environment are threatening their reproductive abilities and even the hormones that produce masculine traits. If men are deeply afraid of turning into women, their first line of defense should be to become environmental activists, not to blame women.

CHAPTER 20: ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISM

The conservation movement is a breeding ground of Communists and other subversives. We intend to clean them out, even if it means rounding up every bird-watcher in the country.

John N. Mitchell, U.S. Attorney General 1969-1974

In case you missed the early 1970s, Attorney General Mitchell was not kidding when he made the above remark. Ironically, no other president has approved as much environmental legislation as President Richard Nixon under whom John Mitchell served as Attorney General. For instance, the EPA was created during Nixon's administration. In the past, many Republicans, especially Teddy Roosevelt, have been strong conservationists. It is almost forty years since John Mitchell was Attorney-General, but there is still a concerted effort to paint environmentalists as "alarmists" and "extremists" if not "eco-terrorists." Other ploys are to equate them with radical leftists, or to activate borderer memes by portraying environmentalists as bureaucrats trying to create a 'nanny-state' with their regulations. This last conflates environmentalists with the EPA, a government agency set up by Congress.

One often-repeated claim is that environmental regulations are preventing new oil refineries from being built in the United States, causing oil shortages and high prices. Public Citizen argues that this is a myth, that the EPA received only one permit request for a new refinery in the 25 years between 1975 and 2000. According to CBS news, internal documents from Chevron and Texaco indicate that in the mid-1990s, those companies wanted to cut refinery output in order to boost profit margins. Twenty-four small refineries were shut down between 1995 and 2001, some under pressure from Big Oil, an oligopoly. Bruce Smith, CEO of the Tesoro Corporation which just bought a Shell refinery in 2008 says: "In the next five years, we think the world is going to be fairly short of refining capacity. And that's going to keep margins at a higher than normal level."

A number of right-wing think-tanks are funded by industries threatened by environmental concepts and campaigns. They can afford to hire writers who search, day in and day out, for any weakness in their adversary's position, and who are adept in the propaganda arts of framing issues for popular consumption. One favorite technique is *conflation*, using one or two examples to characterize an entire class. They make use of the fallacy of misleading vividness. Other common strategies are to belittle your opponent in the controversy and to impugn his motives. You say some people opposed the wholesale spraying of phenoxy herbicides on rural America because they were peaceniks who had opposed the Vietnam War where similar herbicides were sprayed. Or you say that scientists spoke out about the threats posed by climate change because they were looking for publicity or funding. Or that environmentalists generally are power-hungry people, socialists or bureaucrats, who want to tell others how to live.

What is an 'environmentalist?' This single heading actually applies to a wide range of people and organizations with different concerns and different practices or tactics. Some of the disparate groups include:

- National conservation organizations dedicated to preserving American wilderness and/or wildlife, with a large, mostly middle-class membership. Many of these organizations lobby Congress and some engage in civil lawsuits to save a particular river from damming or a national forest from clear-cutting. Examples of large conservation organizations are the Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense

Council (NRDC). Sierra Club is a favorite target of anti-environmentalists, perhaps because of its effective lobbying efforts.

- Local conservation groups trying to protect or restore a nearby woodland or river. For instance in my own Ozarks region, a persistent campaign led by a far-sighted medical doctor, Neil Compton, succeeded in getting the Buffalo River declared the first national river in 1972. (The Army Corps of Engineers wanted to dam it.) My city saw an unsuccessful campaign to save a large grove of 160-year-old post oaks from bulldozing by a big box department store chain headquartered in another state. The chain ignored a local architect who offered a *pro bono* redesign that could save all or most of the trees. Another part of the campaign involved “tree-sitters” who were arrested for illegal trespass and who, of course, garnered most of the publicity and the scorn of people for whom economic growth is one of their highest values. In any case, the chain would not budge from its predetermined plans.
- International conservation groups such as Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd, Rainforest Network, and World Wildlife Federation. Some of them may engage in dramatic and illegal but nonviolent actions such as boarding or blockading ships that are carrying questionable cargo.
- Nature lovers who are not usually politically active but who like to picnic, who plant butterfly gardens and native trees, feed and watch the birds, avoid using pesticides, and otherwise attempt to care for nature in their own backyards and through their own lifestyles.
- Avid hikers, rafters, cyclists, campers, skiers, canoeists, and others engaging in outdoor sports. People who walk the Appalachian Trail.
- Hunter’s organizations such as Ducks Unlimited that lobby to preserve wildlife areas and flyways so that animals have sufficient habitat and hunters may continue to hunt them.
- Organic gardeners and farmers. Also, researchers who experiment with and pioneer in less-polluting or destructive methods of agriculture such as Integrated Pest Management and Permaculture.
- Those who buy natural and organic foods and support the farmer’s markets and stores which carry them. Also those who try to buy locally-produced items in general which, among other benefits, saves transportation energy.
- Investors in “green” companies and stock portfolios. Consumers who try to buy “green” products.
- People aware of the dangers of world overpopulation who support family planning here and abroad and measures such as educating girls in poorer countries. Some adopt children rather than enlarge their family by births. However, anti-immigration groups may disguise themselves as environmentalists.
- People who re-use, mend and repair, buy secondhand, and make an effort to recycle., thus saving both money and energy resources.
- People who have banded together to save prime agricultural land from development, sometimes through the use of land trusts.
- Members of flower and garden clubs and botanical gardens, horticulturists, and others engaged in landscaping or raising decorative plants who avoid pesticides, non-native species, and excessive water use.

- Animal rights advocates. A few groups engage in illegal activities such as turning loose experimental animals; the Animal Liberation Front borrows anti-abortion tactics of harassing individual scientists. Most groups concerned with animal welfare don't use such tactics. Organized efforts to treat animals humanely date back to nineteenth century England, when many people were radicalized by the story of a horse's suffering in Anna Sewell's Black Beauty. Current opposition to animal experimentation and to the conditions of large-scale livestock production and slaughter thus follows a long history.
- Natural scientists who are concerned to protect the animals, plants, ecosystems, and indigenous people that they study. One example is Jane Goodall, who speaks out for the chimpanzees she lived with and researched for many years, now severely threatened. The fictional film "Medicine Man" with Sean Connery illustrates this theme as it relates to the rain forest and indigenous people who live in it. There is a philosophical difference between the animal rights groups who are deeply concerned with the welfare of individual animals and those conservationists and scientists who are most concerned with survival of populations and species of animals.
- The Deep Ecology movement, which has a long-range philosophical or spiritual approach that recognizes first, the inherent value of all living beings and second, the inherent worth of all kinds of diversity. The founders of this movement, Arne Naess and George Sessions formulated a Deep Ecology platform in 1984 that includes the above principles as the first two. A few environmentalists who claim to be supporters of deep ecology have made misanthropic statements inconsistent with the first principle of the movement—the inherent worth of all life, which includes human beings. Naturally, anti-environmentalists have used these statements as grist for their mill, attributing them to environmentalists in general.
- Churches and religious groups which incorporate "Earth stewardship" into their theology, liturgy, and daily practice.
- Environmentalists (in the more precise sense of the word) who are worried about pollution of air, water, and soil that threatens the health of human beings. Sometimes grassroots groups form in response to an urgent local threat such as at Love Canal. While not many of us are environmental activists, public concern with pollution and human health is very widespread. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was set up primarily to meet these concerns. People are quite within their rights to work to keep polluting projects out of their backyards, and the derogatory term NIMBY (not in my backyard) should properly be used only with people who profess to be neutral or in favor of a technology or practice but want it to be located some other place than where they live.
- Alternative energy enthusiasts who have for over thirty years pioneered the use of solar, wind, tides, and other renewable forms of energy. They saw the dangers of global warming and of peak oil long before the rest of society did. In some cases, they are inventors and backyard tinkerers who simply want to expand the energy choices available to the human race (or make a fortune!).
- A growing number of activists who are organizing around the theme of preventing climate change, including protests against new coal plants.
- Do-it-yourselfers, homesteaders, and others who try to be more self-reliant like their forebears. Motivations include saving money, continuing tradition, reducing stress, the satisfaction of greater control over their lives, and a conscious intent to reduce stress on the environment caused by consumerism and industrialization.

- Small groups of radical environmentalists and animal rights activists in the West and Northwest, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) who use arson to make their point. They have set large-scale fires that destroyed an apartment complex, a ski lodge, and a demonstration project of “dream houses” intended to be eco-friendly. Whether or not such actions should be called ‘terrorism’ since there have as yet been no injuries or deaths, they are criminal and manifestly counter-productive for environmentalism in general. Few in the public understand what point they are trying to make, and the fallacy of misleading vividness will make their actions seem to be much more widespread and representative than they are.
- Those who are concerned with city-level issues such as sprawl, parks, traffic, and public transportation. These issues relate to environmental problems such as loss of agricultural land and wild habitat, pollution, and resource depletion from reliance on fossil fuels.
- Anti-war activists, since war is extremely destructive to both human and non-human life.
- Cyclists, pedestrians, mass-transit riders, and those who drive small, efficient cars.
- The environmental justice movement, which notes that poor and minority populations such as Native Americans and inner-city Black communities are overrepresented in the location of polluting industries, toxic waste dumps, and similar threats to health. Several decades ago many people boycotted California grapes because farmers were using toxic pesticides which not only threatened the consumer but were debilitating for the mostly Mexican migrant farm workers who harvested them.
- Anti-globalization efforts particularly directed to the effects of globalization on environment and human health. Teresa Brennan says that “Human health, as such, has yet to generate its own political movement.” However, this movement may be forming.
- There may be yet other environmental constituents I’m leaving out. Certainly it is a much wider range than most recognize.

Anti-environmentalism: The term ‘environmentalist’ is often used as a term of opprobrium by people to the right of the political aisle, in newspaper columns, blogs, and letters to the editor. If one or a few individuals in just one of these many kinds of groups makes a dubious statement or performs a controversial action, the whole range of concerns and groups are tarred with one brush.

Surveys indicate that constant propaganda from right-wing think-tanks that paint environmentalists as “extremists” and “alarmists” has succeeded in shifting public opinion. One example of think-tank framing is the term “eco-terrorist” associating environmental activists with violence. Most people understandably fear political-religious terrorists who blow up innocent people in order to make their point, but except for the rare, mentally unbalanced loner such as the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, environmentalists do not promote violence against people. The small cells of ELF and ALF by using the weapon of arson are risking the possibility of harming someone who happens to be in a building they assume to be empty.

Less dangerously, a few of these smaller organizations such as Earth First! have countenanced sabotage or destruction of property, while some animal rights groups have abducted or set loose animals from laboratories. More frequently, individuals and organizations attempt to protect living things or dramatize issues non-violently by blocking, delaying, or otherwise impeding business as usual, sometimes involving physical risks to themselves. This

includes ‘tree-sitters’ such as Julia Butterfly Hill and Greenpeace. On October 13, 2007, eleven Greenpeace activists boarded a cargo ship at a Dutch port and dangled from ropes in front of its unloading doors. They sought to prevent the ship from unloading newsprint paper made from ancient trees in Canadian forests, and hung a large banner asking newspapers not to use paper from old established forests. After several hours, Dutch police arrested the activists. By no stretch of the imagination does any of the foregoing resemble the common definition of ‘terrorism.’

Another argument frames environmentalists, especially the largest organizations that lobby Congress, as a ‘special interest.’ The standard definition of ‘special interest’ refers to those who have a *personal economic stake* in a given course of action. The leaders and members of conservation and environmental groups (and other nonprofit organizations) are mainly concerned with broader matters that have to do with the larger community and the future. Lobbying Congress seems to be the name of the game for non-profit organizations as well as industry, but in some recent cases, polluting industries have actually designed legislation. Any industry that is writing laws for Congress is most definitely a special interest.

The special interest argument seems to be a projection. This sort of reversal is a favorite trick of propagandists: accuse your adversary of that which someone might accuse you, and *do it first*. An old adage describes it as “The best defense is a good offense.”

Then there are people who wrap themselves in the cloak of environmentalism to pursue completely unrelated objectives. For instance, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff defended the construction of a border fence because he said illegal migrants trashed the area with “human waste, garbage, discarded bottles and other human artifacts in pristine areas. And believe me, that is the worst thing you can do to the environment.” Meanwhile, conservationists warned that the fence would cut off some animals from their only source of water or prevent their seasonal migrations for purposes of feeding or mating. In terms of animal survival, littering is not “the worst thing you can do to the environment.”

Robert James Bidinotto, self-described opponent of environmentalism and a skilled propagandist is one source of some of the misconceptions about environmentalism floating around. His watchword is "Individualism, not Environmentalism." (Thus he sets up a dualistic opposition between these two ideas.) Bidinotto’s website posits that the typical person who thinks he is an environmentalist is actually "just a nature-loving conservationist" whose concern for the earth is "human-centered." But the leaders of the "organized environmentalist movement" have a different, "anti-human agenda." He makes it sound like a conspiracy, but it is not clear which organizations are included in Bidinotto's concept of a super-organized environmentalist movement. (Some of us wish it were so.)

According to Bidinotto and others who use this talking-point, the "anti-human agenda" of environmentalists is based on their premise that nature has inherent or "intrinsic value" apart from any usefulness to humans. However, because something is *apart* from human use does not make it *anti-human*. Are the moon and stars anti-human? The rest of the galaxy has its own intrinsic value even though it will be some time before humans mine the asteroids.

A newspaper column by another objectivist, Glenn Woiceshyn of the Ayn Rand Institute, carries forth this argument against the ‘intrinsic value’ idea by making the following dubious assumption: “Since *man survives only by conquering nature*, man is an inherent threat to the ‘intrinsic value’ of nature and must therefore be eliminated. Environmentalism makes man the endangered species.” This view assumes that the human relationship to nature is necessarily a

kind of warfare. It does not recognize that many people throughout history and before history found ways to live with the rest of nature without conquering or destroying it.

Second, one may distinguish short-term usefulness from long-term usefulness. For instance, we could keep certain wilderness areas in a natural state as a laboratory or library of nature, for information that might be very important to us someday. I suspect Bidinotto's "usefulness" really means immediate, economic usefulness to a relatively few property owners or entrepreneurs. We could distinguish between usefulness to a few people, to a class of people, to certain developed nations, and usefulness to all humans, present and future. This would require reflection, examination of all possible alternatives, and very careful cost/benefit analysis, not the usual simplistic arguments that "we" "need" particular resources or energy sources.

Third, healthy ecosystems just by their existence provide a great many services to humans, as mentioned earlier. A new study (John Losey of Cornell and Mace Vaughn of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation) finds that insects alone are worth more than \$57 billion yearly to the U.S. economy. They pollinate fruits, nuts and vegetables; burying beetles dispose of cow dung for cattle ranchers; bees produce honey; insects at the bottom of the food chain support the hunting, fishing, and bird-watching industries; and insects eating each other provide \$4.5 billion in pest-control. Such usefulness does not exist in a vacuum but depends on whole ecosystems.

Finally, aesthetic, psychological, and spiritual aspects of nature are important to most people, so they too, are 'uses.' Many religions, religious people, and religious movements regard all of nature as part of God's creation and therefore they believe nature has intrinsic value: both human beings and the rest of nature have intrinsic value. According to this religious view, the two are not antagonists.

There is a reason that anti-environmentalists argue so strongly against the idea of "intrinsic value." Nature which has value apart from humans is much harder to commodify.

Nobody Here But Us Poor Little Humans: A common theme among anti-environmentalists, often repeated in letters to the editor, is that Nature is so big and indestructible that humans could not possibly harm it for long. You may recognize this as the latest version of the Neolithic Illusion described in *Models, Myths, and Muddles*. In one example, an article by journalist David Shariatmadari states that "we're in absolutely no danger of extinguishing life on this planet." But he then goes on to quote the well-known scientist Stephen Jay Gould that "We can surely destroy ourselves, and take many other species with us, but we can barely dent bacterial diversity and will surely not remove many million species of insects and mites." This is hardly reassuring, unless you are an insect.

Most of those who make the argument that puny humanity could not possibly poison the Earth or change weather patterns do not quote Stephen Jay Gould or other scientists, or any historians. They are quite unaware of human-caused environmental disasters that date back several thousand years, such as the clear-cutting of the cedars of Lebanon mentioned in the Bible. Another example is the Bronze-Age Argaric civilization in southeastern Spain which vanished from the archaeological record about 3,600 years ago. Researchers recently concluded that these people probably caused their own eco-ruin by setting fire to their forests to clear the land for grazing and mining activities. Quite suddenly, in little more than a decade, an ecological transformation occurred: the diverse forest dominated by oaks turned into Mediterranean scrub. After this, the Argaric civilization lasted only another 300 years.

When forests turn into deserts, local climate also changes. Human numbers have increased about one-hundredfold since early instances of human-caused desertification, and our

technologies are undoubtedly hundreds of times more powerful than Bronze-Age tools and the capacities of goats to over-graze.

Alar-mism: Which is the Myth?

The Alar scare comes to mind, when parents were told their children were at risk of being poisoned by chemically treated apples. It wasn't true.

Kyle Hughes, Gannett News Service, June 4, 1996

NRDC was absolutely on the right track when it excoriated the regulatory agencies for having allowed a toxic material to stay on the market for 25 years.

Dr. Philip Landrigan, chair of National Academy of Sciences Alar study committee, 1993

Anti-environmentalists commonly compare environmentalists to Chicken Little the storybook hen who, hit on the head by an acorn, goes out to warn the world that the sky is falling. From this view, the “Alar Scare” in 1989 was perhaps the most notorious example of environmental fear-mongering. For two decades, many newspaper articles and op-eds have referred to “the bogus Alar scare,” “a false alarm,” “a controversial report of questionable science,” “pseudo-scientific hooey,” or other names that assume that the whole thing was a hoax, a scare tactic, or much ado about nothing.

Alar is a chemical (daminozide) that was sprayed on apples from 1968 to 1989. The chemical causes apples to ripen at the same time—a great advantage for harvesting. However, in 1989, an estimated 40 million people saw a “60 Minutes” story based on a Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) report that Alar was a human carcinogen with special risks for children. Reaction to this program forced apple growers to stop using Alar and the Uniroyal Chemical Company to pull it off the market. According to an official at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the apple market “stumbled momentarily” but resumed its normal level of sales within four months.

The NRDC report was based on solid evidence confirmed by later studies and reviews. In 1984 and again in 1987, the EPA had classified Alar as a probable human carcinogen and in 1986 the American Academy of Pediatrics asked the EPA to ban it. The states of Massachusetts and New York had already done so. Journalist Bill Walkers says that even before the CBS broadcast, enough people were concerned that six national grocery chains and nine major food processors stopped accepting Alar-treated apples. The EPA after extensive review decided to ban Alar in late 1989 because “long-term exposure to Alar poses unacceptable risks to public health.”

Elliott Negin, former managing editor of the *American Journalism Review*, notes that “60 Minutes” has been vindicated several times in federal courts. In 1995 an appeals court dismissed the \$250 million class-action suit brought against CBS by Washington state apple growers. The court said “the growers have failed to raise a genuine issue of material fact as to the falsity of the broadcast.” The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower-court decisions without comment.

However, these lawsuits were not well covered by the press.

Negin says that a sophisticated public relations campaign began soon after the “60 Minutes” broadcast. The counterattack was led by Dr. Elizabeth Whelan and her organization, the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH). Although Whelan has a doctorate in public health, ACSH operates more like a PR company representing food and chemical companies. In 1990, ACSH received over half of its \$1.1 million funding from companies such as General

Mills, Coca-Cola, Proctor & Gamble, Dow Chemical, Union Carbide, Archer Daniels Midland, Dupont, Monsanto—and Uniroyal, the maker of Alar.

SourceWatch adds that the apple industry paid Hill & Knowlton, a well-known PR firm, over \$1 million to distribute ads that claimed (falsely) that children would need to consume “a boxcar load” of apples every day to be at risk. Conservative think tanks such as the Cato Institute, Heartland Institute, and Competitive Enterprise Institute hammered home the message.

Walker says “In the 10 years since the Alar story broke, so many reporters have swallowed the revisionist history of the case that ‘Alar’ has become near-universal journalistic shorthand for an irrational health scare stemming from so-called junk science.” If those who are supposed to be our watchdogs fall for PR spin, the public will too, and by 1991 polls indicated that 68 percent of American consumers thought the Alar crisis was overblown.

One consequence of widespread acceptance of the Alar scare myth is a new public policy to make laws against disparaging fruits, vegetables, and meat, sometimes called “veggie hate-crime” bills. At least a dozen states have adopted these agricultural disparagement laws like the one in Texas that allowed cattle ranchers to sue Oprah Winfrey when she expressed concern on air about “mad cow disease.” The lawsuit was dismissed by a jury in Amarillo, Texas.

To support this talking-point about environmental alarmism, anti-environmentalists focus on a few past predictions by environmentalists or scientists that failed to occur. Forty years ago in his best-selling book *The Population Bomb*, Paul Ehrlich predicted massive famines in the 1970s and 1980s because of overpopulation. These famines did not occur partly because of the ‘Green Revolution’ with its new agricultural techniques and partly because population growth began to slow down. But Joseph Schouweiler, who teaches international studies at Hanyang University in Korea, suggests that Ehrlich’s predictions were premature rather than wrong. “The population bomb has perhaps been delayed instead of defused and averted.”

A second ‘false prediction’ that is often used to discredit the current scientific consensus about global warming is that a few decades ago ‘they’ were predicting another ice age. However, while a few scientists were looking into this possibility in the 1970s, the popular books about it were not written by academic scientists—or well-known environmentalists. There was no scientific agreement or even wide scientific concern about a coming ice age, and very little resemblance to today’s widespread scientific agreement about climate change.

However, our world-wide web of ecosystems, winds, and waters is not a simple game of tic/tac/toe. Thousands of scientists in many countries are looking at various kinds of evidence. A few scientists now think it possible that one paradoxical effect of an unhinged climate system could be to precipitate a sudden ice age. This possibility is confusing only to people who want their knowledge handed to them in sound-bites.

Think Tanks, Astro-turf, and Apostate Environmentalists

A few hundred people with a canned speech can have a tremendous impact, even if 85 percent of the public disagrees.

David Helvarg, *The Amicus Journal*, Fall 1994

Most think-tanks have a conservative orientation, a position that nowadays often links with anti-environmentalism. Think-tank anti-environmentalists tend to converge on similar talking-points such as the purported anti-human attitudes of environmentalists, the malaria/DDT controversy (previously discussed in *Models, Myths and Muddles*), the fact that some

environmental and conservation organizations are reasonably well-funded, and most of all, the issue of global warming. These writers betray that they are propagandists by not giving sources for their evidence, by their narrow focus, and by leaving out important context. For instance, while focusing on the money at the disposal of membership-funded environmental organizations, they do not compare them to the advertising and lobbying funds of multi-billion-dollar, polluting corporations or with corporate donations to think-tanks enabling them to maintain a stable of writers to produce anti-environmentalist propaganda. By law the membership organizations are required to put their finances on public record but think-tanks are not so required.

Anti-environmentalist advocates also come from fake grass-roots groups organized and funded by business corporations, especially timber, mining, and chemical companies. A name for these groups is ‘Astroturf’ after the plastic grass. The Wise Use movement is a broad network of right-wing grassroots groups and corporate interest groups that promote unrestricted resource exploitation and free market environmentalism. They position themselves as the true environmentalists while at the same time downplaying environmental threats. According to William Kevin Burke, “the movement’s signature public relations tactic is to frame complex environmental and economic issues in simple, scapegoating terms that benefit its corporate backers.” This kind of framing results in “terminology wars.” Environmentalists are called pagans or communists. Issues are framed as ‘jobs versus owls’ or claims that the federal government is trying to take away people’s land. Burke says:

Across the nation, the Wise Use movement is backing state legislation seeking to expand the legal concept of what constitutes a “government taking” to include all situations where possible profits from developing, mining, or logging private lands are limited by environmental regulations.

Some of the individuals and groups either associated with the Wise Use movement or else borrowing its rhetoric include Ron Arnold, who may be considered its founder; the American Freedom Coalition (political offshoot of Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church) for which Arnold worked and which funded the first Wise Use Conference in 1988; National Farm Bureau Federation; Rush Limbaugh; Lyndon LaRouche; and reportedly parts of the militia movement and the Religious Right. Arnold once worked for the Sierra Club but now freely proclaims that his mission is to destroy the environmental movement. More recently, the Wise Use movement has become international. Eugene Lapointe leads a coalition of hunting, whaling, shooting, right-wing, and wise use organizations called International Wildlife Management Consortium.

Someone who holds a position such as advocating nuclear energy in opposition to that of most environmentalists may point to individuals who have environmentalist ‘street creds’ to support him. For instance, James Ephraim Lovelock is a distinguished English scientist who is well-known for his Gaia hypothesis that the Earth is one interconnected ecosystem. Lovelock also did pioneering work analyzing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in Antarctica, and has received many scientific prizes. Lovelock strongly supports nuclear energy and has done so for over 20 years. He says he would be happy to store a suitcase full of nuclear waste in his garden shed.

However, through the years Lovelock has made several spectacular mistakes, two of which he acknowledges and regrets. First, he initially published that CFCs constituted “no conceivable hazard.” He is now embarrassed by that mistake. Second, he regrets his part in the program to cut down England’s hedgerows in favor of agribusiness. But third, despite much evidence to the contrary, Lovelock still insists that the reactor disaster at Chernobyl killed only 45 people.

Investigation shows that Lovelock has worked for and has friendship ties with people in the nuclear industry, petroleum industry, and both the U.S. and UK defense industries, so despite his

scientific achievements, he may not be entirely objective about nuclear energy. Scientists, like the rest of us, are not always consistent in their beliefs.

Patrick Moore, formerly a leading activist with Greenpeace Canada (1981-6), has been a corporate consultant for several decades and has obviously changed his ideological orientation. Moore recently began working for the Clean and Safe Energy Coalition, a nuclear industry front group. Yet because of his earlier connection with Greenpeace, the *New York Times* saw the pro-nuclear coalition as “the latest sign that nuclear power is getting a more welcome reception from some environmentalists.” The UK *Guardian* said that Moore did not identify himself as an employee of the nuclear industry during a lengthy interview until he was asked directly.

Moore has also worked for BC Forest Alliance, sponsored by the timber industry. According to a website sympathetic to him, Moore says that environmentalists argue against clear-cutting mainly because clear-cuts look ugly. They don't have the necessary professional training and are judging environmental health by aesthetics alone. He says that plowing a field for a farm loses the biodiversity, “whereas in a clear-cut, it will grow back.” Moore does not explain how the many forest animals, from mammals and birds to insects and microorganisms, will “grow back” after they lose their habitat. Only if the area of clear-cutting is small will some of them be able to *migrate* back from surrounding forests.

The European Heat Wave: In the United States, a number of think-tank writers and conservative columnists have for years vigorously denied climate change, first its existence and then the idea that humans are causing it. Some are funded by fossil fuel producers and organizations such as billionaires David and Charles Koch and the American Petroleum Institute. Those who make a business of denying global warming oversimplify, ignore context, and frame their arguments so as to appeal to public ignorance about this issue. One common misconception is that weather equals climate, so every cold spell ‘disproves’ global warming. People who live in northern latitudes can joke about how happy they would be to lose their heavy overcoats.

But Danish economist Bjorn Lomborg should know better. In his 2007 book *Cool It*, Lomborg exploits this popular misunderstanding of global warming. The European heat wave in 2003 killed an estimated 35,000 people, and Lomborg points out that the European heat wave has become “a psychologically powerful metaphor” for the dangers of global warming. That iconic quality makes the heat wave a prime target for those who deny climate change, as well as those such as Lomborg who do not deny it but say our fears are out of proportion. His narrow argument is based on the fact that the UK and some other parts of Europe have many winter deaths. He claims global warming may actually decrease world mortality rates.

However, Lomborg compares two things which are not truly comparable, an unprecedented heat wave and a repeated, widespread, statistical preponderance of deaths in the winter. Mortalities in cold weather occur especially among elderly people who die from respiratory ailments, strokes and heart attacks.

Lomborg is rightly concerned about winter deaths in Britain, where much of the existing substandard housing is occupied by older people. Energy inefficient housing and fuel poverty along with the notoriously damp climate of the British Isles contribute to worsening health in the winter. But paying attention to one problem does not diminish the significance of another problem, especially one not directly related to it. Lomborg's argument rests on a narrow, distorted view of global warming; he assumes it means only that the planet will get warmer, as if the whole temperature scale is simply ratcheted up a few degrees. As mentioned above, this is a common misconception that has led some scientists to use the term ‘climate change’ instead, but

as an academic scholar and as a writer, Lomborg has an obligation to know what he is talking about.

By leaving out most of the context and acting as though the only dire effects of climate change are rising summer temperatures that may lead to heat-mortalities in Europe, Lomborg not only ignores the rest of the world but also ignores the many other events associated with climate change such as floods, droughts, wildfires, turbulent weather, and rising seas. Even if some lives were to be saved because—we'll assume—winter temperatures are not quite as cold, this would not make up for the many lives lost in low-lying countries and coastal cities by rising seas, or famines caused by droughts.

Lomborg further claims that global warming may actually save lives, especially with increased use of air-conditioning. Of course air-conditioning is a great gobbler of electricity often fueled by coal, so this would be shielding people from the heat effects of global warming by increasing global warming!

