

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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# HOW THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, THE PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, AND “VICTIMOLOGY STUDIES” ARE RELATED TO THE NEW AMERICAN POLICE STATE



The lively press disappeared along with its independence in the media concentration engineered during the Clinton administration. Shortly thereafter all the liberal news anchors disappeared as well. Today the US media serves as propaganda ministry for the government’s wars and police state. Yet, some conservatives continue to rant on about “the liberal media.”

That other conservative bugaboo, liberal academia, has also been crushed. Universities once controlled their appointments, but no more. . . Today academic freedom has disappeared just like the independent media. No one but powerful organized interest groups has a voice.

—Paul Craig Roberts, “Conservatism Isn’t What It Used to Be”

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article18409.htm>



The eminent Paul Craig Roberts, as all know whose eyes are open, is a true conservative engaged in passionate combat with those we call neo-conservatives but *should* call fascists, since they favor no law but their own and have long since left any measure of true conservatism behind. Paul Craig Roberts affirms now that not only is our free press gone but that “liberal academia. . . has also been crushed.” “No one but powerful organized interest groups,” he concludes, “has a voice.”

He’s right, of course, and the fault for this wretched, dire, planet-threatening situation lies nowhere but in our own laps. I’ll go further and say that if *anyone* is to prove able to draw us all back from the hideous cliff’s edge we now stand teetering on, that saving force, too, will and must and can be none other than ourselves.

Let me explain a little bit why I say these two things. I wrote a book, published back in 2006 (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind: America in an Age of Simplification and Deceit*), that argued not only that most Americans *can* no longer think but also—after six decades of manipulation and conditioning through the mass media—that they *can* no longer see the simplest of things in front of them *for what they really are*. Instead of seeing what’s really there, most Americans see what their minds or imaginations have been trained, indoctrinated, or conditioned to see. Most Americans stopped thinking, *per se*, quite some time ago, and, worse, most Americans accept as reality or truth what’s in actuality a media-generated concept, a prefabricated and *extraordinarily* familiar *image* of what passes for the true nature of what’s real.

If we’re ever going to save ourselves from the Bushiscti, that is to say, we’ve first got to *see* the Bushiscti for what they really *are*, and we’ve first got to see each and every one of the Bushisctis’ acts and deeds for what *they* really are and really have been.

You can read all about it in the book, if you like, but here’s something more immediate. Yesterday, Sept. 18, 2007, a news item appeared on *Global Research* under the headline <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=6804> “Poll: Almost one third of the US population do not accept the official explanation of 9/11.” It’s apparent that this announcement, along with the news item carrying it, are intended to be taken as essentially *good news*, and even I, however grudgingly, am willing to accept it as good news, at least sort of. But on the other hand, both more tragically and more truly, what the piece really brings is *insanely, horrendously, disastrously* bad news.

After all, 9/11 was now *six years ago*, and the bad news is that *still only a third of the population sees it for what it really was*. That’s *very* bad news. *Good* news would be that ninety-nine percent see it so.

Since back a long way—at *least* since the 2004 publication of Michael C. Ruppert’s [http://www.amazon.com/Crossing-Rubicon-Deliver-American-Empire/dp/0865715408/sr=1-1/qid=1167586584/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_1/104-4231058-3189532?ie=UTF8&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/Crossing-Rubicon-Deliver-American-Empire/dp/0865715408/sr=1-1/qid=1167586584/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/104-4231058-3189532?ie=UTF8&s=books) *Crossing the Rubicon*—the case against 9/11 as anything *other* than an inside job has been absolutely transparent and clear, backed by true cornucopias of incontrovertible evidence. It’s a clear, transparent, criminal case of murder, treason, and crimes against humanity that in any *normal* world, were it to be tried in any *normal* court of justice, would long ago have resulted in the impeachment and conviction of very, very large numbers of and within the “Bush-Cheney” administration. (If by any chance you’d like to know what I myself think should be done to those figures once they’re convicted, you can have a <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.8.1.2007.html> look here. And if by any other chance you’d like a concise list of sixteen of the very best of the many books that tell the truth about 9/11, making the case transparent and clear, you can get one by clicking <http://www.ericlarsen.net/ideas.books.9.11.html> here.)

The *Global Research*

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=6804> news item echoes Paul Craig Roberts' contention that we no longer have a free press, but that, in place of one, what we've got instead is a "propaganda ministry for the government's wars and police state."

"The number of people who question [the official explanation of 9/11] is growing," Mike Berger of 911Truth.org, a leading 9/11 conspiracy Web site, told Cybercast News Service. "The issue is that there has not been mainstream media coverage of any of the anomalies, the omissions, the lies regarding what we know."

"The mainstream media have basically tried to dismiss anybody who raises questions," he said.

I agree completely with both Roberts and Berger both about "coverage" and about "dismissal," and I've tried to show *why* I agree—especially about "dismissal"—in essays analyzing recurrent examples of propaganda, fraud, cover-up, and deceit in, say, <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.2.1.2007.html> Amy Goodman, papers like <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.3.1.2007.html> *The New York Times*, <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.5.1.2007.html> Matthew Rothschild of *Progressive Magazine*, columnists such as <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought8.html> Frank Rich, editors like <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought1.2.2007.html> Alexander Cockburn of *Counterpunch*, and even the despicable, conscienceless, and quisling <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought1.2.2007.html> *Popular Mechanics*.

