

A Moral Compass and Modern Propaganda? Charting Ethical and Political Discourse

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When Have We Gone Too Far?

The 21st century is defined by communication and the power of communication media that are constantly evolving. The construction and application of propaganda, political and commercial, has a critical influence on this environment. Political, social and cultural life is undertaken in a propaganda soaked atmosphere such that its effects are ubiquitous, its machinations inscrutable, and its energy perpetual. The way we teach, critique, analyze and report upon propaganda is among the dominant challenges of these times.

Propaganda is the intentional manipulation and shaping of what people think, see and believe in an effort to get the targeted audience to respond in ways that satisfy the interests and goals of the propagandist. Propaganda does not need to consider the needs or interests of the audience, and does not require that propagandists believe in what they are doing as long as they achieve their goals. Our world is permeated by propaganda, and although the word and its use are ancient, our times are different by all measures. Commercial, political and cultural propaganda is omnipresent. Yet the sheer tonnage is made more complicated in the American context where the use of propaganda, to the point of outright lies and deception, is protected as free speech. Our world is a universe organized by electronic media of vast power and technology where even our "social networks" are viewed as precious resources; mother lodes of eyeballs just waiting to be directed to products, political movements and cultural fascinations.

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Increasingly students find it difficult to distinguish between propaganda and persuasion, which are related and distinct concepts. The former is more predatory and one-way. The definition and analyses of propaganda can be made as complex as quantum physics, but in reality its practice is simple. Propaganda is an intellectual blight, and the power it exerts, and the sense that it is necessary and unavoidable, creates confusion. This essay underscores the need for moral and ethical boundaries in exploring the use and abuse of propaganda; it is a challenge to all involved in politics and communications to forthrightly address the employment of propaganda on a moral-ethical plane, in a context where the rules favor the propagandist at every turn.

The need for a moral compass in the use of propaganda is essential. After all, it is unlikely that law or policy should, or could, proscribe its use today. Hence the value of a guide. In teaching Political Science, Communications and Journalism, it is unnerving and yet understandable that students may embrace a “win at all costs” attitude when it comes to political communications. For some the scoreboard will always remain the only important measure, and success will be the only ethic applied. This prospect requires sincere examination of the relationship between politics, propaganda, and moral reasoning. The central challenge is to know when the propagandist has gone too far and crossed the line into immoral and unethical behavior, even if their conduct is *lawful*. Talking about morals and ethics in propaganda and communication is complicated. Even so, to toss ethical and moral reasoning aside due to its complexity or its relative inconvenience is a road to perdition. Ubiquity must not lead to indifference.

In her book [The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age](#), (2012), Martha C. Nussbaum envisions a moral calling to provide principles for democratic practice. Nussbaum understands that this task is about “offering insight” to society so that people can stop and think more carefully about what they believe and how they act. It is not always possible or desirable to prescribe by law, policy and force attitudes and behaviors in people, especially in democracy where there is a tension between liberty and order. In the case of religious intolerance, dealing with the way fear drives emotional and irrational responses is critical to Nussbaum’s analysis. The moral calling is similar in the case of propaganda. As Nussbaum argues:

“Supplying principles to guide democratic political practice has been the central purpose of political philosophy, which ever since its (Western) start in ancient Athens, has seen its goal as practical, not merely theoretical.

I'll argue that philosophy really does have the sort of practical importance that the Greeks claimed for it, offering insight to every person who wants to think about these matters," (pp. 59-60).

Designing a moral-ethical compass to confront the dangers of modern propaganda as we encounter it in our world is equally practical, and falls into similar categories as described by Nussbaum in looking at religious intolerance. We cannot inhibit freedom of expression, but we also cannot tolerate powerful tools of distortion, manipulation and lies. Back in 1981, James Q. Wilson made an effort to clarify this calling in his view of "Doing Intellectual Work" (2010) in this way:

"There is little wrong with intellectuals taking part, along with everyone else, in the process by which issues are defined, assumptions altered, and language supplied. But some of them, particularly university scholars, are supposed to participate under a special obligation—namely, to make clear what they know as opposed to what they wish," (pp. 24-25).

The definition of ideas is at the very heart of political life, but is also the target area of propaganda and persuasion. It is necessary to expand Wilson's definition to include journalists, and all public intellectuals. Most important, it must include teachers who would not circumscribe free expression, but are obliged to offer insight about communication that crosses ethical boundaries. Teaching prejudice, sophistry or practical cynicism are not acceptable options.

Moral Obligations and Propaganda

Morals in the normative sense define the area of what may be objectively good or bad. The search for the *good* and for *truth* will always bedevil mankind, but the effort helps make sense of what we mean by morals and ethics. In his book How Do I Save My Honor? War, Moral Integrity and Principled Resignation, (2009) William Felice offered a succinct definition: "Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, attempts to distinguish between right and wrong behavior," (Felice, 2009, p. 41). Ethics are rules and standards and a system of behaviors that guide practices and choices.

Ethical principles as moral philosophy are guided by a commitment to the good, and hence practices and habits that are deemed best should lead to a better character, a better person or a better society.¹ In Practical Ethics, the philosopher Peter Singer spends a good deal of time hashing through what ethics *is not*, and what ethics *is*.

This is important because of the ways we distinguish between behaviors and choices that are good and right, and those that are based on duty, goals, moral obligations and the search for an ideal system (Singer, 1993). As Singer works through his understanding of the application of reason to ethics, he is able to confirm that ethics are not relative or subjective. Singer addresses the central question: "Why should I act morally?" (Singer, p. 314, 1993).

"It is a question about the ethical point of view, asked from a position outside it. But what is the 'ethical point of view'? I have suggested that a distinguishing feature of ethics is that ethical judgments are universalisable. Ethics require us to go beyond our own personal point of view to a standpoint like that of the impartial spectator who takes a universal point of view," (Singer, 1993, p.317).

Singer asserts that we must stand outside ourselves and our interests to evaluate justice and morality in action. The goal must be to explain how our actions or choices improve the world or the lives of other people? This is a universal question. A moral compass in the uses of propaganda must therefore be universal or it is meaningless.

Ethics as moral philosophy are the gateway to following principles in life that may lead to the moral good. Ethics set us toward possessing the means to make the best possible choices when the moral good is unclear or elusive. A *moral compass* suggests that in a world where morals are elusive we need a sound way to navigate treacherous paths. On each stem of the compass rose there must be specific elements of moral philosophy that will point in the right direction. There is the obvious problem: propaganda *is* everywhere. Propaganda permeates all modern social, commercial and political relationships. This is the reality on the ground and complicates distinctions between *propaganda* and *persuasion*. Propaganda is related to, but very different from persuasion as a form of communication. To bring clarity to the central ethical problem we must begin with a definition. One of the best definitions available for its clarity and brevity is provided by Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell in Propaganda and Persuasion, 5th edition (2012).

“Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist,” (p. 7).

This stripped down definition of Jowett and O'Donnell is the beginning of what develops as a vast and carefully analyzed concept with diverse manifestations and relationships. According to Jacques Ellul in Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes (1965) it is essential that we understand propaganda in its *modern* form. *Modern* propaganda, as Ellul describes, is scientific and does not operate as it did in the 19th Century. Modern propaganda is a systematic mode of communication within the world of facts deployed to intentionally distort reality.

“Propaganda by its very nature is an enterprise for perverting the significance of events and insinuating false intentions. There are two salient aspects of this fact. First of all, the propagandist must insist on the purity of his own intentions and, at the same time, hurl accusations at his enemy. But the accusation is never made haphazardly or groundlessly. The propagandist will not accuse the enemy of just any misdeed; he will accuse him of the very intention that he himself has and of trying to commit the very crime that he himself is about to commit.” (Ellul in Jowett and O'Donnell, Propaganda and Persuasion, New and Classic Essays, 2006, p. 29)

Ellul goes on to say that, “Propaganda is necessarily false when it speaks of values, of *truth*, of *good*, of *justice*, of *happiness*—and when it interprets and colors facts and imputes meaning to them,” (Ellul, p. 30). Ellul means that the scientific application of modern propaganda is decidedly predatory. Written in 1967, Ellul's criticism implies greater caution for the 21st Century. For example, Ellul never could have considered the power of electronic social networks like Facebook. Even so, the social network today provides an inexpensive mode of expanding propaganda cheaply, and with greater toxicity than the “chain emails” of the last decade. Propagandists can now initiate politically motivated disinformation campaigns very quickly. An example in 2012 has been the passing on of the “10 Illegal Alien Facts” post on Facebook. According to a PolitiFact analysis nearly the entire list is false and was posted without attribution. It is a new realm of anonymous, fast and efficient propaganda that seeks to distort reality in order to influence elections, public policy and the social narrative.

Near the close of Propaganda and Persuasion, Jowett and O'Donnell conclude that, "Propaganda is not necessarily an evil thing," (p. 367). Ultimately propaganda must be evaluated, they say, within its own context according to the *players*, the target *audience* and its *purposes*.

Therefore, if the players, the audience, and purposes are central in evaluating the ethics of propaganda, then it seems we have all the elements to begin to erect a moral standard of judgment. We can close in on the central moral and ethical conundrum and reveal a path decent people can and should follow in a world of propaganda. Modern propaganda provokes actions and behaviors in people by manipulation. The defining element of propaganda is to change behavior in the target audience without regard to the needs and interests of the audience, but only with concern for the goals of the propagandist. Jowett and O'Donnell examine the many forms of propaganda in comprehensive detail, some far more deceiving and devious than others.ⁱⁱ What we know for certain is that propaganda seeks to influence human behavior by infiltrating and shaping the perceptual field of human beings. Propaganda does not persuade; propaganda controls and manipulates.

Persuasion by contrast to propaganda is a more complex and interactive communication process. According to Jowett and O'Donnell:

"Persuasion as a subset of communication is usually defined as a communicative process to influence others. A persuasive message has a point of view or desired behavior for the recipient to adopt in a voluntary fashion," (p. 31).

Persuasion involves dialogue. Persuasion requires that people listen to one another, and there is always the prospect that an exchange of perspectives can lead to a change of heart in everyone involved in the communicative process. In the end, persuasion normally entails that the persuasive message is sent with the belief that the interests of all, including the receivers in the audience, may be improved or satisfied. So, although propaganda and persuasion are related and at times hard to distinguish, there is a clear difference between the two forms of communication. Propaganda, even in its most "benign" forms seeks to change behavior in the targeted audience without regard to dialogue.

Jowett and O'Donnell make distinctions among different types of propaganda, denoting those forms that are more acceptable than others.

Using the colors *white*, *gray* and *black*, Jowett and O'Donnell characterize types of propaganda based on the source and relative authenticity or accuracy of the information. *White* propaganda derives from a known source and the information tends to be accurate, building credibility in the audience. *Black* propaganda derives from a false and/or undisclosed source and disseminates lies and deceptions.

Black propaganda is purposeful mendacity and deceit. *Gray* propaganda operates somewhere between the white and black, where sources may or may not be clearly known, and the quality of the information may be reasonably accurate or highly questionable. Most scholars recognize many shades within gray propaganda, and the distinctions are clear and useful as far as they go. Clearly, black propaganda is unacceptable and reprehensible, but this leaves too much ground for uncertainty in the gray to white range. White, gray and black propaganda are primarily understood in terms of their relationship to the disseminating source, and to its relative accuracy. The question remains: when is propaganda wrong, even in the case of white propaganda? How do we judge the content and the intentions of the propaganda?

In the world we inhabit it is critical that we have the ability to apply moral reasoning to the uses of propaganda. Scholars, teachers and journalists need to know where the boundaries are between ethical and unethical forms of communication. If there is no escape from propaganda, and if propaganda *is not necessarily evil*, then a dialogue about the moral and ethical applications is among the most central concerns in an age where information, communication and media are dominant.

Propaganda & Ideology: Propaganda is not an Evil Thing?

First: If propaganda is not an evil thing, we know that it does seek to simplify and control vision, knowledge and understanding in people. We know that propaganda narrows human thought, manipulates symbols so as to shape our cognitions, and hence, our attitudes. Propaganda does this to direct human behavior, and to cause people to do things that serve the propagandist, but not necessarily the public or the public good (Jowett and O'Donnell, 2006). Second: If propaganda is not an evil thing, it certainly is a dangerous thing that diminishes our capacity to think in complex ways or to remain very thoughtful about our beliefs or actions. In this light, the political danger of propaganda explodes when harnessed to an ideology.

Propaganda is related to ideology because both are calls to action; they seek to change behavior in others by virtue of simplified and narrow compressions of a more complex reality. Ideology has many elements and a long history in its definition, but one of the simplest ways to think of modern political ideology is as an *integrated pattern of beliefs* (L. Sargent, Contemporary Political Ideologies, 12th Ed., 2003, pp. 2-4).