At least Lomborg accepts that “Global warming is real and man-made.” That is not the case with Robert James Bidinotto, who blames the French heat wave deaths on that government's energy policies, saying: “To address the purely *hypothetical* risks of *possible* future global temperature increases that might average a few piddling degrees, the greens imposed energy taxes that made it impossible for many of its most vulnerable citizens to protect themselves against the *foreseeable and preventable* impact of a summer heat wave [his italics].” This one sentence contains many dubious assumptions, such as that climate change predictions are “purely hypothetical” and that the unprecedented heat wave of 2003 was “foreseeable and preventable.” Also, Bidinotto downplays “a few piddling degrees” which would, however, be sufficient to cause a large number of destructive changes.

Bidinotto blames “the greens” for imposing energy taxes, but no government in the world has so far been led by a Green Party president or prime minister or parliamentary majority. Europeans have noticed the effects of climate change and it is not a hypothetical abstract theory for them. Summer temperatures in European cities have been rising over the last 30 years, with Madrid showing the greatest rise, 4 degrees Fahrenheit in average daily mean summer temperature from 1971-4 to 2000-04. European countries from north to south have been experiencing unusual, extreme and erratic weather events leading to drought, forest fires, and flooding. Europeans are aware that one potential of global warming—“abrupt climate change”—could shut down the Gulf Stream that moderates the climate of Western Europe.

When was the last time—if ever—that Italy and France had a heat wave like that of 2003? In blaming European governments for an unprecedented heat wave, is Bidinotto appealing to anti-European sentiment? There are numerous other debated issues regarding climate change, some involving various flamboyant or embattled personalities and even accusations of conspiracy. George Monbiot, author of *Heat*, says “The story endlessly repeated in the right-wing press [is] that the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change], in collusion with governments, is conspiring to exaggerate the science. No one explains why governments should seek to amplify their own failures [to deal with the problem].” In other words, there is no plausible motivation for governments to exaggerate the science—or for scientists to do so.

Improving Environmentalism

Engineers use a technical term to describe systems without feedback mechanisms: “stupid.”
Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, “The Death of Environmentalism”

The environmental movement has been sorely pressed for the last 30 years by continuous propaganda from industry-funded think tanks and right-wing commentators. Most environmentalists believe the movement has lost ground since its triumphs in the 1970s. As a result, many have criticized the environmental movement itself. For instance, reporter Tom Knudson of the *Sacramento Bee*, who won a Pulitzer for series of articles in the early 1990s which showed “The Sierra in Peril,” later wrote another series that criticized overspending by large environmental groups such as the Sierra Club. Knudson attacked luxury offices for executives and direct mail campaigns that cost a lot but produce little effect.

Sympathetic critics from within the movement or its outskirts have urged environmentalists to evolve, to change their basic attitudes and direction. For example, Shellenberger and Nordhaus believe that the appropriate response to the climate crisis is a government-funded, \$300 billion dollar project that can rapidly develop a new energy economy based on new forms of greentech. However, Shellenberger and Nordhaus came to the conclusion that the large environmental groups were too focused on short-term fixes to promote this new policy and paradigm. Their New Apollo Project is still in the wings.

But well-meaning prescriptions are sometimes based on assumptions shared with or subsequently adopted by anti-environmentalists. Technology critic Tom Athanasiou points to a series of attacks on environmental romanticism and/or pessimism dating back to the late 1980s with Anna Bramwell’s *Ecology in the Twentieth Century* and Martin Lewis’s *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism*. Athanasiou says this genre of books typically describes a reformed environmentalism in terms of “science” and “realism.” It often seems to be a clash between environmentalism and a techno-utopianism that has much in common with the Neolithic Illusion that no matter how many of us there are, and how powerful our technologies, we can’t hurt good old Mother Nature. For instance, Athanasiou says of Gregg Easterbrook’s *A Moment on the Earth* (1995):

[It] weighs in at 745 pages and claims the last word on everything from global warming (no problem) to petrochemicals (no problem) to nuclear power (no problem) to deforestation (no problem) to biotechnology (no problem) to extinction (no problem) to God (see page 138).

Others have described a difference between ‘Second Wave’ and ‘Third Wave’ Environmentalisms. Jesse Alan Gordon says the Second Wave, at its height from the 1960s until the 1980s, is based on morality. This is exemplified by the Stockholm Declaration which has as its first principle “Man has a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment.” Third Wave Environmentalism, on the other hand, is based on economics. It is exemplified by the Rio Declaration in the early 1990s which defines the concept of “sustainable development.” Gordon says the underlying philosophy is “account for the external costs”:

In other words, those who receive the benefits of environmental protection should pay for them, or those who cause the pollution should pay for it. The policy prescription is to use market incentives and economic methods to simultaneously achieve environmental and developmental goals.... Third Wave environmentalists do not need to use the government, since all of our methods are voluntary.

This distinction between two waves clearly shows the influence of free-market thinking from the 1980s onward.

Divisions continue into the new millennium. Stewart Brand, founder of the enormously successful and influential *The Whole Earth Catalog*, divides the environmental movement into

“two powerful forces, romanticism and science. . . . The romantics identify with natural systems; the scientists study natural systems.” Brand appears to describe a narrower spectrum of environmentalism than is suggested by the list at the beginning of this chapter. One might also question his use of the word “romantic” which is associated with historical movements in literature and the arts. In the pragmatic, technology-loving United States the word ‘romantic’ has connotations of emotionalism, nostalgia, sentimentality, and fuzzy-mindedness; of more concern for scenic beauty and baby Harp seals than for human welfare and ecological health.

Instead, one might instead call the non-scientists “intuitive” or “participant” (as in participating consciousness). Take this example: a mother in a poor section of town passes by an abandoned factory and notices an evil-smelling liquid oozing out of the ground. She does not have to be a scientist to have an intuitive grasp of the situation, to forbid her children to play there, and to organize her neighbors to ask for action from the city. To show caution about the not-natural may be a built-in precautionary principle that also shows up in other species. For instance, I bought my dog a cute plastic toy made for dogs, but he would never come near it. Eventually, I sniffed the toy; the strong chemical odor bothered me too, and I have only a tiny fraction of his keen sense of smell. However, human caution about technology is also intellectually based on its track record, on the evidence of science and history.

Brand claims the “romantics” greatly outnumber the “scientists” in the environmental movement. As he describes them, they are quite ideological: “moralistic, rebellious against the perceived dominant power, and combative against any who appear to stray from the true path. They hate to admit mistakes or change direction.” Brand presents several core issues on which he thinks environmentalists should, and will, change direction: they will come to support urbanization, biotechnology, and nuclear power. He presents opposition to these as stemming from lack of scientific awareness, an “aesthetic” love of villages, or a “quasi-religious aversion to nuclear energy.” This is certainly stacking the deck. Brand assumes for one thing that all scientists think alike; for another, that those who have concerns about urbanization, biotechnology or nuclear power lack any reasoned, evidence-based arguments.

Shariatmadari would also change environmental discourse, which he claims is too often framed as “humans versus the planet.” He and I agree that humanity is vulnerable, and that we must develop the will to save our species. However, in many ways his argument resembles Brand’s, with a similar view of most environmentalists as muddle-headed sentimentalists. Shariatmadari suggests a new kind of environmentalist, one whose focus is human survival, calling them “Hard Greens.” The question for them “would be less one of ‘save the whales’ altruism and more one of tough-talking, practical approaches to human safety.” His assumption, of course, is that such environmentalists do not already exist. They do. However, his meaning of “practical” is to accept certain technologies such as nuclear energy, biotechnology, and nanotechnology.

Like Brand, Shariatmadari supports nuclear energy as the lesser of two evils, the greater evil being climate change. (These are not, in fact, the only two possibilities.) But there is no such urgent justification for nanotech or biotech. Shariatmadari notes that the consequences of weaponizing biotech and nanotech “would be fearsome” yet offers only this as counterweight: “Governments must take the long view.” But how many governments have ever taken the long view? He says that “Robust environmentalism is a question of managing technology, keeping a firm grip on the tiller, imposing severe restrictions on some types of research, erring on the side of caution.” All well and good, but what environmentalist movement, Hard Green or not, is “robust” enough to take on trillion-dollar industries, the technological waves of the future, and

the political leaders of whole economies based on military Keynesianism? Somebody else has the firm grip on the tiller.

Globalization: While not a critique of the current environmentalist movement, Teresa Brennan's book *Globalization and Its Terrors* points to economic globalization as the root cause of environmental degradation, climate change, and worsening health and social conditions in both the industrial and the less developed nations. Brennan says that globalization is an economic dynamic in which the increasing speed of production requires expansion; and expansion requires more rapid production and distribution to keep up the pace. As distribution becomes more global, ever more fossil fuel is needed for transporting goods and we are faced with harmful choices:

It is either globalization or the climate, either land use for cash-crops for the North or the subsistence foods of the South, either the decimation of species or their survival. In the West, it is either the short-term benefits of the global market, or a future for those as yet unborn.

Her analysis suggests that a great many concerns could converge in the anti-globalization movement including those of the environmental movement.

CHAPTER 21 : FEMINISM/ANTI-FEMINISM

Feminism's agenda is basic: It asks that women not be forced to "choose" between public justice and private happiness. It asks that women be free to define themselves—instead of having their identity defined for them, time and again, by their culture and their men.

Susan Faludi, feminist writer, 1959-

Since virtually all humans are born either male or female, we cannot escape interacting with each other. Gender relations are cast in ancient patterns and involve very basic emotions. One could expect most people to react strongly to any change or proposed change in the accepted order of gender—and one would not be disappointed. Many people in the United States have a very limited view of feminism as a radical political movement that began in the 1960s, often called “Women’s Lib” by those who don’t like the idea, among those Americans who generally tend to think that everything started yesterday. However, feminism did not begin forty or fifty years ago: that was simply when women really got into the ideology game along with men.

Feminism is the reaction or resistance to the patriarchal status quo, a system of male dominance that has lasted for several thousand years. In one sense, feminism is an ancient idea, since the vast majority of women throughout history have surely at some point said to themselves or someone else, “I am a human being too and deserve to be treated like one!” We are after all talking about half the human race and their struggles to act as autonomous persons. Feminism takes many different forms as a political movement, a social movement, a system of critique, a philosophy, a religious or spiritual orientation, a Renaissance literary genre, a theory, and an ideology. The modern history of feminism dates back centuries, although the word ‘feminism’ did not come into English use until the 1890s and many languages still do not have a word for it, according to researcher Shirin Rai.

Here I would give a brief survey and bird’s-eye view of the earlier history of feminism, with some of its outstanding figures to demonstrate, first, that this is very much part of our missing history. The past that most of us know, even if we are college-educated, is over-simplified and sanitized in many ways to fit the prevailing ideologies. Women have been left out of history to a surprising degree. The field of Women’s Studies that would help correct this omission is often scorned by conservatives who in general decry women’s concerns as part of “identity politics” and “multiculturalism” as if women were a minority ethnic group. However, programs in Women’s Studies are not widely dispersed. Online listings count 415-670 of them, while there are 4,140-4,314 colleges and universities in the U.S. This suggests that only about one-tenth to one-sixth of American colleges offer such a program. In my own state, despite courses here and there it appears that not one college or university offers a program in women’s studies.

I hope to dispel the idea that feminism is simply a radical notion that rose in the 1960s, a mutation from all previous history. The 1960s feminist movement is often called “Second Wave Feminism” to distinguish it from 19th century feminism and the suffragist movement of the early 1900s that won the vote for women. However, one might consider feminism in terms of five or six periods of heightened activity. Note that in every ‘wave,’ there were men who agreed with women’s aspirations and supported them, and other men who strongly resisted any change to the status quo of male domination. Also, during the most recent wave of feminism some women such as Phyllis Schlafly actively joined the resistance to change, while within the ranks of feminists there have been many major differences about emphasis and strategy.

Early Feminism, the Querelle

The ability of women is not known because they are relegated to the business of procreation, child-rearing, and breast-feeding.

Averroes, Spanish Islamic philosopher, 1126-1198

Six hundred years ago, Christine de Pizan wrote the first feminist treatise, an allegory titled *City of Ladies*. Composed at the French court in 1404-1405, *City of Ladies* was meant to answer the misogyny of another book, *Romance of the Rose*. Pizan, sometimes called the first feminist, insisted that women's reason and sense of justice were quite equal to that of men. She said that once the female voice appears in history, nothing will silence it. The female voice did fully appear with the printed word and widespread literacy, which became the 'Great Equalizer' for women. Even now, education of Third World women is the magic key for developing their autonomy, economic self-sufficiency and self-expression, as well as reducing the birth-rate.

After printing was invented later in the fifteenth century, feminism became a literary genre, part of a lively debate between those who criticized and those who defended women: the *querelle des femmes* or 'quarrel about women.' Of course, the participants were upper class since the peasants could not read. Many of the defenders in this debate were men, though sometimes they displayed more gallantry than deep conviction. Siep Stuurman, a Dutch historian, describes this literature and notes that another genre popular in Europe from the fifteenth to eighteenth century was galleries of illustrious women "proving by historical example that they could equal men in every respect." By the mid-seventeenth century, says Stuurman, most literate women and men in Western Europe were familiar with at least some of the arguments of the *querelle*:

The recognition of women's equality with men as immortal souls and rational beings; (2) the assertion that men are like tyrants, wielding an arbitrary and unjust power over women; (3) the argument that the present "nature" of women is the product of a biased education; (4) the demand for access to higher education and the Republic of Letters; (5) the indictment of men's outrageous treatment of women, especially in marriage; (6) the glorification of "strong women," usually by means of galleries of historical examples; and (7) the call for "politeness" and a softening of manners tied to an upgrading of the "feminine virtues," so that (upper-class) women became the agents of a civilizing mission

Meanwhile, a French male writer, Francois Poulain de la Barre combined some of these feminist arguments with Descartes' ideas to create a systematic philosophy of feminism in *On the Equality of the Two Sexes*, 1673. Poulain advocated an equal education for men and women. So did the German intellectual Christian Thomasius in 1687. However, the great French playwright Moliere made fun of educated women in a 1672 play which Sturman describes as an early example of backlash.

Spiritual autonomy for women was a difficult matter at a time when religious differences led to wars and civil wars. Doris Weatherford notes that in early America two women died in theocratic Massachusetts for attempting to exercise their right to worship according to their conscience. Anne Hutchinson articulated her own beliefs in defiance of the leaders of the newly founded colony. In 1637 they tried and convicted Hutchinson of sedition, banishing her although she was in the last months of her twelfth pregnancy. A few years later, living in a less-settled area, she and most of her children were killed by Algonquians.

Hutchinson's friend Mary Dyer, who was the only person to protest when Hutchinson was excommunicated from their Boston church, returned to England from 1652 to 1657 and converted to the newly-formed Society of Friends, or Quakers. Back in Massachusetts she found that both Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies had already passed laws to ban Quakers. Despite the pleas of her husband and sons to stay in the liberal colony of Long Island, Dyer returned more than once to Boston "to preach her vision of a loving, egalitarian God." In 1660 the church-state of Massachusetts hanged her.

The learned woman and the female author became more common by the eighteenth century. Italy seemed to be most receptive to university women. Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia was awarded a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Padua in 1678, probably the first in Europe. In 1732, Laura Bassi received a degree in philosophy from the University of Bologna and also taught there from 1732 to 1778. Maria Gaetana Agnesi taught mathematics at the same university. If one counts the Renaissance *querelle* as the First Wave, such learned women were its fruit. Individual accomplishments refuted old ideas that women were incapable of intellectual achievement. However, it was a long time before these rare personal advances led to general opportunities and full citizenship for women anywhere.

Enlightenment, the Second Wave: Lack of representation for women continued despite the democratic ideals of the Enlightenment. In the newly created United States of America, for instance, the Founders did not heed the advice of Abigail Adams to "remember the ladies," leaving them out of the Constitution. Native American women of the Iroquois Confederacy participated in public life, but in the U.S.A., women did not gain the vote for well over a century.

Meanwhile, women in the American colonies and the new United States were making their own way in the intellectual world. For example, Hannah Adams (1755-1832) was the first woman in America to make a profession of literature. Although she had no formal education, she had been tutored by divinity students who boarded in her home. Adams' major work was a survey of the religions of the world, published in 1784, which went through several editions and was reprinted in England. An early American feminist, Judith Sargent Murray (1751-1820) published an essay "On the Equality of the Sexes." Murray also wrote dramas with some popular success. Sarah Hall (1761-1830) was educated by her father, Provost at the University of Pennsylvania. After marriage, she wrote in her study at night while her ten children were asleep. Her published essays included many about the status of women and their need for education.

Women took an active part in the American Revolution. They organized boycotts of English goods such as tea and cloth. Many traveled with armies to cook and to tend the wounded. Others ran the farms and shops, cared for wounded from nearby battles, and took food to captured Americans in British prisons. Sybil Ludington, then 16 years old, rode 40 miles through the night to alert American militia that the British were burning Danbury, Connecticut. According to a women's history site:

While the words of the Declaration of Independence said that all "men" were created equal, women understood that they had a stake in the war effort and they made gains after the war was won....Widows began to inherit a substantial share of property under the law and property was divided equally among children, both sons and daughters. Before the revolution, women could not write wills, but afterward they gained a voice for the first time in the disposition of their property.

Mercy, Abigail, and John: Two might-have-been Founding Mothers and the husband of one of them—second president of the United States, John Adams—had a long friendship punctuated

by a breach of seven years over political differences. Abigail Smith Adams (1744-1818) had no formal education but having learned the basics of reading and writing from her mother, she then read liberally in her minister father's large library. Abigail spoke up frequently for women's educational opportunities and married women's property rights. Her most famous letter to her husband while he was attending the Continental Congress included this request:

...remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

To which John replied lightly: *As to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh...Depend upon it, we know better than to repeal our masculine systems.*

Abigail's good friend Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814) also picked up an education somehow and developed a clear, insightful mind, conversing at home with her father, husband, and brother who all opposed royal policy. Her personal acquaintance with most of the Revolution's leaders put her in the center of events, an insider who was in position to record the history of the era. Although she had probably never seen a staged play, Mercy Warren began to publish plays (anonymously) in 1772 that satirized public officials especially the colonial governor, whom she called "Rapatio"—one who would rape the colonies. In another play she compared him to a crocodile.

As a thorough-going Jeffersonian, Warren opposed ratification of the federalist constitution in her "Observations on the New Constitution" published 1788. For three decades she worked on a history of the Revolutionary era—*History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*—which was published as three volumes in 1805. However, John Adams, who had grown increasingly conservative, was offended by some sharp comments on him in the book, which led to a gap in the friendship that lasted until 1812.

Had John Adams listened to Abigail's advice and used his political clout to write women into the Constitution, they might well have received rights including the vote many years sooner than they did. One could speculate that in this alternate history, the slave trade and slavery might have been abolished earlier, perhaps even preventing the national wound of the Civil War. As for Mercy Otis Warren, she could have participated directly in public life and politics, perhaps as a Senator or Cabinet official.

Meanwhile in England, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote one of the great manifestos of feminism, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women." Unfortunately this brilliant woman died young of childbed fever after delivery of her second daughter, also named Mary. After her death some incidents in her life became known to the public: an affair that resulted in an illegitimate daughter, Fanny, and two unsuccessful suicide attempts. The public condemned her as immoral, with lasting results for feminism: "For at least the next hundred years the feminist cause was to suffer setback after setback because of society's association of sexual promiscuity with those who advocated the rights of women"

Wollstonecraft was the mother of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who wrote the novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* in 1818. Many consider this powerful story with its theme of the dangers of technology to be the first work of science fiction.

Abolitionism, Seneca Falls, and the Third Wave: Feminism in the era before the Civil War grew out of abolitionism, evangelism, and the temperance movement. Why temperance? A drunken husband could waste the family's resources for food and shelter, could physically abuse his family, yet still retain control of his children and all property—including anything his wife managed to earn. Thus temperance was very much a women's issue.

Religious revivals inspired women to activism in abolishing slavery. Many men did not want to work together with them, so they formed their own organizations. Working to free the slaves, women became aware of the limitations placed on their own actions, education, and legal rights. Abolition work also gave women experience in addressing an abuse and dealing with controversy. Another religious impetus to feminist consciousness was Quakerism. Weatherford says that Quaker beliefs were the most important intellectual root of female freedom in the American colonies and the United States.

In 1840, Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister and abolitionist, met Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The male delegates voted to exclude women from participating in the conference, even though Mott was an official delegate, and made them sit in a separate, roped-off section. These two women immediately became allies, and eight years later they organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Seneca Falls in 1848 was the watershed event for women's rights in the United States. There Stanton read the Declaration of Sentiments, modeled on the U.S. Declaration of Independence, listing 18 "injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman" as the earlier declaration lists 18 injuries and usurpations by the King of England against the colonies. The Declaration of Sentiments included statements such as these:

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice....He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns....He has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it....He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration....He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her....He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God."

In the decade following this Declaration, New York and Massachusetts passed laws giving women control over their own property and wages. In another 50 years most states had similar laws. More colleges enrolled women and, according to Geraldine Ferraro, progress toward pay equity began in 1872.

Suffragists Win the Vote for Women: The energies released at Seneca Falls continued to win advances for women. Wyoming in 1869 was the first of several states and new territories to pass suffrage laws. One reason that these Western states gave women the vote was to attract them to areas in which men greatly outnumbered women. Women struggled for 70 years to achieve full voting rights in the United States, but I am calling the Fourth Wave of feminism the radical activity from about 1912 to 1920 that finally managed to pass and ratify the 'Susan B. Anthony Amendment' as the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution. This made women full voting citizens.

The 19th Amendment was achieved only with a great deal of pain and suffering, and the total dedication of one woman, Alice Paul (1885-1977) along with her colleague Lucy Burns (1879-

1966). Paul was a small, frail woman who never married or displayed romantic interest in any man or woman but was entirely dedicated to the cause of women's suffrage. She inspired a loyal following and was said to plan campaign strategy like a general.

These two well-educated women (Paul had a doctorate in social work from the University of Pennsylvania) first worked with Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst in the British suffrage movement, which employed more militant tactics than those being used by their American counterparts. Paul's first action in the U.S. was to organize a Women's Right to Vote parade on March 3, 1913 that coincided with Woodrow Wilson's inauguration as President. The parade included bands, floats, and over 8,000 women from almost every state. When Washington police failed to provide the protection they had promised for the parade, crowds of men threatened and even injured marchers. The resulting publicity and public indignation brought many new members into the movement.

Paul and Burns broke from the more established organization for women's suffrage, the NAWSA, which was committed to a reformist plan to achieve voting rights state by state, and founded the National Woman's Party in 1916. Their tactics soon escalated and they became the first political activists for any cause to picket the White House. But after World War I began, it became less acceptable to criticize the government. Pickets were physically attacked and began to be arrested on the charge of obstructing traffic. They were imprisoned in deplorable conditions including rat-infested cells and rotting food. When they went on hunger strikes to protest, they were brutally force-fed. On November 15, 1917, the "Night of Terror" at Occoquan Workhouse, many suffragists were badly beaten. Public knowledge of this treatment created still more sympathy for the cause of suffrage and brought new recruits to the cause. The fact that many women were working at jobs left behind by men drafted into military service also made it hard to maintain women's inferiority. The 19th Amendment was finally passed by both houses in 1919 and ratified by the necessary 36 states 14 months later. (The film "Iron Jawed Angels" about the suffragette period was shown on HBO in 2004, with Alice Paul as the central character.)

Part of Alice Paul's plan was the Equal Rights Amendment, which she drafted in 1923. It was introduced in every session of Congress from 1923 on and finally passed in 1972; but at the deadline it had been ratified by only 35 states, three short of the 38 then required. It has been reintroduced at every session since, including the 110th Congress, 2007-2008, with no deadline for ratification. The proposed amendment reads as follows:

Section 1: Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2: The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3: This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Another feminist objective that failed was Mary Ware Dennett's campaign from 1916 to give women control of their own reproductive decisions by eliminating the legal ban on disseminating contraceptive literature. This ban had been in effect since the Comstock Act of 1873. Dennett's proposed legislation in 1925 failed to pass Congress over the opposition of Catholics and the medical community. A court decision in 1936 finally legalized birth control, but put it in the control of physicians.

Modern Feminism (usually called the Second Wave although here it is counted as the Fifth) began mid-29th century with two important feminist books. *The Second Sex* by Frenchwoman

Simone de Beauvoir was published in France in 1949. Beauvoir gave a detailed analysis of the history of women's oppression, arguing that the fundamental paradigm underlying this oppression was the social construction of Woman as "the Other." This was the notion that men were the ideal and women somehow deviant or abnormal. In the United States, Betty Friedan (1921-2006) published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. It struck a chord with millions of women who had been educated to take their part in modern life—many women had started to do this in the 1930s and 1940s—but were now herded back into the home. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, by the early 1950s a campaign was already underway to get women to leave the jobs they had taken on for the war effort:

As one telling example, consider Adlai Stevenson's 1955 address to the Smith College graduating class urging these educated women not to define themselves by a profession but to participate in politics through the role of wife and mother. While McCarthyism rooted out political subversion, science and the media worked to instill proper gender roles. A 1956 *Life* magazine published interviews with five male psychiatrists who argued that female ambition was the root of mental illness in wives, emotional upsets in husbands, and homosexuality in boys.

Unlike older generations of rural women, who churned butter and tended kitchen gardens, these middle-class suburban housewives did not have an economic role to perform within the household to give them meaning. Unlike their grandmothers, these women did not have an extended family nearby to provide help and social interaction, and many of them had to move frequently because of their husband's work (this was also the era of the 'grey flannel suit,' corporation man). Thus they were isolated and often depressed.

Friedan called it "the problem that has no name—which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities [and which] is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease." She described it as a false belief system that required women to lose their own identity and submerge themselves in their family. *The Feminine Mystique*, according to Friedan's obituary in the *New York Times*, "ignited the contemporary women's movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world."

Just as the abolitionist movement in the early 19th century had made women aware of gender injustices, so did the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Radical feminists who were active volunteers in the struggle against racism developed "consciousness raising" from methods used in the black-led movement ("testifying" and "telling it like it is"). In 1966 the National Organization for Women was formed, with Friedan one of 27 co-founders. Consciousness-raising was widespread among the chapters of NOW. Early issues pursued by NOW included ending sex segregation in want ads and setting up federally funded childcare centers.

Feminist Ideology: During and since the intellectual ferment of the 1960s and 1970s, women activists and scholars have been reworking virtually all the assumptions of modern society and Western civilization in areas that include political thought, history, philosophy, economics, and religion. This has led to many new theories and schools of thinking, which I will not attempt to describe in detail. As some of these theories disagree with each other, no one stream of thought or prescription for action could be said to represent all of feminism. If someone claims to be for or against 'feminism' one may ask "which one?"

In feminist ideologies, women were trying to define themselves or liberate themselves from the restricting definitions men had placed on them, for instance, by Freudian psychology.

Broadly speaking, there are two main feminist attitudes: one emphasizes the similarities of men and women in order to achieve equal treatment, opportunities and pay; a second attempts to raise the status of women's distinctive traits, arts, and history. Sometimes these attitudes work in tandem, but they sometimes have divided feminists, as in conflicts between working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. More generally, they suggest two different goals for women, making good in this society or creating a better society with more 'feminine' influence.

Another general difference is between liberal and radical feminism. Liberal feminists work toward greater gender equality through political and legal reforms, without radically changing society. Major issues are reproductive rights, "equal pay for equal work," affordable child care, affordable health care, and measures to combat domestic and other violence against women and sexual harassment on the job. These reforms appeal to women across social and economic classes, and so is probably the most widespread feminist view in the United States. Men too can see the fairness of equal pay and the morality of preventing violence and harassment. However, the main area of continuing controversy is abortion rights, the 'wedge-issue' against feminism.

Activist women learned in the 1960s that even radical movements typically excluded them from leadership roles, and radical feminism developed as a response to this failing of the New Left. Radical feminists such as the Redstockings were more militant than NOW, finding it too focused on economics issues, too liberal-reformist. Radical feminists emphasized the deep social and political roots of the patriarchal system, 'sexual politics,' and the idea that "the personal is political." They demanded total equality in the private sphere of housework, childcare, and emotional and sexual needs. This emphasis on personal issues has led to many changes in personal relationships among younger people.

There have been many competing views and split-off groups in radical feminism. Among these divergent groups of radical feminists ideologies arose and statements were made that frightened some men and provoked a backlash. Radical feminism is a shadow of its strong presence a few decades ago, but anti-feminists are still reacting to what some radical feminist may have said in the 1970s or 1980s. Specifically, some radical feminists advocated sexual separatism and others held men as individuals responsible for sexual oppression.

One example of a strong radical viewpoint was Andrea Dworkin's doctrine that women did not really enjoy intercourse and that the sex act itself was anti-feminist. Victorian ideology also held that women, or at least good women, did not enjoy intercourse—but the difference is that women had no choice 150 years ago. Similarly, many men throughout history have shown contempt for women, and some founders of Christianity including St. Paul counseled celibacy. It is unfortunate when ideologies based on the sexual proclivities or notions of individuals have lasting influence over other individuals in something so personal and biologically-based.

