

## PART I

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# THE CULTURE WARS



## Ever Wonder Why?

When you have seen scenes of poverty and squalor in many Third World countries, either in person or in pictures, have you ever wondered why we in America have been spared such a fate?

When you have learned of the bitter oppressions that so many people have suffered under, in despotic countries around the world, have you ever wondered why Americans have been spared?

Have scenes of government-sponsored carnage and lethal mob violence in countries like Rwanda or in the Balkans ever made you wonder why such horrifying scenes are not found on the streets of America?

Nothing is easier than to take for granted what we are used to, and to imagine that it is more or less natural, so that it requires no explanation. Instead, many Americans demand explanations of why things are not even better and express indignation that they are not.

Some people think the issue is whether the glass is half empty or half full. More fundamentally, the question is whether the glass started out empty or started out full.

Those who are constantly looking for the “root causes” of poverty, of crime, and of other national and international problems, act as if prosperity and law-abiding behavior were so natural that it is their absence which has to be explained. But a casual glance around the world today, or back through history, would dispel any notion that good things just happen naturally, much less inevitably.

The United States of America is the exception, not the rule. Once we realize that America is an exception, we might even have a sense of gratitude for having been born here, even if gratitude has become un-cool in many quarters. At the very least, we might develop some concern for seeing that whatever has made this country better off is not lost or discarded—or eroded away, bit by bit, until it is gone.

Those among us who are constantly rhapsodizing about “change” in vague and general terms seem to have no fear that a blank check for change can be a huge risk in a world where so many other countries that are different are also far worse off.

Chirping about “change” may produce a giddy sense of excitement or of personal exaltation but, as usual, the devil is in the details. Even despotic countries that have embraced sweeping changes have often found that these were changes for the worse.

The czars in Russia, the shah of Iran, the Batista regime in Cuba, were all despotic. But they look like sweethearts compared to the regimes that followed. For example, the czars never executed as many people in half a century as Stalin did in one day.

Even the best countries must make changes and the United States has made many economic, social, and political changes for the better. But that is wholly different from making “change” a mantra.

To be for or against “change” in general is childish. Everything depends on the specifics. To be for generic “change” is to say that what we have is so bad that any change is likely to be for the better.

Such a pose may make some people feel superior to others who find much that is worth preserving in our values,

traditions and institutions. The status quo is never sacrosanct but its very existence proves that it is viable, as seductive theoretical alternatives may not turn out to be.

Most Americans take our values, traditions and institutions so much for granted that they find it hard to realize how much all these things are under constant attack in our schools, our colleges, and in much of the press, the movies and literature.

There is a culture war going on within the United States—and in fact, within Western civilization as a whole—which may ultimately have as much to do with our survival, or failure to survive, as the war on terrorism.

There are all sorts of financial, ideological, and psychic rewards for undermining American society and its values. Unless some of us realize the existence of this culture war, and the high stakes in it, we can lose what cost those Americans before us so much to win and preserve.

## Animal Rites

If you think there is a limit to how much childishness there is among Californians, you may want to reconsider—especially for Californians in academic communities.

Recently a mountain lion was discovered up in a tree in Palo Alto, a residential community adjacent to Stanford University. This was at about the time of day when a nearby school was getting ready to let out. There had already been an incident of a horse being found mauled by some animal on Stanford land, and some thought it might have been a mountain lion that did it.

Fearing that the mountain lion might find one of the local school children a tempting target, the police shot and killed the animal. Outrage against the police erupted up and down the San Francisco peninsula and as far away as Marin County, on the other side of the Golden Gate Bridge, more than 30 miles away.

According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “The police agency has been flooded with outraged calls and e-mails from people inflamed by TV news videotape of the lion lolling peacefully in a tree just before an officer shot it to death with a high-powered rifle.”

Yes, the mountain lion was sitting peacefully. That is what cats do before they pounce—usually very swiftly.

Second-guessers always have easy alternatives. One protester against “the murdering of such a beautiful

creature” said that it “easily could have been removed from the premises and relocated” and that the “dirty blood-thirsty bastards” who killed it should be ashamed of themselves.

The protester offered no helpful hints on how you “easily” remove a mountain lion from a tree—and certainly did not volunteer to demonstrate how to do it in person the next time the police find a mountain lion up a tree in a residential neighborhood.

Animal rights advocates said the police could have given the mountain lion “a chance” by attempting to tranquilize it while it was up in the tree, and save shooting as a last resort if it turned aggressive.

A makeshift shrine has been erected on the spot where the mountain lion died. Flowers, cards and photos have been placed around it.

This is an academic community where indignation is a way of life. Those engaged in moral exhibitionism have no time for mundane realities.

The police, of course, have to deal with mundane realities all the time. Not long before this episode, the police had tried to capture three mountain lion cubs by shooting them with tranquilizers. They missed on two out of three tries with one cub.

What if the police had shot a tranquilizer gun at the adult mountain lion in the tree and missed? Would they have had a chance to get off a second shot at a swiftly moving target before he pounced on one of the hundreds of children that were soon to be leaving school near him?

Moral exhibitionists never make allowance for the police missing, whether with tranquilizers shot at mountain lions or bullets fired at a criminal. The perpetually indignant are forever wondering why it took so many shots.

It would never occur to people with academic degrees

and professorships that they are both ignorant and incompetent in vast areas of human life, much less that they should keep that in mind before they vent their emotions and wax self-righteous.

Degrees show that you have knowledge in some special area. Too often they embolden people to pontificate on a wide range of other subjects where they don't know what they are talking about.

The fact that academics are overwhelmingly of the political left is perfectly consistent with their assumption that third parties—especially third parties like themselves—should be controlling the decisions of other people who have first-hand knowledge and experience.

The cops probably haven't read Chaucer and don't know what existentialism is. But they may know what danger is.

Some Palo Alto parents of small children living near where the mountain lion was killed said that the police did the right thing. There are still some pockets of sanity, even in Palo Alto.



## “Us” or “Them”?

A reader recently sent me an e-mail about a woman he had met and fallen for. Apparently the attraction was mutual—until one fateful day the subject of the environment came up.

She was absolutely opposed to any drilling for oil in Alaska, on grounds of what harm she said it would do to the environment.

He argued that, since oil was going to be drilled for somewhere in the world anyway, was it not better to drill where there were environmental laws to provide at least some kinds of safeguards, rather than in countries where there were none?

That was the end of a beautiful relationship.

Environmentalist true believers don't think in terms of trade-offs and cost-benefit analysis. There are things that are sacred to them. Trying to get them to compromise on those things would be like trying to convince a Muslim to eat pork, if it was only twice a week.

Compromise and tolerance are not the hallmarks of true believers. What they believe in goes to the heart of what they are. As far as true believers are concerned, you are either one of Us or one of Them.

The man apparently thought that it was just a question of which policy would produce which results. But many issues that look on the surface like they are just about which alternative would best serve the general public are really

about being one of Us or one of Them—and this woman was not about to become one of Them.

Many crusades of the political left have been misunderstood by people who do not realize that these crusades are about establishing the identity and the superiority of the crusaders.

T.S. Eliot understood this more than half a century ago when he wrote: “Half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don’t mean to do harm—but the harm does not interest them. Or they do not see it, or they justify it because they are absorbed in the endless struggle to think well of themselves.”

In this case, the man thought he was asking the woman to accept a certain policy as the lesser of two evils, when in fact he was asking her to give up her sense of being one of the morally anointed.

This is not unique to our times or to environmentalists. Back during the 1930s, in the years leading up to World War II, one of the fashionable self-indulgences of the left in Britain was to argue that the British should disarm “as an example to others” in order to serve the interests of peace.