Ideology is built on myths and beliefs, and there is no requirement that there be any bases in fact per se, although the belief patterns are normally stitched together by all sorts of things that we experience in the material world, (i.e. culture, history, mythic stories, philosophy, religion, race, gender, and social-economic factors). Ideologies are so powerful that they can define an age or a political party, and yet they remain patterns of beliefs.

In Karl Mannheim's classic formulation Ideology and Utopia, (1936) he differentiates ideologies into two conceptions: *the particular* and *the total*. The *particular conception* refers to ideologies that motivate political parties, groups or factions within society who compete for power and resources. It is always in the interest of the particular ideology to make all competitors appear inferior, and to simplify complex reality to help followers fall in line, join the movement, and move together in a single cause. The *total conception* of ideology is far more expansive. The *total conception* refers to an entire age or an era in which whole peoples, nations or civilizations subscribe to a worldview which shapes reality. For example, the European medieval age clambered on for nearly eleven centuries. In that time, most of an entire continent subscribed to an ideology dominated by the church in Rome, the feudal system, divine right of the monarchy, and the landlord and serf economic relationship. Aristocracy and noble houses justified their control of lands and peasants based on an ideology that marked an entire era. Ideologies on this level thrive as long as they continue to produce power and wealth. Political, religious, cultural, and economic institutions and systems may combine in a common cause that endures despite wars, rebellions and dynastic change. The total conception of an ideology eventually declines as the dominant social paradigm when it fails to produce power and wealth and it has new competitors that can thrust it aside into the trash heap of history. For example, the industrial and scientific revolutions allied with capitalism, secularism and democracy eventually forced feudalism aside. Little of feudalism remains in this world as it did through the Middle Ages of Europe.

The deceptive power of ideology is undeniable. People live and die, ages are defined, and movements are formed which identify the lives and souls of people as individuals, parties, revolutionaries and nations. Ideology puts its stamp on art, music, language, culture and even social caste. Ideology is a woven fabric of beliefs that resists dialogue, deliberation or thoughtfulness. In organizing themselves into patterns of beliefs ideologies reduce objective reality into one or a few simple principles. Ideology simplifies reality on purpose.

Ideologies are both dangerous *and* indispensable because they may form the ties that bind nations together, and lead people in great causes, but they may also perpetrate the greatest crimes imaginable. Human history is filled with examples of both. Propaganda as a *form of communication* is a tool of ideologies. As a tool or device central to political ideology, propaganda plays a crucial role in manipulating reality to influence human actions and behaviors. Propaganda seeks to narrow and manipulate human perceptions and cognitions on behalf of the propagandist and ideology.

Is it the case that once something becomes ubiquitous and technically indispensable, that this thing must be legitimated for its instrumentality? Is propaganda (like ideology) understood as *not necessarily an evil thing* because we cannot avoid its presence or its influence? If we are forced to live with propaganda, then we must also warn ourselves that propaganda as a form of communication rarely ennoble the players and the audience. Too frequently propaganda has purposes so “self-interested” that the needs of communities become irrelevant. For this reason a moral compass is vital. The *players, the audience and the purposes* of propaganda, as defined by Jowett and O’Donnell, can help to reveal the ethical rules to evaluate its use.

The Players, the Audience and the Purposes: Knowing the Players?

Let’s first think about the players because in them we will find our first point on the compass rose. When we analyze the players we are looking into the hearts and minds of people to ascertain what kind of people they are and to figure out what they believe, how they think, what they feel? Are we talking about good people, bad people, or ignorant people? Are we talking about angry people, hateful people, fearful people, idealistic people, or just opportunists and con artists? What kind of people are we talking about? Why do they think and feel as they do? For all behavioral scientists this is challenging terrain.

It is very difficult to know people in these personal ways. R.G.L. Waite wrote a fascinating book entitled *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler*, (Waite, 1977) which presented strong evidence that Adolf Hitler was a psychopath. Of the innumerable books written about the life and career of Hitler, Waite went far in challenging the reader to consider the deepest of speculative possibilities in the motivations of this man and dictator. Rather than see the monstrosity, we see instead a sick person who lacked the intellectual and psychological equipment to be a leader of a country.

Waite accounts for the lack of moral boundaries in Hitler through a series of pathologies, neuroses and disorders, built upon a mounting pile of circumstantial evidence. All of this is something we could only know after-the-fact. Was there anyone around Adolf Hitler as he began his rise in politics that would have known, or had the expertise to make the proper diagnosis? The ability to generally psychoanalyze human motivations is highly problematic, but there is another way. The other way is to apply ethical inquiry by distinguishing means and ends.

Political history is populated by tales that show us when the means to achieve an end are not commensurate with the ends, people are often doomed to see their dreams and plans fall to perversity and failure. People will get hurt. Whenever we are able to convince ourselves that our ends are so important that we may use any means, no matter how vile, false or violent they may be, then we begin the process of destroying the goals to which we are so ardently committed. Once the ideals we hold become overwhelmed by scorched earth tactics to annihilate the competition, or to create pain in our opposition, then it is also a short step to arguing that means and ends have no partnership. For example, if one person can claim that their goals are so valued that they may rightfully commit any act of dishonesty or violence, why should anyone be prohibited from arguing that all means are acceptable, as long as you get what you want, win your prize, serve your master, defeat the opposition, and *get over* on others? Is it true: are "rules made to be broken?" Are our choices set by standards we alone place on ourselves?

History suggests otherwise. If we consider Lenin and Hitler we see two men who generated powerful movements, but whose dreams and legacies end in tragedy. For example, V.I. Lenin believed that any lie and any act of violence were justified as long as the revolution succeeded. Socialism, the overthrow of Tsarism in Russia, and ending the First World War—these were his highest goals. In spite of the many ways he revised and adapted the ideas of Karl Marx, Lenin was certain that Marx was right and that Marxist theory gave him the keys to success.