In the history of feminism, most feminist theorists and leaders of social and political movements have been middle-class white women in Britain, France, and the United States. This has led to complaints of narrowness and ethnocentrism by women of other ethnic groups, who sometimes propose alternative feminisms, such as "post-colonial" and "Third World" feminisms. Another criticism raised is that in the drive to attain the rights and perquisites of men, some feminists neglected or condescended to women who had a strong commitment to their role as mothers, or who actually by temperament resembled the traditional feminine.

Some expressions of feminism are clearly ideologies type C. For instance, in attempts to swing the pendulum back from the idea that "Biology is destiny," one early school of modern feminist thinking emphasized androgyny, or the basic similarities of women and men, often coming to the conclusion that virtually all gender differences in behavior were caused by social

conditioning rather than biology. This ideology sometimes denied even obvious physical differences. For instance, a woman who couldn't have weighed 110 pounds soaking wet worked in a local alternative warehouse where she was expected to throw around 50-pound sacks of grain as well as any man could. (I don't think it would have been a good job for a 110-pound man, either.) In another ideological manifestation in the '70s, a few women would angrily turn on men who held the door open for them, scolding them for their patriarchal attitudes. This led to confusion and resentment from men who had been taught to perform this courtesy by their own mothers. No doubt such ideological behavior was counterproductive for feminism in general.

Women who had personally suffered abuse by men as victims of incest, rape, or battering, and others whose sexual orientation was towards other women rather than men sometimes advanced themselves as uniquely qualified to speak for women in general. Their leadership often led to ideological assertions that all men are potential rapists, are unfit for modern existence because of their testosterone levels—or a general attitude that men are the enemy. A sample of such attitudes is the jibe by Linda Ellerby: “If we can send one man to the moon, then why can't we send them all?” Such attitudes could drive away other women as potential feminists as well as antagonize men. In the usual way of such things, some conservatives conflated these attitudes as representing the whole of feminism.

One wonders, though, were the actions of this ideological minority really sufficient to cause the consequent backlash? Women in the 1950s suffered through countless television comedians delivering mother-in-law, ball-and-chain, and “take my wife” jokes. Women of that era were expected to be “good sports” about such humor, to indulge men and endure insults because, women told each other, men have tender egos. But then women realized that they too have tender egos. All of us humans do.

Backlash

A Spanish reader made his way through a story about these [political] primary-related gender wars we're fighting, and had a suggestion. “I think you all must go to the shrink, in a kind of collective, nationwide, psychoanalysis.”

Joshua Holland, January 31, 2008

The presidential candidacy of Hillary Clinton did indeed focus those for and against feminism. Although Clinton had not made her mark as a feminist, she was a highly successful woman in the masculine pursuits of law and politics, and she was sensitive to women's issues. Many women especially middle-aged and older ones were deeply invested in her candidacy. The media called Clinton a polarizing figure mainly because so many white men have strongly negative attitudes towards her, often expressed as obscene jokes and tirades on the Internet. NOW President Kim Gandy criticized the sexist themes and double standards in media coverage of Clinton's candidacy, for instance a focus on every aspect of her appearance and demeanor, and using different adjectives to describe the same behavior in male and female candidates. Gandy says our society has not yet come to terms with ambition in women.

Of course, it was quite possible to be for or against Clinton on grounds other than her being a woman, or to prefer one of her rivals. But it is noteworthy that the United States, unlike many other countries whether European, Muslim, Jewish or Hindu, has not yet had a female chief executive. The U.S. Congress is still 85 percent male.

Backlash or resistance to the advances of feminism takes many forms. A lasting media myth depicts feminists as hysterical people who burn their bras, based on a demonstration at the 1968

Miss America pageant during which radical feminists symbolically threw their bras (and wigs, high heels, girdles, etc.) into a “freedom trashcan”—but did not burn them—in order to gain publicity for their cause. Women used this particular symbolism for a reason. High heels, for instance, may look ‘sexy’ but they distort the feet, impair the body’s balance, and make it almost impossible for a woman to walk a reasonable distance. They were first worn by prostitutes in the Italian Renaissance, for whom this very lack of mobility was meant to be enticing to men.

A book by Richard Poe, primarily about gun control, makes an anti-feminist case that probably resonates with many ‘angry white men.’ Poe argues that being a warrior is an essential part of manhood: “The urge to fight, defend, and protect lies at the core of male identity. Strip him of his warrior status, and a man is broken.” Poe says feminists wanted to “suppress all traces of aggression and drive” in men and have demonized masculinity. In particular, the anti-gun movement, he says, is led by women with a subconscious desire to castrate men. Poe insists that in trying to comply with feminist demands, men have lost their spirit, so that many men today are soft, passive ‘wimps.’

Neither gender should want to ‘castrate’ the other, that is, to interfere with the self-actualization of other human beings. Most women feel that they have not yet reached parity (certainly not in pay scales) while already some men proclaim that they are being deprived of their natural powers. Perhaps something else is to blame besides each other? Betty Friedan said: “Men weren’t really the enemy—they were fellow victims suffering from an outmoded masculine mystique that made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill.” Susan Faludi added: “One of the gross misconceptions about feminism is that it’s only about women. But in order for women to live freely, men have to live freely, too.”

An underlying assumption is that aggressive drive is necessarily linked with physical fighting and particularly with war. Adults actually have a number of ways to channel energy, from sports to achievement in art, science, and other fields, or dedication to a cause or principle. Being ready to defend and protect one’s kin or community in a crisis is not the same thing as going around with a chip on one’s shoulder and a gun in the holster. Long before the modern feminist movement arose I knew many men—cousins, family friends, fellow students—who were mild-mannered, who would avoid an argument if they could. Yet many of those men fought honorably in World War II or Korea. In those days people seemed less prone to label men as cowards or wimps or to force everyone into a Rambo mold.

Economic changes since the ‘60s have not favored breadwinners. Unemployment or the fear of it can break a man, probably faster than not being allowed to carry a gun. Poe simply assumes that the masculine spirit has declined. So where is the data about this decline? If in fact men *are* becoming feminized it might be a good idea to look at chemical pollution of our water supply, with flushed-away estrogen pills and various hormone-disrupting chemicals on the menu.

While some women in the many-faceted feminist movement have expressed anti-male or anti-family attitudes and some have become rigidly ideological, the broad outlines of liberal feminism still have to do with equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities for education and promotion, women’s control of their own bodies, protection from harassment and violence, affordable child care, and affordable health care. Yet even this seemingly moderate agenda is under fire from political and religious conservatives.

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) is an international human rights treaty intended to be a women’s “Bill of Rights.” It was adopted in 1979 and since ratified by 175 countries (out of 190) but not by the United States, which is the

only industrialized nation that has not ratified this UN document. It has been stalled in the Senate for 30 years. Conservative groups strongly oppose the treaty based on their belief that it supports abortion and gay marriage.

Phyllis Schlafly of anti-ERA fame or infamy has led the charge against CEDAW, claiming that it “trounces on our national sovereignty, undermines religion, and seeks to abolish the traditional family, despises motherhood and pregnant women, and encourages lesbianism, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and the legalization of prostitution.” Wendy Wright of CWA (Concerned Women for America) says “The CEDAW treaty is everything that was bad about the ERA and much more.” Another CWA official, Janice Shaw Crouse, calls it “the Equal Rights Amendment on steroids” and describes the treaty as follows:

[It is a] leftist utopian wish-list: comparable worth, paid maternity leave, a national network of child care, free maternity-related health care, gender-blind military service, unisex toilets, and quota-determined political parity for women.

It is interesting that Crouse considers family-oriented reforms such as paid maternity leave and free maternity-related health care as radical, leftist ideas. Most countries have paid maternity leave, while free maternity health care is one of the reasons that a country such as the Netherlands has a much lower abortion rate than the United States. Also Crouse brings up unisex toilets over 35 years after Phyllis Schlafly first used this bugaboo to frighten legislators about the ERA Amendment.

CHAPTER 22: THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND THE UN

*Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the World.*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1809-1892, "Locksley Hall" 1842

*I do verily believe that...a single, consolidated government would become the most corrupt
government on the earth.*

Thomas Jefferson, letter to Gideon Granger, 1800

In the first half of the last century, especially after the devastation of World War I, a number of famous people such as Cecil Rhodes, H.G. Wells, and Arnold Toynbee promoted a world government to bring lasting peace. Occasionally someone still expresses the need for a one-world government that could "do something" about the ugly wars and ethnic cleansings that plague the globe. To accomplish this task, a world government would have to have a world monopoly on police powers, as current nations have within their borders. Those in support of world government assume that it would operate on a higher level of rationality and disinterestedness than nation states have so far. However, this is a naïve assumption. If that one-world government became totalitarian, there would be no place left on Earth to escape from it. A number of dystopian novels have been written about a world government of this dark nature.

Some Americans identify the UN as such a one-world government, thus greatly exaggerating its powers and degree of control over individual nations. As Richard Grenier said, "The UN is patently not a 'world government,' since the power to govern is the power to coerce, and the UN can't coerce anybody." The UN does not have a world monopoly on police powers, nor does it even have an army of its own, although that has been suggested. U.N. peacemaking missions are staffed on a voluntary and temporary basis from member nations. Grenier also noted that the existence of the United Nations does not at all diminish the dangers of the world. In other words, concerning its original mission to preserve world peace, the UN is largely impotent. Not much has changed since Grenier made this point 25 years ago.

UN-haters not only demonize the world organization but also scorn the majority of its constituent nations, rejecting the idea that the United States could or should cooperate with countries so much less wealthy, successful or democratic than we are. This belief in American superiority sometimes suggests an unlikely isolationism but often includes the idea that the United States should run the world and remake it in our own image.

Opponents of the UN ignore the fact that as one of five permanent members of the Security Council, the United States has veto power over any major decisions. While American leaders might not want to hear criticisms of their policies voiced in the General Assembly by nations they hold in contempt, the resolutions passed by a majority of nations have no power over U.S. decisions. Arguments about the UN encroaching on U.S. sovereignty were epitomized by the long-time Chairman of the Senate's Foreign Affairs committee, Jesse Helms. Congress under the leadership of Helms and others resisted signing international treaties with the excuse that such agreements diminish U.S. sovereignty. The John Birch Society for 50 years has led an effort to get the U.S. out of the UN. Today neoconservative attitudes and policies promote American dominance of the world and belittle, exploit, and criticize the UN. But they are only reinforcing an earlier ideology.

Quite a few people are concerned about the development of a de facto one-world government which they believe is being imposed on the planet by powerful forces. Many are concerned in particular with preserving U.S. sovereignty. However, they see these powerful forces in three quite different ways. First are those who believe in an overarching theory, a classic conspiracy theory (or CCT) about a powerful elite that may include the Illuminati, Zionists, Trilateral Commission, Bilderbergers, European monarchs, international bankers, EU, UN, Freemasons, and even extra-terrestrials, in some combination conspiring to set up the New World Order.

While some fears about centralized power fit into classic conspiracy thinking, others are more evidence-based and cannot be dismissed so easily. A second group of analysts sees the United States government itself trying to establish world-wide economic hegemony backed up by military dominance. Their evidence comes from history, current events, and official statements. A third focus is transnational corporations and their secretive free trade agreements through the World Trade Organization (WTO). Agreements such as GATT and NAFTA already transcend national sovereignty by superseding national laws that would protect the environment, public health, or labor rights.

These three theories about which entities might be trying to establish the “New World Order” are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but only the first can be called a classic conspiracy theory (or collection of theories) that approaches a mythology. The second two, more limited in scope and more based on evidence, are of a type I will call political conspiracy investigation (or PCI). (We will enlarge on the distinction between CCT and PCI in the next chapter.) However, classic theories often contain elements of more evidence-based theories.

Political conspiracies do exist. Our task is to judge the plausibility of theories that try to expose or explain them. Our focus here is on the first, anti-UN ideology because it contains so many distortions and displays unfounded hysteria. It also obscures the other two main views about what or who might be imposing a dangerous control over humanity. But first, let us look at how the idea of the New World Order began.

A New World Order from Positive to Negative

For a new type of progress throughout the world to become a reality, everyone must change. Tolerance is the alpha and omega of a new world order.

Mikhail Gorbachev, President USSR, June 1990

In the beginning, the term had a positive, idealistic connotation. It was used about Woodrow Wilson’s call for a League of Nations after World War I. Wilson’s “14 Points” included freedom of the seas, removal of economic barriers between nations, disarmament to the point consistent with security, self-determination for colonized countries, and the establishment of a multilateral association of nations to adjudicate the peace. However, this vision was too idealistic for both Americans and Europeans 80 years ago, and the resulting League of Nations was as ineffective as the Articles of Confederation had once been.

In 1940, H.G. Wells wrote a book titled *The New World Order* which addressed the ideal of a world at peace under a world governing body. Others used the phrase to describe changes brought by the victors after World War II. Forty years later as the Cold War ended, Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush gradually redefined what each meant by a “new world order.”

Gorbachev was most articulate in describing a profoundly better world in a speech to the U.N. in 1988. His vision included nuclear disarmament, strengthening the U.N., and greatly

increased cooperation of the great powers to meet world needs such as environmental protection, debt relief for poor countries, and human rights. The elder Bush was criticized for his lack of response to these proposals. Eventually Bush began to define a more traditional plan for the future, linking the success of the new world order to the cooperation of nations during the upcoming Gulf War. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told the Senate that the three priorities for fighting the Gulf War were to prevent any more aggression, protect oil supplies, and further a new world order.

As it became clear that the United States was not going to pursue the idealistic aims presented by Gorbachev, the term gradually fell into disuse as a rhetorical ideal and became a unifying concept for conspiracy theorists.

The All-Purpose Conspiracy Theory: Those who fear the New World Order view it from within their own favorite ideologies, which have in common only their fear of centralized world power and a shared name for it. Their greatest apprehensions may be about the United Nations, or the anti-Christ, or the Trilateral Commission. Some believe that the plotters have a plan to drastically reduce world population by genocide. Some fear that their own American government has been or will be taken over, with the creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1913 as an early step in the plot. They believe that concentration camps are already set up to hold dissidents. Many suspect the official story explaining the events of September 11, 2001. Not all of these fears are groundless or without evidence, but they are presented as a web of dire plots.

Wikipedia describes the New World Order as “an integrative theory that attempts to expose and explain the widespread collusion between business and political leaders and their agenda towards the restriction of personal freedom.” People who do not want to acknowledge that something is wrong within their own country may place the locus of the problem elsewhere, across the seas or with a shadowy organization that has allegedly existed for centuries. This involves the defense mechanism of projection. Many mythological elements are present in various theories such as the men in black and unmarked black helicopters used in secret military operations now to prepare for their later use in implementing the New World Order.

Simply identifying enemies whether international bankers or the Illuminati does not actually empower people to do anything about their situation. The problem is that many people do not have the background knowledge, current information, or the critical thinking skills to work out their fears in a productive way. They are further bound by various ideologies, each with its preferred scapegoats. The one thing that links them is their panic. We can hope that worries about the New World Order will coalesce into a more evidence-based and realistic theory, leading to reasoned actions rather than the mindless motions of decapitated chickens.

Concerns about the great and increasing power of the United States military, the CIA, or transnationals and their institutional props are not far-fetched fantasies. Many people in other nations (and in the U.S.) fear that the United States is not only the world’s sole superpower but some of its agencies seek even greater dominance or hegemony over the rest of the world, for instance, by dominating space and by preemptive wars. While some Americans worry about conspiracies by Illuminati or extraterrestrials, much of the world worries about the United States, its militaristic posture, and its tendency to drive out native cultures and destroy local economies.

Analysts of such a totalistic American imperialism often focus on the actions and writings of two influential geostrategists, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Regarding Brzezinski, Michael C. Ruppert cites a former high official in Germany, Dr. Johannes Koeppel, as one who was acquainted with Brzezinski and who made presentations at Bilderberger conferences and

sub-groups of the Trilateral Commission during the 1980s. Koepl eventually concluded that Brzezinski was part of an elite group that intended to impose a world dictatorship. After warning the public in Op-Ed pieces, of course Koepl's career in politics ended. In 1989 Koepl published a book about this alleged conspiracy titled *The Most Important Secrets in the World*.

Another related concern is the huge corporations that cross national borders and have yearly incomes exceeding the GDP of many nations. Michael Parenti said of these powerful businesses: "The goal of the transnational corporation is to become truly transnational, poised above the sovereign power of any particular nation, while being served by the sovereign powers of all nations." John W. Schoen, a commentator at MSNBC, agrees that mega-corporations have undue power but doubts that it all adds up to a conspiracy. "There's no evidence we can find that individual examples of corporate self-interest overtaking the public good are in any way broadly connected—other than the laissez-faire, deregulatory environment of the past three decades that has allowed them to flourish."

However, that deregulatory environment did not just happen out of the blue. There is such a thing as a 'disorganized conspiracy,' to be described in the next chapter. As Gary Indiana says, "When you've got money and power, who needs meetings in secret boardrooms?"

Elites and Genocide: It is widely accepted that continued world population growth is a very serious problem for humanity. This has created fears that *somebody* whether the UN, U.S. government, or various combinations of world elites, has planned or is actually implementing mass genocide in order to reduce population. For instance, I have a printout before me that implicates 'Global 2000' policies of the IMF and World Bank, a number of top elected officials including Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush II, members of the U.S. State Dept. and National Security Council, the Club of Rome, the UN, the Earth Charter, Maurice Strong, the legacy of Cecil Rhodes, and a 200-year Master Conspiracy to create a New World Order, in this genocidal plan. A number of quotes are included, without any sources, and in fact it is hard to tell what is being quoted and what is being said by the writer of this piece, who is not named.

There could be a tiny kernel of truth in all this mishmash. The sort of mentality among elite leaders that accepts preemptive war and nuclear weaponry would probably not balk at genocide by these or other means *if* it were convinced that it would serve elite or geostrategic ends. But would it? Such drastic measures would certainly eliminate potential customers for capitalist enterprise. Also, there are many other ways to reduce population growth that do not involve killing people

United Nations Fears

The following excerpts are from three letters to the editor in support of The American Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2001 which would have severed the United States from the UN:

"[The Act] will end most **UN threats to our sovereignty**....Tell our representatives and senators that **the UN is not a source of help, but is a safe house for terrorists.**"

"The UN has created an International Criminal Court that will have powers to arrest and place on trial anyone it deems to be in violation of numerous loosely defined crimes....denied trial by a jury of peers, the right to confront accusers, the presumption of innocence and other basic rights."

"**The UN was created and is controlled by a group of internationalists, communists and socialists** who intend to have it supplant the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution."

Fear of the UN resurges with each new document and policy, no matter how seemingly idealistic: “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” “The Earth Charter,” and many others. Fears may tie in with apocalyptic idea-systems that involve an anti-Christ who sets up a One World Government and calls himself God. The UN is regarded as a precursor. Such fears are linked with feelings that other countries generally don’t like us, are jealous of us, or hate our freedoms. Many also think that other countries show no gratitude to the United States despite our past generosity and bailing them out when they are in trouble (based mostly on myths about World War II and on the Marshall Plan 60 years ago).

Two old opponents of the United Nations, Senator Jesse Helms and the John Birch Society, seem to have supplied the anti-UN movement with enough ammunition to last for decades. While focusing on the more visible UN, opponents ignore other ‘Bretton Woods’ institutions that were established at the same time that the United Nations was established: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which deal with global economic policies. These entities are dominated by the United States and tend to serve the interests of transnational corporations.

UN Achievements: Besides peace-keeping and providing a forum for conflict resolution, the UN maintains a number of agencies that have accomplished the following (this is just a sampling):

- IAEA helped minimize threats of nuclear war by inspecting nuclear reactors in 90 countries to make sure nuclear materials are not secretly diverted for military purposes.
- International law was strengthened through over 300 treaties.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees provided humanitarian aid to over 30 million refugees fleeing war, famine or persecution since 1951.
- A 13-year effort by WHO eradicated smallpox in 1980.
- UN agencies using oral rehydration, water and sanitation measures, and other health measures, since 1960 cut in half child mortality rates in developing countries, which increased life expectancy from 37 to 67 years.
- UN agencies during the last decade made safe drinking water available to 1.3 billion people in rural areas.
- UNEP led an effort to clean up the Mediterranean Sea that made usable more than half of the previously polluted beaches.
- UN programs helped raise the female literacy rate in developing countries from 36 percent in 1970 to 72 percent in 2000.
- Since its inception, the UN has negotiated 172 peaceful settlements to regional conflicts.

Peacekeeping missions are extremely important, but also the most expensive and most problematical of UN efforts. They are not emphasized in U.S. media and seem to be widely misunderstood. When some horrible situation arises abroad, one hears people say “Why doesn’t the UN do something?” Like those others who resent and fear the UN, they seem unaware that the organization has few powers of independent action. Also, in the case of Darfur, most peacekeeping operations require willingness of the host country. And Jean-Marc Coicaud, author of *Beyond the National Interest*, notes that in Darfur “the international community hasn’t been really eager to take action. That’s the bottom line.”

Coicaud says that an increasing number of conflicts have come before the UN since the early 1990s and the end of the Cold War, and they more often involve humanitarian and human rights issues, ethnic cleansing, and failed states than in the past. In early 2008, 18 peacekeeping operations around the world utilizing almost 150,000 men and women, and cost altogether nearly \$7 billion a year. The UN is changing its emphasis from *peacekeeping* to *peacebuilding* which requires work in building governance after the security situation is stabilized.

But while many lives have been saved by these operations, and societies rebuilt, Coicaud says there are more situations of mixed results than of outright success. He counts missions in Macedonia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Guatemala as successes; Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor as mixed results; and Somalia, Angola, and Rwanda as failures.

Why are these operations not more successful? Coicaud lists a number of limiting factors, first regarding the UN itself. Its leadership is not unified and decisive, neither the relationship between the Secretary General and the Security Council, nor relationships among the five Permanent Members of the Security Council: Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In terms of its global mandates, the UN has few resources. Coicaud points out that the money allotted for peacekeeping operations is less than one percent of what the major powers spend for military budgets. And these resources are not used optimally because the UN functions in “an ad hoc fashion.” Coicaud says that the earlier you can take action before a crisis turns into a conflict, the more successful you can be. “But of course very often a crisis has to become a conflict for member states to pay attention....So it is a catch-22.”

The second major factor Coicaud describes is the choice between the national interest and the internationalized interest. There are seven major guidelines for collective security under international law, but sometimes these principles conflict, for instance between the principle of sovereign equality of states and nonintervention vs. respect for human rights. Member states may have to choose between such principles and Coicaud says “most of the time, if not always, these member states choose the national interest, and, of course, most of the time the national interest is understood in a very narrow manner.”

The third factor has to do with the ambiguous role of the three Western Permanent Members of the Security Council and especially the United States. Coicaud describes them as “both *the underwriters* and *the underminers* of the international system, its values and institutions.” They have had a key role in how it is organized; in fact, he says, “the United Nations is largely a U.S. invention.” However, “These Permanent Members of the Security Council tend to think that they have more rights than they have duties; and conversely, of course, they tend to think that other countries have more duties than rights.”

Other problems with peacekeeping have to do with the military forces that member nations contribute to the peacekeeping missions. The number of countries contributing troops and police has risen to a record 119. However, many of these soldiers are poorly trained. More developed countries with well-trained troops do not want to deploy them in UN missions, which do not have the means and operational ability of, say, NATO. The United States has only 316 military people deployed under the UN flag.

Both those who fear the United Nations and those who want more from it need to become aware of what peacekeeping is all about and what it would take in world leadership and investment to make it work much better.

United States/United Nations Cost/Benefit Ratio. Those Americans who actively dislike the United Nations often express resentment that the United States is the UN's biggest single financial contributor, providing 22% of the UN's annual budget of \$1.8 billion. (The European Union also claims to be the largest contributor because collectively its twenty-five member countries provide 37% of the UN budget.) Besides this general budget, there are assessed and voluntary contributions to various agencies and peacekeeping efforts, adding up to an average U.S. total of \$3.8 billion in 2002-2004.

Perhaps some Americans resent paying dues to the UN because they view its activities as charity for the Third World that doesn't do anything for the home folks. However, that is a very narrow and short-sighted view, because the U.S. is not an island. Plagues and armed conflicts tend to spill over borders. Many Americans assume that since the U.S. contributes so much money it is only fair that it should dominate the world body and demand 'value for money' or 'reform' of the UN. Congress, under the influence of anti-UN members, developed the pattern of making its payments late, so that by April 2008 the U.S. was listed as owing the UN something between \$300 million and \$2.4 billion, especially for peacekeeping missions.

However, although the United States pays the most, it is also first in getting UN procurement contracts (mostly for peacekeeping activities) worth \$200 million to \$300 million each year. In addition, the United Nations, its agencies, and the attending diplomats with their staffs contributed about \$3.2 billion a year to the economy of New York City in the late 1990s (according to former mayor Rudi Giuliani) and probably more now.

James A. Paul, executive director of the Global Policy Forum, notes that the UN performs actions such as peacekeeping which otherwise the United States would have to do at its own cost. Norman Solomon of the Institute for Public Accuracy points out that the United States leads the world in the international arms trade, undermining UN missions and making them more costly. Also note that the amount the United States contributes to the UN is a pittance compared to amounts paid out, for instance, to bail out industries and keep financial entities afloat.

Oil-for-Food Investigation: The Independent Inquiry Committee (IIC) chaired by Paul Volcker, on February 3, 2005 released its first interim report on issues related to the United Nations Oil-for-Food Program. The report confirmed that "the major source of external financial resources to the Iraqi Regime resulted from sanctions violations outside the Program's framework" such as illicit oil sales or "smuggling" rather than from relatively few instances of surcharges or kickbacks within the Program.

The interim report also said that the administration and accounting of funds was generally carried out appropriately. The UN used \$327 million or 27 percent less than it was given for program administration and instead used the funds for direct benefit of the Iraqi people. In other words, the Volcker report did not support the strident critics of UN handling of the Oil-for-Food Program. It did find the program was corrupted by 2,200 companies in 66 countries that were paying kickbacks to Iraqi officials to win supply deals—to the tune of \$1.8 billion. One of these companies was Chevron, the No. 2 U.S. oil company which agreed to pay \$30 million in settlement but was not prosecuted.

CHAPTER 23: CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Coming home from church and watching Lee Oswald shot dead, live. A man with a Russian wife who's just killed a President is shot by a dude who looks like a Mafia hitman while cops in cowboy hats watch, and we're supposed to believe this is just a couple of lone nuts? The fifties drive for everything's fine fine was still strong in November of 1963.

Anne Herbert, "Assassinations" 1985

Conspiracies do exist and probably have existed since the dawn of civilization. The ancient Egyptian dynasties had their court intrigues, as did the rest of the ancients. You will recall the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar—*"Et tu, Brute!"* The English after 350 years still celebrate Guy Fawkes Day—discovery of the Gunpowder Plot to blow up Parliament. The Boston Tea Party might be called a conspiracy from the British point of view. Aaron Burr, Vice President under Thomas Jefferson, was involved in a conspiracy to build an empire on the Western frontier. The Erie wars of 1868 involved plots by several robber barons—Cornelius Vanderbilt, Daniel Drew, James Fisk Jr. and Jay Gould—to control the Erie Railroad. Gary Indiana says these players "manipulated the stock market like a rigged slot machine, liberally purchased judges and legislators, and in one spectacular instance staged a rail collision in a tunnel north of Albany." Adolf Hitler discovered (more likely fabricated) a Communist plot to torch the German parliament—the Reichstag—and used this as justification to close down German democracy.

The great majority of conspiracies in the historical record were political. They involved secret plots by two or more persons to gain power, get rid of a leader, or overturn a government. Criminal conspiracies also occur on a smaller scale, two or more people joining to commit fraud or murder or some other illegal act. Laws are on the books to prosecute criminal conspiracies.

Although it is clear that conspiracies exist, of both the political and criminal kinds, there is a very strong prejudice in the United States against discussing them. Some individuals refuse to listen to anything that contradicts the conventional wisdom or official statements, calling any dissenting view a 'conspiracy theory,' and implying that those who listen to such stuff have a few screws loose. This is one of those forms of pseudo-skepticism that actually defends orthodoxy. Marginalizing people with divergent opinions about political events is coercion into conformity. It can also be a disinformation technique.

The derogatory term is applied to those who have doubts concerning dramatic events such as assassinations, 9/11, or the unexpected results of elections—in other words, political conspiracies. Examples are the 2004 presidential election, suspicious deaths of prominent people such as Paul Wellstone or John Kennedy, Jr., and various official government stories that do not seem to add up. Rather than believing a full-fledged 'theory,' people may only have doubts about the official story. They should not have to apologize about looking for more evidence.

In this situation, the word 'skeptic' has two opposing definitions: a person may be skeptical of conspiracy theories, or he may be skeptical of official explanations. Ideally, one should be skeptical of both. The existence of cranks should not discredit *all* investigations or theories. A discerning person is neither gullible nor pseudo-skeptical.

Gary Indiana says the very term 'conspiracy' is misleading because most of what we ought to know about the dealings of power is not really secret. It is just that "much of the public doesn't have the ability to make obvious connections between available facts." Indiana also notes that some conspiracies evolve over time without being planned in detail—he calls them

“disorganized conspiracies.” They can occur gradually over generations, with different people involved at different times, requiring only a continuity of authoritarian ideology.