When economist Roy Harrod asked one of his friends whether she thought that disarming Britain would cause Hitler to disarm, her reply was: “Oh, Roy, have you lost all your idealism?”

In other words, it was not really about which policy would produce what results. It was about personal identification with lofty goals and kindred souls.

The ostensible goal of peace was window-dressing. Ultimately it was not a question whether arming or disarming Britain was more likely to deter Hitler. It was a question of which policy would best establish the moral

superiority of the anointed and solidify their identification with one another.

“Peace” movements are not judged by the empirical test of how often they actually produce peace or how often their disarmament tempts an aggressor into war. It is not an empirical question. It is an article of faith and a badge of identity.

Yasser Arafat was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace—not for actually producing peace but for being part of what was called “the peace process” in the Middle East, based on fashionable notions that were common bonds among members of what are called “peace movements” around the world.

Meanwhile, nobody suggested awarding a Nobel Prize for peace to Ronald Reagan, just because he brought the nuclear dangers of a decades-long cold war to an end. He did it the opposite way from how members of “peace movements” thought it should be done.

Reagan beefed up the military and entered into an “arms race” that he knew would bankrupt the Soviet Union if they didn’t back off, even though arms races are anathema to members of “peace movements.”

The fact that events proved him right was no excuse, as far as members of “peace movements” were concerned. As far as they were concerned, he was not one of Us. He was one of Them.

## Twisted History

One of the reasons our children do not measure up academically to children in other countries is that so much time is spent in American classrooms twisting our history for ideological purposes.

“How would you feel if you were a Native American who saw the European invaders taking away your land?” is the kind of question our children are likely to be confronted with in our schools. It is a classic example of trying to look at the past with the assumptions—and the ignorance—of the present.

One of the things we take for granted today is that it is wrong to take other people’s land by force. Neither American Indians nor the European invaders believed that.

Both took other people’s land by force—as did Asians, Africans, Arabs, Polynesians, and others. The Indians no doubt regretted losing so many battles. But that is wholly different from saying that they thought battles were the wrong way to settle the question of who would control the land.

Today’s child cannot possibly put himself or herself in the mindset of Indians centuries ago, without infinitely more knowledge of history than our schools have ever taught.

Nor is understanding history the purpose of such questions. The purpose is to score points against Western society. In short, propaganda has replaced education as the goal of too many “educators.”

Schools are not the only institutions that twist history to score ideological points. “Never Forget That They Owned Lots of Slaves” is the huge headline across the front page of the *New York Times*’ book review section in its December 14, 2004 issue. Inside was an indictment of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

Of all the tragic facts about the history of slavery, the most astonishing to an American today is that, although slavery was a worldwide institution for thousands of years, nowhere in the world was slavery a controversial issue prior to the 18th century.

People of every race and color were enslaved—and enslaved others. White people were still being bought and sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire, decades after American blacks were freed.

Everyone hated the idea of being a slave but few had any qualms about enslaving others. Slavery was just not an issue, not even among intellectuals, much less among political leaders, until the 18th century—and then it was an issue only in Western civilization.

Among those who turned against slavery in the 18th century were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and other American leaders. You could research all of 18th century Africa or Asia or the Middle East without finding any comparable rejection of slavery there.

But who is singled out for scathing criticism today? American leaders of the 18th century.

Deciding that slavery was wrong was much easier than deciding what to do with millions of people from another continent, of another race, and without any historical preparation for living as free citizens in a society like that of the United States, where they were 20 percent of the total population.

It is clear from the private correspondence of Washington, Jefferson, and many others that their moral rejection of slavery was unambiguous, but the practical question of what to do now had them baffled. That would remain so for more than half a century.

In 1862, a ship carrying slaves from Africa to Cuba, in violation of a ban on the international slave trade, was captured on the high seas by the U.S. Navy. The crew were imprisoned and the captain was hanged in the United States—despite the fact that slavery itself was still legal at the time in Africa, in Cuba, and in the United States.

What does this tell us? That enslaving people was considered an abomination but what to do with millions of people who were already enslaved was not equally clear.

That question was finally answered by a war in which one life was lost for every six people freed. Maybe that was the only answer. But don't pretend today that it was an easy answer—or that those who grappled with the dilemma in the 18th century were some special villains, when most leaders and most people around the world at that time saw nothing wrong with slavery.

Incidentally, the September 2004 issue of *National Geographic* had an article about the millions of people still enslaved around the world right now. But where was the moral indignation about that?

## Explaining to the Grand Kids

Those of us who are optimists believe that someday sanity will return to our society. Our media, our officials—perhaps even our schools and colleges—will begin to talk sense. Those of you who are young may live to see it.

But there is a down side to sanity. Once there is a whole generation raised to think—to examine evidence and use logic—you are going to be confronted with a need to explain to your grandchildren how our generation could have done the things we did. You don't want your grand kids to think that your whole generation was crazy.

“Grandpa,” they will say, “today we were reading in history—”

“History?”

“Yes, Grandpa. There's a subject in school called history.”

“Well, we didn't have that back in my day. We had social studies or current events or multiculturalism. But we didn't have this thing you call history.”

“Well, history is about what happened in the past, Grandpa—like back when you were young.”

“I'll be darned.”

“Anyway, we learned in history today that back in your times, people who refused to work were supported by people who did work. Is that true, Grandpa?”

“Well, yes, we were compassionate to the poor and the downtrodden, like the homeless and such.”

“Why were people homeless, Grandpa?”

“They didn’t have enough money to buy houses or rent apartments.”

“Were you homeless, Grandpa?”

“No. I had a regular job and used part of my salary to pay the rent.”

“Why didn’t the homeless do that?”

“Well, it is hard to explain. They had a different kind of lifestyle, they sort of dropped out of society. They lived a more laid back kind of way.”

“Took drugs?”

“Yeah, drugs, alcohol, stuff like that.”

“And you gave them money that you had worked for, Grandpa?”

“Well, not so much personally, but I paid taxes and the government gave money to the homeless, provided places for them to sleep, and so forth.”

“But you voted for the government, Grandpa.”

“Yeah, most of the time.”

“If the voters didn’t want their money spent this way, the elected officials wouldn’t have done it.”

“You sure do a lot of thinking things out, honey.”

“That’s called logic. They teach that in school too.”

“Logic? I heard something about it vaguely, but we didn’t have time for it in school when I was young. We had to express our feelings about things like trees and animal rights and being non-judgmental.”

“You weren’t supposed to have judgment, Grandpa?”

“Well, if you were judgmental, that might hurt someone else’s self-esteem.”

“So you couldn’t tell the homeless to go get a job like you had, because it would hurt their self-esteem?”

“Exactly. It would be cultural imperialism—and that



would be wrong because one culture is just as good as another.”

“But, Grandpa, in our history class we learned that people from all over the world were trying desperately to get into the United States—some paying to get smuggled in from Mexico or Asia, some trying to cross the Caribbean in leaky boats and drowning.”

“Why, yes, that happened.”

“But, if all cultures were equal, why were these people risking their lives trying to go from one culture to another?”

“I never really thought about that, honey. Gee, they must be working you pretty hard in school, to have you doing all this thinking.”

“Aren’t people supposed to think, Grandpa?”

“I suppose it’s all right for those who like it. I don’t want to be judgmental.”

## Human Livestock

An old television special featured great boxing matches of the past, including a video of a match between legendary light-heavyweight champion Archie Moore and a young Canadian fighter named Yvon Durelle. In that fight, each man was knocked down four times. Since Archie Moore was also among those serving as commentators on the program, someone asked him if he knew that this was a great boxing match while he was fighting it.