Lenin was convinced that socialism was the final end *of history* and therefore he could not be wrong. Even so, that dream culminated in the rise of Josef Stalin and the erection of one of the most totalitarian regimes of the 20th Century. Leninism led to Stalinism, because when any lie or treachery is justified in the name of the revolution, it was a short step to Stalin's regime built on sheer mendacity and terror. By comparison, Hitler built a movement that used fear, hatred, murder and nightmarish visions of history, philosophy and culture to justify the violation of laws, constitutions and humanity. But like Lenin, Hitler knew he was right. The ends justified the means.ⁱⁱⁱ History is studded with examples both mundane and nefarious, whether we are talking about Alcibiades in the Peloponnesian War, or the use of napalm, Agent Orange and Free Fire Zones in Vietnam.^{iv}

Robert Penn Warren (1974) wrote the following well-known lines for his character Willy Stark in the novel All the Kings Men, when Willy was asking an underling to dig up dirt on a political opponent. In this scene, Governor Stark has asked his political right-hand Jack Burden to find some darkness in the past of an old and respected family friend, Judge Irwin, who stands in Stark's way. Judge Irwin has been like a father to Burden, and known him his entire life. Burden is hesitant, and does not wish to seek information to defame a friend of good reputation. He intuitively knows Willy Stark is asking him to do something morally wrong, and Burden tells Stark there is likely nothing to dig up on a good man like Judge Irwin. Willy rejects the possibility and says to Burden: "Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud. There is always something," (Warren, 1981, p. 239). By these words Warren immortalized the American Machiavelli.^v Burden eventually does find something incriminating in Judge Irwin's past, and the Judge in despair and indignation kills himself. Willy Stark (who is based on the real life career of Huey Long) truly believed that good is conceived in bad. This expands the notion that the means are justified by the ends. Willy Stark was certain that all things are conceived in bad, thus, good was only a consequence of winning.

Machiavellian ethics emphasized success over goodness. The ethical code offered by Nicolo Machiavelli in The Prince suggested that for the good of the state, the Prince must be cunning, capable of violence, force and guile—and willing to do anything to protect power and the state itself.

Felice argued that in Machiavelli we find “two moralities,” one for the public world, and another for the private or personal realm (Felice, p. 44). Machiavelli clearly asserts that in the interests of state power, the Prince is above conventional morality. According to Machiavelli:

“Hence a prince should take great care never to drop a word that does not seem imbued with the five good qualities... , to anyone who sees or hears him, he should appear all compassion, all honor, all humanity, all integrity, all religion. Nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last virtue.

Men in general judge more by the sense of sight than by the sense of touch, because everyone can see but only a few can test by feeling. Everyone sees what you seem to be, few know what you really are; and those few do not dare take a stand against the general opinion, supported by the majesty of the government. In the actions of all men, and especially of princes who are not subject to a court of appeal, we must always look to the end. Let a prince, therefore, win victories and uphold his state; his methods will always be considered worthy, and everyone will praise them, because the masses are always impressed by the superficial appearance of things, and by the outcome of the enterprise,” (Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 49).

Herein we can see two moralities where ends justify means, not only because the preservation of the state is the ultimate end, but also because human beings are manipulable and will always judge by success or failure. It is a dim view of human nature. As the master of “outward seeming and inward being” Machiavelli’s successful Prince must utilize the arts of not only deception, but of the well crafted image. From Machiavelli’s vantage point, propaganda was the elixir of life.

At the same time, Niccolo Machiavelli was also aware of a broader moral universe. He knew that truly evil ends bring destruction, and although he dealt at length in The Discourses on the subject, it is present in The Prince. As we see in the selection above, a Prince must at least appear aware of the primary virtues and give them public homage as in his character. Machiavelli believed that the citizens of Republics are generally wiser and more reliable than individual Princes, and a state will only survive after the Prince is gone if it is “good.” So, on the one hand humanity is described as feckless and selfish, and on the other, capable of self governance with proper guidance and social conditions. The master of the dictum of *any means to an end* (as Machiavelli is often cast) was aware that there is a limit and a perceptible moral boundary, though the rationale for it is the survival of the state.

Ultimately, good means allied with good ends are always the best path. If your goal is freedom you must not use slavery and oppression to acquire the goal. If your goal is justice, then you cannot build justice on lies, defamation and treachery. For this reason, Mahatma Gandhi stands apart and will for the ages. In Gandhi's moral universe, where human beings are imperfect and prone to error, the means still must be defined by the goals and vice versa. Without that, you destroy truth, and thus Gandhi's "truth force," or *satyagraha*, was nourished in an unremitting attention to truth. Have you ever noticed the unsustainability of a lie? Lies can never really outlast the truth because lies require more lies to sustain them.

Lies are not real, and thus they cannot live on their own. Lies can do harm, ruin lives, and move people, but the truth can (potentially) always overcome the lie because, quite simply---it is true. The truth stands on its own as real. Truth is sustainable because it never needs more than itself to survive. For this reason truth and honesty are precious, even in a world where truth is constantly evolving, and endlessly sought; where multiple interpretations of truths may coexist.

Adolf Hitler did not "lose" because he made tactical mistakes or had some bad luck. Every so often we hear people say things like: "Hitler was a genius." And: "If the Nazis had won then Hitler would have written the history books." Another common fallacy often goes as follows: "Hitler was a great man and a master strategist who simply had a few bad ideas. Otherwise, he would have conquered the world!" Such musings are ignorant and beneath contempt. Hitler was a self destructive narcissistic racist who led a movement that was fueled by lies, hatred, and fanatic idiocy. Hitler became the Fuhrer in Nazi Germany because of a combination of historical and social context, luck, and the collusion of folks that clever propaganda and ideology always brings together as strange bedfellows. Hitler failed because he was a self loathing, hate-filled psychotic bent on destruction. Despite the destructive ferocity of the Nazi regime, Hitler was never going to *win* because lies as monstrous as his will be defeated...ultimately. Hitler failed because what he wanted to accomplish and the means he selected to get there were criminal violations against humanity and history.

People like Hitler or Josef Stalin are too easy. Our world offers examples that make the case stronger precisely because they are not so obvious. For example, in 1963 President Lyndon Johnson (LBJ) inherited the US presidency from the fallen Jack Kennedy.

Johnson's goals were personal, political and many were laudable, but despite his efforts to expand upon the *New Deal* with the *Great Society*, to defeat racial discrimination and support the expansion of civil rights, and to end hunger and injustice through the *War on Poverty*, he failed because he lost his credibility. As Americans discovered that Johnson was not being truthful about the war in Vietnam, this immensely powerful President and political figure became impotent. Imagine a president with the nuclear arsenal at his disposal, control of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, the most powerful military and economy in the world, and one of the greatest electoral landslides bringing him to office on his own terms in 1964. Imagine that President three years later unable to run for re-election, unable to pass legislation and in fact, unable to govern.

Lies and deception and a failed war in Indochina were the undoing of LBJ. The ends did not justify the means, and lying about it to deceive the public, was unsustainable.