How many people does it take to turn a ‘conspiracy theory’ into the conventional wisdom? Patrick Leman says a 1968 survey found that about two-thirds of Americans believed John F. Kennedy’s assassination in 1963 involved a conspiracy. By 1990 the number had risen to 90 percent. Similarly, several polls show that many people believe that top U.S. officials had foreknowledge of the September 11, 2001 attacks, but consciously failed to act for political, military, and/or economic reasons. In the U.S., one in four adults believed this. Almost half (49 percent) of New York City residents agreed. In Canada, a national poll found that 63 percent of Canadians believe that U.S. leaders had prior knowledge of 9/11. There was virtually no news coverage of these polls in the United States, so that 9/11 ‘conspiracy theorists’ continue to be stigmatized as a small and mentally unstable group.

Of course, the fact that many people believe something does not necessarily make it true.

Two kinds of ‘Conspiracy Theories’

Since my paranoid shift, whenever I hear the words “conspiracy theory” (which seems more often lately) it usually means someone is getting too close to the truth.

Michael Hasty, 2004

It may help us to make a distinction between classic conspiracy theories (CCT), on the one hand, and the investigation of political conspiracies (PCI) on the other. David Ray Griffin renames/reframes political conspiracy theories, calling them “alternatives to official explanations,” or “non-official explanations.” The sense of the political conspiracy analyst that something is fishy, that the facts as given to the public “do not add up” involves psychological motivations quite different from those of classic conspiracy believers who divide the world into good and evil-doers and see the evil-doers as larger than life.

The followers of classic conspiracy theories tend to be emotional and gullible; come up short on questions of conspirators’ motivations; give long lists of individuals and groups guilty by association with each other; and often link several conspiracies together, sometimes in novel ways. In contrast, political conspiracy analysts are evidence-based and use greater critical thinking skills. However, any important field of conspiracy theories, notably 9/11, may draw theorists of both kinds, ranging from classic cranks to serious and able investigators, along with hoaxers and those who spread disinformation.

An article by Jeffrey M. Bale in the British journal *Lobster* describes the difference between CCT and PCI (my terms, not his). *Lobster* studies actual covert politics, in its many forms from ‘dirty tricks,’ to industrial espionage and cartels, to the activities of various countries’ secret services, which may include assassinations and foreign coup d’états. The journal boasts that it has been denounced on the floor of the House of Commons (no doubt for outing some clandestine activity). Clearly, since political conspiracies exist historically, currently, and in criminal law, they deserve investigation and study. However, Bale says that academics tend to reject out of hand any idea that political plots might exist, for the following reason:

[It is] a simple failure to distinguish between ‘conspiracy theories’ in the strict sense of the term...and the activities of actual clandestine and covert political groups, which are a common feature of modern politics...Serious research into genuine conspiratorial networks has at worst been suppressed, as a rule been discouraged, and at best been looked upon with condescension by the academic community. An entire dimension of political history and contemporary politics has thus been consistently neglected.

Another barrier to consideration of political conspiracies is our narrow version of history. Jonathan Vankin and John Whalen in their book about conspiracies and conspiracy theories (mostly of the political kind) say that the definition of what *could* be true is often terribly narrow. Most people only know the sanitized, ‘Disney’ version of history which could also be called “the ‘New York Times version’ or the ‘TV news version’ or the ‘college textbook version.’ Much of the historical knowledge we carry around might be termed propaganda of the past.

Vankin and Whalen say that the main resistance to analyzing political conspiracies and clandestine politics comes from the media, academia, and the government—those who manage information and who often are implicated. Among reasons for such resistance they give these:

- Vested interests—those involved in covert politics do not, of course, want past or current plots to come to light.
- Laziness—“A good conspiracy is tough to crack.” [One might also mention the growing lack of funds for investigative reporters]
- Peer pressure from armchair psychoanalysts and dogmatic skeptics who paint those with dissenting opinions as cranks or crazy people. Vankin and Whalen note that there may be psychological reasons for resisting information about conspiracy theories. “It is unsettling to face the possibility that, to quote the [old radio program] Firesign Theater, ‘Everything you know is wrong.’”
- Bad associations with past classic conspiracy theories, especially those involving a Jewish conspiracy. Also, liberal over-reaction to right-wing ‘paranoid style’ politics.
- Unquestioning faith in democracy, and patriotic denial that any agencies or leaders of the United States government could have been or could be involved with clandestine politics of criminal intent and/or subverting the public will.

Classic Conspiracy Theories

[The essential element is belief in a] *vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character [designed to] undermine and destroy a way of life.*

Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*

The classic conspiracy theory is a special form of ideology that mythologizes human affairs. Theorists tend to view the world in terms both Manichean (Good versus Evil) and apocalyptic (End of the World).

Bale says that when such an overarching conspiracy belief spreads throughout a society this suggests that it serves basic social needs. “[Classic] conspiracy theories are important as collective delusions, delusions which nevertheless reflect real fears and real social problems, rather than as evidence of individual pathologies.” One social function of these grand conspiracy theories is to make the complexities of public affairs more understandable to the individual,

through our ancient mental habits of dualistic thinking, oversimplification, personification, projection, and scapegoating. Also, Bale says, by personifying the source of current crises and misery as evil people, that implies that good people might have a similar power to control events:

In short, a belief in conspiracy theories helps people to make sense out of a confusing, inhospitable reality, rationalize their present difficulties, and partially assuage their feelings of powerlessness. In this sense, it is no different than any number of religious, social, or political beliefs, and is deserving of the same serious study.

Bale notes that in the past, large segments of a nation's population and also its leaders sometimes accepted beliefs in "sinister, all-powerful conspiratorial forces." The combination of classic conspiracy theories and authority can be lethal. Such official conspiracy theories resulted in the late medieval witch-hunts, several centuries of Jewish pogroms, Hitler's genocide against the Jews and Romany, Stalin's purge of purported Trotskyites and traitors, Mao's Cultural Revolution targeting intellectuals, and less lethally, McCarthyism and Cold War fears of 'Comms.' In the U.S. today, propagandists have tried with some success to spread an official conspiracy theory that conflates al-Qaeda, terrorism, Arabs, the victims and enemies of the state of Israel, and Islam. Besides providing scapegoats, this conspiracy belief can justify neoconservative wars and occupations in oil-rich countries.

To decide whether a given idea system is indeed a classic conspiracy theory, one might look for the following traits listed by Bale. First, the theory regards the secret conspirators as demonic, inhuman or anti-human beings with grandiose aims to overturn established institutions and the values of decent people. They are directed from a single center that plans and coordinates the conspiracy in all its details, and are all united in one plan—making them more effective than most human organizations. Bale says that conspiracy theories usually depict the conspiratorial group as both international and continuing in time. "The conspiratorial group is therefore capable of operating virtually everywhere." It is seen as almost omnipotent. And it is the motive force of historical change. Donna Kossy notes the all-encompassing nature of classic conspiracy theories:

Conspiracy theories are like black holes—they suck in everything that comes their way, regardless of content or origin. Everything you've ever known or experienced, no matter how 'meaningless', once it contacts the conspiratorial universe, is enveloped by and cloaked in sinister significance. Once inside, the vortex gains in size and strength, sucking in everything you touch

In contrast, says Bale, real covert groups and political actions may have quite bad effects but they do not fit the "bleak, simplistic image propounded by conspiracy theorists." They are not absolutely evil but only too human. There may be bitter disagreements within the group about tactics. Rather than a single monolithic conspiracy, "at any given point in time, there are dozens if not thousands of competitive political and economic groups engaging in secret planning and activities, and most are doing so in an effort to gain some advantage over their rivals among the others."

Classic Conspiracy Theories

[Classic] conspiracy theories...are essentially elaborate fables even though they may well be based on a kernel of truth.

Jeffrey M. Bale

Let us keep in mind both parts of this definition: the elaborate fable and the occasional kernel of truth. Conservative religious beliefs about the Anti-Christ and the End-Times are at the mythological end of the spectrum, as are some idea-systems about ancient astronauts that contend the human race is under surveillance and possible attack by one or more groups of extraterrestrials, some of whom may be hostile.

CCTs often involve very persistent memes, based on long-ago events or folklore, or a single book written a century or two ago. Some religious CCTs are based almost entirely on the Bible, decoding it or finding patterns of numbers embedded in it. Or they are based on certain comparatively recent interpretations of the Bible that refer especially to the Book of Revelation, linking this to contemporary political affairs in Russia, Europe, or Iraq, and reworking ancient themes of anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism.

Babylon: One popular element of Christian fundamentalist conspiracy theory or mythology is expressed in the *Left Behind* series as “every false religion in the world can be traced back to Babylon.” This Babylon theory usually has anti-Catholic overtones and is now tied in with the U.S. occupation of Iraq. One idea in the books is that the “One World Government” headed by the anti-Christ will be located in the rebuilt city of Babylon. The United States has built in Baghdad what is currently the largest embassy in the world. However, this coincidence would suggest that an American is the anti-Christ.

Belief in the Babylon connection shows the influence of a nineteenth century book, *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop and a twentieth century popularization of it by Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (which Woodrow later disowned). The theory regarding Babylon’s evil influence over all world religions is absurd because lands far from the Middle East such as China, Africa, India, and the Americas had no contact with the Babylonians and developed entirely different religions, with different gods, beliefs, and rituals.

Religious conspiracies tend to be circular and self-referential, without interest in actual evidence apart from their often-unique readings of the Bible, or perhaps the text of a forged document such as the “Protocol of the Elders of Zion.” There is no physical evidence, little or no circumstantial evidence, and even the textual evidence is subject to multiple interpretations.

Galactic conspiracy theories include not only the persistent belief that aliens crash-landed near Roswell in 1947, but also that a number of new inventions coincidentally appeared some years later as the military surreptitiously gave valuable wreckage to trusted scientists and industrialists). Other dimensions of galactic theories are the many sightings of UFOs especially by credible witnesses such as police and pilots, witnesses who insist that they were abducted by aliens, crop circles, cattle mutilations, and other anomalous occurrences which may not be related to each other. An overarching galactic theory about several alien races visiting Earth—some of them friendly, some not—meshes with books and beliefs about ancient astronauts or a twelfth planet.

The actual conspiracy theory is the belief that the U.S. government over a number of administrations covered up evidence of these startling events. It is now widely accepted that U.S. military officials encouraged belief in a UFO cover-up, in order to maintain secrecy about their research into advanced aircraft that the Germans had begun during World War II. Yet some think this latest information is yet another level of cover-up. Although Galactic beliefs are often quite bizarre, some aspects are supported to a degree by physical evidence, circumstantial evidence, anomalies, and official contradictions.

Zionism is another purported world-wide conspiracy, leading some from right and left to wax vitriolic in their belief that Zionism directs U.S. foreign policy. A few blog posters even deny or

minimize the Holocaust. Besides being a *non sequitur*, such revisionism is patently false. I have personally known two American vets who were among the first to reach and liberate survivors of concentration camps. In one vet this view of horror produced a lifelong peace activist. Multiply this by many thousands of eyewitnesses, photographs, Nazi records, legal testimony, etc. for a massive amount of documentation that makes Holocaust deniers seem absurd.

Certainly Zionist ideology is a problematic political force not only in Israel but also the United States. Straussian philosophy, Jewish religious Zionism, and Christian Zionism are dangerously converging ideologies. Neoconservatives, AIPAC, and Christian Zionists do influence U.S. government. But exaggerated claims that the tail is wagging the dog carry memes of ancient anti-Semitic conspiracy thinking.

Do keep in mind that Israel's population is about two percent that of the United States and that not all Israelis are Zionists—in fact, some are actively anti-Zionist. It is a similar story with American Jews, a small minority of the U.S. population with relatively few strong supporters of Israel's expansionist policies. Besides, Zionists are not some sort of Svengalis—devious types who hoodwink naïve and decent Anglo-Saxon chaps such as, we'll say, Dick Cheney. Decades of U.S. support (mostly military) for a nuclear armed, right-wing government in Israel has to come not from altruistic reasons or even mainly political reasons—the Jewish vote—but geostrategic reasons.

North American Union: Fears about immigration from Mexico have coalesced around the supposed plot to merge the United States with Canada and Mexico, involving a superhighway across Texas and a common currency called the amero. There are several kernels of truth in this CCT. Around 1999, several economists at Canadian think-tanks advocated a shared currency. Texas Governor Rick Perry proposed the Trans-Texas Corridor in 2002, to consist of a 400-yards-wide highway that would also carry utilities, petroleum pipelines, railway track, and fiber-optic cables. In 2004, an Independent Task Force on North America proposed a degree of integration resembling the European Community which existed before the European Union or perhaps similar to the U.S. Articles of Confederation.

The focus of conspiracy concern today is a NAFTA-related, quasi-governmental agency called the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) which has discussed increasing integration of the three governments. When it was formed in 2005, SPP was concerned with congestion at the Canadian border, synchronizing external tariffs, and similar issues.

Theories about an imminent plan for unification were fueled especially by Jerome Corsi's Internet columns and best-selling book, *The Late Great U.S.A.* Three of the Republican presidential candidates in 2008 campaigned against a North American Union. Both North America's SuperCorridor Coalition (NASCO) and the SPP on their websites have denied the existence of plans for a North American Union, NAFTA Superhighway, or common currency. For example the NASCO site says:

MYTH: NASCO promotes a North American Union.

FACT: NASCO does not promote a NAU, nor do we know of any single serious advocate of such. NASCO certainly does not desire nor supports any NAU. There have been a few university professors and "think tank" groups who may have discussed the idea of a NAU similar to the 27-nation European Union; but the mere suggestion, much less the serious intent to incorporate the sovereign nations of Canada and Mexico into a political union with the United States would provoke extraordinary, insurmountable resistance, and is certainly not a concept NASCO supports.

MYTH: NASCO promotes the adoption of the "Amero."

FACT: NASCO does not promote the adoption of a NAU single currency called the “Amero,” a discussion primarily among university professors. NASCO does not support the creation of any new currency. Again, this is an idea that has been floated by a few professors and “think tanks” and does not exist beyond the minor discussions within those groups.

The conspiracy theory may be overblown, but there is another case to be made against SPP and its parent NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). Laura Carlsen, director of the Americas Policy Program, points out that representative government was shut out of the process after the initial approval of the NAFTA pact. The SPP or “son-of-NAFTA” she says “did not [even] involve congressional approval or signed agreements.” After 14 years of NAFTA, majorities in all three nations believe the agreement has had a negative effect on their countries. Carlsen says that proceedings and representation in SPP should be open to the public. Project Censored, October 1, 2008 reported that Canada, the United States, and Mexico have been meeting secretly to form a militarized tri-national Homeland Security Force.

Political Conspiracy Investigation: PCIs are frequently focused on discovering corruption and machinations of the powerful, and so they are often a tool of dissent. Economic conspiracies are also part of the PCI category. As a child I heard male relatives discuss various inventions they believed were squelched either by the government or business companies who bought patents and then ignored them. My uncles talked about automobile and oil companies buying up and destroying the streetcar lines. Much later I learned this was well-substantiated by legal evidence. That a business might squelch inventions also seems quite plausible. In one recent example, the documentary film "Who Killed the Electric Car?" demonstrates how automakers destroyed their own invention even after it was leased to customers.

Investigating and analyzing actual covert politics might involve the following activities: 1) Investigative reporting; 2) Historical research; 3) Criminal investigations; 4) Impeachment or prosecutions in court. One essential for anyone who investigates covert politics is a habit of skepticism, particularly about official pronouncements or the conventional wisdom, but also about one’s own hypotheses. It is useful for the conspiracy analyst to have an eye for anomalies, coincidences, and contradictions, but this talent or skill if overused can lead one into the less objective kind of conspiracy thinking. Imagination needs to be balanced by skepticism and intuition by evidence.

It is a well-known fact that military intelligence and covert organizations such as the CIA and its counterparts in other countries such as M15, KGB, ISI, and Mossad have on many occasions conducted disinformation campaigns, psychological operations (psy-ops), and even ‘false flag’ operations in which intelligence agents initiate an action such as an explosion to let blame fall on somebody else. Such activities have long figured as plot elements in Hollywood films.

The *agent provocateur* is a person paid by a police or intelligence agency to urge some group to plan more radical and violent activities than they would otherwise have performed, or sometimes to perform the violent action himself under cover of the group. If the *provocateur* is successful in producing criminal actions, police may then arrest members of the targeted group, or at the very least, the group will lose public support. The FBI under J. Edgar Hoover freely used psy-ops, disinformation campaigns, and *agent provocateurs* during its Cointelpro program against dissident domestic groups such as the Black Panthers and American Indian Movement.

It is also well-known that photos, films, tapes, and other technical records can be doctored or faked. In other words, all is not as it seems and this is what the conspiracy analyst sniffs out. It is actually more surprising to find so many people who apparently take events for gospel truth as

long as the Pentagon or the CIA says it is so. Their belief in official conspiracy theories shows they are almost as gullible as the tabloid readers and Elvis believers.

As a rule of thumb, the more we see governments acting with secretiveness and apparent cover-ups, the more suspicions will arise and non-official explanations will circulate. Such theories are less common when governments are transparent and investigative media are doing their job. Currently, we seem to be at a high water mark for political conspiracy theories and doubtless also for economic and political conspiracies themselves. Until 2001, the “mother of all” political conspiracy theories was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. Now major focus is on the large-scale murders of September 11, 2001. In both cases there has been widespread doubt about the official story. As Richard Falk notes in his foreword to *The New Pearl Harbor*, “It is not necessary to go along with every suspicious inference in order to conclude that the official account of 9/11 is thoroughly unconvincing.”

At the same time there is a great deal of resistance to any unofficial explanation. Most people do not recognize an official conspiracy theory as such. Produced by a government, with a government’s access to media, it is accepted automatically. Griffin notes that the official account of 9/11 is a theory about a conspiracy perpetrated by a group of 19 Mideast terrorists. There is more than one alternative explanation (Griffin lists eight). These other explanations range from the possibility that some elements of the U.S. government (perhaps a small rogue group of current or former intelligence agents) were *aware* of the impending attacks, to the theory that persons at the highest level of government were *implicated* in them.

Griffin says that one can choose between the official conspiracy story and some version of the revisionist (unofficial) conspiracy story. This choice centers on pattern and coincidence:

A conspiracy theory usually depends upon the perception of a pattern, plus a claim that the existence of this pattern is best explained by supposing that it was brought about through the combined efforts of two or more people. To reject it requires either a denial that the alleged pattern exists or the assertion that the existence of the pattern could be purely coincidental.

Thus the two objections raised to any particular conspiracy theory are first, that there is no pattern, and second, even if there is a pattern, it could be explained by coincidence. The second, fall-back position becomes more difficult for skeptics if there are a great many coincidences or anomalies to explain away. Speaking about just one of the eight alternative explanations, Griffin says, “The price for rejecting this conspiracy theory is to accept a coincidence theory [and] the number of coincidences that would need to be accepted is enormous” [he lists 38 of them].

However, those who don’t want to consider anything except the official explanation usually frame the only alternative to it as the most bizarre unofficial explanation—something of a straw-man argument. For instance, those who accept the official story of the 9/11 attack often assume there is only one alternative—full complicity at the top level of government—and only one or two issues such as whether an actual jet hit the Pentagon. They are understandably skeptical of some convoluted story that involves dummy planes and hundreds of people kept incognito. Such scenarios may be put forth in good faith or not. One 9/11 website accuses portions of the 9/11 “Truth” Movement of being duped or even of deliberately spreading disinformation, notably with theories about “no planes,” “no Boeing at the Pentagon,” and “Pentagon missile.”

Griffin says that discrediting the more far-fetched scenarios presented by a book or argument is valid in defeating a *deductive* argument in which all the parts hinge together and the argument is only as strong as the weakest link. But the same tactic is not valid in opposing a *cumulative* argument which depends on several independent arguments and the preponderance of evidence.

Some skeptics such as Michael Shermer put unofficial conspiracy theories in the same basket with ‘pseudoscience,’ using similar reductionist arguments against both. Shermer says:

The mistaken belief that a handful of unexplained anomalies can undermine a well-established theory lies at the heart of **all** conspiratorial thinking (as well as creationism, Holocaust denial, and the various crank theories of physics). **All** the “evidence” for a 9/11 conspiracy falls under the rubric of this fallacy. [*my emphasis*]

Shermer forgets that old rule “Avoid the word ‘all’ lest you end up making a sweeping generalization” (he makes two of them). The findings of the 9/11 Commission are simply not a well-established theory such as evolution or the fact that the Holocaust occurred. The 9/11 anomalies are more than a handful, and perhaps number in the hundreds. They may well have explanations, but many Americans do not feel that they have yet heard those explanations.

Some prominent leftists such as Noam Chomsky, David Corn, and Alexander Cockburn also take pains to reject nonofficial explanations about matters such as 9/11 or the alleged 2004 election fraud, perhaps as part of the general academic avoidance of such topics. One argument used against the possibility of complex conspiracies is that they would involve a number of people and it is unlikely that so many people would stay quiet. For example, Alexander Cockburn says (concerning the 2004 presidential election): “As usual, the conspiracy nuts think that plans of inconceivable complexity worked at 100 percent efficiency, that Murphy’s Law was once again in suspense, and that 10,000 co-conspirators are all going to keep their mouths shut.”

However, inside jobs do not necessarily require large numbers of co-conspirators. They might involve military command structures with control at the top and subordinates trained to obey orders without question. Strict compartmentalization means many technicians might be unaware of the significance of their tasks. Automation amplifies the ability of a few to perform complex operations. The website 911review claims “It is reasonable to think that the entire 9/11/01 attack could have been executed by as few as a dozen insiders.”

Also, people involved in a secret project may never talk, especially if no one asks them any questions. One could point out that an estimated 3,000 scientists, military people, University of Chicago officials, and others were involved in the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb in the early 1940s—yet none leaked the information.

Declassified memos and newly released records have revealed hitherto-unknown details of events fifty and sixty years old, such as Cold War discussions between the U.S. and UK about using the nuclear bomb against China or the Soviets, or details of how U.S. intelligence officials used former Gestapo agents and war criminals after World War II.

Circumstances surrounding the deaths of tens of thousands of Korean citizens during the Korean War were recently uncovered through extensive research by AP reporters and the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission. From records declassified after half a century, they learned that a number of American officers knew about, photographed, conditionally accepted, and possibly supervised mass executions of leftists (100,000 or more) by the right-wing South Korean government in the mid-1950s.

Plausibility: To dismiss all accusations of conspiracy out of hand is not critical thinking. Unofficial explanations can be quite thorough and sophisticated. Many individuals with expert credentials dedicate time and energy to uncovering recent and current political conspiracies that they believe threaten our freedoms and our planet. Their background may be in law, investigative journalism, or historical scholarship. For instance, Robert Kennedy Jr., a highly respected and

capable attorney, summed up a large amount of factual evidence supporting persistent beliefs that the 2004 American presidential election involved serious fraud and chicanery.

A better approach is to judge each so-called conspiracy theory on its own merits. Although most of us do not have time to analyze the major theories, you can make a rough estimate of plausibility factors based on the following:

- The *absence* of traits that indicate a classic conspiracy theory—especially belief in extremely powerful, monolithic, metaphysically evil conspirators
- Credible sources and logical analysis
- Physical evidence, circumstantial evidence
- Historical evidence and precedent (if the CIA followed a certain procedure in the past, it might be more likely to do so again)
- Motive, means, and opportunity
- *Cui bono*: Who benefits?
- Coincidences, anomalies, and contradictions in the official story
- Possible scenarios and plausible alternatives
- Signs of a cover-up
- Media coverage and opinion pieces that ignore, deride, or downplay any but the official explanation. In some cases this will be a media blackout.

Since many alleged conspiracies are criminal conspiracies, and they tend to be unique events, an appropriate method to deal with them is that of criminal investigation, with the model of Sherlock Holmes or an investigative reporter. Scientists can contribute expert evidence, but the major concern of scientists is not unique events but repeated patterns.

PART VII: INFORMATION

All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values.
Marshall McLuhan, Canadian media scholar, 1911-1980

For ideologies, public information is the coin of the realm. By ‘information’ I mean much more than simple facts. Even on the personal level, every communication includes a great deal more than the plain meaning of its words. It also contains information about how the talker wants to be understood and how he sees his own relation to the person who receives the information. This *metacommunication* includes both the context of the communication and nonverbal communication that accompanies the words. (Metacommunication is a concept based on the work of Gregory Bateson and developed further by the late Paul Watzlawick.)

Whether the communicator is your boss, your lover, or a mugger, and whether the communication is accompanied by a smile, a growl, or a gun, are of utmost importance in deciphering the message. Some individuals (perhaps women, perhaps those whose ‘right brain’ is dominant) are better than others at translating metacommunication. Some can more easily detect when a person is lying, even on television, while others tend to take words at face value, especially when delivered by an authority figure or someone with whom they already agree.

The quality of information may be good, bad, or indifferent. In other words, the messenger may or may not know what he or she is talking about, or may lie. Information comes in several varieties. Besides the standard kind, there is Misinformation, Disinformation, and No Information at All—the sound of silence. The silence may be due to ignorance, or censorship, or generations of denial. Distracting information is another variety. There is also Tricky Information, as in advertising, propaganda, media bias, PR, and ‘spin.’ Somewhere between denial and censorship is the hidden history left out of school text-books.

The American public tends to assume that their media are the freest in the world and their government, a representative democracy, is transparent, making the dissemination of public information completely unlike the old ‘Iron Curtain’ of Soviet days. Instead however, we have a Plastic Curtain that filters information via government and corporate censorship and media self-censorship. It is not transparent, but more like a sheet behind which is performed a shadow play.

Propaganda is the manipulation of public opinion using the techniques of psychology and advertising. A concerted effort by a government to misinform, dis-inform, and fail-to-inform the public, including censorship and propaganda, can be termed Thought Control (not that our own government would try anything like that). The ‘opposite’ of thought control is *Glasnost*, or openness regarding information and opinion formation. Another word for it is ‘transparency.’

Especially for us in the United States, a large proportion of public information arrives through the mass media. As Marshall McLuhan famously said, “The medium is the message,” so we need to look very closely at the medium (plural media) to see what the message is. All too often it is money speaking.

CHAPTER 24: MEDIA, MONEY, AND MONOPOLY

We paid \$3 billion for these television stations. We will decide what the news is. The news is what we tell you it is.

David Boylan, WTVT station manager, April 16, 1997

Since the media often carries disinformation, while censoring or underreporting other important information, one needs to understand the nature of the system from which the public gets most of its current information. It is an economic oligopoly. Media conglomerates are increasingly concentrated due to mergers and acquisitions, and to decisions from a docile Federal Communications Commission (FCC) dominated by industry.

First, ten newspaper chains control over half of U.S. newspaper circulation (total circulation is estimated at about 50 million). These ten chains account for fourteen of the top twenty newspapers in the United States. They have also been buying up television stations.

Second, by 2000 six enormous corporations controlled most of the U.S. media industry. They were Time Warner, Disney, Murdoch's News Corporation, Bertelsmann of Germany, Viacom (formerly CBS), and General Electric's NBC. Since 2000 there have been yet more mergers, such as AOL Time-Warner, and the conglomerates include new media such as the Internet market. According to media scholar Ben Bagdikian, the first five corporations (without NBC) now have major control. The situation appears to be a virtual monopoly, in which only a few firms control the market.

To demonstrate how quickly this has happened, the Media Reform Information Center points out that only 25 years ago—in 1983—50 corporations controlled the great majority of U.S. news media. A decade later, in the fourth edition of Bagdikian's book *The Media Monopoly* he pointed out that "fewer than two dozen of these extraordinary creatures own and operate 90 percent of the mass media." A decade after that, the number was down to six, then five.

Third, nine extremely powerful, transnational media corporations, most of them based in the United States, dominate the global commercial media. These nine media giants have grown very quickly. Until the 1980s, most media were national. Then the IMF, World Bank, and U.S. government applied pressure to deregulate and privatize media and communication systems. This coincided with new satellite and digital technologies, and the result was transnational media corporations such as the following:

- Time Warner (1997 sales \$24 billion) expects to do a majority of its business abroad by 2013.
- Disney (\$22 billion) also is generating at least one-third of its business abroad.
- Bertelsmann (\$15 billion)
- Viacom (\$13 billion)
- Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (\$11 billion)
- TCI is the largest U.S. cable company, with many other U.S. and global ventures.
- General Electric (1997 sales \$80 billion) owns NBC.
- Sony (\$48 billion) owns Columbia and TriStar Pictures and several recording companies.
- Seagram (\$14 billion) owns Universal film and music interests.

Source: Robert W. McChesney, "The Nine Firms That Dominate the World," August 2003

Disney, for example, controls ABC, six film companies, ten TV stations, five cable channels, 65 radio stations, four record companies, ten book publishers, fifteen magazines, and five parks and resorts.

Behind this first tier of giants, according to noted media critic Robert W. McChesney, are three or four dozen media firms, mostly national or regional in scope, which annually do between \$1 and \$8 billion dollars worth of media business. Thus, the great majority of the world's films, TV shows, cable and satellite ownership, book and magazine publishing, and music production come from about fifty firms, with the nine giants dominating most sectors. McChesney says, "Such a concentration of media power is troubling, if not unacceptable."

In addition, McChesney says the media field is even more concentrated than appears:

These firms are all actively engaged in equity joint ventures where they share ownership of concerns with their "competitors" so as to reduce competition and risk. Each of the nine first-tier media giants, for example, has joint ventures with, on average, two-thirds of the other eight first-tier media giants.