And yet, however monolithic, culpable, complicit, and traitorous the media and those working inside the media may be, our present vulnerability under the regime—including the possibility that we won't be able to escape the regime's *worst* and *most* murderous of plans for us—are the result of distant sources and deep origins that reach far beyond *only* the media and its workers.

The media may be the *cause*, but what that cause has *resulted* in is a disease that now infects us all. And this is a disease that we've got to rid ourselves of *if we ever hope to resist, let alone defeat, the Bushiscti regime and restore the republic that's already been lost to us in all but name*.

This disease is one that has to do with *seeing*. It's one that has to do with the *mind*. But, most basically of all, it's a disease that has to do with *language*, a disease that has *corrupted* language to the point where it can no longer *help* us but can only make us impotent and empty and thereby *harm* us.

Unless we can change this situation, we're doomed.

Just take a moment to consider: It's a simple truth that people can't think if they don't have language as a logical and coherent tool to think *with*—any more than they can

drive ten-penny spikes into oak slabs without a hammer or its equivalent as the tool that makes it possible. I'll grant at once that *some* high geniuses can *think* without a language that's necessarily a verbal one in the familiar sense. I've got no wish to rule out, say, mathematicians, composers, painters and others who may not need "words" as they're familiarly "spoken" in order to do their own kind of thinking. Such cases, however, invaluable as they may be, are in the infinitesimal minority. *Most* people need words. *Most* people need language.

And one of the most terrible, crippling, and paralyzing things about America today is not *only* that language itself has been made simultaneously toxic and impotent—toxic, that is, when it's used *against* us, yet impotent when we make any effort use it *for ourselves*. That's a situation already *more* than bad enough. But worse is that Americans—being so *thoroughly* uneducated, de-educated, and anti-educated—*don't even know that it's happened*.

What patients can be cured who don't even know they're sick? And here's an even more despairing question: What patients *can cure themselves* if they don't even know they're sick?

And that's the situation we face in the U.S. today. Nobody *else* is going to save us, *that* much is for sure. Our so-called *leaders* aren't going to save us. *Congress* isn't going to save us. The *Bushiscti* aren't going to save us—but are hell-bent, instead, on destroying us.

So if anyone is going to save us, it's got to be *ourselves*. We're the ones who've got to get a grip on our language again, have got to detoxify it, have got to make it *real* again, make it *potent*, make it again into an instrument that we can *use* for ends that are *good*.

Can it be done? I fear not but pray so. I'm afraid that it's a little bit like asking a physician-surgeon to save you from peritonitis by taking out your inflamed and near-bursting appendix. Sounds reasonable and fine, except that *this* physician-surgeon is so senile, so afflicted by Alzheimer's, that he can't remember what a peritoneum *is*, or what or where an *appendix* is, or, god knows, even what a *scalpel* is.

Little help from him. And that's the way it is now with Americans. They're so deeply undone through undergoing so much *non-* and *anti-* and *de-*education that they no longer know the least thing about language, are even in the least way *conscious* of language, know what it is, what it's *for*, how to *use* it, or how, in turn, it's *used*. After all, like almost anything else that's very, very powerful, language can both nurture and destroy. The sun, for example—as all who know Euripides' *Medea*<sup>1</sup>—can give birth, warmth, food, generation, and life itself, but, on the other hand, it can also, like gunpowder, whiskey, or atomic energy, if you don't know how to use it or know what it *is*, turn against you and not just not *help* you, but destroy you so thoroughly that not the faintest outline, shape, or remnant of what you once were will remain.

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<sup>1</sup> Ditto for all those who know *The Bacchae* of Euripides.

And that's what we, as a republic, are facing now.

## 2

Paul Craig Roberts' concise, plain, understated sentence—"Today academic freedom has disappeared just like the independent media"—implies even more bad news than it actually, and correctly, declares. The *reason* that academic freedom has disappeared, after all, is that *the language to justify and defend it has also disappeared*. And the reason for that prior disappearance is that the system of education that once existed—however imperfectly—to preserve it is now in a state of almost total failure. Meanwhile, *other* systems of education, whose several purposes include the elimination and *forgetting* of that language, prosper beyond all imagining.

The "anti-schools," as you might call them, include very nearly the entirety of the mass media (including movies, ads, images, marketing methods, the works). They include the mercenary, death-embracing hallways of the corporatocracy *most* assuredly. And—here may be a surprise for some—they include most of academia itself, *certainly* in its so-called "higher" reaches. Far and away the best, soundest, and most humane education in the United States today takes place in kindergarten and pre-school, with a fall-off gradually occurring up to grade six or so. High school is worse yet, college dismal and dangerous (see *A Nation Gone Blind*), while graduate work in the humanities offers education just about as pernicious as any coming from the mass media and corporatocracy themselves (ditto *A Nation Gone Blind*).

Higher academia, after all, like the corporatocracy itself, is now made up of very, very few people—and those few rapidly disappearing—who were born earlier than my own birth year of 1941. What this means is that soon *no one* in corporate work or in academia today will have lived any part of his or her life outside the atmosphere and reach of the contemporary mass media. None of them, as a result, will any longer have a personal memory of what I call in *A Nation Gone Blind* the "old" America, which I date as having existed in 1947 and before. Here's a passage from the first age of the book:

I have become grateful for the fact that I was born in 1941, since if I had come onto the scene even, say, five or six years later, I would have missed one of the most important experiences of my life, which was being privileged to get a meaningful impression, at first hand, of what I and many others now think of, rightly, as the "old" America.