A similar story was re-enacted in the Presidency of Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal. It can be seen again in the life story of Lee Atwater, the "Boogie Man" who helped get George Bush elected president in 1988. Atwater's most notorious moment was the creation of the racially charged Willy Horton attack ad that accused Governor Dukakis (candidate for President) of releasing dangerous criminals into decent society. Nixon and Atwater had careers that ended in humiliation, scandal and a final judgment upon their lack of a moral boundary. The narrative was re-enacted once again during the presidency of George W. Bush and the rush to war in Iraq in 2003. Saddam Hussein ultimately did not possess weapons of mass destruction nor was there an Iraqi connection to Al Qaida and the September 11, 2001 attacks on America master-minded by Osama bin Laden. The rhetoric employed prior to the Iraq invasion by the Bush Administration was a march to war, a "war on terrorism" that may or may not have had much to do with global terrorism at all.

"The Bush administration's language of 'preemptive strikes,' 'regime change,' and 'anticipatory self-defense' is purely Orwellian, presenting euphemisms for raw military aggression....The Bush policy is highly repressive, taking the global community to a social Darwinist battleground where decades of international law were put aside in perhaps the most dangerous foreign policy doctrine that had appeared in U.S. history," (Douglas Kellner, "Foreword," in Lee Artz and Yahya Kamalipour, Bring 'Em On, 2005, p. xi).

Global hegemony and plans for American domination in the Middle East morphed between 2003 and 2005 into rhetoric of “spreading democracy and freedom.” America was flogged into war hysteria and frightened out of its wits by a narrative predicting the proliferation of terror culminating in a “mushroom cloud.” The ends and means were disconnected, and the propaganda plied fact and fiction to foment a dark and exaggerated tableau of anger, hate and war, rather than peace, freedom and international law.

The tragic story of ends defying means has been re-enacted time and again throughout history, and though there is never any guarantee the unscrupulous, cynical and dishonest will always receive their “come-uppance,” it is always possible that the judgment of history will reveal the truth about them, when it may not appear in their lifetimes. So much destruction and so many ruined lives are frequently in their wake. Ends cannot justify means, even when the practitioner is successful. The players are critical in setting the first cardinal direction on the moral compass, but there may be much we cannot know, and we are left to speculate and measure the ephemeral. Life as it is happening puts great pressure on us to try to look behind the veil and it is not always easy to know what is really going on inside the heart and the mind of another human being. But we can judge actions. We can measure *means and ends*. The ends, no matter how noble, cannot justify any means in the use of propaganda. The nexus between ends and means should be commensurate and mutually inclusive of one another. On the moral compass, the distance between the actual defined goal, and the methods employed to reach that goal, must be closed as much as possible.

In Benjamin Barber’s analysis of war, terrorism and its effect on democracy, Fear’s Empire (2003), he concluded that America’s policies after the events of 9/11 led the nation toward hypocrisy and, in fact, the United States itself was providing a grave threat to democracy. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not support the highest values and goals of democracy, the ideals of constitutional government, and the social contract.

“The truth is America like other nations, will be judged and should judge itself by what it does, not what it says it does. Like other peoples, Americans are a mixture of the noble and the base. Of daunting aspirations and recurring failures to live up to them....The quest for freedom must be pursued with humility and humility demands restraint,” Barber, 2003, pp. 19-20).

The means and ends nexus is not only a judgment, if employed properly, it can be a guide. The central virtues of constitutional government demand humility, rule of law and fair play. Without such understandings, constitutional and civil government is at risk.

The Audience on the Compass

The next important question we must then ask ourselves is this: how do we define a good end? How do we distinguish a good goal from bad goal? This is the great quandary of political affairs, is it not? But this is where we must consider the audience—the target of propaganda. We know that propagandists need not care about the needs and interests of the audience. Their primary concern is to move the audience.

In the seminal work of John Stuart Mill's life, On Liberty (1859), he put great weight on the power of free expression. A free society must have free expression so that the voice of even the tiniest, most insane minority can be heard. He feared the tyranny of a majority of mass conformism more than anything. Mill understood that the greatest danger is that a majority, properly propagandized, can accept and perpetrate some of the worst things in political life.

"If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind," (J.S. Mill, 1859, p. 20). Mill's simple principle in On Liberty is the corollary to the importance of free expression:

"That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant," (J.S. Mill, 1859, p. 12).

For Mill this was not a simple "libertarian" argument. Rights and common goods are accessible by public action. To make sure the collective action in public life does not succumb to depravity and lies, Mill emphasized an antidote: free expression. A good society is one that allows for the greatest ability of humanity to determine their own lives, and this also requires that it is society that encourages dialogue, tolerance, and education to have a well formed and free culture. Self-interest, by itself, is not a decent justification for doing anything you might choose to do.

Mill says that one of the most “pleasant falsehoods” in history is that “truth always triumphs over persecution,” (J.S. Mill, 1859, p. 33). At the same time, the highest aim and singular motivation of human beings is seeking the freedom to be the masters over their own lives with reason, intelligence and dignity. Freedom is worth the risk that truth may be elusive.

Free expression is the foundation for a free society because the culture in which people live must breed understanding, tolerance and diversity. Ideas must be tested, and argued. A free society is one where people think and Mill believed free ideas must be fostered because a majority of the people can easily be in the wrong. A free society is one where people can reach their full potential as human beings and this involves something called *self-determination*. Any attempt to snuff out the ability to think in the audience out there is an effort to smash liberty of thought, expression and *self-determination* which are essential to becoming a complete human being. Self – determination is the next point on the moral compass in the use of propaganda. James Madison modestly observed in The Federalist Papers the following:

“As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form,” (James Madison, Federalist No. 55).

What we can suppose in Madison’s own careful and chastened world view is that human beings do possess the qualities of intelligence and reason. Democracy is founded on the idea that, on balance, human nature requires that the prospect for self-determined lives remains viable. According Theodore Glasser and Marc Gunther, (in “The Legacy of Autonomy in American Journalism,” The Press, 2005):

“Freedom of expression, particularly freedom of the press, deserves constitutional protection not as an end in itself but as a means to a larger end, namely the creation and preservation of conditions for free and full participation in the very processes of collective self-determination that self-government demands,” (Glasser and Gunther, 2005, p. 384).

It is noteworthy to see that Glasser and Gunther are not only cognizant of “means and ends,” but the end is *the audience* itself—to have the power of self-determination and thus, self-governance. This, as they say is a “higher end.” This must mean that when you use any form of propaganda that undermines the processes of collective self-determination, then you have crossed an ethical barrier. It is wrong. In modern democracy where free speech is protected, journalists and the press media share with scholars the responsibility to also protect collective self-determination.