“Yes!” he replied emphatically. At the time, he had said to himself: “This is the kind of fight that any fighter would love to be in—a knockdown, drag-out—and emerge the winner.”

Overcoming adversity is one of our great desires and one of our great sources of pride. But it is something that our anointed deep thinkers strive to eliminate from our lives, through everything from grade inflation to the welfare state.

The anointed want to eliminate stress, challenge, striving, and competition. They want the necessities of life to be supplied as “rights”—which is to say, at the taxpayers’ expense, without anyone’s being forced to work for those necessities, except of course the taxpayers.

Nothing is to be earned. “Self-esteem” is to be dispensed to school children as largess from the teacher. Adults are to have their medical care and other necessities dispensed as largess from the government. People are to be mixed and matched by race and sex and whatever else the anointed

want to take into account, in order to present whatever kind of picture the anointed think should be presented.

This is a vision of human beings as livestock to be fed by the government and herded and tended by the anointed. All the things that make us human beings are to be removed from our lives and we are to live as denatured creatures controlled and directed by our betters.

Those things that help human beings be independent and self-reliant—whether automobiles, guns, the free market, or vouchers—provoke instant hostility from the anointed.

Automobiles enable you to come and go as you wish, without so much as a “by your leave” to your betters. The very idea that other people will go where they want, live where they want, how they want, and send their children to whatever schools they choose, is galling to the anointed, for it denies the very specialness that is at the heart of their picture of themselves.

Guns are completely inappropriate for the kind of sheep-like people the anointed envision or the orderly, prepackaged world in which they are to live. When you are in mortal danger, you are supposed to dial 911, so that the police can arrive on the scene some time later, identify your body, and file reports in triplicate.

The free market is a daily assault on the vision of the anointed. Just think of all those millions of people out there buying whatever they want, whenever they want, whether or not the anointed think it is good for them.

Think of those people earning whatever incomes they happen to get from producing goods or services for other people, at prices resulting from supply and demand, with the anointed cut out of the loop entirely and standing on

the sidelines in helpless frustration, unable to impose their particular vision of “social justice.”

The welfare state is not really about the welfare of the masses. It is about the egos of the elites.

One of the most dangerous things about the welfare state is that it breaks the connection between what people have produced and what they consume, at least in many people’s minds. For the society as a whole, that connection remains as fixed as ever, but the welfare state makes it possible for individuals to think of money or goods as just arbitrary dispensations.

Thus those who have less can feel a grievance against “society” and are less inhibited about stealing or vandalizing. And the very concept of gratitude or obligation disappears—even the obligation of common decency out of respect for other people. The next time you see a bum leaving drug needles in a park where children play or urinating in the street, you are seeing your tax dollars at work and the end result of the vision of the anointed.

## The Wright Stuff

One of the greatest inventions of the 20th century—indeed, one of the landmark inventions in the history of the human race—was the work of a couple of young men who had never gone to college and who were just bicycle mechanics in Dayton, Ohio.

That part of the United States is often referred to disdainfully as “flyover country” because it is part of America that the east coast and west coast elites fly over on their way to what they consider more important places. But they are able to fly over it only because of those mechanics in Dayton.

The Wright brothers’ first airplane flight was only about 120 feet—roughly the distance from home plate to second base—and not as long as the wingspan of a 747. But it began one of the longest journeys ever taken by the human race, and that journey is not over yet, as we soar farther into space.

Man had dreamed of flying for centuries and others were hard at work on the project in various places around the world when the Wright brothers finally got their plane off the ground on December 17, 1903. It didn’t matter how long or how short the flight was. What mattered was that they showed that it could be done.

Alas, Orville and Wilbur Wright are today pigeon-holed as “dead white males” whom we are supposed to ignore, if not deplore. Had either of them been a woman, or black or any of a number of other specially singled out groups, this

hundredth anniversary of their flight would be a national holiday, with an orgy of parades and speeches across the length and breadth of the country.

Recently, a reporter for a well-known magazine phoned me to check on some facts about famous people who talked late and whom I had mentioned in my book, *The Einstein Syndrome*. Her editor wanted to know why there was not more “diversity” among the people I cited. Almost all of them were men, for example, and white men at that.

The vast majority of people who talk late are boys and I had no control over that. In a predominantly white society, it should not be surprising that famous men who talked late were mostly white. No doubt in China most would be Chinese.

The reporter seemed somewhat relieved when I pointed out that the distinguished mathematician Julia Robinson and famed 19th century concert pianist Clara Schumann were among the women discussed in my book. Ramanujan, a self-taught mathematical genius from India, came to my attention right after the book went into print, but the reporter seemed happy to be able to add his name to the list of famous late-talkers.

This mania for “diversity” has spread far and wide. When I looked through my nieces’ high school math book, I saw many pictures of noted mathematicians but—judging by those pictures—you would never dream that anything worth noting had ever been done in mathematics by any white males.

This petty-minded falsification of history is less disturbing than the indoctrination-minded “educators” who are twisting reality to fit their vision. Those who cannot tell the difference between education and brainwashing do not belong in our schools.

History is what happened, not what we wish had happened or what a theory says should have happened. One of the reasons for the great value of history is that it allows us to check our current beliefs against hard facts from around the world and across the centuries.

But history cannot be a reality check for today's fashionable visions when history is itself shaped by those visions. When that happens, we are sealing ourselves up in a closed world of assumptions.

There is no evidence that the Wright brothers intended the airplane to be flown, or ridden in, only by white people. Many of the great breakthroughs in science and technology were gifts to the whole human race. Those whose efforts created these breakthroughs were exalted because of their contributions to mankind, not to their particular tribe or sex.

In trying to cheapen those people as "dead white males" we only cheapen ourselves and do nothing to promote similar achievements by people of every description. When the Wright brothers rose off the ground, we all rose off the ground.

## The Legacy of Eric Hoffer

The twentieth anniversary of the death of Eric Hoffer passed with very little notice of one of the most incisive thinkers of his time—a man whose writings continue to have great relevance to our times.

How many people today even know of this remarkable man with no formal schooling, who spent his life in manual labor—most of it as a longshoreman—and who wrote some of the most insightful commentary on our society and trends in the world?

You need only read one of his classics like *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* to realize that you are seeing the work of an intellectual giant.

Having spent several years in blindness when most other children were in school, Hoffer could only do manual labor after he recovered his eyesight, but he was determined to educate himself. He began by looking for a big book with small print to take with him as he set out on a job as a migratory farm worker.

The book that turned out to fill this bill—based on size and words—was the essays of Montaigne. Over the years, he read many landmark books, including Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. If ever there was a walking advertisement for the Great Books approach to education, it was Eric Hoffer.

Among Hoffer's insights about mass movements was that they are an outlet for people whose individual significance is meager in the eyes of the world and—more important—in their own eyes. He pointed out that the leaders of the



Nazi movement were men whose artistic and intellectual aspirations were wholly frustrated.

Hoffer said: “The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for his own self, the more ready he is to claim all excellence for his nation, his religion, his race or his holy cause.”

People who are fulfilled in their own lives and careers are not the ones attracted to mass movements: “A man is likely to mind his own business when it is worth minding,” Hoffer said. “When it is not, he takes his mind off his own meaningless affairs by minding other people’s business.”

What Hoffer was describing was the political busybody, the zealot for a cause—the “true believer,” who filled the ranks of ideological movements that created the totalitarian tyrannies of the 20th century.

In a comment very relevant to the later disintegration of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe and the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union itself, he observed that totalitarian governments’ “moment of greatest danger is when they begin to reform, that is to say, when they begin to show liberal tendencies.”