Using a term one rarely hears anymore (in the media, that is!), this describes a *cartel*, a "combination of independent commercial or industrial enterprises designed to limit competition or fix prices." In the olden days, the U.S. government used to prosecute cartels for being in restraint of trade. The commerce we are talking about here is the communication of knowledge and the cultural basis of society.

International Media Concentration: Jerry Mander says that across the world, in barrios and yurts, people are sitting in front of television sets watching shows such as "Baywatch," the most popular show in the world. They are seeing the lives of young and beautiful people who don't ever seem to worry about money, with glamorous jobs in urban Texas, California, or New York. This is "made to seem the ultimate in life's achievements." Mander says:

The net result is that a handful of media billionaires in New York, Hollywood, London, and one or two other places are implanting the brains of the entire global population with fantastically concentrated and nonstop doses of highly powerful images that tell them to hate where they live, worship McDonald's and Coca-Cola, and believe that corporations are the answers to their problems.

The same trend of media concentration that we see in the United States also exists in many other countries notably Italy, where Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi with his family owns most of the country's television stations and its biggest weekly magazine, book publisher, and advertising agency, along with daily newspapers. Conflicts-of-interest involved with this media empire have been at issue in Italian political campaigns for decades. Another right-wing media mogul is Rupert Murdoch, who dominates much of the media in Australia, Ireland and Britain, and owns Fox television and *The New York Post* among other media investments in the United States. Murdoch's News Corporation and John Fairfax Holdings dominate Australia's newspapers, impelling the organization Reporters Without Borders to list Australia 41st in press freedom in 2004 mainly because of this limited diversity in media ownership.

In the United States, according to one report, Murdoch spent almost \$10 million on lobbying from 1999 to 2002 and contributed over \$1.7 million in the 2000 and 2002 elections. In 2003 the FCC approved a controversial mega merger between DirecTV satellite television (11 million subscribers) and Murdoch's News Corporation.

Wikipedia also lists Axel Springer AG, a German newspaper publisher which claims more than 150 newspapers and magazines in at least 30 European countries, and the Lagardere Group

owner of the world's largest magazine publisher Hachette and other media. Several large media corporations have military holdings, including Lagardere, General Electric, and Dassault, an arms company which owns 80 percent of the publishers of *Le Figaro* and *L'Express* in France.

FCC

In fact, our media system is not predominantly the result of free-market competition [but is] made possible, in large part, by explicit government policies and subsidies that permit the creation of large and profitable conglomerates.

Robert McChesney and John Nichols, "Getting Serious About Media Reform," 2002

Over the last decade, decisions of the Federal Communications Commission have steadily loosened restrictions on the number of media outlets that one corporation or conglomerate can own in any one market. Public interest groups, Congress, and the courts have worked to hold back these FCC decisions to deregulate media ownership and limit the diversity of voices. For instance a federal appeals court in 2004 reversed FCC rule changes that would allow a company to own more radio and television stations in the same market. The FCC had also raised the limits of the audience reached by a single owner of TV stations from 35 percent to 45 percent, but Congress passed a law capping the number at 39 percent.

But the FCC kept making new rules. The 2007 decision of FCC Chairman Kevin Martin to lift the ban on cross-ownership (of both broadcasting and print media in the same market) was especially infuriating to hundreds of citizens who had attended FCC hearings where virtually all of them opposed further media consolidation. Chairman Martin couched his decision as a compromise and a way to help the financial woes of newspapers. A Free Press report disagreed, saying the plan would start a buying spree in the top 20 markets and push out local owners without solving the problems of newspapers.

One of several problems with media consolidation is that women and minorities own so few media outlets such as full-power radio stations and even these are threatened by continued consolidation. Women (half the population) own only 6 percent of full-power radio stations, while minorities own 7.7 percent of them. Nearly half of minority-owned stations in the United States are in the top 20 markets, which makes them a target for large corporations to take over under Martin's plan.

In a flagrant example of how media conglomerates can hijack the democratic process, Time-Warner, the nation's largest magazine publisher, successfully lobbied the Post Office to restructure postal rates in a way that favors large circulation magazines and devastates smaller publications, some of which will probably go out of business. Times Warner actually drafted the new policy. The new rates came into effect in July, 2007 and reverse 215 years of postal policy that encouraged small magazines and a diverse press. Postal costs have risen by 20 to more than 55 percent for small and medium-sized publications. The new rates are especially hard on periodicals that publish weekly, such as the *Nation* or the *National Review*, two magazines that comment on public affairs from opposite ends of the political spectrum.

CHAPTER 25: MIS-INFO, DIS-INFO AND NO-INFO

For the great majority of mankind are satisfied with appearances, as though they were realities, and are often more influenced by the things that seem than by those that are.

Niccolo Machiavelli, Italian political thinker, 1469-1527

Here let us distinguish between misinformation, disinformation, distraction, tricky information, and no information. **Misinformation** has to do with ‘the things we know that just ain’t so,’ usually as a result of ignorance, mistakes, bad memory, habit, custom, and laziness. Like the rest of the universe, information is subject to entropy, the tendency of order to turn into disorder. Of course, behind the misinformed individual may lurk a propagandist, or a personal tendency to believe shaky notions whenever one prefers that they be true.

Disinformation is a more malignant thing. This is the deliberate dissemination of false information, usually by a governmental agency (especially military or intelligence), a political group (smear campaign), or other powerful entity. In its most virulent form, disinformation is Hitler’s ‘Big Lie.’ In his book *Mein Kampf*, the dictator-to-be outlined his general strategy: “If you wish the sympathy of broad masses, then you must tell them the crudest and most stupid things.” The strategy included outrageous lies, imparted with complete assurance to people who were accustomed to trusting authority.

Disinformation is something we once associated only with totalitarian regimes. Then we learned to accept a certain amount of it during wartime and in the course of intelligence operations. Now we are not surprised anymore when it happens on a day-to-day basis in nations operating as democracies. Advertising and public relations are not above spreading disinformation, which has also increasingly crept into the American mainstream media, coinciding with a great concentration of media ownership.

This erosion of truth erodes the practice of democracy as well. It contributes to widespread cynicism about politicians and the political system, and consequent apathy. It makes it difficult for citizens to make informed choices in or out of the voting booth. It may lead a sufficient portion of the public to accept or initiate violent measures based on falsehoods. As Voltaire said, “Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities.”

Distraction may arise because the communications revolution supplies us with too many messages. The result is more information than people can process, about trivia and irrelevant matters that take up our mental time and energy. The degeneration of television news into a series of news cycles about celebrities and sensational crimes—tabloid television—may be caused by pure profit-seeking. Or—if you are the suspicious sort—it could also be a conscious attempt to dumb down the public by those who want to manipulate public opinion and elections. Investigative reporter Greg Palast says, “It’s all in the plan, where made-for-TV dramas and news are switched as needed to titillate the numbed public.”

Politicians may also deliberately use distraction in an election campaign, and elected officials who say one thing and do another may use it to cover their tracks.

Tricky information sprouts from the efforts of some of us to sell the rest of us on something or somebody. It is spin and the ancient art of persuasion. In this case you don’t completely forswear the truth—you simply pick out the part that you like, dress it up a little, associate it with everything that is good and beautiful, and repeat it 40,000 times with a smile. Well, it is still information, isn’t it? And everybody does something like this, more or less, right? We like the

idea of positive thinking, making people feel good, and getting your kids to do what they are supposed to do; accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.

The key phrase here is “more or less”—and it *is* a tricky area. Once I had a whole classroom of people arguing against me that they did not see any difference between art and propaganda; or, they might have said, between propaganda and education. We are always selecting the information that we choose to communicate. However, in propaganda, as in advertising or indoctrination, someone feeds the information in with a funnel. It is all concentrated into one calculated, narrow effect.

Art, on the other hand, has a whole range of effects. Not everybody interprets a painting or poem the same way. You may even go back to it at a later period in your own life and find something different from what you found before. Art disturbs your mind-sets and makes you feel and think, while propaganda targets your tendencies and prejudices. A similar distinction could be made between education—which at best stimulates you to think and also can make you conscious of the thinking process itself—and training or indoctrination, which uses the funnel, often to pour in obsolete notions and propaganda hallowed by custom.

No information at all is another large category of would-be information as in the Sherlock Holmes story, the curious incident of the dog that did not bark in the night. This shadow area has two main divisions: first, the information that the transmitter does not transmit; second, the information that the receiver does not receive. Often the transmitter does not send the information because it does not help his cause, sell his widgets, or fit in with the rest of his message. Sometimes it is a deliberate withholding of information motivated by power and profit, but often enough the transmitter himself does not recognize the information as such. The anomalous facts are not reported because they don’t fit into the accepted body of knowledge, the consensus reality. It may be that someone does not report the event because she or he does not perceive it as being newsworthy. Some of the comments you might hear in these cases are “I didn’t know you would be interested.” “What they don’t know won’t hurt them.” “I couldn’t have seen what I just thought I saw!” “It’s only a coincidence.”

Here is an example of a situation neglected in part because it was not deemed sufficiently dramatic or “newsworthy:” An oil spill larger than Exxon Valdez lies under Brooklyn, one of the largest oil spills in the world, somewhere between 17 million and 30 gallons, under a residential neighborhood in New York City. The neighborhood appears to have a cancer cluster. For almost 20 years neither the likely culprits (ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron), the city of New York, the state of New York, New York State’s Department of Environmental Conservation, nor any federal agency (after the Coast Guard spent half a million dollars investigating the spill in 1978-9) did very much about it.

In 2005 a small environmental group called Riverkeeper filed suit against the offending oil companies, and in 2006 Congress funded a full EPA study. Everybody knows about the Exxon Valdez spill but how many outside of Brooklyn ever heard about this one? Environmental investigator Basil Seggos says, “This is a working-class community with a dirty creek in a part of Brooklyn no one really cares about. It would have perhaps been a better thing if these were river otters covered with oil. You’d have had immediate action.”

Then there is outright censorship. For instance, Australia is proposing to make internet filtering compulsory for all Australians in order to ban illegal material such as child pornography and euthanasia and pro-anorexia sites. Critics say that this would slow internet speeds, raise the price of access, and fail to prevent illegal content transferred by peer-to-peer file-sharing

networks. It would put Australia's level of net censorship in the same class with China, Cuba, Iran, and North Korea.

To deliberately withhold information is dangerous to democracy and sometimes to your health (if, for example, the information was withheld by a tobacco or pharmaceutical company). Media censorship is more widespread than most realize. Katherine Graham was the respected publisher of the *Washington Post* for many years. In a 1988 speech to CIA recruits, she attempted to justify the practice of censorship by government and media:

We live in a dirty and dangerous world. There are some things the general public does not need to know, and shouldn't. I believe democracy flourishes when the government can take legitimate steps to keep its secrets and when the press can decide whether to print what it knows.

From the context of Graham's remarks, it is clear that she is not just talking about censoring troop movements during wartime, an action with which most would agree, but rather a much greyer area, such as failing to report covert actions of the CIA. She is suggesting that the media play along with whatever the government decides to do. This self-censorship of the media appears to have increased greatly during the past decade; so also have government steps, legitimate or not, to keep its secrets. We shall look shortly at examples of media and governmental mis-info, dis-info, and no-info.

Receiver Does Not Receive. First, however, let us consider the receiver. He or she may not receive information even when it is sent, because of being illiterate or barely literate. Functional illiteracy seems to be a widespread condition in the United States afflicting about one third of us to some degree. Other citizens are theoretically able to read but do precious little hefting of books in or out of school. Statistics indicate that we are not a reading nation, compared with countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, U.S.S.R., or New Zealand (although the United States publishes the widest variety of titles).

Ignorance is not 'simply' ignorance, and sometimes it actually results from *too much* information—an overload that is not processed very well. Since there is usually too much information coming our way, we have to prioritize what we will accept. We filter it, just as we do with our sense perceptions. Our selection of occupation, friends, neighborhood, church and other organizations all serve as filters of the sort of information we will be processing. The media that we choose to read or view also assume this function for us. If we read the supermarket tabloids, the information we receive concerns two-headed babies and impending divorces of movie stars. If we watch the local TV news, we know about local politics along with car wrecks, crimes, weather, sports, and the county fair. If we watch Fox News, we will collect partisan opinions taking the form of news. If we watch network news, we receive a cafeteria-style selection by the news director that emphasizes crisis-situations and is short on context.

Newspapers and news magazines give a wider selection of news stories, but what we receive depends on which stories we choose to read. A surprisingly large number of people, especially college students, acquire most of their information about current events from television comedy shows. While this choice may give them a sense of the irony and subtexts underlying major political and international events, they miss a wider variety of news that is carried by most daily newspapers, including scientific and environmental news.

A person cannot make informed decisions without an information base. To get the information you need, you must actively seek it out. Even professional people may filter information through their professional journals and reject whatever relates to their profession that

does not come through ‘official’ channels. Thus a doctor refused to consider certain information from European medical research because it had not appeared in American medical journals.

Often people are not so much ignorant as they are impervious to information. They put up a wall of resistance and denial against anything new, unless of course, it comes through accepted authority, in a simple and easily-digested form, and agrees with opinions they already hold.

Some ignorance is proud of itself. Imperious ignorance has been a constant in U.S. history at least since the Know-Nothing political party of the 1850s displayed a now-familiar pattern of ignorance, pride, and scapegoating. It is however no crime to be plain ignorant and eager to learn. In fact the outlook may be brighter for the person who is something of a clean slate than for the ‘learned ignoramus’ or the person stuffed with misinformation and disinformation who is proud of what he thinks he knows. Thomas Jefferson said “Ignorance is preferable to error, and he is less remote from the truth who believes nothing, than he who believes what is wrong.”

Misinformation: Most of us tote around a pack of misinformation, much of which is fairly benign. In the *Dictionary of Misinformation*, Tom Burnam points out that Henry Ford did not originate the assembly line, although he did improve on the idea originally developed by Rason E. Olds. Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball in 1839 at Cooperstown, New York, since an English boy’s book described a similar game fourteen years earlier. Coffee does not sober up drunks. There is no rule against ending a sentence with a preposition. Stonehenge was not built by the Druids but by an earlier people who lived in Britain a thousand years before the Druids arrived. (And there are many more “things we know, that ain’t so.”)

We learn a lot of misinformation in school, especially in history, which is written by the victors or at least by the survivors. History is therefore bound to reflect their point of view along with more than a few assumptions, rationalizations, and useful memory lapses. No matter which is our nation, the mythologized history that we learn in school perpetuates misinformation to support patriotism and moral lessons. For instance, not all the people who arrived on the Mayflower were Pilgrims—some were indentured servants. The Pilgrims hold an exalted position in popular history as seekers of religious freedom. It is true that they sought freedom for themselves, but they were intolerant of any other dissenters. Nor were Puritans great exponents of democracy. The first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, stated that democracy is “accounted the meanest and worst of all forms of government.”

History is not the only area of misinformation in schools. A survey of middle school science textbooks found that twelve of the most popular ones, used by 85 percent of U.S. children, were riddled with errors. These included maps that showed the equator passing through the southern United States and a photograph of singer Linda Ronstadt labeled as a silicon crystal. Physics professor John Hubisz, who led the study, said researchers had compiled 500 pages of errors and found “many irrelevant photographs, complicated illustrations, experiments that could not possibly work, and drawings that represented impossible situations.” Hubisz suggested that such inaccurate textbooks might be a “strong component” of why American children do poorly in science compared with children of many other nations.

Rumors, Hysteria and Carelessness: Some misinformation is spread through fear, even hysteria (emotional contagion). A conservation group’s quarterly journal reports on one such rumor frenzy:

A highly-acclaimed voluntary U.S. scientific research program that has been embraced elsewhere around the U.S. apparently won't be initiated in the Ozark Highlands. It's been sabotaged by misinformation being spread by a nebulous "private property rights" group that calls itself, "Take Back Arkansas." [They are] mostly newcomers to the Ozarks, convinced that the U.S. Man and Biosphere program of establishing "biosphere reserves" is a conspiracy fostered by the United Nations through UNESCO....

One tale has it that highly trained and equipped United Nations troops are already hidden out in the Lower Buffalo Wilderness Area...ready to force people off their land at gunpoint. [Another rumor is that] the UN has a secret communications command post deep in Point Peter Cave. (Obviously, they have never been in this tiny cave).

Military operations are not exempt from rumors and misinformation. According to journalist and author Matthew Wall, faulty intelligence has propelled the United States into war on several occasions. For instance, invasion of the tiny island-nation Grenada by U.S. troops in 1983 was a tragicomedy of errors based on poor intelligence. The supposed reason for invasion was to prevent American medical students from being taken hostage by a Marxist government undergoing an internal coup. However, the Grenadian government had sent police to *protect* the students during the coup. They had no motivation to take students hostage, since the medical school was the country's main source of foreign income.

How did the hostage-taking scenario ever come up? Students had phoned home about fighting in the streets, and worried parents then called the State Department. Just as in the old telephone game, the story became more exciting as it passed up officialdom to President Reagan. Many more intelligence errors occurred during the invasion itself, and the U.S. Army had to use tourist maps to find its way around the island. During the three-day war, phone lines continued to operate but Wall says "no one in Washington thought to call the students (or any other Grenadian phone number) to find out what was happening." Wall said the story would be comical except that twenty-three American soldiers and hundreds of Cubans and Grenadians were killed.

Ronald Reagan was notorious for his carelessness with basic facts. On one occasion he said "I'm no linguist, but I have been told that in the Russian language, there isn't even a word for freedom." The Russian word for freedom is *svoboda*. Any library reference librarian could have checked that one out for the President of the United States or his aides—had he cared. Mark Green, who compiled hundreds of documented misstatements by Reagan, said of the former president "Like a panicky passenger lunging for a life preserver, under stress he would concoct almost any fact, anecdote, or analysis to advance his ideological beliefs."

Many people reacted to Reagan's misstatements with tolerance, saying something like, "Well that's just like my Uncle Ed." However, Uncle Ed is not the leader of 300,000,000 people and half the world's military arsenal. As though using the same script as Reagan, George W. Bush and top members of his administration were equally careless with facts. For instance, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said about Iraq's purported weapons of mass destruction: "We know where they are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat."

There is a paradox in our Information Age. Greater quantities of information do not guarantee a higher quality of information. The more information is circulating, the more misinformation is circulating with it. The sheer numbers of these mental bits begin to tax our capacity to process them. With such abundance, we may value each bit the less. Tolstoy called "the most powerful weapon of ignorance—the diffusion of printed material." Had Tolstoy lived

to see television, he would undoubtedly have added it to his statement. In the latest example of the Information Age paradox, we see the Internet, portable videotaping equipment, and other electronic technology greatly increase the amount of information available, while people seem to respect it less, evidenced by their tolerance of misstatements by the highest officials.

Disinformation

Already, the Kay report identified dozens of weapons of mass destruction-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations.

President George W. Bush, State of the Union address, January 2004

I don't think they [WMD] existed.

David Kay, former U.S. special adviser leading the hunt for WMD in Iraq, concerning what he found.
(*Newsweek*, January 29, 2004)

Disinformation comes out of government, especially from military and intelligence agencies, but we must also add media bias that follows the lead of the government, as disclosed by Katherine Graham. Disinformation includes false stories, repeated misstatements (lies), psy-ops (psychological operations), false flag operations, and cover-ups. Media collusion consists of the failure to question the government's story, as professional journalists are supposed to do, and sometimes of actively promoting government disinformation.

Often no one discovers or publicizes the truth about disinformation until some time after its spread; or only a minority ever becomes aware of it. For instance, in 1992 Senator Sam Nunn demanded an investigation of allegations that the Navy had "deliberately misled Congress" in testimony about an incident in 1988 in which an American warship, the USS Vincennes, shot down an Iranian civilian airliner, killing all 290 passengers. The Pentagon finally admitted that the Vincennes was in Iranian waters, but did not admit to other alleged instances of the use of force there or "the practice of provoking Iranian attacks."

The onset of wars is often accompanied by false stories. In 1990 just before the Gulf War started, Pentagon officials said that according to top-secret satellite images, it was clear that Saddam Hussein had stationed a huge army of 250,000 men and 1,500 tanks along the Saudi border, ready to invade. But Joshua Holland points out a different story:

Jean Heller, a reporter with the *St. Petersburg Times*, purchased some Russian satellite images of the same piece of desert and found that in fact there was nothing there but sand. After the U.S.-led attack, a "senior (U.S. military) commander" told *New York Newsday*, "There was a great disinformation campaign surrounding this war."

There was so much suspicion about the George W. Bush administration, and its maneuvers were often so clumsy, that a great many people looked for examples of disinformation and publicized them via the Internet. In the winter of 2003, Vice President Dick Cheney repeatedly made statements such as this: "There's overwhelming evidence there was a connection between al Qaeda and the Iraqi government. I am very confident that there was an established relationship there." But the document he cited as proof had already been discredited by the administration itself at the time it was published. Both the Defense Department and Secretary of State Colin Powell had disputed the idea.

Many people made fun of the color-coded terrorist threats issued by the Department of Homeland Security a few years ago, because these warnings appeared at times that were convenient for distracting the public from news unfavorable to the Bush administration. We could describe these color alerts as a psy-op or psychological operation. As for false flag operations and other such covert activities, it is often hard to make any definitive claims about them. That remains the area of unofficial explanations, otherwise known as conspiracy theories.

The story that Iraq was seeking uranium in Niger, based as it was on a forged document, was disinformation. So were repeated statements by President Bush that Saddam Hussein had “kicked out” the UN inspectors, as a cause for the U.S. invasion. Something like that had occurred several years earlier, but in early 2003, Saddam was cooperating with UN investigators and it was the United States that told inspectors to leave ahead of the bombing. That Bush’s obfuscation could work at all shows that a large portion of the public did not follow the news very carefully or remember it very well.

Deja Vu All Over Again.

In times of universal deceit, telling the truth will be a revolutionary act.

George Orwell, British author, 1903-1950

In September, 2006 recent history repeated itself when UN inspectors investigating Iran’s nuclear program angrily complained about a U.S. House committee report they said contained “erroneous, misleading, and unsubstantiated statements.” The intelligence committee report was written by Fredrick Fleitz, ex-CIA agent and special assistant to John R. Bolton, but it was never discussed or voted on by the full committee. The report said Iran’s nuclear capabilities are more advanced than either the IAEA or U.S. intelligence believed. It alleged that EIBaradei prevented UN inspectors from telling the truth, and removed a senior inspector from the investigation because the inspector showed concerns about Iranian deception. However, the agency said the inspector was still at his post. The Fleitz report also rebuked the CIA and other intelligence agencies for not providing evidence to support assertions that Iran is building nuclear weapons.

A former nuclear inspector, David Albright, commented, “This is like prewar Iraq all over again. You have an Iranian nuclear threat that is spun up, using bad information that’s cherry-picked and a report that trashes the inspectors.”

Media Disinformation

The Press was protected [in the U.S. Bill of Rights] so that it could bare the secrets of the government and inform the people. Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government. And paramount among the responsibilities of a free press is the duty to prevent any part of the government from deceiving the people.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black, 1886-1971

Many pro-administration stories about Iraq’s supposed military build-up, written by reporter Judith Miller, appeared prominently in the *New York Times* in 2002 and 2003. It later became clear that these articles were partisan, shoddy work, based largely on information from Iraqi exile groups and especially from the mysterious and many-sided Ahmed Chalabi. Miller’s stories were quite influential in convincing people that Iraq posed a threat, simply because they appeared in the highly reputable *Times*.

Media disinformation is certainly not new nor is it limited to Republican administrations. The CIA and military intelligence continue their work whatever party is at the helm. For instance, according to Harper's Index, the U.S. Army sent five "psychological operations" specialists to work for CNN in 1999. (*Harper's* source was CNN.) But media disinformation became a much bigger project before and after the Iraq invasion and occupation. In April 2008, a *New York Times* article documented that the Pentagon had recruited more than 75 retired generals to act as "military analysts" on television. Privately, Pentagon documents called them "message force multipliers" to present the administration's point of view about Iraq and to counter critical news coverage. The generals also had blatant conflicts of interest because of their many ties to military contractors either as lobbyists, executives, consultants, or board members. According to the organization Newswatch, it is a federal crime to spread "covert propaganda."

The media watch group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) studied network news coverage just before the Iraq invasion. They found that three-fourths of those who appeared as sources on the evening news—ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS—were either current or former government or military officials, and only one of these (Senator Edward Kennedy) expressed any doubts or opposition to the approaching war. Of 393 sources, only three were associated with anti-war groups or protests.

Slanted reporting is a form of disinformation. For instance, in reporting on Israel-Palestine conflicts, the mainstream media almost invariably casts the conflict as being initiated by the Palestinians, even though there is an ongoing cycle of attacks by both sides. In a typical example, CBS News reported that a crisis 'began' when Hamas kidnapped an Israeli soldier on June 25, 2006, although Hamas justified its raid as retaliation for previous Israeli air strikes that had killed a top militant and thirteen civilians. Similarly, reactionary Israeli individuals who kill Palestinian civilians are called "extremists" rather than terrorists.

In early 2007, General David Petraeus gave a report to Congress about the Iraq War that was widely seen as very close to the Administration's position. Researchers at *Harper's* magazine counted up how many times during the year that U.S. media glorified General Petraeus by calling him "King David" (24 times) and a "warrior intellectual" or "warrior scholar" (26 times).

In reporting on the very close Mexican election in the summer of 2006, wire service news dwelled repeatedly on the personality and tactics of the leftist challenger, Lopez Obrador, strongly suggesting that he is a dangerous demagogue while giving no details about the voting fraud that he charged had stolen his victory. His conservative opponent, Felipe Calderon, was strongly favored by the Bush administration. Finally, almost two months after the election, since Obrador did not go away, an AP article included the information that a Washington think tank found mathematical errors in half of the 126,139 ballot boxes. Mark Weisbrot, co-author of the think tank report, said "Without a full recount, it's hard to have confidence in the result of a close election like this, especially with such a huge level of errors. The article did not explain how a U.S. think tank had access to Mexican ballot boxes.

The general circumstances bore some resemblance to the U.S. elections of 2002, 2004, and 2006, all of which had balloting irregularities that were barely mentioned by mainstream information sources. Top investigative reporter Greg Palast has found no home in U.S. media for his stories about U.S. election fraud. Palast, an American, reports instead on BBC, and is forced to ask for donations to help support the travel expenses of his investigative teams.

Develop Disinformation Detectors: Here are some rules of thumb. In crises, the first 48 hours of media reporting are the most important in forming public opinion. So don't make up

your mind until more information comes out. Gregory Sinaisky gives other hints for detecting media disinformation. For example, a headline may make a strong statement, while the start of the article itself is much vaguer such as: "Military officials said the Shiite population of Basra appeared to be rising." Sinaisky says that unnamed "military officials" and "appeared to be" should raise red flags for the reader, along with information from unnamed reporters later in the article. Sinaisky says the first rule of disinformation analysis is this: "Truth is specific, lie is vague. Always look for palpable details in reporting and if the picture is not in focus, there must be reasons for it."

Another disinformation technique is 'bracketing' or including a piece of solid information in a list of other, obviously less credible pieces of information.

Using Sinaisky's rules among others, I questioned this morning's AP story about U.S. tension with Iran. Part of the story reads "[Iranian] naval commanders claim to have an array of high-tech weapons, including super-speed torpedoes and a sonar-evading, anti-ship missile. U.S. military officials and independent experts are skeptical." The clear implication is that *all* such experts are skeptical, but the story goes on to quote only one expert, Anthony Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

However, I then 'googled' CSIS to discover that this think tank has strong ties to government and private industry, with members or trustees including noted geostrategists Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, and long association with a well-known neoconservative, Michael Ledeen. Reportedly, one fourth of its \$28.57 million yearly budget comes from government contracts. I would not expect such a think tank to question Bush administration plans to attack Iran. In fact, one can learn from other sources that some military experts, such as Admiral William Fallon, then Commander of the U.S. Central Command, took more seriously the capacity of Iranian forces to retaliate. (Soon after, Admiral Fallon resigned.)

I would not have questioned this story if it had said "*Some* U.S. military officials and independent experts are skeptical" and had then gone on to balance the Cordesman quote with a differing expert opinion.

Hidden History

History is a combination of reality and lies. The reality of History becomes a lie. The unreality of fable becomes the truth.

Jean Cocteau, French dramatist and filmmaker, 1889-1963

Most of what we know about history we learned in public school. There, in deference to teachers, parents, and long tradition, we learned many stories that have little relation to the actual study of history. Just as we teach children about the Easter bunny and Santa Claus, we teach them about Washington and the cherry tree. They learn about our brave soldiers, although we avoid mentioning some wars such as the Philippine revolt, or how some of those brave American soldiers when they came to Washington asking for their promised bonuses that were fifteen years late, were violently driven out.

Our teachers and parents withheld the uglier facts—or they may not have known them, since they had been raised the same way. Just as individuals repress unpleasant events, so do societies repress the occurrences in which they didn't come off looking very noble.

Much else is forgotten, too. For instance, sixty years before the Surgeon General first announced that cigarette smoking was unhealthy a number of states began to ban the product. In

1900, the Supreme Court upheld Tennessee's ban on cigarette sales. In 1901 forty-three out of 45 states faced strong anti-cigarette activity. By 1909, fifteen states prohibited sales of cigarettes.