That is, I was born just early enough that I was able to see, hear, smell, feel, taste, and walk around in the "first" America, the real one, as opposed to the one we're left with now: the mass media America, the corporation America, the television America—the empty America.

I doubt very much, if it weren't for the indescribably powerful influence of the mass media as we know it, that we would now be watching the United States—under the putative governance of the Bush-Cheney regime—being systematically dismantled as a republic and rebuilt as a police state at home and as a crushing military empire abroad. Without the mass media as we've known it now for sixty years, the chances of so enormous, ruinous, cataclysmic—and *successful*—commitments of crime, murder, treason, rape, law-breaking, invasion, and pillage as the Bush regime is *already* guilty of—well, without the help of the mass media, I doubt that such a thing would have happened, would have been *capable* of happening, *certainly* not on so vast a scale.

Call me naïve, but I still think that bad education as opposed to good is what's gotten us into the deep and malicious hell we're now in. As for the word "naïve," I'm pretty sure that the <http://www.bestcyrano.org/THOMASPAINE/?p=300> brilliant and energetic John Hanks *would* most likely use it on me, since the implied answer to his rhetorical question (which follows), at least for me, is *yes*:

Is it true [he asks] that liberals are starry-eyed idealists that think a better class of humans can be produced in classrooms?

Let me clarify. I would answer "yes" to the "classrooms" and "better class of humans" parts of the question. At the same time, I'd give a resounding "no" to the "starry-eyed idealists" part.

Here's why.

Forty centuries of history (western history, to be more precise) show with a near absolute clarity that *nobody* is going to get *anywhere* in the bringing about of a "better class of humans" until such a person first tosses onto the permanent junk heap the "idealist" notion altogether and turns to the "holistic."<sup>2</sup>

That said, allow me to turn to the "classrooms" part of the question, the part that's about "education." With idealism having been thrown far, far away out through the window, I won't just *give* my answer, but I'll *shout* out that, *yes*, education matters; that, *yes*, education can and does make people better; and that, *yes*, education alone is the thing that can save us (or *could* have saved us) from the collapse and fraud and deceit and murder and brigandage and rape and crime and sadism and greed and pandering and

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<sup>2</sup> If you'd like illustration, begin by reading Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. *Then* you could read Plato and watch him demolish the prospering and vigorous world of holism portrayed in the epics and the tragedies in order to replace it with the repugnant and life-negating (death-desiring) imaginary dichotomies that comprise the philosophic disaster we know as idealism. Then watch the Christians carry on the big mess, Des Cartes make doubly sure it remains alive and kicking (after the Renaissance's noble effort to kill it forever), and existentialism at last fight grandly against it one last time: Until the Age of Simplification (read *A Nation Gone Blind* to find out what *that* is) discontinues education altogether, so that down the Memory Hole goes the very notion that 1) philosophy either exists or matters, and that 2) it can conceivably have anything to do with the nurturing or improvement of life in human societies.

torture and death that we see now everywhere “round us and under us, [and] over us”<sup>3</sup> in our poor, hideous, dying world.

I’ll shout all that out. I’ll do it from the rooftops.

But *only* after it’s absolutely clear to everyone that the education I’m talking about *is the right kind*. That is to say, it can’t be a fraud or a fake, and it can’t be any of the myriad sorts of pernicious and ruinous “lying-projects” that pass for “education.”

No. It’s absolutely got to be the real thing and nothing else, nothing less, nothing other.

### 3

Now, I know it’s up to me to explain what I consider this “real thing” to *be*, especially after claiming such importance for it. The trouble is, though, that that’s a big part of what *A Nation Gone Blind* does, and I’m sure readers will understand my not wanting to do again here what I’ve already done there. So, instead of defining *good* education, I’ll quote a passage that describes a *bad* kind—specifically, the kind the mass media has provided for the past sixty years or so. Then I’ll take a look at some other places than the media—Princeton University, for example, and, for another, “victimology studies”—that *also* appear to be providing that same bad kind, thereby doing their bit, like those other traitorous exemplars of propaganda, fraud, and deceit I mentioned earlier—Amy Goodman, Frank Rich, et alii—to help hasten and assure the republic’s regression from free state to police state and from world guardian to world psychopathic rapist.

A bit of history first. At the end of World War II a huge and historical opportunity was missed, lost, or thrown away. It can easily be argued that the U.S. at that time breathed free, stood on the high ground of right victory, and—this isn’t stretching believability, no matter how many may call it naïve—could have overseen the formation and nurturing of a world era unlike any known before. That era *could* have brought into existence a global balance of powers and a conscientious husbanding of global resources that would make it a period of undeniable historical significance. But, as we know all too well, nothing of the sort came about. In fact, one of the worst periods in all of human history came about instead.

Nineteen forty-seven can be thought of as an especially significant year by merit of having been filled with the magic of unsought blessings *and* simultaneously cursed with the cruel promise of their certain betrayal. The year *could* have been famous as the first in long period of global peace.<sup>4</sup> Instead, infamous 1947 marks the exact moment

<sup>3</sup> Euripides, *The Bacchae*, trans. Paul Roche (from the Fifth Choral Ode, preceding line 1329).