Mikhail Gorbachev’s place in history was secured by his failure to understand that and his willingness to believe that a decent and humane Communist society was possible. But, once the people in Eastern Europe no longer had to fear tanks or the gulags, the statues of Lenin and Stalin began being toppled from their pedestals, like the governments they represented.

Contrary to the prevailing assumptions of his time, Eric Hoffer did not believe that revolutionary movements were based on the sufferings of the downtrodden. “Where people toil from sunrise to sunset for a bare living, they nurse no

grievances and dream no dreams,” he said. He had spent years living among such people and being one of them.

Hoffer’s insights may help explain something that many of us have found very puzzling—the offspring of wealthy families spending their lives and their inherited money backing radical movements. He said: “Unlimited opportunities can be as potent a cause of frustration as a paucity or lack of opportunities.”

What can people with inherited fortunes do that is at all commensurate with their unlimited opportunities, much less what their parents or grandparents did to create the fortune in the first place, starting from far fewer opportunities?

Like the frustrated artists and failed intellectuals who turn to mass movements for fulfillment, rich heirs cannot win the game of comparison of individual achievements. So they must change the game. As zealots for radical movements, they often attack the very things that made their own good fortune possible, as well as undermining the freedom and well-being of other people.

## One-Uppers versus Survival

Among the many commemorations of the September 11th anniversary, the one at Berkeley was unique. The American flag was banned because it might offend people from other countries. “The Star Spangled Banner” was banned because it was considered too militaristic, while “God Bless America” was not regarded as an acceptable substitute because God is politically incorrect in Berkeley.

This might all be just an incidental sidelight on the silliness of Berkeley, except that such attitudes are far more widespread among academics, the literati, and the glitterati. Too often such attitudes are based on nothing more substantial than a desire to be part of the self-anointed elite who are one-up on everyone else.

Being one-up is so important to some people that it colors the way they see every issue and can even override concern for their own safety in a world of international terrorism. One of the ways of being one-up is to jump on the bandwagon of the latest fads, like being non-judgmental or supporting multiculturalism and deconstruction. These clever sophistries are the self-indulgences of sheltered and comfortable people.

Does anyone suffering the agonies of some terrible disease question whether what he is experiencing is real or just a matter of “perceptions” that are “socially constructed”? Does a mother whose child has died in her arms question whether that is of any greater significance than swatting a mosquito? Do people who risk their lives trying to escape

from some brutal dictatorship and reach American soil regard all cultures as “equally valid”?

People can define things inside their own heads any way they want to. It is only when they pretend to be talking about things outside their heads, in the real world, that they spread intellectual confusion and social chaos. Many a foolish policy is based on trying to make the real world match the picture inside someone’s head.

Since all people and all cultures are equal—inside the heads of the one-uppers—any disparities in the real world are seen as injustices to be corrected. Therefore, if a high school punishes more black males than Asian females for misconduct, then apparently that school must be racist and should be sued.

Differences in income, mortality rates, unemployment, and innumerable other things are all automatically suspect as evils of society, because different groups cannot possibly be behaving differently, since they are equal inside the heads of the one-uppers. Countries that are poor cannot possibly be less productive, but must have been “exploited” somehow.

People who think this way are especially dangerous when we are facing mortal perils, such as international terrorism. Since there is moral equivalence inside their heads, their conclusion is that we must have done something wrong to make terrorists hate us.

It will never occur to such people that the kind of envy and resentments which they themselves promote incessantly may be behind the hatred from those who are lagging far behind the progress of the West, and who can achieve significance only by destruction.

We cannot do anything about what is inside other people’s heads—except let it stay there and not get inside

ours. But getting inside our heads, and especially inside the heads of our children, is the compelling urge of those who want to make the real world outside match their inner vision.

Why? Because theirs is a very self-flattering vision, which establishes them as morally one-up on the rest of us. Going against the common sense of ordinary people is the key to their self-exaltation, whether they are favoring criminals over victims, animals over humans, or other countries over America.

In a long war against terrorism, where we may have to both suffer and inflict terrible devastation, unity and resolve are the keys to enduring and prevailing. One-uppers are the last thing we need. They are enemies within, who can be the most dangerous kinds of enemies.

If they are so preoccupied with flattering their own vanity that they do not understand that their own survival is at stake, so be it. But the tragedy is that millions of other people's survival is also at stake.

## The Equality Dogma

A statement in this column that black students usually do not perform as well in school as white students or Asian American students brought fierce objections. Some people seemed to think that this was a personal opinion—or even an immoral remark.

It never seemed to occur to them that this was a verifiable fact, shown by innumerable studies over the years by many scholars of various races. As John Adams said, more than two centuries ago: “Facts are stubborn things, and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”

More is involved than a confusion between facts and opinions. The reigning dogma of our time is equality—and anything that seems to go against that dogma creates an automatic response, much like the conditioned responses of Pavlov’s dog.

When discussing equality, we must at least be clear in our own minds as to what we mean: Equality of *what*? Performance? Potential? Treatment? Humanity? Too often, fervor for the word serves as a substitute for clarity as to its meaning.

It is an undeniable fact that different groups have different performances across a whole spectrum of activities. Does anyone seriously believe that whites usually play basketball just as well as blacks? Is anyone surprised when

Asian American youngsters walk off with science prizes, year after year?

When it comes to performance, huge disparities are the rule rather than the exception. And performance is what pays off.

Those who are politically correct may try to claim that these disparities are all “stereotypes” or “perceptions” but hard data show the best selling beers in America to be those created by people of German ancestry. It is the same story on the other side of the world, where China’s famed Tsingtao beer was also created by Germans. And Germans have been leading beer brewers in Europe, Australia, and South America.

What upsets some people is the inference that performance differences reflect innate differences in potential. But there are huge differences in all the things that turn potential into performance.

Back in the early 19th century, a Russian official reported that even the poorest Jews there somehow managed to have books in their homes and “their entire population studies,” while books were virtually unknown among most of the surrounding population.

When C-SPAN’s Brian Lamb asked author Abigail Thernstrom why Jews scored so high on mental tests, she replied: “They have been preparing for them for a thousand years.”

A recent study by the United Nations shows that publications per capita in Europe today are at least ten times as numerous as in the Arab countries or in Africa. How could equal potential lead to equal performance when there are such great disparities in the intervening factors?

The fact that some societies have long educated both girls and boys, while others have not bothered to educate

most girls, means that some societies have thrown away half their inborn talents and abilities. How could the performances of such societies not be different?

Recognizing the equal humanity of all peoples, and a need to treat everyone with decency and compassion, is very different from insisting on a dogma that their performances are all equal.

It is not just politically correct people but government agencies and the highest courts in the land that dogmatize against any recognition of differences in performances among groups. Statistical differences in outcomes automatically fall under suspicion of discrimination, as if the groups themselves could not possibly be any different in behavior or performance.

Any school that disciplines black boys much more frequently than Asian American girls can be risking a federal lawsuit, as if there could not possibly be any differences in behavior among the children themselves. Employers can be judged guilty of discrimination, even if no one can find a single person who was discriminated against, if their hiring and promotions data show differences among ethnic groups or between women and men.

The biggest losers from these dogmatic notions are people who very much need to change their behavior, but from whom that crucial knowledge is withheld by their “leaders” and “friends.”



## The Inequality Dogma

This is truly the age of dogma when it comes to differences between groups. Some will blindly deny that intergroup differences in performances are anything other than “stereotypes,” “perceptions,” or “discrimination.”

At the other end of the spectrum, the dogma is that mental differences especially, whether among individuals or groups, are innate in the genes. Reaction against this view is so strong in some places that it can literally be a federal case if schools give IQ tests to black children.