Split personality? There is obviously a difference between how other nations see Americans and how we see ourselves. Americans generally do not seem to know that the United States has unilaterally invaded other sovereign nations on numerous occasions. We do not think of ourselves as an imperialist power. Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, or other split personalities, our self-image represses much of what we do abroad:

The United States, for generations, has sustained two parallel but opposed states of mind about military atrocities and human rights: one of U.S. benevolence, generally held by the public, and the other of ends-justify-the-means brutality sponsored by counterinsurgency specialists. Normally the specialists carry out their actions in remote locations with little notice in the national press. That allows the public to sustain its faith in a just America, while hard-nosed security and economic interests are still protected in secret.

The forty years of ***Cold War***—what was that really about? Were we, the United States, constantly in danger from aggressive actions by the Evil Empire of the Soviet Union? Let us look at some suggestive evidence. First, Russia has had a long history of invasion, by the Germanic Goths, Asian Huns, Turkic Avars, Mongols, Poland, and Napoleon, among others. Even the United States sent a small expedition to the Russian city of Archangel in 1918-1919, taking sides with the White Russians against the Soviets. By comparison, the United States mainland was only threatened briefly by the British in the War of 1812. Which country would be more likely to assume a defensive rather than offensive posture?

Second, the USSR lost two generations of men in wars during the first half of the twentieth century. The country suffered an estimated eight million casualties in its 1918 Revolution, in addition to over three and a half million in World War I. Then in World War II, the U.S.S.R. fought back an invasion by Germany and suffered at least twenty million deaths. The Soviet Union lost over thirty-one million people, especially its young men, in three wars over a thirty-year period. For purposes of comparison, the U.S. suffered about 660,000 war fatalities in the two world wars (and every one a tragedy in both countries). In addition, this same society had huge losses from famines and violent persecutions by the Stalinist regime, probably at least as many deaths as those from wars. Does this sound like a country itching to get into another fight?

We might also look at the history of the arms race:

The U.S. possessed, and used, the atomic bomb in 1945. The USSR developed it in 1949.

The U.S. deployed 630 long-range, strategic bombers between 1955 and 1963. The USSR deployed 190 similar bombers between 1956 and 1962.

The U.S. developed the H-bomb in 1952, the USSR in 1955.

High-Altitude Strategic Photo-Reconnaissance: U.S. 1956, USSR 1962.

Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Deployment: U.S. deployed 27 IBMs 1959-1961. USSR deployed 4 IBMs, 1957-1961.

Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile Deployment: U.S. deployed 656 between 1960 and 1967. The USSR deployed 950 between 1968 and 1979.

Multiple Independently-Targeted Reentry Vehicles (MIRV) Deployed: U.S. in 1970, USSR in 1976.

Multiple Warheads (MRVs) Deployed: U.S. in 1964; USSR in 1973.

Cruise Missiles (ALCM) Deployed: U.S. 1982, USSR unknown.

Which country seems to be driving the arms race? It certainly looks like it was the United States. According to *Project Censored News Stories of 1984*, despite claims by the Reagan administration of an “unrelenting” Soviet military build-up, “reliable reports reveal that the Soviets had started slowing their military expansion program about eight years previous [1976].”

U.S. adviser George Kennan said in 1984 that material and psychological preparations for such a war had become an ingrained habit in both the armed services and civilian society:

The media and writers of adventure fiction and spy tales endlessly conjure up the image of the Soviet opponent in his most terrible, desperate, and inhuman aspect: an implacable monster, incapable of impulses other than the lust for sheer destruction, and to be dealt with only in a final military struggle. This image is purveyed to millions of people day after day. It reaches the imaginations of children and the subconscious assumptions of adults...Is this not in itself a major determinant of policy?

The Cold War ended when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev recognized that his country could no longer keep up the competitive pace of the arms race. His country went bankrupt first, so “we (Americans) won.” However, the United States was not in great shape either. Our country could have used the trillions wasted on weapons in order to repair its decrepit infrastructure, provide universal health care for its people, and in other ways make this country the Eden that we like to pretend it is. Nobody wins arms races.

CHAPTER 26: THE PLASTIC CURTAIN

It is permitted to everyone to say what he pleases, but the Press is free to take notice of what he says or not. It can condemn 'truth' to death simply by not undertaking its communication to the world—a terrible censorship of silence, which is all the more potent in that masses of newspaper readers are absolutely unaware that it exists.

Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 1918

The Pentagon recently justified its position on censorship by insisting "If we let people see that kind of thing, there would never again be any war."

Geoffrey Regan, "Military Blunders," *Night and Day*, January 23, 2000

The 'Plastic Curtain' has two meanings here. The first refers to the fact that our mainstream media sources present ever fewer points of view from abroad or from a wide range of opinions in the United States. Sources available on the Internet show how much is missing from the standard news of the day. Residents of the United States hear very little about the rest of the planet, giving them the false perception that their five percent of the world population is all-important, while nothing much of interest is happening among the other 95 percent unless there is a war or huge disaster someplace.

In a second sense, the Plastic Curtain is that almost invisible barrier that our government places between its citizens and the truth, in other words, censorship. The Plastic Curtain is not as rigid as was the Iron Curtain of the U.S.S.R. but is in a way more insidious, because who is afraid of plastic? Americans think that they are getting the full story, when they are not. We live in an Age of Information, yet significant and even crucial information is often missing. The simple failure to mention or report on certain matters is probably the most frequent method employed by those who want to manipulate the public. The sin of omission is harder to prove and less risky than outright lying. Widespread omission is called a media blackout. A more deliberate censorship by governments and/or media crosses the line into Thought Control, to be discussed later.

Here are just a few of the many areas in which mainstream media often downplay or omit information: They do not mention evidence of harmful health and environmental effects of various substances and technologies that are in use and profitable. They ignore the size and reach of transnational and multinational corporations. They fail to give much information about growing economic inequality in the United States. They leave out actual detailed provisions of important, controversial legislation such as the Patriot Act or the Military Commissions Act, especially before Congress votes on them. They have kept the American public mostly ignorant of massacres and genocides perpetrated by right-wing dictators using U.S.-supplied arms and sometimes direction (for instance, Indonesia's campaign against East Timor from 1975 to 1985 which Amnesty International reports killed up to 200,000 East Timorese or a third of the population, and which was largely ignored by American media)

But the information is still out there, and especially accessible since the Internet. The answer to the Plastic Curtain is to remove it, resulting in *Transparency*. One tool is the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, implemented in 1967, greatly aiding journalists and researchers looking for previously unreleased government-controlled information. States have their own FOI laws. So do a great many other countries.

Transparency International is a non-governmental organization that publicizes corporate and government corruption in various countries. TI publishes a yearly report, with a cross-country comparison of corruption.

A decade ago, only governments had satellite surveillance. Now an NGO, Satellite Sentinel, can use this technology to watch areas of past or potential massacres and genocide, as in the Sudan. Their goal is to prevent future crimes against humanity.

Launched in 2006, WikiLeaks and similar organizations began to publish secret government documents and other material online. WikiLeaks is an international, non-profit organization that publishes information from anonymous sources, news leaks, and whistleblowers. The organization describes its founders as a mix of Chinese dissidents, journalists, mathematicians, and start-up company technologists from the United States, Taiwan, Europe, Australia, and South Africa. Australian activist Julian Assange is its main director. The WikiLeaks website states that its "primary interest is in exposing oppressive regimes in Asia, the former Soviet bloc, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, but we also expect to be of assistance to people of all regions who wish to reveal unethical behavior in their governments and corporations." To date, the majority of documents released have been U.S. military and diplomatic cables.

Every year for several decades *Project Censored*, a journalist organization based at Sonoma State University, has published a list of the top twenty-five under-reported news stories of the year. These give some indication of the news we are missing. For instance, "Censored 2011: The Top Censored Stories of 2009-2010" includes the following top five:

- [1. Global Plans to Replace the Dollar](#)
- [2. US Department of Defense is the Worst Polluter on the Planet](#)
- [3. Internet Privacy and Personal Access at Risk](#)
- [4. ICE Operates Secret Detention and Courts](#)
- [5. Blackwater \(Xe\): The Secret US War in Pakistan](#)

In the Project Censored archives one may find hundreds of significant news stories that barely made it into the U.S. media. The following examples of 'left-out' information are from other sources. By going back into the past I would show a pattern that is not limited to any one administration or political party, or only to politics.

MSG and Obesity. A number of scientists have confirmed the findings of Dr. John W. Olney in 1968 that MSG (monosodium glutamate or processed free glutamic acid) causes lesions in the hypothalamus of both rodents and rhesus monkeys, with resulting obesity. Aspartic acid (40% of aspartame) has a similar effect. In 1992, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) in an FDA-funded study concluded that "it is prudent to avoid the use of dietary supplements of L-glutamic acid by pregnant women, infants and children." FASEB also found evidence of endocrine responses to L-glutamic acid that suggest that the substance "should be avoided by women of childbearing age and individuals with affective disorders." Jack L. Samuels says that the FDA appears to have suppressed this FASEB finding and another related finding reported by an FDA researcher in 2000 regarding carcinogenic contaminants produced when amino acids are freed from protein through a manufacturing process.

April Glaspie. A few of us old-timers remember that shortly before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, he had a meeting with April Glaspie, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. A month

later, British journalists obtained the tape and transcript of the meeting in July 29, 1990, in which Glaspie said “We have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary [of State James] Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960s, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America.” This information was not widely disseminated in the United States, and was all but forgotten by most people by the time the Gulf War began six months later.

Most Chemicals We Use Were Never Tested. A recent *Harper’s* article by Mark Schapiro discloses the following information. First, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) finished screening a broad cross section of Americans in 2005, looking for evidence of 148 toxic chemicals in their blood. The CDC found that the vast majority of people tested had almost all of the toxins in their blood.

Second, 95 percent of chemicals now in circulation were never tested for toxicity or their effect on the environment. The way that happened was that when the Toxic Substances Control Act passed in 1976, it contained a huge loophole the chemical industry wanted, which was that every chemical on the market before 1979 was exempt (62,000 of them). Even with the loophole, the TSCA was the world’s first meaningful regulation of chemicals, and other countries brought their policies in line with it.

However, the European Union is now establishing much more stringent regulations, a new law called REACH which plans to test many of the chemicals originally excused from testing or review, starting with the 1,500 worst-looking ones in 2008. The E.U. estimates that REACH would cost European chemical manufacturers about \$4 billion over 14 years, which is less than one percent of their yearly revenue. Another estimate is that it would save European health-care costs from chemically-caused illnesses \$69 billion over thirty years.

Fourth, when REACH was debated in the EU Parliament between 2003 and 2006, the U.S. government and chemical-related industries mounted an unprecedented lobbying effort which Schapiro says was “an historic intrusion into European affairs.” One wonders how it would go over in the United States if foreign lobbyists were heavily involved in changing the minds of members of Congress. Fifth, Schapiro says that American media and public are pretty much oblivious to all of this.

U.S. Airmen in German Concentration Camps: During World War II, eighty-two Americans who were shot down over Belgium and France were not treated as POWs, but were taken to Buchenwald for extermination. Fortunately for them, a high-ranking German air force officer came to learn about their situation and used his influence to secure their release.

As of 1997, fifty years later, the United States government still refused to recognize that anyone from the U.S. military had spent time in a concentration camp. One survivor, Robert Ward, said the government may resist acknowledging that they were in Buchenwald for fear the vets may ask for compensation. He compared their lack of acknowledgement to the Gulf War syndrome. And he might also have compared it to how the Department of Defense stonewalled the Atomic Veterans from World War II and the Agent Orange veterans from Vietnam.

In November 2007 *USA Today* reported that at least 20,000 American soldiers who were not classified as wounded during combat in Iraq and Afghanistan have in fact sustained brain injuries. Data provided by the Army, Navy and Department of Veterans Affairs—in some cases only after the newspaper filed under the Freedom of Information Act—showed about five times the number of brain-injured troops as are listed officially. Rep. Bill Pascrell of New Jersey,

founder of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, estimates that more than 150,000 soldiers may have suffered head injuries in combat.

Veterans for Common Sense stated on September 11, 2008 that the Department of Defense reports about 79,000 battlefield casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, while the Department of Veterans Affairs reports more than 347,000 Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran patients. It seems that the DOD reports as casualties only those who are medically evacuated out of the country because of the seriousness of their condition.

Family Leave: The Plastic Curtain normally shuts out any sort of social comparison with other countries, especially if it might show up the United States. For instance, an article in the Business section of today's newspaper discusses problems many American families have in taking off time for work to take care of a newborn baby. The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was an advance over the previous situation, giving new parents 12 weeks of unpaid leave. However, FMLA does not apply to about 40 percent of nongovernment employees who work in smaller workplaces, and taking unpaid leave is financially very difficult for many working-class families. Only about 8 percent of private-sector employers offer paid parental leave. This long and informative article did not, of course, make any comparison to other industrial nations, almost all of which do offer some paid maternity leave.

Dockworkers Protest War: If not for the Internet, I would have missed this item. On May 1, 2008, ports on the U.S. West Coast including the country's busiest port complex in Los Angeles closed for the day. Ten thousand dock workers went on a one-day strike to protest the war in Iraq and their concern that big shipping companies are profiting from the war.

Masters of Space: When China conducted its first anti-satellite missile test in early 2007, a number of media outlets such as *CNN*, *The New York Times*, and *Aviation Week* spoke of "dangerous new challenges" and "China's hostile intentions." None of them mentioned U.S. military plans to dominate space, or strategy documents such as the U.S. Space Command's "Vision for 2020," the 2001 Rumsfeld Commission report, or the new U.S. National Space Policy adopted in 2006.

The *New York Times* did mention that China (along with most of the world) had "been trying to push a treaty to ban space weapons," but did not mention who opposed the treaty. According to Harper's Index, May 2000, the United States and Israel were the only members of the UN that voted against a 1999 ban on "an arms race in space."

Iraq's Civilian Casualties: The Pentagon has never tried to report civilian casualties in Iraq publicly or accurately. However in October 2004 and again in October 2006, *Lancet*, the journal of the British Medical Association published a study of civilian casualties by researchers from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad. The 2004 study estimated that 100,000 Iraqis, more than half of them women and children, had died violently since the U.S.-led invasion. The second study estimated that from 2003 to July 2006, there were approximately 601,027 more Iraqi deaths from violence than would have been expected without a war.

Both British and American governments dismissed the original numbers, and American media ignored the study or dismissed it. Lila Guterman in the *Columbia Journalism Review* gives one explanation for the "near total silence" of the press: journalists are statistics-shy and

did not understand the wide range of figures presented (because of the margin of error). Guterman called a number of biostatisticians and mortality experts, all of whom accepted the study's methods and its conclusions which they said were, if anything, cautious. She notes "With a quick call to a statistician, reporters would have found that the probability forms a bell curve—the likelihood is very small that the number of deaths fell at either extreme of the range. It was very likely to fall near the middle."

It seems likely that official disapproval also contributed to media failure to publicize this study. In Britain, George Monbiot said the 2004 study suffered "just about every possible misunderstanding and distortion of its statistics" including the claim that fierce fighting in Fallujah had inflated the numbers. However, the study had explicitly excluded Fallujah from its statistics. Several newer estimates are that over a million Iraqis have died violently since the U.S. invasion, although most figures cited in the U.S. media are about one-tenth of that.

In early 2008, the AP reported an estimate of Iraqi deaths by the World Health Organization and the Iraqi government. The new estimate was 151,000 casualties during the same time frame as the study published in *Lancet* that estimated 600,000 deaths. Michel Thieren, a Belgian physician who specializes in humanitarian affairs, said the new estimate was based on a larger sample of households, and criticized the authors of the *Lancet* study because they suggested the Iraqi government under-reported deaths.

However, this AP report itself showed clear signs of bias. For instance, the first paragraph calls the new study "the best effort yet to count deaths" although that is a value judgment not supported by a quote from any authority. In the second paragraph we learn that "Experts called it the largest and most scientific study of the Iraqi death toll since the war began." The implicit suggestion is that the experts are in agreement; however, no experts at all are listed. The AP article was accompanied by the most incomprehensible graph or diagram I've ever seen, purporting to compare the various studies of the war's civilian death toll.

We can not yet be sure that this is the full story. In September 2007, a British polling agency (ORB) that with its Iraqi fieldworkers has been tracking public opinion in Iraq since 2005, asked a representative sample of 1,499 adults how many household members (if any) had died as a result of violence since 2003. The results suggest a total of 1,220,580 deaths since the invasion. (The range due to the margin of error is a minimum of 733,158 to a maximum of 1,446,063.)

CHAPTER 27: THOUGHT CONTROL

The jaws of power are always open to devour, and her arm is always stretched out, if possible, to destroy the freedom of thinking, speaking, and writing.

John Adams, 2nd President of the United States

When the government and related institutions repeatedly use disinformation and censorship; when they attempt to control scientific information; when they coerce public opinion and threaten dissenters, this pattern may be called *thought control*. We generally associate such behaviors with police states, but they occur also in the United States. While the Bush administration carried thought control to new levels for the United States, it has been used before and will be attempted again, no matter which party is in power.

Besides government censorship, public relations firms are very effective at the practice of censorship (more about this in the next chapter). As we have already seen, media and other institutions may also practice self-censorship in tandem with the government. Here are a few examples of both kinds of censorship, over a period of three decades:

Patriot missiles: According to the Pentagon, the Patriot missiles used in the Gulf War were extremely effective in intercepting Scud missiles. But when a civilian scientist at MIT, Theodore Postol, published an article in a Harvard journal saying that the Patriots were grossly overrated, the Army proceeded to classify information that had previously been publicly available, and then harassed Postol for publishing classified information. At the time, an estimated three trillion classified documents occupied government file cabinets. Investigative journalist Jack Anderson said that in testimony before Congress, Postol asserted that the Defense Investigative Service was acting on behalf of Raytheon, the main contractor producing the Patriots.

Anderson reported that the Pentagon fired another civilian scientist, Aldric Saucier, who worked with the SDI research project, for vocally opposing the SDI program because he believed it was a wasteful, expensive failure.

Drug War Censorship: The U.S. House of Representatives approved an omnibus federal spending bill December 8, 2003 that contained a little-known provision to take away federal grants from local transportation authorities that allowed citizens to run advertising on buses, trains, or subways in favor of reforming national drug laws. The same bill gave \$145 million to the White House to run anti-marijuana ads. Civil libertarians said that the censorship provision was a dangerous precedent that ideologues could apply to many other issues.

Big Brother in China: Researchers from Harvard, University of Toronto, and Cambridge University in England evaluated China's Internet practices, finding that "China operates the most extensive, technologically sophisticated and broad-reaching system of Internet filtering in the world." For example, Internet users in China are unable to find information on Taiwanese independence, the Dalai Lama or the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising. The researchers said they feared that China's system of censorship could become a model for other countries. According to

one researcher, Rafal Rohozinski, “The Internet is wildly misunderstood. It is built around very specific chokepoints” and authorities could control them.

Whitewashing the White House: The *Washington Post* reported on December 18, 2003 that the administration was actively scrubbing government websites clean of any previous statements that later proved untrue. One such erased statement related to an assurance by USAID Director Andrew Natsios on the television program *Nightline* in April 2003 that the cost of Iraq war and reconstruction would definitely be no more than \$1.7 billion. (It has been estimated to cost more like a thousand times that amount.)

Previously the president, after making substantial budget cuts, ordered the government to stop publishing its regular report to the states that detailed budget cuts. During a period of high unemployment, the president ordered the Department of Labor to stop publishing a regular report of mass layoffs.

Media Censors Journalists

I have always thought it morally unacceptable to kill stories, not to run stories, that people have risked their lives to get.

Christiane Amanpour, English journalist, 1958-

The book *Into the Buzzsaw*, edited by Kristina Borjesson, gives accounts by eighteen award-winning journalists of government pressure and stories killed by corporate media ownership. Some of the journalists were subsequently fired or laid-off, such as April Oliver, who worked on the Tailwind story. Oliver said that CNN management ran at the first sign of heat, which came from “everyone from Henry Kissinger and Colin Powell to Special Forces veterans.”

Kristina Borjesson of CBS and Philip Weiss of *New York Times Magazine* discussed the role of an FBI official, James Kallstrom, in the case of TWA flight 800. When Pierre Salinger announced in November 1996 that he had documents proving that a U.S. Navy missile had accidentally downed the flight, Kallstrom immediately called a press conference. When a reporter raised his hand and asked why the Navy was involved in the recovery and investigation if it was a possible suspect, Kallstrom yelled “Remove him!” and two men dragged the reporter away. Weiss notes that Kallstrom was later hired by CBS.

Monika Jensen-Stevenson, an Emmy-winning producer for *60 Minutes*, said that a number of Vietnam veterans with impeccable war records reported that there were American prisoners in Vietnam, probably several thousand, long after the war ended. The story she was unable to tell raised the possibility that North Vietnam had kept the prisoners as hostages to make sure the U.S. would pay more than \$3 billion in war reparations. But the U.S. had not paid and apparently had no intention of paying the promised money.

Norman Solomon indicates that self-censorship is a far greater problem than outright squelching of stories, quoting George Orwell that “the really well-trained [circus] dog is the one that turns his somersault when there is no whip.” Self-censorship becomes an automatic process, described by former FCC commissioner Nicholas Johnson as follows:

A reporter first comes up with an investigative story idea, writes it up, and submits it to the editor and is told the story is not going to run. He wonders why, but the next time he is cautious enough to check with the editor first. He is told by the editor that it would be better not to write that story. The

third time he thinks of an investigative story idea but doesn't bother the editor with it because he knows it's silly. The fourth time he doesn't even think of the idea anymore.

Science Censorship

In The Republican War on Science (Basic Books, 2006), author Chris Mooney shows the reader how modern science has been under assault by the evangelical base of the Republican Party for the better part of two decades.

Reviewer Richard Drake, *Little Rock Free Press*, 2008

The most famous example of science censorship is the persecution of Galileo by the Catholic Church because he insisted that the Earth revolves about the Sun instead of the reverse. In more recent centuries, however, authorities have generally left scientists alone. One exception was the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s. A Soviet biologist named Lysenko held a non-Darwinian theory of evolution which Josef Stalin liked for ideological reasons. Most of the world's scientists did not accept the theory, but Stalin forced Soviet scientists to support Lysenkoism. This prevented them from working with their colleagues world-wide and slowed down their research. Lysenkoism is not only the enforcement of junk-science but the suppression of free science.

We seem to be in another period of attempts to control scientific thought, this time motivated by politics, religious fundamentalism, and the short-term profits of various economic interests. Looking at only one three-month period at the beginning of 2004, we find a number of efforts to 'manage' the science findings that relate to various governmental policies. First, the White House Office of Management and Budget proposed that it should gain final control over emergency declarations from the federal agencies responsible for public health, safety, and the environment. OMB would decide when and how to tell the public about an outbreak of avian flu or mad cow disease, a nuclear plant accident, or any other crisis. It is obvious that in this plan, economic and political considerations would likely be paramount. The OMB also planned to manage scientific and technical peer reviews of major government regulations and plans.

A number of former top officials and scientists protested the proposed changes. For example, David Michaels, former assistant secretary at DOE, said "OMB is not a science agency. The ramifications of it attempting to insert itself into a time-proven system of having the most knowledgeable scientists available evaluate proposed policy or regulations, is a disaster in the making. "

Just a month later, media reported that House Republicans were working on efforts to rewrite the Endangered Species Act. The representatives involved complained about "junk science" affecting government decisions such as previous bans on PCBs and DDT.

Still in February, the Union of Concerned Scientists issued a report asserting that "the scope and scale of the manipulation, suppression, and misrepresentation of science by the Bush administration is unprecedented." One UCS example was a nine-month delay in an EPA report on mercury pollution from power plants. Another was a report that the White House wanted an EPA climate study to delete both a 1,000-year temperature record and a reference to research that showed a link between climate change and human activity. In a third example, the UCS charged the administration with pressuring the Centers for Disease Control to end a project which found that sex education programs were effective that did not insist only on abstinence.

In March the censorship of scientists jumped to Britain, where Downing Street tried to put a gag on the Prime Minister's chief scientist, Sir David King, after he wrote an article in which he said climate change was a problem more serious than terrorism.

About the same time, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. gave more examples of politics overtaking scientific truth, first the EPA's false declarations that air quality was safe in the area of the World Trade Center catastrophe soon after 9/11. The vast majority of rescue workers (an estimated 40,000) and many others who worked in the same area suffered and suffer persistent lung and respiratory illnesses they might have prevented except for this false reassurance. Five years later, the government had delayed the release of protocols or guidelines that would help doctors across the country in diagnosis and treatment.

Kennedy says that in 2003 the EPA arranged for a pesticide manufacturer (Syngenta) to conduct federal studies of Atrazine, a widely-used weed-killer that Syngenta manufactures. Atrazine had been identified as a potential carcinogen by the 1980s. Scientists in Missouri and Iowa have found reproductive consequences in humans in the corn-belt where Atrazine is widely used, including male semen counts in rural areas that are 50 percent below normal.

The American version of Lysenkoism actually began under Reagan: Recent widespread and aggravated attacks on science, particularly those based on religious beliefs, are unprecedented in the United States. However, the politicizing of science began early in the Reagan administration, almost thirty years ago. Keith Schneider listed a number of such cases in 1982. One example was the high-profile firing of Dr. Melvin Dwaine Reuber, a respected cancer researcher at the top of his field in experimental pathology. Dr. Reuber was also a recognized opponent of chemical companies. He was not only fired but in such a way that in the course of one week his reputation and career were ruined. Reuber charged that he was victimized by a conspiracy of the National Cancer Institute and the chemical industry, and he filed a \$7 million lawsuit. [I don't know the outcome of that lawsuit filed twenty-five years ago.]

Other Reagan casualties included Dr. Peter F. Infante, a top OSHA scientist, fired after he contested an agency decision not to call formaldehyde a carcinogen, and Dr. Adrian Gross, demoted for criticizing his superiors in the EPA for illegally helping two major chemical companies to register an insecticide that Gross's research had found to be a "potent carcinogen."

Thought Control by Squashing Dissent

When General Shinseki indicated several hundred thousand troops would be needed in Iraq, his military career came to an end. When then OMB Director Larry Lindsay suggested the cost of this war would approach \$200 billion, his career in the Administration came to an end. When U.N. Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix challenged conclusions about Saddam's WMD capabilities, the Administration pulled out his inspectors. When Nobel Prize winner and IAEA head Mohammed ElBaradei raised questions about the Administration's claims of Saddam's nuclear capabilities, the Administration attempted to remove him from his post.

Tom Paine (tompaine.com)

There are a number of ways to squash dissent, from firing high-ranking officials who disagree with an administration's policies, to forcing protestors into restricted 'free speech zones' away from the public, to intimidation and censorship of non-profit organizations. A 2003 report from OMB Watch, a non-profit organization, says that the Bush administration was trying to gag or punish social service organizations for ideological differences. Chisun Lee gives several examples of this intimidation: First, the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) threatened Head Start advocates for speaking out against a presidential proposal to decentralize the program. Teachers and parents of poor children faced the loss of funding, even prosecution,

but instead the National Head Start Association sued the Administration for interference with First Amendment rights—and won the case.

HHS also audited more than a dozen AIDS service organizations after U.S.-based advocates loudly heckled HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson’s speech at an AIDS conference in Barcelona in 2002. The protesters had accused the Administration of putting minimal funding into HIV prevention programs. The HHS twice audited an effective but explicit HIV prevention program in San Francisco called Stop AIDS. The CDC threatened to discontinue federal funding for Stop AIDS if it continued to use language the Administration believes will promote sexual activity.

Thought control can also occur at other levels of government, down to the size of a school district. A seventh-grade social studies teacher in Presque Isle, Maine said his school no longer allowed him to teach about non-Christian civilizations such as ancient Greece or modern India, China, and Japan. Teacher Gary Cole alleged that the restricted curriculum resulted after complaints by a small group of fundamentalist Christians.

At another level of education, neoconservative pundits with close ties to Israel attempted to control teaching and research in Middle East Studies at American universities. First, they asked Congress to reduce appropriations that provide federal funding to universities for study of less common languages such as Arabic, Persian (Farsi), and Turkish. This act would in fact have *diminished* national security by further reducing the already small number of Americans fluent in Middle Eastern languages. Perhaps this was why Congress rejected the proposal.

Neoconservatives then induced Rep. Peter Hoekstra to sponsor the International Studies in Higher Education Act, which would establish an advisory board with the power to monitor Middle East scholars and programs, based on political criteria. It did not pass Congress either.

Ideological Exclusion: During the Cold War, suspected Communists were prevented from entering the United States. Since the Patriot Act, the U.S. government again denied visas to foreign scholars, artists, and politicians with political views it didn’t like. Two examples of this exclusion are Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss scholar and expert on Islam who was invited to teach at Notre Dame University, and Adam Habib, a scholar and administrator at the University of Johannesburg, who was prevented from attending speaking engagements and scheduled meetings in the U.S. with scholars and representatives of agencies, universities, and foundations. Habib has been a vocal critic of the war in Iraq.

These exclusions on the basis of ideology violate Americans’ First Amendment rights to hear constitutionally-protected speech, according to the ACLU, which filed lawsuits on behalf of professional and religious organizations that invited these two men to teach and speak in the United States.

Blacklist for “Excuse Makers”?

Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear.