<sup>4</sup> Anyone who may really think I reveal myself as not only naïve but also mad as a hatter (an *idealistic* hatter, I might add) by saying such things as I do here about what *could* have happened in 1947 might take

when the United States set out knowingly, deliberately, and calculatingly on a course not of peace but of unending and purposefully self-aggrandizing war.

That is to say, 1947 saw passage of <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/NSChistory.htm> the National Security Act of that year, an act that brought about the creation of the National Security Council and transformed the old OSS into the new CIA. Why was it done? There are some who will argue down to this very day that the National Security Act was a patently necessary and entirely reasonable response to a dire and pressing international threat, primarily from an aggressive Soviet Union. Others will argue exactly the opposite: That there *was* no such threat, that the Soviet Union had been brought to its knees by the long and costly campaign to defeat the Nazis and by its final tally of almost 24,000,000 war dead (13.4% of its population—as compared to the 0.32% of *its* population lost by the U.S.). Seen from this latter point of view, the U.S. decision to turn away from peace and toward war was taken as almost wholly cynical, a decision based on greed, self-interest, and a desire for economic—corporate—growth of the same intensity and degree as the war-economy in the second half of the 1940s had brought into existence and had in those years maintained.

For those who lean to or who hold the second view—as I do—the matter boiled down simply to this single, awful, desolating, ruinous truth: That the world war had proven itself *so* profitable for *so* many corporate interests in *so* many areas of production and supply and finance—that the leaders and groups of leaders in those industrial and manufacturing and corporate areas *wanted the war to go on forever* because only in that way they could go on making more and more money than ever—*forever*.

No one I know puts the matter more succinctly—or bitterly—than Gore Vidal in his short book <http://books.google.com/books?id=8DvqJqybvWoC&dq=&pg=PP1&ots=CxUNE9ZphC&sig=z2zgAubyeRIXvyLQhsO8kGd5Jlo&prev=http://www.google.com/search%3Fhl%3Den%26q%3Dperpetual%2Bwar%2Bfor%2Bperpetual%2Bpeace&sa=X&oi=print&ct=title#PPR7,M1> *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. You can also read the relevant passage—the one below—by going to <http://21stcenturycicero.wordpress.com/tyrrany/gore-vidal-perpetual-war-for-perpetual-peace/> this site. There, you'll find the author of the site, B. John Zavrel, explaining that the quotation comes from a chapter that was “actually a letter (written for *Vanity Fair* before the November 7, 2000 presidential election) to the new President-Elect.”

Vidal:

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a look at <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought11.1.2.2007html> these absolutely wrenching passages about Eisenhower and the way he was shanghaied by the corporate pressure-men near the same time we're talking about. The passages are from <http://books.google.com/books?id=ZUS7t8Af-i4C&pg=PP1&dq=inauthor:William+inauthor:Appleman+inauthor:Williams&sig=xFluFqd71eLg8CAGsaS6ocoebWQ#PPP7,M1> *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, by the late, towering historian, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Appleman\\_Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Appleman_Williams) William Appleman Williams (from his timely Chapter 8, “The Terrifying Momentum Toward Disaster”).

“ . . . fifty years ago, Harry Truman replaced the old republic with a national-security state whose sole purpose is to wage perpetual wars, hot, cold, and tepid. Exact date of replacement? February 27, 1947. Place: The White House Cabinet Room. Cast: Truman, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, a handful of congressional leaders. Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg told Truman that he could have his militarized economy only IF he first “scared the hell out of the American people” that the Russians were coming. Truman obliged. The perpetual war began. Representative government of, by, and for the people is now a faded memory. Only corporate America enjoys representation by the Congress and presidents that it pays for in an arrangement where no one is entirely accountable because those who have bought the government also own the media. Now, with the revolt of the Praetorian Guard at the Pentagon, we are entering a new and dangerous phase. Although we regularly stigmatize other societies as rogue states, we ourselves have become the largest rogue state of all. We honor no treaties. We spurn international courts. We strike unilaterally wherever we choose. We give orders to the United Nations but do not pay our dues. . . we bomb, invade, subvert other states. Although We the People of the United States are the sole source of legitimate authority in this land, we are no longer represented in Congress Assembled. Our Congress has been hijacked by corporate America and its enforcer, the imperial military machine. . . ”

#### 4

And so, thanks in good part to Gore Vidal, we can now take in at a single glance the whole sweep of time from February 27, 1947, on down “to the pupil age of this present twelve o’clock at midnight,” if I may borrow a few of Prince Hal’s words. When *he* spoke them, he was at the very top of his spirits.<sup>5</sup> Our own “midnight” is far less appropriate to revelry, far *more* appropriate to sorrow, fear, horror, and despair.

A way back, we were talking about education and language. Education first.

I promised a passage from <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* that would describe the truly prospering form of education that came into existence near 1947 and has continued ever since in its growth, reach, and ever-increasing technical sophistication. This is, of course, the nation’s single most prominent and influential “school,” an institution that provides the “education” *most formative* on and of the population in general than any other, bar none, not even churches, families, or faiths. We’re talking about the mass media, of course, from television’s first snowy, flickering black-and-white images in the corners of living rooms (preceded at dawn and followed at midnight by “test patterns”) on through today’s cell phones, i pods, MTV, the whole ball of wax.