Both these opposing views go back for centuries. Back in the 18th century, Adam Smith said that the difference between porters and philosophers was due to education and suggested that there are fewer innate differences among human beings than among dogs.

On the other side, an Islamic scholar of the 10th century noted that Europeans grow more pale the farther north you go and also that the “farther they are to the north the more stupid, gross, and brutish they are.”

This correlation between skin color and mental ability would of course be anathema to the politically correct today—and the question as to whether it was true or false would never get off the ground. But what were the facts, as of the 10th century?

Since antiquity, Mediterranean Europe—especially at the eastern end—had been far more advanced than northern Europe in technology, organization, literacy and all the things that make for a more advanced society. The fact that

this has all changed in the centuries since then does not mean that this 10th century scholar was not correct in what he said when he said it.

At the very least, he was there and we were not.

Unfortunately, facts have played a very subordinate role in much discussion of differences among groups, races, nations, and civilizations—whether among those arguing for innate equality or for innate inequality.

In the early 20th century, many believers in innate inequality presented what may have seemed like a logically airtight argument that our national IQ was in danger of declining over time, because people with low IQs usually had more children than people with high IQs. The eugenics movement and the birth control movement sought to counter this trend by reducing the number of children born to low IQ people.

The logical airtightness of this argument turned out to be its greatest vulnerability when confronted with hard facts. Extensive research by Professor James R. Flynn, an American expatriate in New Zealand, has shown that in fact whole nations have had their performances on mental tests rise by substantial amounts over the years.

This should never have happened if IQ tests measured innate ability, predetermined by genes. Yet Professor Flynn's work, widely recognized among scholars, showed more than a dozen countries where whole generations answered more IQ questions correctly than their parents or grandparents had.

Because IQ tests by definition have an average score of 100, the standards keep getting changed. In other words, if the average person answers 42 questions correctly on a given IQ test at a given time, then 42 correct answers will be counted as an IQ of 100.

A generation later, if the average person answers 53 questions correctly on that same test, then 53 correct answers will be defined as an IQ of 100. What this means is that there was nothing to indicate how much IQ test results were improving until Professor Flynn went all the way back to the original raw scores and discovered how much they had risen over the generations.

The time is long overdue to let facts be acknowledged as facts, whatever our differing philosophies or hopes may be. The preponderance of evidence is that northern Europeans were not nearly as advanced as southern Europeans in the 10th century. If there had been IQ tests given then, the northerners would undoubtedly have come in a poor second.

By the time real IQ tests had been developed and given in early 20th century America, immigrants from northern Europe scored higher than immigrants from southern Europe, many of the latter having IQs similar to those of American blacks. We don't need to fight the tests. We need to change the reality.

## Equality, Inequality, and Fate

One of the confusions that plagues discussions of equality and inequality is a confusion between the vagaries of fate and the sins of man. There are plenty of both but they need to be sharply distinguished from one another.

The plain fact that there are large differences among individuals in incomes, occupations and whole ways of life dependent upon these things has been widely seen as “unfair,” especially when the accident of birth has had much to do with these large economic and social differences.

Life is unfair. There is no point denying it. Indeed, it is hard even to imagine how life could possibly be fair, given all the innumerable factors that go into individual success or failure—and how these factors vary greatly from one person to another, one group to another, and one nation or civilization to another.

Whatever the potentialities with which anyone enters the world, the development of those potentialities into specific skills and abilities depends on each individual’s parents, schools, peers and the surrounding culture and its values. These are never the same for everyone.

Eskimos no doubt have all the intelligence required to grow pineapples but they are unlikely to have the experience to do so. Nor are Hawaiians likely to know how to hunt seals in the Arctic. Children who grow up in homes where sports are discussed constantly, but science is not, are unlikely to have the same goals or careers as children who grow up in homes where the reverse is true.

None of this is really anyone's fault, not even that universal scapegoat, "society." These are simply the vagaries of fate.

For thousands of years, the whole Western Hemisphere had no opportunity to develop in the same way as Europe or Asia, because horses and oxen enabled Europeans and Asians to build their agriculture and their transport around these beasts of burden—neither of which existed in the Western Hemisphere until they were brought here by European invaders.

Whole ways of life had to be different on this half of the planet from what they were on the vast Eurasian land mass. Whose fault was that?

Some ethnic groups have an average age that is a decade older than the average age of others, and whole countries like Germany and Italy have average ages that are two decades older than the average age in Afghanistan or Yemen.

Is that a level playing field? No! It is an unfair advantage to those with more experience and the increased capabilities that come with experience.

Other differences are due to the sins of man—discrimination, conquest, slavery and more. Yet, whatever the sources of the differences among people, those differences are huge and the economic consequences are huge.

None of this is hard to understand in itself. But much of it gets confused and twisted by the rhetoric, the visions and the crusades of the intelligentsia, politicians, mush heads and hot heads.

Even our courts of law are ready to consider different distributions of groups in employment as evidence that the employer discriminated, since it is apparently beyond the

pale to consider that the groups themselves may differ, whether in quantifiable ways like age or in intangible ways like attitudes.

So deeply ingrained is this egalitarian dogma that different rates of passing tests from one group to another are taken as evidence that something is wrong with the tests. Different rates of promotion at work or in school are taken as virtual proof that the employer or the school is doing something wrong.

Best-selling author Shelby Steele has argued persuasively that whites are afraid of being considered racists and blacks are afraid of being considered innately inferior—and that both do many foolish and counterproductive things as a result. Such attitudes apply even beyond racial issues.

A nation's laws and policies need to serve more serious purposes than allowing people to escape their psychological hangups. The time is overdue for these laws and policies to be based on realities and geared toward consequences.

## Hiroshima

Every August, there are some Americans who insist on wringing their hands over the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, so it was perhaps inevitable that such people would have an orgy of wallowing in guilt on the 60th anniversary of that tragic day. *Time* magazine has page after page of photographs of people scarred by the radiation, as if General Sherman had not already said long ago that war is hell.

Winston Churchill once spoke of the secrets of the atom, “hitherto mercifully withheld from man.” We can all lament that this terrible power of mass destruction has been revealed to the world and fear its ominous consequences for us all, including our children and grandchildren. But that is wholly different from saying that a great moral evil was committed when the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

What was new about these bombs was the technology, not the morality. More people were killed with ordinary bombs in German cities or in Tokyo. Vastly more people were killed with ordinary bullets and cannon on the Russian front. Morality is about what you do to people, not the technology you use.

The guilt-mongers have twisted the facts of history beyond recognition in order to say that it was unnecessary to drop those atomic bombs. Japan was going to lose the war anyway, they say. What they don’t say is—at what price in American lives? Or even in Japanese lives?

Much of the self-righteous nonsense that abounds on so many subjects cannot stand up to three questions: (1) Compared to what? (2) At what cost? and (3) What are the hard facts?

The alternative to the atomic bombs was an invasion of Japan, which was already being planned, and those plans included casualty estimates even more staggering than the deaths that have left a sea of crosses in American cemeteries at Normandy and elsewhere. “Revisionist” historians have come up with casualty estimates a small fraction of what the American and British military leaders responsible for planning the invasion of Japan had come up with.

Who are we to believe, those who had personally experienced the horrors of the war in the Pacific, and who had a lifetime of military experience, or leftist historians hot to find something else to blame America for?

During the island-hopping war in the Pacific, it was not uncommon for thousands of Japanese troops to fight to the death on an island, while the number captured were a few dozen. Even some Japanese soldiers too badly wounded to stand would lie where they fell until an American medical corpsman approached to treat their wounds—and then they would set off a grenade to kill them both.