Harry S. Truman

In the summer of 2005, Thomas Friedman, a columnist for the *New York Times*, asked for the United States government to create a blacklist of those whom a former State Department spokesman had called “excuse makers” and whom Friedman described as follows:

After every major terrorist incident, the excuse makers come out to tell us why imperialism, Zionism, colonialism or Iraq explains why the terrorists acted. These excuse makers are just one notch less despicable than the terrorists and also deserve to be exposed.

Friedman says that those who believe that U.S. government actions can encourage reprisals are not part of “legitimate dissent.” He appears to be using the fallacy of equivocation by erasing the distinction between analytic understanding and sympathetic understanding, between searching for a perpetrator’s motivations and making excuses for him. In fact a majority of Americans in polls have agreed that the war in Iraq has made the United States more vulnerable to terrorism, and that terrorist attacks in London occurred because Great Britain supports the war.

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) says that other commentators besides Friedman are calling for censorship of those who seek explanations for political violence or who criticize the war. Bill O’Reilly went further when he called on the air for incarceration of Iraq War opponents including Air America Radio hosts. “Dissent, fine; undermining, you’re a traitor.” It is not clear exactly what O’Reilly considers legitimate dissent.

Friedman and O’Reilly are not government spokespersons, of course. But conservative pundits often acted as unofficial spokespersons for the Bush administration.

Thought Control by Managing War News

No one has ever succeeded in keeping nations at war except by lies.

Salvador de Madariaga, Spanish writer, diplomat, and historian, 1886-1978

At the inception of any war, the press is part of the problem....And that goes all the way back to the Crimean War when the first modern war correspondent was invented.

Chris Hedges, U.S. journalist and author

In the two wars which we examine here, the invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf War, media coverage was stage-managed by the same official, then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. In both cases, he allowed a minimum of information to reach the American public.

Cheney limited press access in several ways, even before “Operation Just Cause” began in 1989. First, he rejected a suggestion from the DoD Southern Command to organize a local pool of U.S. reporters who lived in Panama City. He then delayed deployment of the Washington press pool so that journalists would miss the opening hours of combat. Jacqueline Sharkey describes reporters’ frustrations in the *American Journalism Review*. Even after the Defense Department pool from Washington arrived, they had so little access to communications and transportation resources that they had difficulty covering the action and transmitting reports in a timely manner. The pool members decided their slogan was “If it’s news today, it’s news to us!”

Meanwhile, back in Washington military briefers presented a picture to the public and media of a fast and precise operation that was just about successfully completed. However, CNN posted a telephone number for Panamanians to call with reports of what was going on in their neighborhoods, and hundreds did so. According to CNN executive Ed Turner, while the White House and Pentagon were saying that the action was over and the U.S. had won, “viewers in Panama would call to say that the fighting was going on in their front yard by the rose bushes.”

It was not until many months after the invasion that journalists dug up accurate information about some aspects of the operation, such as friendly fire and civilian casualties. Media reports that corrected the record got much less play than the original stories did, according to Sharkey.

An experienced Latin American correspondent for the *Miami Herald*, Andres Oppenheimer, told a journalism conference that he was embarrassed about having based stories on “sloppy, bad, erroneous and maybe intentionally wrong information” released by the Pentagon.

Because of such negative feedback, the Defense Department hired an adviser, Fred Hoffman, to review its relations with the media during the conflict. Hoffman was harshly critical of Cheney’s decisions regarding the press pool. He asked Cheney to reissue the Pentagon’s Principles of Information, which state that the DoD will make “timely and accurate information” available to the press, public, and Congress. The Principles also state that “propaganda has no place in Department of Defense public affairs programs.”

Cheney did reissue and sign these principles. However, two years later, Cheney’s press restrictions were even more onerous in the Gulf War, a much larger, more complex conflict than Panama. This time they were accompanied by a full-scale disinformation and propaganda campaign. A decade later, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq saw a new form of managing news reports, by embedding correspondents with U.S. troops and discouraging, even on occasion bombing independent journalists (on April 8, 2003).

CHAPTER 28: PROPAGANDA

What good fortune for those in power that people do not think.
Adolf Hitler

The term ‘propaganda’ has negative connotations and is often associated with Hitler, who used propaganda techniques quite effectively for the ugliest of purposes. The word is often used as though only enemy nations ever use propaganda. Some people assume that propaganda is limited to efforts produced or sanctioned by government officials, especially in wartime. Many reserve the term for persuasive efforts with which they disagree (“It’s just a bunch of propaganda”). But the word can be used in a more neutral way to describe any attempt to influence public opinion, even attempts with which one might agree.

The dictionary definition of propaganda is value-free and refers to the deliberate spreading of ideas, information, or rumor in order to help or injure an institution, a cause, or a person. This broader definition could include all sorts of persuasive writing, films with a point of view, spin, advertising, public relations, and smear campaigns, as well as official propaganda from governments and those officially sanctioned by governments.

The art of persuasion, or rhetoric, was analyzed by Aristotle, and great orators, writers, and debaters have studied rhetoric ever since. Demagogues were often natural talents. However, true propaganda began with the mass media and mass culture, advertising, and the public relations business. If we only associate propaganda with the likes of Hitler, we miss the manipulation that occurs daily, even in a democracy. Mark Dowie, a journalist with many journalism awards, says:

Few outside the public relations industry know how well PR really works, and fewer still realize how often we are persuaded by it [or] know how much of our “news” flows virtually unedited from the desks of public relations practitioners. [PR is] an industry designed to alter perception, reshape reality and manufacture consent.

Dowie noted in 1995 that the nation’s 150,000 PR practitioners already outnumbered its 130,000 reporters. Journalism school graduates were finding more jobs in public relations than in journalism. In the dozen years since he wrote, media have been downsizing their newsrooms and the gap is surely even wider. Journalists themselves, if they report national news, can’t afford to irritate a major PR firm that represents most of the individuals who are important news sources.

According to Dowie, most PR firms offer the following standard services: “crisis management, industrial espionage, organized censorship, and infiltration of civic and political groups—a formidable array of persuasive techniques available to large corporations and whoever can afford to hire.”

One PR technique is organized censorship. In their book *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You*, John C. Stauber and Sheldon Rampton show how it works. “A single telephone call from a DuPont public relations man to the Book-of-the-Month Club financially doomed an unflattering history of the DuPont family and its businesses” in 1981. Another victim was *May All Be Fed*, a 1992 book by John Robbins that advocated a vegetarian diet. Stauber and Rampton say the PR campaign was funded by the dairy industry. A similar target in 1992 was Jeremy Rifkin’s *Beyond Beef*.

Stauber and Rampton describe the 1990 campaign by a large PR firm Ketchum (representing the California Raisin Advisory Board among other firms), which effectively kept an

environmental book from selling more than a few copies. Science writer David Steinman had spent five years researching the toxic contaminants in U.S. food before writing *Diet for a Poisoned Planet*. But a number of individuals did not want that book to find a wide audience. They enlisted Elizabeth M. Whalen, a prominent anti-environmentalist, who contacted her friend C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General. Koop publicly called the book “trash.” Stauber and Rampton say the campaign reached the USDA and even higher: “Thanks to a pesticide industry front group with deep Republican connections, the stealth campaign against Steinman’s book even reached into the White House and other arms of the United States government.”

Here is a recent example of another PR technique, crisis-management. After a Siberian tiger escaped its pen at the San Francisco Zoo on Christmas Day 2007, killing one young man and severely mauling his two friends, the zoo hired a prominent crisis-management specialist. Soon a number of reports appeared in the media suggesting that the victims had used slingshots to provoke the beast and had been drinking. The lawyer for two of the victims threatened a lawsuit over this “despicable blame-the-victim strategy.” I do not know the truth of the matter, but it does demonstrate a typical PR response.

Sigmund Freud is well-known as the founder of psychoanalytic theory. However, his all but unknown American nephew, Edward L. Bernays, may actually have had more a more profound effect on the twentieth-century. Bernays was the “Father of Spin.” He took the principles of Freudian psychology and applied them to the young science of mass persuasion. Bernays used PR on his own behalf very skillfully. According to Stauber and Rampton, Bernays successfully sold himself into history as the main inventor of PR although several others deserve at least as much credit.

An early assignment of Bernays was to sell World War I to the American public. His winning idea was to “Make the World Safe for Democracy.” Another of his successes was the 1929 “Torches of Liberty” group in New York City’s Easter Parade. A bunch of debutantes publicly smoked cigarettes and thus broke the taboo against women smoking in public. Bernays was paid for this coup by the American Tobacco Co.

While Bernays and other Americans were perfecting the arts of framing and deception for marketing purposes, in Germany Adolf Hitler used their ideas to develop the art of propaganda in order to attain political power and spread his ideology. *Mein Kampf* is a hard book to read, poorly written, full of insane ranting about the Jews, but when Hitler writes about his theories of propagandizing, he becomes all too lucid. The following are examples of his insights into government propaganda:

The greater the mass [that propaganda] is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be....All effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans....The very first axiom of all propagandist activity [is] the basically subjective and one-sided attitude it must take toward every question it deals with.

Mein Kampf sold very poorly when it was first published in 1925, but after Hitler gained some power it became a best-seller and made him rich.

Propagandists: Joseph Goebbels, a member of the Nazi Party, became Adolf Hitler's propaganda minister in 1933. As *Reichsminister* for Propaganda and National Enlightenment, this clever and cynical man had full power over the press, radio, films, and theater. The

following principles of propaganda are selected and adapted from the writings and actions of Goebbels by Leonard W. Doob:

- A. **One authority:** Propaganda must be planned and executed by only one authority, who issues all the propaganda directives.
- B. **Propaganda Is Part of Any Plan:** The propaganda consequences of an action must be considered in planning that action.
- C. **Believability Is Foremost:** Credibility alone must determine whether propaganda output should be true or false.
- D. **Timing:** Propaganda must be carefully timed for the optimum moment.
- E. **Repetition:** A propaganda theme must be repeated, but not beyond some point of diminishing effectiveness.
- F. **Well-crafted Slogans and Labels:** Propaganda must label events and people with distinctive phrases or slogans which: a. evoke desired responses which the audience previously possesses; b. are capable of being easily learned; c. may be utilized again and again in appropriate situations; d. are boomerang-proof.
- G. **Optimum Anxiety Level:** Propaganda to the home front must create an optimum anxiety level, reinforcing anxiety concerning the consequences of defeat and diminishing other forms of anxiety which reach too high a level.
- H. **Specified Scapegoats:** Propaganda must facilitate the displacement of aggression by specifying the targets for hatred.

Although Goebbels was a master of propaganda, he could build on a long tradition of demagoguery. What distinguishes the propaganda of the 20th and now 21st century from previous efforts is the existence of mass media that can widely and almost instantly spread lies and appeals to baser emotions. In more open countries such as the United States, propagandists need to develop clever techniques in order to manipulate public opinion without public awareness of being manipulated. Karl Rove, propagandist for George W. Bush in his gubernatorial and presidential campaigns and reigns, was often considered to be a master of these more subtle techniques. Lee Atwater was another well-known political strategist a decade or two earlier.

Most hosts on talk radio are propagandists, but 'shock jocks' in particular spread outrage memes and set up scapegoats. They have to keep escalating their remarks and building up the pressure to keep the audience listening. Thus they can contribute to widespread hatred. According to Rev. Chris Buice, talk radio in Rwanda helped incite the genocide there in 1994. Hutu disc jockeys kept calling the Tutsi "cockroaches," dehumanizing them. Bill Moyers notes that "A deliberative democracy depends on a certain kind of conversation." If instead the conversation is built on extreme partisanship, outrage memes, and scapegoats, the infrastructure for democracy withers away.

Propaganda Ploys: Fear

The mob leader will count on emotional contagion....Emotions are far more contagious than the measles. This fact of emotional contagion was very important to Hitler.

George Estabrooks, Psychologist

Humans are subject to emotional contagion as are other animals that howl together, stampede, or fly away as one. We do not like to think so, because first, we are supposed to be

100 percent rational and second, we like to think we are all individualists. However, emotional contagion is easily observed in mobs, in crowds at concerts and games, and even in much smaller groups. As the old saw has it, “Two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all.” Small groups of adults may also influence each other, so caught up in the moment that they will do what no one of them would have done alone. Or they will magnify each other’s fears, like children sitting in the dark, telling each other ghost stories. This emotional contagion is the reason for old admonitions to avoid ‘bad company.’

Emotional contagion also works on the larger scale. Fear is undoubtedly the most contagious emotion and the one most often manipulated by propaganda. After all, fear has to do with immediate survival, whereas other basic drives such as hunger or sexual desire can wait a bit. As Edmund Burke, the nineteenth-century British political thinker put it, “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.”

People fear anything that dramatically claims lives in bunches, such as terrorism, even though smoking or automobile accidents kill more people, and invisible CO₂ emissions that cause climate change may end up killing even more. The associated events of 9/11, the anthrax scare and the Washington snipers have had a lasting effect in frightening the American people. Recently, white powder on the sidewalk downtown near the federal building in my small city caused local authorities to close off the area and disrupt traffic for about two hours. The substance turned out to be ordinary flour left by a group of runners to mark race routes. In *The Assault on Reason*, Al Gore says “The single most surprising new element in America’s national conversation is the prominence and intensity of constant fear.... We seem to be having unusual difficulty in distinguishing between illusory threats and legitimate ones.”

Manufactured fear has been a mainstay of the Bush administration and Republican campaigns since 9/11, but it is not the first time in our history that leaders have used fear to further their policies. For instance, we spent 40 years in fear of the Soviet Union. A generation earlier, right after World War I, there was a Red Scare in which the young J. Edgar Hoover took a major role. Molly Ivins noted that “when we are afraid, we do damage to both ourselves and to the Constitution. Our history is rank with these fits of fear.” However, current manipulation of fears about terrorism may be the most deliberate and concerted of all such historical attempts and for the most far-reaching purposes. Paul Krugman notes that “The Bush administration adopted fear-mongering as a political strategy.” The strategy may be to win elections or something even more. Naomi Wolf points out that each of the ten steps used by dictators to overthrow democracies involves the use of fear to intimidate the public and suppress dissent.

For some of the foregoing quotations about fear I am indebted to Dick Bennett, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Arkansas and co-founder of the Omni Center for Peace, Justice and Ecology. Prof. Bennett also notes:

A common, tried-and-tested technique employed by torturers is known as ‘the showing of the instruments,’ [or] in U.S. military lingo, ‘fear-up.’ Fear up is also a basic, powerful technique used by tyrants to cow the crowd: Have the FBI interview a few thousand, detain some hundreds; the rest will stay indoors, restrict their voices [and even] snitch on neighbors.

It may be that the George W. Bush Administration’s persistent attachment to the use of torture on prisoners—a technique well known to produce little or no useful information—is actually a form of ‘fear-up’ to frighten the domestic population into conformity.

Most of us have forgotten our panic about the first incidence of germ warfare in the United States. The anthrax attacks that began a week or two after the airplane assaults of 9/11 were in

some ways even more disturbing to the public than the explosions. It may seem laughable now, but there were elderly widows in my neighborhood who were afraid to get the mail from their mailboxes. Glenn Greenwald, writer and constitutional law litigator, notes that the anthrax letters raised fear levels and created the climate of fear that dominated in the U.S. for several years afterwards. “It was anthrax—sent directly into the heart of the country’s elite political and media institutions, to then-Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), Sen. Pat Leahy (D-Vt), NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw, and other leading media outlets—that created the impression that social order itself was genuinely threatened by Islamic radicalism.”

Greenwald is not satisfied that the case is closed with the suicide of Dr. Bruce Ivins, and calls for a Congressional Committee to hold hearings on the entire matter, beginning with disinformation broadcast by ABC News in fall 2001. ABC claimed then that “four well-placed and separate sources” told them that tests showed the anthrax contained bentonite, which pointed directly to Iraq. However, Greenwald says:

No tests ever found or even suggested the presence of bentonite. The claim was just concocted from the start. That means that ABC News’ “four well-placed and separate sources” fed them information that was **completely false**—false information that created a very significant link in the public mind between the anthrax attacks and Saddam Hussein.

In a follow-up, Greenwald notes that journalists’ resistance to disclosing their sources, even when sources have exploited them by deliberately giving false information, makes it very easy for officials to spread disinformation.

More Propaganda Ploys: Repetition is the great engine of both advertising and propaganda. And, one might add, of brainwashing. The more times you hear something, the more likely you are to believe it. “Where there’s smoke there’s fire.” “Everybody says...” Such belief from repetition seems to be human nature, but this is where critical thinking comes in. Ask: Who keeps repeating this information? Why? What is the evidence? Then, turn off the television set or radio demagogue. Step back and take time to think for yourself.

Although it came too late for Howard Dean’s presidential candidacy in 2004, CNN admitted that it had overplayed Dean’s Iowa scream by repeating it 633 times. Paul Slavin, Senior Vice President of ABC News (which only ran the Dean footage once) said his one regret was that he did not air a Diane Sawyer report about the Dean coverage earlier. Sawyer reported that Dean was using a special microphone that filters out crowd noise. Other videotapes of the event showed that Dean’s “scream” was barely audible to the original audience.

Another important aspect of propaganda is to get your message out quickly and strongly before your adversaries have time to re-group. Once an idea is fixed, it is almost impossible to change. For instance, a month after Wisconsin protests started, an article appeared in the local newspaper with various experts explaining why public sector workers’ pension plans were not responsible for state budget shortfalls. But locally, the idea that they were was set in stone. Manipulated ACORN videos produced by James O’Keefe and Andrew Breitbart were sufficient to ruin the organization’s reputation and lose it its funding, before it became evident that the videos were stunts. However, those who like a good story that fits their ideology are not likely to hear or read the debunking.

Also, the power of suggestion is very strong indeed. It is not necessary to lie outright in order to mislead someone. Often it is accomplished simply by associating two words or symbols together. For instance, you might mention both ‘Saddam Hussein’ and ‘al Qaida’ numerous

times in the same speech, and human nature being what it is, a number of people would think that you had established a link between them.

Ideologies spread by propagandists made effective use of euphemisms and positive associations. For instance, it sounds a lot better to speak of the “Unitary Executive Theory” than to say: “Let’s ditch the checks and balances idea in the Constitution and let the President have dictatorial powers.” Propaganda makes use of positive associations with ideas like ‘small-town America.’

Why will people believe a big lie sooner than a little one? Perhaps it is because we are accustomed to many little lies in our daily lives, while it takes both imagination and a cultivated skepticism to question pronouncements by government or other authorities. As previously mentioned, exploiting public fears and anxieties is a basic propaganda tool honed in this country for forty years as fear of Communists, now transferred to terrorists. Meanwhile, we can always fear some ethnic minority or new batch of immigrants will take away jobs from the native-born. Another ploy is to create a hero out of a president or other leader by creating an evil, larger-than-life enemy for him to combat.

Another propaganda ploy is time pressure, to narrow and funnel information to the public, to force them into black and white thinking and give them no time for reflection. This is clear in the following advice from Joseph Goebbels, with my emphasis on the admonitions that would pressure the public and put blinders on them:

Never allow the public to cool off; never admit a fault or wrong; **never concede that there may be some good in your enemy; never leave room for alternatives;** never accept blame; **concentrate on one enemy at a time and blame him for everything that goes wrong;** people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it frequently enough people will sooner or later believe it.

Time pressure in addition to Goebbels’ advice above “never leave room for alternatives” was evident in a dramatic event that occurred in early October, 2008. To ease economic strains and specifically a ‘credit crunch,’ Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson proposed a \$700 billion plan to subsidize large investment firms by buying up their bad mortgages, a plan that would give him unprecedented powers. The proposed ‘bailout’ immediately received angry opposition from several political directions and criticism from economists. Paul Krugman spoke for many of them when he said: “The plan on offer is a stinker—and inexcusably so.”

Even after the House made various improvements, the bill lacked non-partisan oversight and provisions that would prevent similar problems in the future. It did not make clear if the taxpayers would ever get anything back. It would not help homeowners facing foreclosure. It did not address other economic problems such as unemployment. It obviously contradicted the 30-year Washington Consensus, particularly of Republicans, that government should not interfere with markets. Without going further into the merits or flaws of this plan, I would just point out that lawmakers were pressured to make a quick decision on the bill, and alternative plans were not proposed to Congress or described in the mainstream media.

Most of the media did not convey the news that over 200 academic economists at the nation’s top universities had sent a letter to Congress criticizing the plan and urging legislators to take their time, or that several alternative proposals were made by credible economic experts, including Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz. When the House of Representatives initially rejected the Paulson bill, many opinion-makers vilified them for their “failure to do the right thing,” for listening to their angry constituents and other motives deemed petty. Media accounts

barely mentioned that either Democratic or Republican legislators might have problems with the bill based on principle.

The mantra of the day was “We have to do something!” The only ‘something’ ever mentioned was the Paulson plan. Both houses of Congress finally swallowed the poison pill after a record Stock Market loss and after the Senate ‘sweetened’ the bill by adding pork, some of it rancid. After the bill safely passed both houses, pundits discussed whether the administration had adequately explained the need for it at the beginning. By cynically renaming it a “Rescue Plan” instead of a “bailout,” they thought the PR problem was solved. But despite the name change, many Americans were still angry and suspected a swindle.

Similar tactics had been used by the Bush Administration to propel the Patriot Act and other important legislation through Congress at a speed that prevented any real reflection or even the reading of long and complex bills. This effectively turned Congress into a rubber stamp, and legislators should have rebelled *enmasse*.

Since television, a number of new propagandist techniques have developed. One is the sound-bite—a negative quotation or incident compressed into 30 seconds without any accompanying context. This is the epitome of missing information. As columnist Reg Henry described it, “People just seize on a few isolated words to form their opinions, as if they hold the only meaning. They ignore what was said before and what was said after. They ignore the time and the place, the audience, the history of the speaker and what was clearly intended.”

One propagandist ploy is the trademark of Republican political consultant Karl Rove. The plan is to go straight at some Democratic strength and turn it on its head—making it a liability instead. Political columnist John Brummett notes: “The party that gave us President Reagan and Governor Schwarzenegger dismissed Obama as a celebrity. The party that plucked George W. from partial ownership of a baseball team suggested Obama lacked essential experience.” Conversely, the propagandist can make his own weaknesses into strengths. Brummett says that carefully crafted talking-points result in ‘Stepford voters’ who simply repeat the same messages they have been fed.

Another upside-down ploy makes deliberate use of the defense mechanism of projection: seeing your own faults in your adversary. For instance, even as conservative politicians are playing the politics of resentment, conservative columnists are talking about liberals as “angry.” The Republican Party that has been pro-business for over a century repositions itself as a working-class party and the Democrats as elitists. The notion of the so-called liberal media is a similar upside-down, preemptive attack so that no one will notice that ownership of the broadcast media, in particular, is monopolized by a few large conglomerates.

One tactic associated with Karl Rove is the wide and synchronized dissemination of right-wing talking-points to sympathetic newspaper columnists and broadcasters. All three of my local newspapers have at least one conservative columnist or editorialist who will write a column on the same subject around the same time. For instance, during and just after the week of dissension about the Paulson bailout, a number of columnists and a local editorial attempted to pin the blame for the spike in foreclosures on past Democratic presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton and their support of the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977. The CRA was designed to stop real estate agents and banks from discriminating against homeowners because of their race, or from ‘red-lining’ whole neighborhoods as unfit for investments. However, it did not force lenders to make risky loans. An estimated 80 percent of sub-prime loans were issued by companies that were not banks, not insured under FDIC, and not subject to CRA. However,

blaming the CRA, Democrats, and by extension minorities, was fast becoming the conventional wisdom from constant repetition to people disposed to believe it.

Negative political campaigns in general tend to use a lot of propaganda devices.

Most people now realize that pictures can be doctored and videotapes manipulated, but there are still strong inborn tendencies to trust the evidence of our senses and to jump to conclusions especially from repeated information. The public at large not only assumes that one can believe what one sees and hears, but as explained previously, our evolution prepared us for this. But individuals can learn to be aware of the power of repetition, suggestion, positive associations, missing context, pressure to think a certain way, and all sorts of black-and-white thinking.

A Propaganda Model: Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky present a theory to explain mass media biases in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). They look at the media as businesses that are selling readers and audiences (their product) to advertisers. Herman and Chomsky list five “filters” that sort out what news gets published or broadcast. These are: Ownership, Advertising, Sourcing, Flak, and Enemy Ideologies.

The first filter listed by Herman and Chomsky is the “Size, Ownership, and Profit Orientation of the Mass Media.” Media are owned by large conglomerates, which are tied into the stock market, and they have wealthy people on their boards with connections to other corporations. In the case of CBS and NBC, these two networks are merged with or owned by Westinghouse and General Electric, both multinationals which are heavily invested in weapons production and nuclear power. Additionally, owners of media corporations believe in free market ideology. David Cromwell, Scottish oceanographer and writer, asks how likely is it that owners would allow their own newspaper, radio or TV station to make a systematic criticism of the ‘free market’ capitalism which is the source of their material wealth.

Advertising is the second filter. Only a few small publications survive on sales to readers. In general, for any publication or commercial broadcasting station to succeed in the market, it has to be an advertiser-friendly medium, that is, sympathetic to business interests. An advertiser’s threat to withdraw advertising can influence editorial content. Cromwell says that in a 1992 study, 90 percent of news editors said that advertisers had tried to interfere with content, 70 percent had experienced advertisers who tried to stop news stories, and 40 percent had let advertisers influence a story.

Another filter is a symbiotic relationship between journalists and official sources. Media critic and communications Professor Robert McChesney points out that reporters are heavily dependent on powerful sources of information. If they offend their sources, they may lose access, and access is the lifeblood of political news, in particular. Reporters don’t want to question publicly their source’s truthfulness, and as a result, the source’s point of view automatically becomes the legitimate one. This gives those in power the ability to define what is or isn’t news. McChesney notes that this dependence on official sources gives a conservative cast to what is printed or broadcast.

The fourth filter is “flak” or negative response to something in the media, in the form of letters, email, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches in Congress, and other complaints and threats. Business groups and public relations companies form ‘flak machines’ that sometimes organize public campaigns of protest. Other groups, especially conservative religious ones, have organized boycotts of certain programs or advertisers. The threat of lawsuits can stop media investigations at any stage.

The fifth filter has to do with the nation's official identification of an enemy. When Herman and Chomsky published their book, the enemy was communism. It is now terrorism and Islamic militants. Cromwell notes that other enemies are "evil dictators" such as Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, and (soon perhaps) Hugo Chavez. Also environmentalist or anti-globalization protestors, perceived as threats to free market or official ideology, may be described as "rioters."

Think-Tanks and Propaganda

They don't think; they justify.

Jonathan Rowe

Think-tanks are supposedly organizations that conduct research and analyze important public issues. Funded by corporations and major foundations, they develop and promote many of the policies that affect our lives. However, while some of these non-profit 'idea factories' conduct legitimate research, many others are simply public relations fronts for industry. They may seek to privatize Social Security, debunk global warming, promote their pet economic doctrines, or roll back environmental legislation.

Conservative think-tanks outnumber liberal ones two to one and usually have more money. David Callahan in *Washington Monthly* says that since the early 1990s, conservative think-tanks and advocacy groups have received "a huge influx of private sector money" (which is tax-deductible) so that older organizations have grown larger and new ones have started up. Callahan says that in 1996 the top 20 conservative think-tanks spent \$158 million, with more than half of it from corporations or wealthy individuals. SourceWatch quotes Democratic strategist Rob Stein about the imbalance of money going to left and right wing think-tanks. He says in a recent two-year period the conservative agenda received \$295 million compared with \$75 million for center-left organizations, or four times as much.

Think tanks are modeled superficially on universities, calling their experts "senior fellows" "adjunct scholars" or similar titles. However, these experts may not have an academic degree in their supposed specialty. Unlike real academics, they don't have to submit their research to peer reviews and conferences. While public universities promote diversity of thought, most think-tanks hire those who already agree with their philosophy.

Terrorism and Propaganda

Probably the most frightening problem facing people in the Western developed world today is the growing threat of terrorism.

Cynthia G. Wagner, editorial in the *Futurist*, May/June 2007

In the 2000s, it has become conventional wisdom in the United States that terrorism is a major world problem, if not the biggest one of all, and that it is intractable and growing. This widespread ideology is based on public fears that began in the Reagan era, when Ronald Reagan declared "war on international terrorism" (meanwhile secretly supporting the terrorist Contras). The term is never clearly defined, and in the last two decades it is applied almost always to Muslim extremists. Serving as an example of this conventional wisdom is futurist Marvin J. Cetron, president of Forecasting International, a futurist think tank.

Cetron predicts that terrorist events will become more common and bloody, that Al-Qaeda will grow much larger and more dangerous, that Muslim extremists will acquire nuclear weapons within the next 10 years, that various Middle Eastern countries especially Saudi Arabia might be taken over by Islamic extremists, and that the ‘war on terror’ will drag on for years. His advice—to the United States government, not the species—includes Pentagon planning for the possibility of a widespread preemptive strike against “terrorists and their sympathizers” if it is absolutely necessary. This advice sounds to me like a prescription for genocide.

A much broader and more thoughtful context for ‘terrorism’ was provided by Indian activist and scholar Eqbal Ahmad in a 1998 talk later published as *Terrorism, Theirs and Ours*. Ahmad identifies five types of terrorism:

1. *State terrorism*, in which nations commit violence against other states, groups, or individuals, including assassinations conducted by states. By waging war, governments can cause damage far exceeding that which individuals or groups can inflict. In the 20th century, democides (in which governments murder their own people) accounted for at least as many deaths as wars did. State terrorism includes torture, destruction of people’s subsistence and homes, and genocide.