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<sup>5</sup> “I am now of all humors that have showed themselves humors since the old days of Goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o’clock at midnight.” *Henry IV, pt. 1* (II, iv, 89-91).

And here's a passage (from chapter two, "The Death of Literary Thinking in America: How It Happened and What It Means") describing what this "school" teaches and how it goes about doing so:

The corporate state, with its policing and proselytizing arm, the mass media, wants, in all citizens, to create and maintain passivity, lack of individual thought, and as low a consciousness as possible of the nature, meaning, and full potential of the individual self. And if this is so, how can it be, how can it conceivably have happened, that the bringing into being and the nurturing of those very same deleterious qualities and characteristics—rather than their desperately-needed and deeply undervalued opposites—could have become the routine business even of the intellectual, academic, and artistic classes in the nation?

The passage actually takes up two subjects. The first is the subject of *what* this omni-pervasive educational institution *teaches*. And *what* it teaches is passivity, simplification, the removal of individual perception *up at least* one level of abstraction above actual reality, and therefore as much as possible the *non-consciousness* insofar as possible "of the nature, meaning, and full potential of the individual self."

And the second subject is the sheer and all but incredible *success* of this "educational" institution. So *unbelievably* successful is it that not only has it had its effect and made its mark on the general mass of the population, but it has done the same with "the intellectual, academic, and artistic classes in the nation." And *there* comes trouble. *There* comes the *huge* significance of the counting up of years, of the simple recognition that people born any time after, just say, 1947, are now *at least sixty years old* and have lived their *entire lives*, from earliest formative years on up, sitting dawn-to-dawn and *every single day* in the classroom chairs of *that* educational institution, the one that patently *beggars* the powers of "real" school, of parents, of home, of church, of peers, to compete with it in any *significant* way whatsoever.

The result? Well, that's what <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* is about, which is why it has the title that it does. Right here and now, however, I'm interested in looking more specifically at the overwhelming and pernicious result of this massive, monstrous, six-decade-long educational success on three things: First, on language itself and *consciousness* of language; second and *almost* simultaneously, its influence on education, especially higher education; and, third, an obvious product of the first two, its influence on making Americans *freeze* instead of *act* or even *react* as they watch a radical and unelected junta abominate 230 years' worth of their nation's history, discredit or destroy the freedom-guaranteeing legacies of that two-and-a-third centuries' history, turn freedom into tyranny, innocence into guilt, peace into war, lies into truth, and citizens into subjects.

My inclination at times like this is to turn to an example. As everyone knows who genuinely understands the virulence and enormity of the disease that's destroying us (and that's *not* being stopped), just reading the newspaper can be a crushingly dismal and

hope-destroying experience. Take *The New York Times* of Tuesday, September 19, 2006—for an example that I’ve kept in my files—and turn, again for example, to page B3. There, you’ll find a headline saying that “Princeton Plans Expansion Of Black Studies Program.” Under that headline you’ll see a photo of the familiar and famous Cornel West, the scholar who, after having been [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1282/is\\_1\\_54/ai\\_81775374](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_1_54/ai_81775374) “disrespected” by Harvard’s president, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence\\_Summers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_Summers) Lawrence Summers, put on a nationally publicized hissy-fit, snatched up his marbles and toys, and stomped off to Princeton. There, it would seem, he was warmly welcomed by that university’s president, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirley\\_M.\\_Tilghman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirley_M._Tilghman) Shirley M. Tilghman.

The reporter of the *Times* piece, Karen W. Arenson, wrote this lead paragraph:

Princeton University, one of the leading universities in black studies, yesterday announced an expansion in its program, including at least a doubling in the number of faculty members, the introduction of a major for undergraduates and the creation of a new center for teaching and research on race in America.

Now, readers of <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* will be aware that the news contained in this paragraph is, to me, not *good* news. After all, the third chapter of the book (“Consumerism, Victimology, and the Disappearance of the Meaningful Self”) argues unequivocally and very closely *against* “victimology studies,” the very thing that Princeton University, a year or so ago, was so happy about *expanding*. Everyone is aware of these programs of study and aware of how thoroughly they’ve been adopted into the college and university curriculum—Women’s Studies, Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender Studies, Asian Studies, and so on. But the omnipresence of these programs is the *last* logical reason to approve of them. “It is one thing to study history and gain knowledge,” says <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind*,

to insist upon the importance of that knowledge and use it in every possible way to preclude the recurrence of suffering, injustice, cruelty, pain—these are not only understandable pursuits but *right* ones. Victimology, though doesn’t do this. Victimology is fatally confused, if only because it argues simultaneously that suffering is bad *and* that suffering has meaning—that it is *meaningful* to suffer and that that meaning can and should be studied. This is an impossible situation, since it argues that suffering must be ended, yet at the same time that suffering must *not* be ended, since then, if it were, there would be nothing to study.

The “victim,” in other words, must remain victim in order to remain meaningful. This fact makes it impossible to escape the conclusion that victims’ studies programs are based on a deep, even vicious, and certainly corrupting hypocrisy.