In the air the same spirit led the kamikaze pilots to deliberately crash their planes into American ships and bombers.

Japan’s plans for defense against invasion involved mobilizing the civilian population, including women and children, for the same suicidal battle tactics. That invasion could have been the greatest bloodbath in history.

No mass killing, especially of civilians, can leave any humane person happy. But compared to what? Compared to



killing many times more Japanese and seeing many times more Americans die?

We might have gotten a negotiated peace if we had dropped the “unconditional surrender” demand. But at what cost? Seeing a militaristic Japan arise again in a few years, this time armed with nuclear weapons that they would not have hesitated for one minute to drop on Americans?

As it was, the unconditional surrender of Japan enabled General Douglas MacArthur to engineer one of the great historic transformations of a nation from militarism to pacifism, to the relief of hundreds of millions of their neighbors, who had suffered horribly at the hands of their Japanese conquerors.

The facts may deprive the revisionists of their platform for lashing out at America and for the ego trip of moral preening but, fear not, they will find or manufacture other occasions for that. The rest of us need to understand what irresponsible frauds they are—and how the stakes are too high to let the 4th estate succeed as a 5th column undermining the society on which our children and grandchildren’s security will depend.

## The Tyranny of Visions

At long last there is some reconsideration of the child molestation hysteria that has sent innocent people to jail for long terms behind bars, often with zero evidence and with testimony from children who have been heavily pressured or manipulated by “experts.”

Genuine child molesters certainly belong behind bars and a case could be made that they should never be allowed out again. But that is wholly different from saying that an unsubstantiated allegation should be automatically believed in a court of law.

The *New York Times Magazine* in its September 19, 2004 issue had a long article featuring one of the children who made false accusations against a man who spent 15 years in prison as a result. The supposed victim now says that all of it was a lie. Why did he lie? Because “experts” leaned on him to say what they wanted him to say and he was just a kid at the time.

Were those “experts” trying to frame this particular man? Probably not. More likely, they just had a set of preconceptions about the world—a vision—that made them believe that the accused man was guilty, so they saw their duty as getting the kid to testify in a way that would get a conviction.

CBS News probably didn’t set out to frame President Bush with a forged document about his National Guard service. More likely, the story they heard fit their vision of the world so strongly that they believed it—and brushed

aside any witness or expert who told them something different.

Visions are powerful things. For some people, visions make facts unnecessary and can even override facts to the contrary.

In the years leading up to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Lenin developed a whole vision of the world of the past, the present, and the future. Although he spoke in the name of the workers, he never bothered to ask what actual flesh-and-blood workers thought. In his years of exile before returning to lead a revolution, he never bothered to go where workers lived or worked.

Lenin was just the first of the great vision-driven dictators of the 20th century. Like Hitler and Mao after him, Lenin was prepared to sacrifice the lives of millions of human beings on the altar to his vision.

Even in democratic nations, there are people who can impose their vision on other people, with no consequences for being wrong and no requirement that they prove themselves right.

Social workers have for years tried to stop white couples from adopting orphans from minority groups because that goes against their vision. They don't need a speck of evidence to back up their preconceptions.

Many minority children have been ripped out of the only home they have ever known by social workers who have sent them off to live among strangers, or a whole succession of strangers in foster homes, simply because a vision says that this is better than having them grow up with a white couple who have raised them from infancy.

Everyone has visions but everyone is not in a position to indulge those visions, or to impose them on other people, without suffering any consequences for being wrong. Even

the biggest businesses can find themselves looking red ink in the face if their idea of what the public wants turns out to be different from what the public will buy.

Federal judges, however, pay no price for being wrong, even if the costs to others—sometimes the whole society—turn out to be catastrophic. When murder rates skyrocketed after 1960s judges started conjuring up new “rights” out of thin air for criminals, there were no consequences for those judges, who had lifetime appointments and were not likely to be living in high-crime neighborhoods.

The political left has long favored putting more and more decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong—not only judges but zoning boards, environmental commissions and, internationally, the United Nations and the World Court. This is a vision of the wise and the virtuous imposing their wisdom and virtue on the lesser people who make up the rest of humanity.

Egalitarians are often in the vanguard of those seeking to promote this most dangerous of all inequalities—the inequality of unaccountable power in the service of a vision.

## The Tyranny of Visions: Part II

Some people think of California as a place where many kooky ideas originate. It is that but there is more to it than that.

California has long had more than its fair share of busybodies with a vision of the world in which it is necessary for them to force other people to do Good Things. That is not just a vision of the world, it is a vision of themselves—a very flattering vision that they are not likely to give up for anything so mundane as facts or logic.

One of the latest examples is a recent ruling by one of the many busybody commissions in California that people who build houses, or just remodel their homes, will in the future have to have more fluorescent lights and even install motion sensors to control lights—all in the name of saving energy.

Motion sensors? Yes. If you are in a room where motion sensors control the lights, sitting still for a while will cause the lights to go off automatically.

The idea of the anointed busybodies is that we lesser people often leave the lights on when we walk out of a room, thereby wasting energy. The answer, as in so many other cases, is to impose their superior wisdom and virtue by forcing us to do a Good Thing—in this case install motion sensors to turn out the lights automatically when there is no one moving in the room.

If you are one of those people who just likes to sit still and think for a while, or perhaps listen to music or watch

television, look for the lights to start going off if you are in California—and get used to having to wave your arms or shake your legs in order to get them to come back on again. But it's a Good Thing.

The world is full of Good Things, which is why there are so many laws and regulations increasingly intruding into our lives and restricting what we can do, even in our own homes. The vision of imposing Good Things means an ever-growing petty tyranny.

In some countries, where such visions are more sweeping, the tyranny is far from petty. Around the world and for thousands of years, human beings have not been able to leave other human beings alone.

Just think of all the centuries in which Christians tried to force Jews to change their religion or Muslims tried to force other people to adopt Islam. Was there nothing better to do with all that time and energy except persecute people for having different beliefs?

Some people obviously thought it was a Good Thing to have other people believe what they believed or to unify the country with one religion. Like today's busybodies, they seldom stopped to consider the cost of the Good Thing they wanted done.

Whole economies have been ruined by expelling productive minorities who happened to have a different religion or belonged to a different race. After Spain expelled the Moriscoes in the 16th century, one of the religious leaders who had advocated their expulsion asked: "Who will make our shoes now?"

That would have been a very good question to ask *before* expelling the Moriscoes. Similar questions might well have been asked before France's persecution of the Huguenots led them to flee in the 17th century, taking many productive

enterprises from France with them. Twentieth century examples are too numerous to cite.

Good Things have costs, often costs out of all proportion to whatever good they might do. But notions like trade-offs and diminishing returns seldom deter zealots, whose own egos are served by their zealotry in imposing their vision, however costly or counterproductive it may be for others.

The whole environmental extremist movement is based on doing Good Things, in utter disregard of costs or diminishing returns.

The idea that DDT might leave residues with harmful effects on the eggs of some birds was enough to set off a worldwide environmental crusade to ban the use of that insecticide. The resurgence of malaria after that ban has cost millions of human lives.

Green zealots are not about to reconsider, on this or a whole range of other issues. Their vision triumphed, their superior wisdom and virtue were affirmed, and that is what it is ultimately all about. To admit, even to themselves, that their ego trips have cost other people their lives would be too much.

## The Tyranny of Visions: Part III

Nowhere is the tyranny of visions more absolute than with issues involving safety. Attempts to talk about costs, trade-offs or diminishing returns are only likely to provoke safety zealots to respond with something like, “If it saves just one human life, it is worth it!”