Self-determination is a human capacity, and therefore, because we can determine our own lives (under the proper circumstances) we also wish to determine our own lives. This is the essential drive for liberty and freedom. It is in every human heart from birth and it is universal. This principle establishes that this essential human quality and desire, for it is both at once, must also be a human right. When the powers of self-determination are denied to people it is a great violation of human rights. Of course, this human right has been violated repeatedly throughout history, but that does not cheapen its value or authenticity. A free society, as J. S. Mill envisioned, is a society that nurtures the capacity and desire for self-determination. Leslie Lipson, in his book The Great Issues of Politics (1954), put it this way,

“Human beings associate in groups under the contrary impulses of cooperation and competition. But to reconcile the two has always posed a problem. Perhaps the answer is found when liberty and equality are synthesized under the higher concept of the good life. It is in our concern for the human condition that we express our altruism, cooperativeness, and sense of solidarity. It is in the personal achievement of creative growth that each of us displays individuality. To maintain both principles in equilibrium and use them constructively in the solution of the great issues, to unite the good person with the good society, is the wisdom of statesmanship, “ (Lipson, p. 391). The art of politics is a voyage, as Lipson says, of ethical discovery, but it is self-determination that fosters the connections between the good society, the good person, and hence the good life. Propaganda that serves to annihilate the good society and the good person connection is in service of power at odds with being human. Hannah Arendt asked a powerful question in her great work The Human Condition, (Arendt, 1958): “What will you save from the natural ruin of time?” Perhaps what we will save is the story of the life we have created? An examination of the audience reveals that self-determination is a universal capacity no one has the right to deny and must be a part of the moral compass applied to propaganda.

The run up to the US war in Iraq before 2003 provides an example of the denial of self-determination. American leaders used propaganda to make an angry and frightened nation hungry for vengeance and war. As Christian Fuchs argued in "The Mass Media, Politics and Warfare," (Bring 'Em On, 2005) the mass media lined up with the government and represented the same economic and political interests, propagating the belief that Saddam Hussein had WMDs. The premises for war went unquestioned in America except by a minority of academics and experts who were ignored or vilified as being unpatriotic.

Despite evidence available to the contrary and even when confronted with sufficient doubt to prescribe caution, American statesmen like Secretary of State Colin Powell strode forward with the war propaganda.

Purposes, Power and Values—Points East on the Compass

According to Paul Starr in his 2007 book entitled Freedom's Power, "Power is essential to liberty, yet power is also inimical to liberty—it all depends on the kind of power and its use, and on our understanding of liberty," (Starr, 2007, pp. 17-18). Obviously, the power that is essential to liberty stands on the expansion of the human capacity for self-determination. The task is to discipline power; to recognize when it is in the service of a master who would stifle human vision, creativity and agency. For example, to argue that propaganda in the service of genocide is acceptable as long as it is effective would be considered monstrous. Therefore, propaganda in the service of lies, and that falsely beats the drums of war, or seeks to undermine the power of people to democratically shape their own lives--must be equally wrong.

Former President Jimmy Carter posed a series of questions in his book Our Endangered Values (2006) that remain relevant, even now:

"Is it better to cherish our historic role as the great champion of human rights, or to abandon our high domestic and international standards in response to threats? Is it better to set a firm example of reducing reliance on nuclear weapons and their further proliferation, or to insist on our right (and that of others) to retain arsenals, expand them, and therefore abrogate or derogate control agreements negotiated for many decades?"

Are we best served by espousing peace as a national priority unless our security is directly threatened, or by proclaiming an unabridged right to attack other nations unilaterally to change an unsavory regime, or for other purposes? Is a declaration of 'You are either for us or against us' superior to forming alliances based on a clear comprehension of mutual interests? When there are serious differences with other nations, is it best to permit direct negotiations to resolve the problems, or to brand those who differ as international pariahs—and to refuse to permit such discussions?" (Carter, pp. 162-163).

President Carter's questions are simple but challenging. In the service of power and wealth, we are called to discern between that which leads to public good and a good society, and that which leads cynically to aggrandizement, oppression, war, and injustice. How can a nation proclaim itself devoted to peace and simultaneously preserve a unilateral right to attack other nations when it sees fit to do so? To be sure, it can be a complicated and dangerous world, and no nation wants to walk forward blind. All nations that succeed do so because their unity, national identity and willingness to combine as one in great causes can be counted upon. The interests of power are not inimical to integrity, honor or truth. The interests of power do not mean that the essence of values that inspired the great democratic republics can be set aside for expedience.

Ultimately, it is unacceptable that a democratic nation should endanger its most cherished values. Propaganda in the service of endangering central values is wrong. We can judge and evaluate that-- and we can know the right answers. Politics and democracy operate on contested ground, but the social contract theories that inspired modern democracy, especially the ideals of rule of law, humility, fairness and equality are not expendable. In the political arena ideas and interests will collide and there will be the natural and necessary contests for power, leadership and control that are the very guts of politics and life itself. But, the fact that it is contested ground requires that in that contest, essential values are preserved. Political conflict, without democracy and human rights, is just a battle for power; meaning is drained from the enterprise beyond self interest and domination. Democracy, as a preserver of the prospect for self-determination aspires to higher goods.

Power cannot be the sole guide in what makes for acceptable propaganda. We know that propaganda is wrong when it lies to us, but also when it calls us out to act in ways that undermine the foundations of who we are as people.

Again---if propaganda is not an evil thing—then it must never violate what Bill Moyers identified as the basic virtues of American freedom. Moyers said: “At the heart of our experience as a nation is the proposition that each citizen has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As flawed in its reach as it was at the time, that proposition carries an inherent imperative,” (Moyers, On Democracy, 2008, p. 17-18). That imperative remains a life that is understood in the form of a self determined life; a liberty that seeks to fulfill our need for individuality and community; and a happiness that is embodied in the good life.

The pursuit of power for its own sake is a sickness unto itself, and the use of propaganda for the pursuit of power justifies nothing. Self determination on the moral compass reflects something universal. In thinking about this very issue, Bill Moyers argued that:

“Here in this first decade of the twenty-first century the story that becomes America’s dominant narrative will shape our collective imagination and our politics for a long time to come. In the searching of our souls demanded by this challenge....the nation must confront the most fundamental liberal failure of the current era: the failure to embrace a moral vision of America based on the transcendent faith that human beings are more than the sum of their material appetites. Our country is more than an economic machine, and freedom is not license but responsibility—the gift we have received and the legacy we must bequeath. Although our sojourn in life is brief, we are on a great journey. For those who came before us and for those who follow, our moral, political and religious duty to make this nation, which was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all are equal under the law, is in good hands on our watch,” (Moyers, p. 21).