These are strong words—but they’re words also that consist of a strong *logical* argument. And in the Age of Simplification, as I call it—*our* age—a strong logical argument is usually the *last* thing wanted. After all, that kind of argument is *intended to result in actions based on logical thought*. And the more *that* sort of thing happens, the more there’ll be people in many a calling—*certainly* in academic callings—who will less

likely be allowed to go on enjoying their essentially non-logical— “feeling-based” or “politically-based”—sinecures.

Again, anyone who’s read <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* knows how seriously the book takes matters of these kinds. Salient among its concerns is the now-commonplace establishment of victims’ studies, a troubling thing specifically because such programs invariably fail to be built on *intellectual* foundations. Consequently, they are also incapable of being *defended* on intellectual grounds:

In order to maintain an intellectual position that was untenable and could *not* be maintained, the victimologists weighted things away from thought and toward feeling, a position where logic could not make its customary demands. In order to maintain a moral and ethical position that was untenable and could *not* be maintained, the victimologists gave up the last vestige of the true, authentic, irreducible, free self and replaced it with the *group*, or with the *tribe*, then took refuge in the idea of “the people” who make up that group or tribe. By this time, thinking had ended, since the self was gone, while feeling, instinct, and an un-intellectual sense of the just and righteous gained prestige through being identified not with a single individual and accountable human mind, but with the democratically enshrined concept of a “people.”

Brothers joined brothers, sisters joined sisters, and the programs were here to stay—built on sand, inward-looking, self-involved, not really political, not really intellectual, not really ambitious for reform, not really honest. And so academia began its fiddling—and is fiddling still—while the Age of Simplification helps see to it that America burn.

## 5

Now, if black studies (as, it’s clear enough, it is in *my* view) is really a *bad* thing, why would it be written up in the newspaper as a *good* thing while, at the identical same time, *actual* good things are happening that don’t even get mentioned? More on this in a moment, since we’ve got to consider another question first.

Now let’s assume, for the moment, that black studies *really is* a bad thing (for a full argument for that position, go to the third chapter of <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind*). Further, *still* assuming that it’s a bad thing, let’s assume also—just for the moment—that *you*, the reader, and not Shirley M. Tilghman, are the president of Princeton University. It’s obvious that you’ve got to say *something* about the university’s new expansion of black studies. But *what*? Still assuming that you consider black studies a *bad* thing—*what would you do*?

Well, you *could* say that the expansion of black studies is therefore *also* not good but *bad*—though if you did do that, the next morning you’d find the wheels turning in the elaborate though unrelenting process that brings about the firing of one president and the hiring of a new one.

Luckily for you, though (that is, assuming that you *really did want* to remain president), there remain other choices. One choice is, of course, that you could *lie*. That is, even if you thought black studies was a *bad* thing, you could *say* it was a good thing. But who wants to lie? Liars are awful, and lies themselves are destructive both of personality and of society.

Now let's change the terms of the situation and imagine that you *haven't* read <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* and that you *do* think (or think you think) that black studies is a good thing. If such really were the case, the entire matter would be easy. That is, you could tell the truth. You could say that you *did* think black studies was a good thing, then say *why* you think so, and then you could laud the expansion of black studies at Princeton, and your praise would be *logically related* to what you'd said from the start. In this case, not even concerning ourselves with the question of who's right and who's wrong, there would at least actually be some *content*, some *personality*, some *felt purpose* in the speaker's words.

All right, now let's switch back to the way things actually are. We know perfectly well that you the *reader* aren't the president of Princeton University. And we know that the *real* president is Shirley M. Tilghman.

Now that we know a bit about some of the options open to someone in the president's position—to tell the truth, to lie, or to *change* either *oneself* and/or the truth—let's look and see how Shirley M. Tilghman herself handled the situation. Watch closely. Here's Karen Arenson's second paragraph:

Shirley M. Tilghman, Princeton's president, said in a telephone interview yesterday that she hoped the effort would help the university contribute greater insights to issues like the nature of racial identity and help train a "new generation of leaders to solve problems that have persisted too long."

*Uh, oh.* Do you see the choice she made? I'll give you the news article's third paragraph. After that, there'll be no option for us but to declare that whatever is, *is*. Then we'll be able—maybe—to find out which choice—if it *was* a choice—Shirley M. Tilghman made. The paragraph consists of a quote:

"Of all the challenges that confront America, none is more profound than the struggle to achieve racial equality and understand the impact of race on the life and institutions of the United States," she said.

I wish I could cast this part of our discussion in the form of a quiz or a poll, so that readers could write in saying what they think happened: Whether they think Tilghman made a choice or didn't make one, and, if she did make one, which one it was. I may sound like a broken record, but, again, people who have read <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* are likely to be ahead of those who haven't.

The reason is that the book dedicates a lot of its energies to analyzing exactly the kind of thing given us here by President Tilghman.

And what *is* that? Well, there's no question that what we're seeing is a form of lying, though it's probably impossible to tell whether it's *intentional* lying or *unintentional*. The difference between the two is of huge importance in a good number of ways—but the truth about the distinction lies hidden within the heart and mind of Shirley M. Tilghman. Or the truth of it *may* lie there. In any case, it's invisible to us.

Three things we *can* tell, however, are these: First, that Tilghman's words *are* lies (though we can't say whether they're intentional or not); second, that these lies come in the form of what we can call *code*; and, third, corollary to the first and second things, we can define the words as lies by merit of their implicit claim to be saying *something* while in fact they are saying *nothing*.