That immediately establishes the safety zealot as being on a higher moral plane than those who stoop to consider crass materialistic costs. And being morally one-up is what a great deal of zealotry is all about.

The vision of zealots is not just a vision of the world. It is a vision of themselves as special people in that world. The down side is that such a heavy ego investment makes reconsideration of the issues highly unlikely. Ego trumps mundane facts or dry logic.

If the recent hurricanes that have swept across the Caribbean and Florida prove anything, it should be that wealth saves many human lives. Deaths from hurricane Jeanne in the Caribbean have been in the thousands while the death toll in Florida was less than a dozen.

The difference is that Florida is far more affluent. Houses there can be built to withstand more stress. Ambulances can rush more people more quickly to better equipped medical facilities. It has been estimated that more than 95 percent of the deaths from natural disasters worldwide occur in the poorer countries.

How does this affect safety issues?

Safety laws and regulations all have costs—not just



money outlays but other restrictions that reduce the rate of production of wealth. If wealth is itself one of the biggest lifesavers, costly safety devices cannot automatically be considered justified “if it saves just one human life” when the wealth it forfeits could have saved many lives.

Everything depends on the particular safety rule or device. Some save many lives at small costs and others save few, if any, lives at huge costs.

Diminishing returns matter as well, though these are seldom taken into account by safety zealots.

Many dangerous impurities can be removed from water or air at costs that virtually everyone will agree are worth it. But there is no such thing as “pure water” or “pure air,” so the only real question is how far you want to go in removing impurities—and at what cost.

Impurities that are deadly at high concentrations can become harmless at sufficiently low concentrations. In extremely minute traces, even arsenic has been found to have beneficial effects. But the vision of “pure water” keeps zealots pushing for removing ever more minute traces of ever more questionable impurities, regardless of how much more it costs or how little good it does—if any.

Alcohol takes huge numbers of lives every year, whether in automobile accidents, liver disease or innumerable foolish risks taken while “under the influence.” Yet studies show that a very moderate daily intake of alcohol reduces hypertension and the incidence of dementia. Everything depends on how much.

Trade-offs and diminishing returns are not the stuff from which heady visions and dramatic crusades are made. For that you need goals to be reached “at all costs” and a clash between heroes and villains. This appeals to the young and to those who remain adolescents all their lives.

The realities of life force most of us to grow up, whether we want to or not. But for people protected from realities by being born rich, or by having lifetime tenure as academics or federal judges, maturity is optional.

Many of the most extreme safety and environmental crusaders are rich busybodies or academics and their students, and they are often helped by judges whose rulings allow them to violate other people's rights while pursuing their own vision.

The "thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to" have become a thousand reasons for lawsuits against those who produce anything that is not "safe."

Nothing is categorically safe. But few things are as dangerous as those who are pursuing a safety vision that ministers to their egos, with the costs being paid by others.

## The Immigration Taboo

Immigration has joined the long list of subjects on which it is taboo to talk sense in plain English. At the heart of much confusion about immigration is the notion that we “need” immigrants—legal or illegal—to do work that Americans won’t do.

What we “need” depends on what it costs and what we are willing to pay. If I were a billionaire, I might “need” my own private jet. But I can remember a time when my family didn’t even “need” electricity.

Leaving prices out of the picture is probably the source of more fallacies in economics than any other single misconception. At current wages for low-level jobs and current levels of welfare, there are indeed many jobs that Americans will not take.

The fact that immigrants—and especially illegal immigrants—will take those jobs is the very reason the wage levels will not rise enough to attract Americans.

This is not rocket science. It is elementary supply and demand. Yet we continue to hear about the “need” for immigrants to do jobs that Americans will not do—even though these are all jobs that Americans have done for generations before mass illegal immigration became a way of life.

There is more to this issue than economics. The same mindless substitution of rhetoric for thinking that prevails on economic issues also prevails on other aspects of immigration.

Bombings in London, Madrid and the 9/11 terrorist attacks here are all part of the high price being paid today for decades of importing human time bombs from the Arab world. That in turn has been the fruit of an unwillingness to filter out people according to the countries they come from.

That squeamishness is still with us today, as shown by all the hand-wringing about “profiling” Middle Eastern airline passengers.

No doubt most Middle Eastern airline passengers are not carrying any weapons or any bombs—and wouldn’t be, even if there were no airport security to go through. But it is also true that most of the time you will not be harmed by playing Russian roulette.

Europeans and Americans have for decades been playing Russian roulette with their loose immigration policies. The intelligentsia have told us that it would be wrong, and even racist, to set limits based on where the immigrants come from.

There are thousands of Americans who might still be alive if we had banned immigration from Saudi Arabia—and perhaps that might be more important than the rhetoric of the intelligentsia.

In that rhetoric, all differences between peoples are magically transformed into mere “stereotypes” and “perceptions.” This blithely ignores hard data showing, for example, that people who come here from some countries are ten times more likely to go on welfare than people from some other countries.

The media and the intelligentsia love to say that most immigrants, from whatever group, are good people. But what “most” people from a given country are like is irrelevant.

If 85 percent of group A are fine people and 95 percent

of group B are fine people, that means you are going to be importing three times as many undesirables when you let in people from Group A.

Citizen-of-the-world types are resistant to the idea of tightening our borders, and especially resistant to the idea of making a distinction between people from different countries. But the real problem is not their self-righteous fetishes but the fact that they have intimidated so many other people into silence.

In the current climate of political correctness it is taboo even to mention facts that go against the rosy picture of immigrants—for example, the fact that Russia and Nigeria are always listed among the most corrupt countries on earth, and that Russian and Nigerian immigrants in the United States have already established patterns of crime well known to law enforcement but kept from the public by the mainstream media.

Self-preservation used to be called the first law of nature. But today self-preservation has been superseded by a need to preserve the prevailing rhetoric and visions. Immigration is just one of the things we can no longer discuss rationally as a result.

## The Left Monopoly

Recently Albert Hunt's last column for the *Wall Street Journal* mentioned how he was recruited by the late and great Robert L. Bartley, who made that newspaper's editorial page unsurpassed in quality. What made the hiring of Albert Hunt especially significant was that Bartley was a staunch conservative in the Reagan tradition, while Hunt is a standard issue liberal.

It was precisely for that reason that Bartley wanted Hunt to write for the *Wall Street Journal*, so that readers would be sure to get more than one side of the issues discussed.

Many years ago, when I was teaching economics at UCLA, we likewise had a staunchly conservative department. We were sometimes called the west coast branch of the University of Chicago, because so many of us had studied under Milton Friedman and other leaders of "the Chicago school" of economists.

Like Bob Bartley, we wanted our students to see more than one way of looking at economics. One young, liberal-minded economist was regarded by some as a possible permanent member of the department, to add variety.

He never really measured up to our expectations, but he was probably kept on longer than he would have been if he had been a conservative economist, because of hopes that he would turn out to be better than he did.

Even though the word "diversity" has become a mantra on the left, there is no such drive for intellectual diversity in

bastions of the left, such as academia or the mainstream media.

In recent years, the liberal media have at least added some token conservatives, but our colleges and universities are content with whole departments consisting solely of people ranging from the left to the far left. In academia, “diversity” in practice too often means simply white leftists, black leftists, female leftists and Hispanic leftists.

Perhaps it was the remarkable popularity of conservative talk radio and the meteoric rise of the Fox News channel that led liberal TV networks to begin adding some conservatives to their lineups. No such competitive pressures operate in academia.

There are a few good small conservative colleges like Hillsdale or Grove City, but Ivy League schools have no conservative rivals of comparable size and prominence, and neither do most state universities. A student can spend four years at many colleges and universities and graduate with no real awareness of any other viewpoints than those on the left.