2. *Religious terrorism* such as occurred during the medieval crusades, Catholic-Protestant violence in Northern Ireland, Hindus and Muslims during partition in India, Sunnis and Shiites in present-day Iraq

3. *Crime*, individual or organized. “All kinds of crime commit terror.”

4. *Pathology terrorism* by those who are mentally ill, who murder public figures or commit sensationally violent crimes for the attention.

5. *Political terrorism* by private groups. This is the only kind on which the United States focuses, although it is one of the least costly in terms of numbers of lives lost. Also, the media rarely report on right-wing domestic terrorism or violent groups elsewhere in the world that are not Muslim. Political terrorism is a criminal problem best dealt with by police agencies cooperating across borders.

One might add a sixth type, “ideological terrorism” that is not exactly either religious or political, such as murder of abortion doctors or hate crimes against gays, racial minorities, or homeless people. But currently ‘terrorism’ is a handy term with which to frighten people in order to justify repressive policies at home and state terrorism abroad.

More People See through Propaganda: Australian journalist John Pilger reported that by summer 2007, many British soldiers including even generals were speaking out publicly against British involvement in the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. Of particular note, Pilger said, is increasing awareness in the British forces and general public of government propaganda and how it works. An experienced British officer wrote to BBC to attack the media’s “embedded coverage with the U.S. Army” and asked journalists to go beyond the official propaganda.

One aspect of Iraq War propaganda in both the UK and U.S. was censorship by omission. For example, media omitted the fact that almost 80 percent of attacks were directed against occupation forces (Pilger’s source for this was the Pentagon). Pilger said this omission gives the impression “that the occupiers are doing their best to separate ‘warring tribes’ and are crisis managers rather than the cause of the crisis.” Pilger also quotes American journalist Seymour Hersh, who criticized official emphasis on al-Qaeda as follows:

Most of the pros will tell you the foreign fighters are a couple of per cent and they're sort of leaderless...there's no attempt to suggest there's any significant coordination of these groups, but the press keeps going ga-ga about al-Qaeda...It's just amazing to me.

A third example, from the London *Guardian*, was an article by Simon Tisdall saying that "Iran is secretly forging ties with al Qaeda elements and Sunni Arab militias in Iraq." The entire article, say Pilger, was based on anonymous U.S. official sources. This suggests political propaganda rather than news.

The fact of Barack Obama's election as United States President in 2008 suggests that a majority of voters then were impervious to Republican use of Rovian propaganda tactics such as guilt by association and gross exaggeration and distortion of Obama's positions. However, there has been a steady barrage of right-wing propaganda since. I say 'right-wing' because conservatives not only dominate the media but they also seem to have a shrewder grasp of the basics of propaganda.

CHAPTER 29: MEDIA MALAISE/MEDIA REFORM

I reported for UPI in the 1970s when media helped end the US-Vietnam War and the Washington Post exposed the ugly truth about Richard Nixon....In those days words had the power to topple presidents, stop wars, enforce laws, expose fraud, save lives and, on occasion, even save entire species....Then the comfortable bought the franchise, and it's been a party ever since.

Michael Bugeja, "Here Is the News," *The Ecologist*, September 2007

There are several big problems affecting the U.S. media. First is the increasing concentration of ownership of television networks and cable companies, radio stations, and newspaper chains. Our information is being delivered by an oligopoly. This means that the news and views will fit a standardized format and will largely serve the interests of a few wealthy owners. It also means that a few people own the means of propagandizing the public and turning democratic institutions into an empty shell.

Second, newspapers in particular have been in decline for some time. They are competing with television news and the Internet. Declining revenue from advertising and circulation sharpened in 2008 for most U.S. newspapers, according to an AP report. (AP, July 15, 2008) While still profitable, newspapers are not profitable *enough* for the bottom-line types who own them, who have bought out many family-owned newspapers that prided themselves on their role of informing the public. These new profit-minded investors tend to cut staff, including reporters. That means there are fewer people to do any investigative reporting, which historically has been the special role of newspapers.

Without investigative reporting, news degenerates into handouts from government, politicians, industry, and PR firms. Leonard Pitts, Jr. points out that "only newspapers routinely fill the function of government watchdog, particularly at the state and local level. Only a newspaper will detach a reporter to spend three, four, six months following a paper trail, documenting kickbacks, conflicts of interest, shady deals in the statehouse or the White House."

An example of the bottom-line approach to the newspaper business is executive Mark Willes, who transferred from a top post at General Mills to become the new CEO at Times Mirror Co. Willes almost immediately closed *Newsday* and ordered big layoffs at *The Los Angeles Times*, one of the nation's major newspapers. Norman Solomon notes that "Willes did not seem to be embarrassed when he compared managing newspapers to marketing Cheerios."

Third, concentration of ownership in radio has had several bad effects. One is that it has contributed to monopoly conditions in the popular music industry. Another effect is the proliferation of right-wing talk-radio shows (almost all talk shows appear to be right of center) some of which actually foment hate and divisiveness, along with misinformation. Radio programming also suffers from the bottom-line approach. For example, Lowry Mays is the CEO of Clear Channel, America's biggest radio company, with over 1,200 stations. He described his company's goals as follows:

If anyone said we were in the radio business, it wouldn't be someone from our company. We're not in the business of providing news and information. We're not in the business of providing well-researched music. We're simply in the business of selling our customers products.

Fourth, the Internet is under siege by those who would like to privatize this great commons of free interchange of ideas and information.

Fifth is the fact that the majority of people get their news from television, despite the fact that it is a 'hot' medium ideal for manipulating emotions and stifling critical thinking. Television by its nature over-dramatizes and over-personalizes the news, the same as tabloids do. In recent years, beginning especially with the O. J. murder trial, television news puts the news focus on celebrity scandals and sensational tragedies. Each event, whether important or not, is milked to the limit and then it disappears from view. This is called the 'news cycle' and it is part of what mainstream newspapers are competing against.

Pat Thomas, Editor of the *Ecologist*, laments "the shift from reporting news responsibly to reporting it in a fashion-driven way....It makes for lazy journalists and a lazy public." One consequence of that mutual laziness is lack of knowledge about scientific research and developments. NASA scientist James Hansen says that the mainstream media are three years or more behind the scientific data. Even scientific journals are about one year behind (because of publishing schedules and the necessity for peer review).

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, other factors have also contributed to the decline of the free press in the United States. Lisa Finnegan, an award-winning journalist, lists "fear, personal attacks on those who present alternative viewpoints, editors who allow themselves to be bullied by administration officials, and a general disregard for hard-charging journalism that includes the pursuit of difficult truths."

Myths about Media: Norman Solomon, syndicated columnist and author of *The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media*, lists several common myths about the mainstream media (MSM). First is the enduring 'liberal media' myth. It first appeared among segregationists during the civil rights era, and was later taken up by conservatives in general. The liberal media myth found support in surveys showing journalists much more likely to vote Democrat than Republican. However, says Solomon, editors tend to be more conservative than reporters, and publishers most conservative of all. "As in other industries, people at the top of the hierarchy have much more power to determine policies and constraints than rank-and-file employees do." The news you see and hear reflects the choices and priorities of top management, not reporters. Relentless repetition of this myth about the liberal bias of mainstream media has contributed to the public's distrust of what they hear and read rather than to skepticism and critical thinking that compares sources and digs deeper.

Another myth is that a privately-owned press is necessarily a free press. Solomon says: "In the real world, however, the freedom of expression that flourishes in mass media is confined to messages that are acceptable to such corporations [as Time Warner, Disney, and General Electric]." Solomon notes that the MSM have done a lot to make 'big government' sound bad—except for the Pentagon budget, which is a cash cow for several conglomerates that own both military contracting companies and major media outlets, for instance General Electric (NBC) and Westinghouse (CBS).

A third myth listed by Solomon is that new technologies are creating more democratic media. But "no digital breakthrough or cyberspace marvel can rectify a chronic and severe shortage of democracy." Solomon predicts that the Internet will shift from being a participatory medium

serving public interests to being a broadcast medium in which corporations deliver consumer-oriented information.” Interactivity would be reduced to little more than sales transactions and e-mail.” This shift hasn’t happened yet, but is being attempted.

It is also a common myth that news reports can be truly ‘objective.’ In fact, nothing described in words can be completely objective, because of the nature of language. Images produce even more emotional responses. One can work towards being fair and balanced without ever expecting to reach the “perfection” of objectivity. (That Fox News describes itself as “fair and balanced” is doublespeak since its operation is as much propaganda as news.)

Solomon quotes from *The Media Monopoly* by Ben Bagdikian, a veteran newspaper reporter and editor, about the many subjective choices involved in each daily edition of news:

Which of the infinite number of events in the environment will be assigned for coverage and which ignored? Which of the infinite observations confronting the reporter will be noted? Which of the facts noted will be included in the story? Which of the reported events will become the first paragraph? Which story will be prominently displayed on page 1 and which buried inside or discarded? None of these is a truly objective decision.

By assuming that what one reads or hears is without any bias, one becomes blind to the bias involved in any piece of writing (including this one!). On the other hand, a person who reports the news or those who present it can attempt to balance one point of view with others.

Solomon says another myth is that newspapers correct important mistakes. Instead, minor inaccuracies get into the “Corrections” column, while major distortions and biases, or the “stenographic reliance on governmental and corporate sources” are never corrected.

Media Reform

We must all be media critics not just capable of partisan sniping or finding bias under every journalistic rock but also capable of discerning good and bad journalism through a wider lens than our own political beliefs.

Jeffrey Scheuer, Foreword to *No Questions Asked*

A compelling argument can be made that media reform is the first, most urgent and important action to take in order to preserve what is left of the American democratic system. A number of people, many of them journalists, have written about what needs to be done. Organizations that advocate media reform are growing in numbers and influence, such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), the Center for Media and Democracy which focuses on misleading PR, Media Alliance, Take Back the Media, and Media Empowerment Project (United Church of Christ). Three major goals are to promote media literacy and critical thinking; to support independent media; and to work for legislative reforms.

At the most basic level, people need to be aware that their children, even babies and toddlers, are being brainwashed and perceptually limited or actually damaged neurologically by the widespread use of television as a baby-sitter. (This is like hiring a baby-sitter who gives her charges opium to keep them pacified.) In addition, advertisers target young children for products such as sugary cereals and expensive toys that provide little opportunity for interactive play. Several reform organizations focus on children’s relationship to television, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics’ group Media Matters, Parents Television Council, and Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood. Elsewhere I have suggested that children watch *no* television until

they are at least eight, the age at which they can start to separate fact from fiction. Even then, viewing should be limited and monitored, with media literacy taught in public schools.

Of course many adults themselves seem unable to separate media fact from fiction. Media literacy for youths and adults is an important part of media reform. For instance the American Coalition for Media Education (ACME) supports projects to show people how advertising manipulates them to buy (or vote), and others that show how to watch television news critically. ACME President Rob Williams says that one basic idea to stress is that “truth is not completely objective. There is not one magic source that will provide the complete truth. One must synthesize a variety of sources and determine truth for oneself.” The problem is getting through to adults whose conditioning has led them to look for that one magic source of information, whether it is the Bible, authority figures, or a few media personalities or networks which have the same outlook as they do.

A second aim of media reform is to encourage grassroots and alternative media such as public access television, independent video and film producers, local weekly newspapers, small magazines, Indymedia, and low-power community radio. On the Internet, a number of bloggers and websites have taken over the functions of investigative reporters since newspaper owners have cut reporting staff. Before the Internet, someone with a camcorder recorded the police beating of Rodney King for a traffic infraction, an incident that was played on the evening news and eventually led to riots in Los Angeles after a trial acquitted the police. Now witness records do not depend on an intermediary. YouTube lets anyone with a video camera witness events and publicize them world-wide.

In Italy, where Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi owns or controls 90 percent of the country’s television, small pirate TV stations called *telestreets* with a broadcast range as small as a couple of apartment buildings keep popping up, although if they are noticed, authorities close them down. The *telestreets* demonstrate that the technology could be much more accessible.

The third, largest, and most difficult area of reform involves legislative and regulatory measures. The first thing to understand is that *the public owns the airwaves*. Stations are granted certain broadcast frequencies—a limited resource—based on the agreement that they will perform a public service. In the Radio Act of 1927, Congress directed the FRC, forerunner of the FCC, to grant licenses for broadcasting in a way that ensured broadcasters would serve the “public convenience, interest or necessity.” By the 1940s, this included rules against editorializing by the station. In 1949 the FCC viewed station licensees as “public trustees” that were obligated to provide opportunity to discuss differing viewpoints on controversial issues important to the public. According to a 1969 Supreme Court decision, “It is the right of the viewers and listeners, not the right of the broadcasters, which is paramount.” (U.S. Supreme Court, upholding the constitutionality of the Fairness Doctrine in *Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC*, 1969)

The Fairness Doctrine was one such obligation to the public, implicit from the 1920s and a formal rule from 1949 to 1987 (almost 40 years). The doctrine required the three networks of the day to discuss some controversial matters on air and to provide contrasting views of these issues. But the arrival of cable changed the situation. Because cable channels do not depend on a limited number of available frequencies, the FCC did not require that medium to serve the public interest. The FCC stopped enforcing the doctrine during Reagan’s administration and formally repealed it in 1987. Reagan’s FCC chair, Mark S. Fowler said: “The perception of broadcasters as community trustees should be replaced by a view of broadcasters as marketplace participants. [Television is] just another appliance. It’s a toaster with pictures.”

The Reagan FCC claimed the doctrine violated First Amendment free speech rights of broadcasters, although in the 1969 Supreme Court decision, Justice Byron White had written: “There is no sanctuary in the First Amendment for unlimited private censorship operating in a medium not open to all.” Another slight problem for the Reaganites was that in 1959, an amendment to the Communications Act had made the Fairness Doctrine into law. However, in 1986 a 2-1 legal decision by the D.C. Circuit of Appeals—with Reagan appointees Robert Bork and Antonin Scalia in the majority—said that the doctrine wasn’t actually a law. Congress then passed a bill to make the doctrine a federal law, but President Reagan vetoed it, and a similar attempt was vetoed by the first President Bush.

Steve Rendall says there are a number of misconceptions about the Fairness Doctrine. It did not require balance for each individual program, and it didn’t insist on equal time for opposing points of view—the ratio between the original view and the response could be as much as five to one. Talkshows never figured in any FCC decisions about the doctrine, although even before its repeal, rightwing talkshow hosts often dominated the airwaves.

In the 20 years since the doctrine’s repeal in 1987, television news and public affairs programming decreased and the volume of conservative opinion greatly increased, especially on talk radio where virtually all the leading political talkshow hosts today hold right wing views.

Other goals of media reformers include the following areas of action:

Restore FCC’s Original Role: The FCC was formed to protect consumers against unfair industry practices, but like all too many regulatory agencies, its mission eventually reversed to protect and promote the industry they were supposed to regulate. One of “15 Steps for Media Reform” is to reconstitute the FCC to include representatives from nonpartisan groups such as the Parent Teachers Association. Also, using historical precedent, the FCC might grant licenses for a limited time conditional on the station’s general service to the community. That would not, for instance, be a station owned by a large broadcast group that supplies canned programming and minimal staff so that the station could not even warn the community about an approaching tornado or wildfire. The FCC could notify the public about broadcast license renewals in the local market and require existing license holders to give the public evidence of how they have served the public interest.

Anti-monopoly Laws: Robert McChesney and John Nichols advocate that the United States should apply existing anti-monopoly laws to the media and write some new ones to address ownership of large numbers of radio stations and TV stations. Legislators should also “move to break the lock of newspaper chains on entire regions.” Mergers such as that of AOL and Time Warner need careful scrutiny to determine effects on the quality of news. “Fifteen Steps” says that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 should be replaced with a new law that can help break up conglomerates.

Ban Political Advertising? The Communications Act of 1937, Section 315 required radio stations to give “equal opportunity” to any legally qualified political candidate if the station had allowed time for another person running for the same office. This was long before political advertising became a major source of income for television broadcasters, distorting and corrupting the political process because candidates needed so much money to pay for the advertising. The better-funded candidates almost always win. The networks received a billion dollars in ad revenue from the 2000 campaign—the figure for 2008 is undoubtedly much higher.

One suggested reform is free airtime for candidates. This idea was proposed by President Bill Clinton in 1997 and Presidential candidate Bill Bradley in 1999. The Free Air Time Bill was introduced by Senators John McCain and Russell Feingold in 2002, but the broadcasting lobby

made sure it was defeated. “Fifteen Steps” goes further, saying that paid political advertising should be banned from American broadcasting. In the two months before the election, stations would provide prime time for local and national candidates, with a minimum of 15-minute presentations instead of Madison Avenue sound bites.

Public broadcasting: In some other countries, public broadcasting is financed through a non-political system, but in the United States it is funded in part by federal appropriations that make it dependent on political and commercial interests. This problem became evident just prior to the Gulf War, at a time when conservative senators were threatening PBS with drastic funding cuts. The formerly excellent PBS news show then became dominated by the talking heads of the military and first Bush administration, and became merely a funnel for official information (propaganda).

At this writing, the House of Representatives has just abolished federal funding of NPR, the national radio network.

One suggestion is imposing a small surtax on consumer electronic equipment such as computers, VCRs and television sets. “Fifteen Steps” claims that a few cents at the retail level could support not only a full system of non-commercial television and radio, but also a “substantial news and documentary operation.” Another possibility is one or more public information systems financed by consumer subscription sign ups.

News Reforms: Until the Reagan administration, there was a time restriction on commercials shown during newscasts. “Fifteen Steps” suggests restoring these restrictions to reduce the influence of corporations on news content. McChesney and Nichols would require stations to allow journalists an hour every day of news time without any commercials.

Other Reforms: McChesney and Nichols would reduce or eliminate television advertising that targets children under age 12. Also, some countries show adult programming only after young children’s bedtime, say 8:00 pm, a plan I would strongly support because of the following experience. In the early days of television, my husband and I resisted buying a set, but our children would occasionally see TV at a neighbor’s. One Sunday afternoon, my two little girls age three and six came running home from the minister’s house across the street, where they and the minister’s children had been watching a film about Jack the Ripper. My kids were badly frightened to the point of nightmares by the idea of “a man who wants to kill pretty girls.” Today of course, many children are exposed to such dramatized brutality day in and day out, and we pretend that it can’t make any difference to their psyches.

Another suggestion is to establish inexpensive licensing of low-power, short-range radio and television stations, as Japan has done.

Net neutrality

In most of the world people regard Net Neutrality as...an obvious requirement....The Web took off in all its glory because it was a royalty-free infrastructure.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web, in U.S. House testimony 2007

In summer 2005, a U.S. Supreme Court decision and an FCC ruling combined to deregulate how phone and cable companies deal with broadband Internet traffic. Phone company executives started to talk about setting up a tiered program of fast and slow lanes, charging customers who wanted priority to the fast lanes—a sort of toll road. This alarmed some consumer groups and Internet companies. But the issue exploded in spring 2006 after a House subcommittee refused to add Net neutrality provisions to a broad telecommunications bill. According to a *Washington*

Post article by Charles Babington, “The 23 to 8 vote goaded more than 850 interest groups...to form a coalition called SavetheInternet.com.” While some of these groups were left of center, the alliance included the Christian Coalition and Gun Owners of America.

In January 2007 Senators Byron Dorgan and Olympia Snowe introduced the Internet Freedom Preservation Act to prevent a fee-based Internet, and other versions of the bill have been introduced since but none has yet come to a vote. Meanwhile, according to Free Press Policy Director Ben Scott, the telephone companies spent over \$100 million on advertising, lobbying, campaign contributions, and other efforts to destroy the idea of net neutrality.

So what is this Net neutrality they are fighting about? It is the way the Internet is set up now. Phone and cable companies may own the wires but they can’t discriminate against any Internet content, service or application based on its source, ownership or destination. The issue is related to broadband competition and accessibility. Richard Hoffman in *Information Week* says that the United States has fallen behind other developed countries in broadband accessibility, speed, and cost to the consumer. “The U.S. isn’t even close to being the leader in widespread broadband availability and usage....Prices are still much higher than in many of the countries that lead the world in broadband use. [There is] surprisingly little competition.”

Journalist Bill Moyers points out that technology will soon allow almost all media to be delivered to homes by way of a single high speed broadband connection. Thus widespread and equal access is of prime importance for everyone to access information.

CHAPTER 30: ISM IS OR ISM AINT MY BABY?

Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.

Mark Twain

Well, here we are back on deck. I do hope nobody suffers from the bends after exploring the depths of our ideology-infested waters, nor was injured from the thrashing about of giant ideologies in turmoil—free market capitalism during an economic crash, or a revived culture war at the tail-end of the presidential campaign. Now it is time to reflect on what is wrong with letting ideologies take over our mental life.

First, people replace their own perceived reality with abstractions and verbal formulas—canned beliefs and opinions. The canned stuff does not begin to compare with freshly picked from your own garden. Second, ideological thinking assumes that there is only one reality. But as philosopher and psychiatrist Paul Watzlawick points out: “There are, in fact, many different versions of reality, some of which are contradictory, but all of which are the results of communication and not reflections of eternal, objective truths.” Ideologies substitute for deeper and more impartial thought, thus leading us to an unreal and ill-adaptive picture of our world and its current problems. They get us out of the habit of critical thinking. They give us tunnel vision.

Third, ideologies tend to be dualistic, to dwell on the extremes, and to call forth competing ideologies. They lead to either/or arguments. They demonize opponents and find scapegoats. Not only do they ignore the middle ground, they also polarize public life. Fourth, ideologies tend to represent the interests of certain nations, classes, ethnic groups, genders, and the like. They must be upheld by propaganda and rhetorical tricks, or even by armed conflict. Ideologies are by nature divisive.

Human affairs are much too complex to fit into such hollow constructions of ideas. Insofar as our thinking consists of received frames, myths, and “isms” we are borrowing a garment. It may or may not fit us, and it may or may not suit the occasion, but it is easy to put on and wear instead of tailoring our own mental garb. Why then don’t we construct our own personal system of ideas? Perhaps it is because we are busy, over-scheduled, worried, sleep-deprived, and, let’s face it, somewhat lazy. Emerson called it “the love of repose.” There are a lot of things to keep track of in a world that keeps getting bigger through population growth, trade, communication, and technology. So we rely on ideologies that are spread by mass media—spread to the advantage of those who produce the ideologies. The information sources on which we depend are often little more than soft-core propaganda.

At this time, the whole world is held hostage to some exceedingly dangerous ideologies such as nationalism, social Darwinism and racism, religious fanaticisms especially of the three Abrahamic religions, and free-market fundamentalism. In view of the fact that our species is facing perhaps the greatest assortment of challenges humans have ever faced, we need to find a way to break through ideologies and encourage more people to actually *think*, to see through the efforts of propagandists who are skilled at manipulating our emotions.

In contrast to the love of repose, Emerson described the love of truth: “He in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself aloof from all moorings and afloat. He will abstain from

dogmatism, and recognize all the opposite negations between which, as walls, his being is swung. He submits to the inconvenience of suspense and imperfect opinion; but he is a candidate for truth, as the other [who loves repose] is not, and respects the highest law of his being.”

There are ways to cultivate the love of truth. Three positive attitudes or skills were emphasized in *Models, Myths and Muddles*: species consciousness, participating consciousness, and critical thinking. They are all antidotes to ideological thinking. Species consciousness greatly broadens our outlook. Ideologies usually favor one group, class, or nation, but the habit of thinking of our species as a whole takes one out of those narrow ideological limits. Second, ideologies are spread by an unthinking transfer of abstractions and biases as a package, whereas participating consciousness directly engages the world. A participant respects her own senses and experiences in a whole world and is not captured by other people’s abstractions. Third, it is absolutely necessary to cultivate critical thinking skills in order to see through ideological thinking, propaganda, and media manipulations. And we *must* see through these traps and snares in order to go forward as one human species consciously cooperating for our mutual survival.

Familiarity with the scientific method, scientific knowledge, and scientific ethics is not the same as critical thinking but is equally important to us in a technological civilization so interwoven with scientific ideas. Scientific literacy and the habits of skepticism, objectivity, and suspending judgment are crucial if we are going to live with advanced technologies. We do need to become more conscious of what science can do and can’t do for us, and avoid turning it into an all-encompassing ideology or religion, especially a rigid ‘fundamentalist’ scientism based on ideas of its 17th century founders. Even more, we need to keep our skepticism about the wonders promised by every new technology.

Convergent and Divergent Thinkers

If the human mind worked [like a computer] by (trying all possible combinations of the sense data reaching it), it would take us about a month just to cross the road. The brilliance of the human mind lies in its ability to take in a mass of data and to put it together to give a pattern.

Edward de Bono, “Lateral Thinking”

Most people prefer, or at least are accustomed to respond to problems by *convergent thinking*, either using deductive logic or ticking off a limited number of possibilities one by one. This process is something like solving a Sudoku puzzle. At the end of this elimination process a person gains the satisfaction of reaching closure. Ideology has a certain relationship to convergent thinking. This deductive type of problem-solving is more appropriate and useful for mathematical and mechanical problems than for complex social and political ones, but for many people it is their habitual response to all problems. As a friend observed of her husband—who is a very good problem-solver in the mechanical sphere—if you present him with too many choices or possibilities, it makes him feel uneasy and overwhelmed.

Schooling and constant testing may reinforce the preference for convergent thinking by emphasizing ‘one right answer.’ Schools and the culture as a whole often emphasize speed of response—not only coming up with the one right answer but doing it quickly. This favors the clever and quick-witted but not the reflective and wise, or original thinkers. There are of course emergency situations that call for quick decisions, but for some people, every opinion is a quick decision, often based on prejudice and stereotypes. American culture tends to overvalue decisiveness as a general character trait.

Other drawbacks to convergent thinking are that it may lead to group-think, or encourage the sort of thinking, or meme transfer, that we see in ideologies. In contrast, *divergent thinking* deals with open-ended problems and generates multiple answers from across fields of knowledge. Both approaches have their place, but since divergent thinking is underutilized we need to encourage it. A prerequisite is to provide time for reflection, without so much riding on speed of response. Some strategies that have been suggested to stimulate divergent thinking are brainstorming, keeping a journal and free-writing.

Dr. Lakshminarayanan Samavedham, an engineering professor, suggests that critical thinking is convergent in nature and requires the very same skills that an engineer uses in problem solving. However, difficulties arise from equating critical thinking with scientific and engineering problem solving, or solely with problem-solving in general. Critical thinking is needed across the board, in everyday life with all its ambiguities, in areas not accessed by science. It is often greatly dependent on the interpretation of words, as in analyzing propaganda. CT also involves the interpretation of metaphor and nonverbal communication, so it is not entirely analytical, objective, and ‘left-brain.’

Another type of thinking skill is *lateral thinking*. Edward de Bono, who invented this term, defines it as “the process of generating alternative concepts and perceptions. [It] is at times divergent and at other times convergent.” It is not the same as creative thinking, although both skills may lead to new ideas. Lateral thinking involves changing the *direction* of your thinking. “Instead of moving straight ahead to tackle a problem you could move laterally in order to change the approach.”

De Bono says it is odd that although the human brain is so good at making and using patterns, it has relatively few methods for escaping from old patterns and reaching new ones. He mentions two reasons that changing patterns is difficult: “First of all we only look for the information that the old patterns tell us to look for. Second, we tend to see the new information through the old pattern.” He lists four tools we own for changing patterns: accident, mistake, humor, and lateral thinking. De Bono has a very high regard for humor, which he says is the most significant characteristic of the human brain. But he emphasizes that we must also cultivate lateral thinking lest we become trapped within old patterns of perception.

It is evident that lateral thinking, divergent thinking, and creative thinking could greatly improve the flexibility of our mental processes and lead us away from rigid ideologies. But let us defer more detailed discussion about how to do this. In the next book we consider a number of ways to create the mental infrastructure we need to support us in the huge task that lies ahead. *Models, Myths and Muddles* gave a broad view of the challenges to our species and the obstacles to critical thinking. The third and last book in this series concerns itself with a variety of overlooked, positive solutions to these problems. *Thinking toward Survival* was published in book form in 2010 and will eventually appear online as well.

Notes and Sources

Swimming in a Sea of Ideology is not intended as a scholarly work, and can only skim the surface of many of its subjects. Sources are included so that the reader can pursue some topics further, and can check up on the author's evidence and arguments. Also, sourcing provides a counter-example to the common practice of people arguing from ideology without examples or evidence, using only wishful thinking or the desire to sway the beliefs of others. Unless otherwise indicated, dictionary definitions are from *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition, 1994.

Some may object to my occasional use of Wikipedia, because of its open-access policy. (See "Criticism of Wikipedia," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Wikipedia) While there are problems and controversies around this ground-breaking effort to create a base of communal knowledge, I have found it a good place to start for a reasonably accurate overview of the subject, with bibliography and links for further investigation. One study published in *Nature* magazine indicated that Wikipedia was nearly as accurate as the online *Encyclopedia Britannica*. (Daniel Terdiman, "Study: Wikipedia as accurate as Britannica," CNET News, http://news.cnet.com/2100-1038_3-5997332.html) In any case, Wikipedia is seldom my only reference.

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