An individual or a nation pursues power with some goal or ends in mind. Power as a system of relationships is employed to acquire objectives. What is power if it is pursued for its own sake and nothing else? How can power be an object? Where power is pursued as an end in itself, as if it were a material object that one can possess, it will end in domination, oppression, corruption and perverse power.^{vi} Power alone is an indecent purpose; it is in fact a delusion.

Points South: The Cardinal Direction Toward Truth

The final direction on a moral compass is the pursuit of *truth*. Practitioners of communication in public life, as well as in commercial enterprise, must ultimately be devoted to the truth. We cannot accept a future that has no moral vision beyond our interests and our appetites. Worse, we cannot sleep well at night thinking that such a thing takes care of itself, or that the market, and good intentions will do the job. We must challenge the uses of propaganda, and challenge ourselves to remember that our duty to one another is to make sure the moral vision of democracy is in good hands on our watch.

The ideals of the social contract are the foundation of modern democracy and certainly the basis for constitutional government. Social contract theory assumes a set of common understandings among people that justify an exchange of rights and liberties for law, security and civil society. Amartya Sen argued at the end of the 20th Century that democracy had evolved into a universal value and preeminent development of the modern era. Democracy and the social contract rests on three distinct virtues according to Sen: 1) its *intrinsic* importance, 2) its *instrumental* contributions, and 3) its *constructive* role in the creation of social values and norms (Sen, 1999). The *intrinsic virtue* of democracy is that political freedom is crucial to human freedom, which all people desire. Political and social life have intrinsic value because they impart meaning and a sense of well being. The *instrumental value* lies in the manner in which people, through the exercise of their voice in civil society, may set their own priorities and shape their own lives. This not only brings happiness, it leads to more successful societies that can distribute goods and services as people wish. Finally, democracy has a *constructive value* in that, in its practice, it can ennoble the human individual, and liberates the many, rather than the few, to actively seek to improve their lives and their communities. These are core ethical foundations of civil society and form the basis for the central values of the social contract. Propaganda must not be employed against these virtues or the core principles of democratic society. Nothing is more corrosive to these ethical virtues than lies.

What is ultimately universal is precisely what we must use the time in our lives to uncover. Philosophers understand that truth is not easy to find, but the pursuit of truth is noble; *truth* does exist. The difficulty may lie in the multiplicity of truths, and the evolution of understanding about those things we can hold as true. Even so, this pursuit of truth challenges and ennobles humanity.

Human beings must be more than the sum of their material appetites, and we have a responsibility to set higher standards. Our highest purpose is to reach beyond the practical, material and the selfish to find the common good, and embrace a moral vision. To deny that is to deny something quintessentially human. It is the human experience.

One of the most compelling features of the human experience is love, and not only personal love between people. There is a higher love too, which can serve as guide to human progress and to help us to discriminate between the good and the bad; the moral and the immoral. St. Augustine described love as the highest of the graces in his Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love, writing in 420 CE:

“And now as to love, which the apostle declares to be greater than the other two graces, that is, than faith and hope, the greater the measure in which it dwells in man, the better is the man in whom it dwells. For when there is a question as to whether a man is good, one does not ask what he believes, or what he hopes, but what he loves. For the man who loves aright no doubt believes and hopes aright, whereas the man who has not love believes in vain, even though his beliefs are true; and hopes in vain, even though the objects of his hope are a real part of true happiness; unless, indeed, he believes and hopes for this, that he may obtain by prayer the blessing of love,” (Augustine, Ch. CXVII).

This is not the love of sentimentality, nor romantic love between persons. Augustine here is speaking of the love of the good and the virtues which once known cannot be ignored. Virtue for Augustine was not an accident of behavior, anymore than it was for Aristotle or Plato (Aristotle, 1985).^{vii} Ethics and virtue are a matter of knowledge, and they can and must be learned to be understood and thus to flourish in the human soul. Virtue, for Augustine, comes with a loving embrace of truth and righteousness. Our greatest purpose as people (and as educators) is to “love aright” all those things that make our lives good, free and beautiful.

People will long dispute the definitions of truth, beauty and right, but woe unto us if we ever begin to believe their pursuit is vain and inefficient, or unnecessary and wasteful. Darkness will descend on the day we believe that there is no love, no good, and no truth.

The points on the moral compass concerning propaganda and our directions are visible: 1) we must consider means and ends when we evaluate the players; 2) we must understand that the audience is seeking self determination, freedom, knowledge and ultimately the good life; 3) we must know that self interest and power is not sufficient as a purpose, and that power though it must be sought cannot be pursued without a commitment to cherished and central values; and 4) we must incorporate love—a love of truth, goodness and our communities so that we might never invite others into the realm of lies, treachery or falsehood. Down that path we will find war, poverty, genocide and hate.

Some might conclude that the standard is so high that there is no basis for acceptable propaganda. An argument can be made that propaganda by its very definition makes it practically impossible to pass ethical scrutiny.

After all, propaganda manipulates and shapes the world we see to move us on behalf of the interests of others. Propaganda simplifies, distorts and narrows communication. Even so, it is not impossible to offer examples. Frank Capra's legendary film series in World War II entitled *Why We Fight* serves as an example of how propaganda is indispensable to modern technological society, and can be used in such a way as to make larger underlying truths manifest. In the analysis of David Culbert, in "Why We Fight": Social Engineering for a Democratic Society at War," there was a truthfulness inside of Capra's films that not only shaped American war objectives, but helped an educated nation understand why the war must be fought; why great sacrifices had to be made. The genius was in the manner that Capra turned Nazi and Fascist propaganda on itself, showing to Americans what the Nazis believed—using Nazi war films to communicate to the masses of people what democracy was up against. As Capra always insisted, this gave him the opportunity to shape perceptions without telling lies. Frank Capra believed Americans had to know what they were fighting and why it was worth dying for. By letting the Nazis "speak for themselves" and showing German, Italian and Japanese propaganda to the American public, he revealed the enormous danger and barbarity of the Fascist regimes and the Axis Powers.