The president's words are a bit like those of someone who claims to be saying to another, "I love you," while in actuality the words being whispered into the waiting beloved's ear are "tile, air horn, cat litter."

Let's analyze, in other words, the emptiness, deadness, vacuity—and therefore the plain and clear deceitfulness, since they're claiming to say something while in fact saying *nothing*—of Tilghman's words.

Just *look* at these words and phrases: "help the university contribute"; "greater insights"; "issues"; "the nature of racial identity"; "new generation"; "leaders"; "problems"; "persisted too long." These words are *code* because, as the first chapter of <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593760981/ref=nosim/104-1974668-7081548?n=283155> *A Nation Gone Blind* demonstrates and discusses at length,<sup>6</sup> because

1) they mean nothing whatsoever in and of themselves. The words possess no correlatives in the real or observable world, suggesting that, as she spoke them, Tilghman was not *looking* at anything concrete nor did she have in her *mind* a memory or image of anything concrete. She and all others who use language the way *she* uses language—a grotesque and frightening thing to realize—have been such successful students in the great Wurlitzer of the never-pausing school of media that, through endless practice and imitation, they've mastered "the removal of individual perception *up at least* one level of abstraction above actual reality";

2) since the words have no meaning, Tilghman was therefore aiming them—how could it be any other way?—at listeners about whom her assumption was that they already thought of the words in a pre-determined way, a way that, again, depended at all upon a

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<sup>6</sup> Using as examples essays of a number of writers, among them Almaz Abinader, Julia Alvarez, Sven Birkerts, Robert Olen Butler, Richard Ford, and Naomi Shihab Nye.

connection *between* those *words* and any object or thing physically observed—or *remembered*—in or from the physical world;

3)

so that, consequently, since nothing whatsoever was said, a corollary can be formed to the effect that *nothing whatsoever was said that consisted of or was a result either of thinking or of thought*;

4)

a fact in turn reveals the truth that, in light of the *absence of thought*, the only thing that could possibly have been present in Tilghman was a vague, general, probably very familiar set of *feelings and attitudes* that were

5)

sent out by her to an audience *presumed already to share* those feelings and attitudes *and* themselves to hold and value the same contentment with non-thinking and the same contentment with non-thought as were demonstrated by Tilghman herself.



And so—what happened?

Well, *here's* what happened: *Nothing* was said by anyone to anyone. *Nothing* was identified, defined, or *thought* by anyone. Therefore, *no* thinking and *no* ideas could possibly have been communicated *by* anyone *to* anyone else.

Please pause and consider for a moment the importance and enormity of what we're talking about. What we're talking about, what we're seeing *demonstrated*, is the utter and total and absolute *inanity* of the code-driven non-think that substitutes for actual thinking, actual thought, among the greatest figureheads in advanced research and pedagogy, among those who stand at the pinnacles of American higher education in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Does *anyone* want to go to college? Does *anyone* want to pay great amounts of money to attend <http://www.indoctrinate-u.com/pages/welcome.html> “Indoctrinate U”? If any people still do want to, let them remember that *these* are the words that in reality ought to be inscribed, in this our Age of Simplification, over the gates of all our great American colleges and universities:

We are the hollow men  
 We are the stuffed men  
 Leaning together  
 Headpiece filled with straw. . .

## 6

It's time to recall Paul Craig Roberts' comment from some time back: "Today," he said, "academic freedom has disappeared just like the independent media. No one but powerful organized interest groups has a voice."

In Tilghman and West, indeed, we're seeing exactly those "organized interest groups" in action—and yet we must go a step farther even than Paul Craig Roberts did. *These* interest groups are even *more* pernicious than the ones Roberts was talking about, the kind indicated by his reference to <http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=11&ar=1233> the Norman Finkelstein case and "Censorship at Harvard." It's perfectly true that the [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1282/is\\_1\\_54/ai\\_81775374](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_1_54/ai_81775374) Larry Summers vs. Cornel West incident (without which we'd never even have *had* the Shirley Tilghman incident) does demonstrate "organized interest groups" at work. And it's also perfectly true that, insofar as such groups gain leverage in academia *without first laying intellectual foundations to justify that leverage*, they, de facto, constitute *and* demonstrate instances of the disappearance of academic freedom. If I were to advocate the establishment of a White Studies Center at Princeton, I'd be dismissed out of hand—although not if I were to advocate the establishment of a Women's Studies Center. These are matters not of academic freedom or of intellectual contest, but of [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1282/is\\_1\\_54/ai\\_81775374](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_1_54/ai_81775374) "idiot games. . . [as if] the universe were battling and tumbling, in brute confusion and wanton lust. . ." <sup>7</sup>

But there's worse news still. And that worse news is that this collapse of academic freedom is in actuality a collapse into *academic emptiness*. And, worse still, the emptiness was created *first*. And then, after the emptiness was *ready*, academics, freedom and all, collapsed *into it*.