College and university faculties do not simply happen to be leftist. Too often ideological questions are asked at faculty job interviews and ideological litmus tests are applied in hiring. One reason for the prominence of conservative think tanks is that so many top scholars who are not leftists do not find a home in academia and go to work for think tanks instead.

Not even visiting speakers with a conservative viewpoint are tolerated on many campuses. It seems incredible that there would be fears that a one-hour lecture would undo years of indoctrination. But perhaps it is just sheer intolerance that creates hostility to anyone expressing ideas contrary to the prevailing notions of the left.

Students often report that their professors react against them for stating a viewpoint different from the prevailing orthodoxy of the left. They can be ridiculed in class discussions or given low grades on exams.

Dartmouth College has been carrying on a running battle with the conservative student newspaper, the *Dartmouth Review*, from the moment it was founded many years ago. On some campuses, conservative student newspapers are seized and destroyed by leftist students or even burned publicly, with little or no effort by the college administration to maintain freedom of speech.

A student at Lewis College in Colorado was actually kicked by a professor for wearing a sweatshirt proclaiming his Republican views. This happened at a birthday party, of all places, and the professor has been quoted as saying that her only regret was that her kick was not “harder and higher.”

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, which monitors campus intolerance, is trying to get some action taken against that professor. Good luck.



## I Beg to Disagree

**M**y assistant sorts the incoming mail into various categories, such as “critical mail,” “fan mail,” etc. But the so-called critical mail is seldom critical. It may be bombastic or vituperative or full of pop psychology, but it seldom presents a critical argument based on facts or logic.

Too many people today act as if no one can honestly disagree with them. If you have a difference of opinion with them, you are considered to be not merely in error but in sin. You are a racist, a homophobe or whatever the villain of the day happens to be.

Disagreements are inevitable whenever there are human beings but we seem to be in an era when the art of disagreeing is vanishing. That is a huge loss because out of disagreements have often come deeper understandings than either side had before confronting each other’s arguments.

Even wacko ideas have led to progress, when dealt with critically, in terms of logic and evidence. Astrology led to astronomy. The medieval notion of turning lead into gold—alchemy—led to chemistry, from which have come everything from a wide range of industrial products and consumer goods to more productive agriculture and life-saving drugs.

Where an argument starts is far less important than where it finishes because the logic and evidence in between is crucial. Unfortunately, our educational system is not only failing to teach critical thinking, it is often itself a source of

confused rhetoric and emotional venting in place of systematic reasoning.

It is hard to think of a stronger argument for teaching people to examine arguments critically than the tragic history of 20th century totalitarianism and its horrors in peace and war. Dictators often gained total power over a whole nation by their ability to arouse emotions and evade thought.

Watch old newsreels of Hitler and see the adoring and enraptured look on the faces in his audience. Then read what he said and see if it makes any sense whatever. Yet he convinced others—and himself—that he had a great message and a great mission.

The same could be said of Lenin, of Mao, of Pol Pot, and of countless other despots, large and small, who brought devastation to the people they ruled. It is not even necessary to look solely at government leaders. Cult leader Jim Jones used the same ability to sway people's emotions and numb their brains to lead them ultimately to mass deaths in his Guiana compound.

Instead of trying to propagandize children to hug trees and recycle garbage, our schools would be put to better use teaching them how to analyze and test what is said by people who advocate tree-hugging, recycling, and innumerable other causes across the political spectrum.

The point is not to teach them correct conclusions but to teach them to be able to use their own minds to analyze the issues that will come up in the years ahead, which may have nothing to do with recycling or any of the other issues of our time.

Rational disagreement can be not only useful but stimulating. Many years ago, when my friend and colleague Walter Williams and I worked on the same research project,

he and I kept up a running debate on the reasons why blacks excelled in some sports and were virtually non-existent in others.

Walter was convinced that the reasons were physical while I thought the reasons were social and economic. Walter would show me articles on physiology from scholarly journals, using them as explanations of why blacks had so many top basketball players and few, if any, swimming champions.

We never settled that issue but it provided lively debates and we may both have learned something.

I even met my wife as a result of a disagreement. She read something of mine that she disagreed with and told a mutual friend. He in turn suggested that we get together for lunch and hash out our differences.

Although we have now been married more than 20 years, we have still not completely settled our differences over that issue. But when we met our attention turned to other things. There are a lot of reasons to be able to have rational discussions about things on which people disagree.

## 4th Estate or 5th Column?

There are still people in the mainstream media who profess bewilderment that they are accused of being biased. But you need to look no further than reporting on the war in Iraq to see the bias staring you in the face, day after day, on the front page of the *New York Times* and in much of the rest of the media.

If a battle ends with Americans killing a hundred guerrillas and terrorists, while sustaining ten fatalities, that is an American victory. But not in the mainstream media. The headline is more likely to read: “Ten More Americans Killed in Iraq Today.”

This kind of journalism can turn victory into defeat in print or on TV. Kept up long enough, it can even end up with real defeat, when support for the war collapses at home and abroad.

One of the biggest American victories during the Second World War was called “the great Marianas turkey shoot” because American fighter pilots shot down more than 340 Japanese planes over the Marianas islands while losing just 30 American planes. But what if our current reporting practices had been used back then?

The story, as printed and broadcast, could have been: “Today eighteen American pilots were killed and five more severely wounded, as the Japanese blasted more than two dozen American planes out of the sky.” A steady diet of that kind of one-sided reporting and our whole war effort against Japan might have collapsed.

Whether the one-sided reporting of the war in Vietnam was a factor in the American defeat there used to be a matter of controversy. But, in recent years, high officials of the Communist government of Vietnam have themselves admitted that they lost the war on the battlefields but won it in the U.S. media and on the streets of America, where political pressures from the anti-war movement threw away the victory for which thousands of American lives had been sacrificed.

Too many in the media today regard the reporting of the Vietnam war as one of their greatest triumphs. It certainly showed the power of the media—but also its irresponsibility. Some in the media today seem determined to recapture those glory days by the way they report on events in the Iraq war.

First, there is the mainstream media's almost exclusive focus on American casualties in Iraq, with little or no attention to the often much larger casualties inflicted on the guerrillas and terrorists from inside and outside Iraq.

Since terrorists are pouring into Iraq in response to calls from international terrorist networks, the number of those who are killed is especially important, for these are people who will no longer be around to launch more attacks on American soil. Iraq has become a magnet for enemies of the United States, a place where they can be killed wholesale, thousands of miles away.

With all the turmoil and bloodshed in Iraq, both military and civilian people returning from that country are increasingly expressing amazement at the difference between what they have seen with their own eyes and the far worse, one-sided picture that the media presents to the public here.

Our media cannot even call terrorists "terrorists," but

instead give these cutthroats the bland name, “insurgents.” You might think that these were like the underground fighters in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II.

The most obvious difference is that the underground in Europe did not go around targeting innocent civilians. As for the Nazis, they tried to deny the atrocities they committed. But today the “insurgents” in Iraq are proud of their barbarism, videotape it, and publicize it—often with the help of the Western media.

Real insurgents want to get the occupying power out of their country. But the fastest way to get Americans out of Iraq would be to do the opposite of what these “insurgents” are doing. Just by letting peace and order return, those who want to see American troops gone would speed their departure.

The United States has voluntarily pulled out of conquered territory all around the world, including neighboring Kuwait during the first Gulf war. But the real goal of the guerrillas and terrorists is to prevent democracy from arising in the Middle East.

Still, much of the Western media even cannot call a spade a spade. The Fourth Estate sometimes seems more like a Fifth Column.