Culbert understands that, "A technological society depends on propaganda to persuade its citizens its actions are legitimate," (p. 172). This is a dangerous balancing act and Culbert says that, "The more thought one gives to the struggle between ends and means the more slippery the concept of objective truth becomes; the less easy to say with certainty what the contextual significance of any fact is," (p. 173).

So, we live in a complex world where propaganda proliferates, and what this means then is that in an imperfect world we have a strong ethical duty to stand for a moral imperative. The practical importance of the moral compass is to aid us in evaluation and arm us as educators, communicators or philosophers to stand against the tide of cynicism and lies. The standards of the moral compass are practical because it provides the basis for critique and ethical instruction; good principles are the foundations for the essential act of teaching and understanding. This kind of moral reasoning is essential to democratic republics. Capra's *Why We Fight* may be an example of propaganda that can pass the ethical test.

Virtue is no accident. In the many balancing acts of our lives this one is crucial. Propaganda may not be an evil thing, but when used to cross the boundaries of truth to achieve the crass material ends of power and wealth--it is wrong. That is why black propaganda is wrong, but so too can be gray and white.

In a way, when we destroy truth, we destroy life—and this was a central lesson of Gandhi. To explain *satyagraha* to the world, Mahatma Gandhi said:

"The sun's light does not need to be pointed out. Truth shines with its own light and is its own proof. In these evil times, it is difficult to follow truth in such perfection but I know it is not impossible," (Gandhi, Selected Political Writings, 1996, p. 36).

The very means of Gandhi's movement were grounded in "truth force" and it would have been impossible without a "sincere endeavour to keep the vow of truth," (Gandhi, 1996, p. 35). For the sake of humanity it must be possible. Our times are no less evil than Gandhi's, but our powers to communicate outstrip his imagination. This too, is not bad or good—it is the way we encounter the world. Propaganda is a fact of our lives, but we have a responsibility to embrace a moral vision, and maybe—as lovers of truth—sustain both faith and hope in the lives of people.

1. The first guide is the ends versus means test. If the propaganda employed uses means that are incongruent to the ends then it must be repudiated. The current construction of the right of freedom of speech and expression in America means regulation and legal limits are elusive. Hence, whistle blowers and social critics, the press and the audience must be wary, impose the test, and condemn its violation—especially in the class room.

2. Self determination is a universal driver in the human experience. Human life is linked to democracy by this desire. All propaganda in any form that manages to scourge the terrain of self determination is morally and ethically wrong.
3. Working for power means working for a delusion. Power alone does not justify the employ of propaganda. The audience must not be treated like thoughtless creatures to be manipulated for short term objectives of power, or to please a paying client.
4. A commitment to the truth ties the four directions of the moral compass to the ultimate moral imperative: the preservation of the social contract and democratic life.



Figure 1: The Basis for a Moral Compass

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ⁱ In [How Do I Save My Honor?](#) (2009) Felice argues that political life challenges us to choose between our careers, our clients and our leaders, and the ethical right and wrong bound into any situation. Especially when nations engage in diplomacy and most important, war, persons involved in executing policy are bound by moral principles to behave ethically despite the imperatives of loyalty and political power. Felice encounters a number of people who faced this dilemma in the time leading up to the Iraq War, including Secretary of State Colin Powell as well as soldiers and actors in British as well as the U.S. Government. Felice argues there are critical junctures where principled resignation from the official position is required to proclaim one's dissent against dishonest, destructive, immoral or unethical policies.

ⁱⁱ In Jowett and O'Donnell the authors distinguish between white, gray and black propaganda. In their analysis, to be sure, the worst forms of propaganda lie in the gray to black forms. They do suggest a strong ethical preference for propaganda where the propagandist is known and the information bears on reality (or the "truth") to some degree. Black propaganda is the worst form because the identity, motives and the veracity of the propaganda are in serious question. Even so, the authors' definitions lack a clear moral and ethical prescription that would guide consumers and practitioners of propaganda comprehensively. We know, for example, the Nazis were "bad." How do we know when current democratic leaders, politicians and their fellow travelers are "bad?"

ⁱⁱⁱ Both men fell into the totalitarian temptation that argued that history justified their causes. In their minds, because they had the keys to history, all means necessary could be employed. For Lenin, this took on a philosophical dimension in his adherence to, and adaptation of Marxist political theory. Since Marx was "right", he (Lenin) could not be "wrong." Unlike Hitler, Lenin sought to make an authentic revolution and he did succeed in the overthrow of Tsarism and the creation of a new society. Unfortunately, this society succumbed to Stalinism, for many reasons, but not least of which can be found in Lenin's misuse of the truth, his ideological centralism and a ruthless pursuit of his opponents. High revolutionary goals fell to low means and mendacity.

^{iv} Alcibiades is a classical image of the faithless power trader. A contemporary of Socrates, he is said to have changed sides, fought battles, committed murder and treason, and traded information and espionage for power, protection and wealth. Thucydides paints a picture of the archetype of the political animal for whom all means may be used for the ends of power and survival.

^v This reference is to the common and often unfair characterization of Machiavelli's ideas, but of course, this usage has become ingrained in the popular historical consciousness. Willy Stark is idiomatic of a kind of populist figure who, in many ways, learned all the wrong lessons in life about people, power and morality.

^{vi} Political communication in the 21st Century with Super PACs, unlimited and undisclosed corporate spending, the internet and other technologies which allow for compelling visual distortions of reality at lightning speed, the rise of the political consultant, and the over-all climate in which all forms of media are employed in the constant campaign and the unending attack on opponents, has placed the responsibility on the audience to apply moral and ethical standards on the players. Power alone is a poor guide. In B. Moser's article, "God Help Us," (2011), he describes Texas Governor Rick Perry's clever use of evangelical Christian rallies to spread his well-funded political message. Governor Perry's message

has morphed with the Republican right and crosses the streams between religion and politics. The savage attack on Kay Bailey Hutchison in 2010 is a cautionary tale. Similarly, Viveca Novak (in "Under the Influence," 2011) details how elections for judicial seats have succumbed to big money and brass knuckled tactics. Her description of the deceptive and misleading campaign that altered the political composition of the Wisconsin Supreme Court is disheartening and alarming. Power alone is a destructive goal

^{vii} Aristotle clearly establishes the logic that virtue is not only acquired by habit, but it can be learned, and it must be sought for its own sake. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle underscored the political nature of the human being. The human experience is made noble by what *we do for our communities and for the polis*. If we were only motivated by self interest and our physical needs and desires, then human beings would not be much different than other animals. Aristotle asserts that difference.