This is what's *so important* about language and about what's *happened to it* over the sixty-years' worth of indoctrination and simplification that its everyday users have undergone for their whole lives, users from the lowest halls of Walmart on up to the ivied halls of academe and beyond. Even the most intellectual of Americans have stopped being able to see for themselves, very possibly able to see at *all*. It's not just a matter of nit-picking when, in the first chapter of *A Nation Gone Blind*, I analyze the work of fifteen American writers and find their average grade to be "D." The reason for that shocking and egregious failure? The *central* reason is that so many of them are unable to think, see, or feel by and for *themselves*. Instead, they're able to "think" only by *beginning* the process from a point that's "*at least one level of abstraction above actual reality*." Instead of writing about human beings they've known, for example, or about ideas that *they have had or gained through experience*, they write about abstractions like "race, class, gender, and ethnic identity" and they *imagine* all along that they're actually

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<sup>7</sup> *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf. The lines come from the brilliant and moving section VII of the "Time Passes" chapter of Woolf's great novel.

writing from the first, initial, fundamental level of observed reality when, truly, they're doing no such thing at all.

Instead of *seeing* for themselves, they're *receiving* from sources already prepared, already simplified, already categorized, narrowed, and, most important of all, already moved up—yes, that's right—at *least one level of abstraction above actual reality*.

Try it and see for yourself. Start listening to people who are putatively thinking about the standard-issue “subjects” and “topics” that they passively and unquestioningly accept, over and over and over, as if they were “real” or “true” or “relevant” to something or other, when in actuality they're nothing more than stock notions and prefab, fake “concepts.”<sup>8</sup>

If Americans weren't already so badly damaged both intellectually and emotionally—hadn't been *so* extremely simplified and been made *so* extraordinarily passive—the war in Iraq could and would never have gotten off the ground. Not for a minute. The whole project was far too absurd and laughable, a thing built far too inane on a transparent foundation of lies, falsehoods, deceptions, hissy fits, childish “outings,” and frat-boy-worthy vindictive accusations *ever* to have survived more than a very, very short career by merit of possessing a worthiness as nothing more than a public laughing stock before dying away altogether.

But we're a nation gone blind. The American population *really has been damaged that badly*, badly enough that not even after six whole years can people see—for *themselves and by themselves*—the simple, obvious, overwhelmingly evidenced truth that 9/11 was pulled off *by our own country* for the very purpose of cashing in on precisely and exactly the inability of Americans to see for themselves that we've been talking about. And what do we *get* at a time like this? What do we get when we're under greater oppression and threat from a “foreign” power—a power that's internal and yet that's set upon destroying the American Constitution and thus America—than we've been at any time since the years preceding 1776?

You know what we get. We get pap. We get inertia. We get boilerplate. For intellectual leadership we get the likes of Shirley Tilghman and Cornel West. For political leadership we get the likes of Nancy Pelosi, who lies like a rug because she knows that Americans won't *do* anything about it, or the likes of John Kerry, who can't even *see*—*can't see for himself, can't see it for what it is*—the <http://michellemalkin.com/2007/09/17/student-tasered-at-john-kerry-forum/> tasing and arresting by rogue police of a student in broad daylight and in a public place for doing nothing whatsoever except asking a factual question about Skull and Bones. Watch that video of Andrew Meyer being tased as neither John Kerry nor the audience does a thing and ask yourself *who* is not seeing and *what* they're not seeing and *why* they're not seeing it and therefore *why they're doing nothing*.

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<sup>8</sup> Here's some of what you'll find out when you listen closely to people, however eminent—like Shirley Tilghman or Cornel West—who *think* they're thinking, or who *think* they're talking about “significant topics.” Just <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought1.1.3.2007.html> click here and start reading.

Americans can no longer see reality for themselves, and therefore they can't and won't *believe* it even when it's stuck right in front of their blinded eyes. This statement—the one I just made—is no longer metaphoric, but now it's real. With the destruction of language and the raising of it up *at least* one notch above the empirical real; from *that* destruction follows the destruction of *thought* and its replacement by *pseudo-thought*; and from *those two processes* of destruction there can only emerge a people *frozen*, a people of no self-reliance whatsoever, a people numbed and confused into stasis and doubt *by their own inability to tell the unreal from the real*.

How did it happen? How *could* it have happened?

Dr. Johnson remarked that <http://www.samueljohnson.com/refuge.html> “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel,” and I'm convinced that *we* can say with equal certitude that abstraction, boilerplate, and cliché are both the sign and the destiny of the non-thinker. Having lost the language *to do it with*, Americans *can* no longer think, and because they can no longer *think* they can no longer *see*, and *certainly* they've lost the power once given them by the language that's theirs no longer, *the power to explain objectively and accurately what it is that they actually see and therefore be able to respond to it as reason and ethics would normally direct*.

It may be that we're lost, but I know now—I didn't always—that the loss came *before* George W. Bush. The loss is an emptiness, already there, and he—and all the banal evil and fierce destructiveness he represents—simply fell into it.

I also know that if we can't regain our language, can't regain our access to it and the traditional uses we were once able to make of it—I know that if we can't do those things, then we truly *are* doomed. It may be true already. Without language, we can't speak. And if we can't speak, how can we possibly save ourselves?

Here's the last sentence from the Paul Craig Roberts essay we started with, “Conservatism Isn't What It Used to Be”:

In America today, speaking your mind in the media or in academia is a thing of the past. A country that has no voices independent of powerful interests is a country in which freedom is dead.

In computer programming, it used to be said routinely, “garbage in, garbage out.” Why in the name of all things holy should we ever have imagined that the case would have been any different with regard to human beings?

—Eric Larsen  
—September 25, 2007