Uncertainty about what motivates "senders" of public messages leads "receivers" to "read between the lines" to discern the sender's deepest commitments. Anticipating this, senders "write between the lines," editing their expressions so as to further their own ends. I examine how this interactive process of inference and deceit affects the quality and extent of public deliberations on sensitive issues. A principle conclusion is that genuine moral discourse on difficult social issues can become impossible when the risks of upsetting some portion of one's audience are too great. Reliance on euphemism and platitude should be expected in this strategic climate. Groups may embark on a tragic course of action, believed by many at the outset to be ill-conceived, but that has become impossible to criticize.

Self-Censorship in Public Discourse

A THEORY OF "POLITICAL CORRECTNESS" AND RELATED PHENOMENA

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The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink.

Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.

George Orwell (1968, 137)

1. PUTTING THE "PC" DEBATE IN PERSPECTIVE

Political correctness is an important theme in the raging "culture war" that has replaced the struggle over communism as the primary locus of partisan

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conflict in American intellectual life. Starting on the campuses—over issues like abortion, affirmative action, multicultural studies, environmentalism, feminism, and gay rights—the PC debate has spread into newsrooms, movie studios, and even the halls of Congress. Critics, mainly on the right, claim that only the "correct" views on these and other sensitive issues can be expressed—on campus, in print, on film, or in electoral politics—without evoking extreme, stifling reactions from activists seeking to make their opinions into an enforced orthodoxy. They cite a litany of woes about how, in venues where the left is most powerful, those expressing even mildly divergent views are treated poorly. In response, liberals call these charges overblown and insist that their efforts to hold people accountable for what they say and write are justified by legitimate moral concerns.

We can usefully distinguish two levels on which disagreement occurs. At the primary level, partisan arguments on certain questions divide public opinion: How bad is the "date rape" problem and what should be done about it? What texts are canonical, and are non-Western cultures adequately represented among them? What causes the violence among young Black men in the cities and how can it be reduced? What is the nature and moral standing of homosexuality? Disagreement on these substantive matters stems from the different values, factual judgments, and theoretical frameworks that people employ to analyze the world around them. These disagreements are inevitable, and healthy. They have the potential to engender constructive exchanges, from which all participants can learn and better public policies can emerge.

At a secondary level, however, a contentious discussion is taking place over the very nature of primary discussions: Are speakers treated respectfully regardless of the popularity of their views? Are some opinions given privileged access to the media? Are people candid in their arguments? Who can talk about what topics, and when, without violating some unspoken canon of decency? Do advocates of one position seek to prevent, or discredit, the expression of opposing ideas? Do some arguments so offend the sensibilities of some citizens that they should be preemptively excluded from public debate?

These two levels of debate can become confused. Some complaints about PC are, upon examination, really laments that within a certain community of discourse the complainer's views are unpopular. However, the most serious questions raised in the PC debate focus on this secondary level. The fundamental issue is whether the climate for the voicing of opinion in important forums (and the universities are by no means the only forums of interest) continues to permit a constructive, informative dialogue on vital matters of common concern. Increasingly, it seems to me, there is reason to doubt that this is so.

Thus I have undertaken in this essay to provide an analysis of political correctness. Unlike much that has been written on this topic, I will not waste time telling "horror stories" about the excesses of PC zealots, or lamenting their influence on the campuses.[1] Instead, I will endeavor to "lay bare" the underlying logic of political correctness—to expose the social forces that create and sustain movements of this sort. Two preliminary observations will help to set the stage for the analysis.

First, although political correctness is often spoken of as a threat to free speech on the campuses (and this is indeed the case when it results in legal restrictions on open expression, as with formal speech codes), the more subtle threat is the voluntary limitation on speech that a climate of social conformity encourages. It is not the iron fist of repression, but the velvet glove of seduction that is the real problem. Accordingly, I treat the PC phenomenon as *an implicit social convention of restraint on public expression, operating within a given community*. Conventions like this can arise because (a) a community may need to assess whether the beliefs of its members are consistent with its collective and formally avowed purposes, and (b) scrutiny of their public statements is an often efficient way to determine if members' beliefs cohere with communal norms. This need to police group members' beliefs so as to ferret out deviants, along with the fact that the expression of heretical opinion may be the best available evidence of deviance, creates the possibility for what I call *self-censorship*: members whose beliefs are sound but who nevertheless differ from some aspect of communal wisdom are compelled by a fear of ostracism to avoid the candid expression of their opinions.

Second, despite the attention that has been given to recent campus developments, the phenomenon of political correctness, understood as an implicit convention of restrained public speech, is neither new nor unusual. Indeed, pressuring speakers and writers to affirm acceptable beliefs and to suppress unacceptable views is one of the constants of political experience. All social groups have norms concerning the values and beliefs that are appropriate for members to hold on the most sensitive issues. Those seen not to share the consensus view may suffer low social esteem and face a variety of sanctions from colleagues for their apostasy: heretics are unwelcome within the councils of the faithful. Communists and their sympathizers paid a heavy price for their "incorrect" views during the early Cold War. "Uncle Toms"—Blacks seen as too eager to win favor with their White "overlords"—are still treated like pariah by other Blacks who greatly value racial solidarity. Jews critical of Israel or Muslims critical of Islam may find that they "can't go home again."

Therefore, a theory of contemporary political correctness problems should be broad enough to address these related phenomena. I sketch here an approach that, I believe, meets this requirement. My theory is based on a conception of political communication that stresses strategic considerations. From this point of view, people engaged in primary level debates over policy questions must also—at the secondary level, if you will—consider how their interests are affected by the specific manner in which they express themselves. The next section develops the main ideas along this line. This strategic approach is then applied to explain how conformity in public speech emerges as a stable behavioral convention within a given community. Section 4 reviews some historical examples of censored public discussions, and Section 5 discusses some broader implications, for both the style and the substance of policy debates, of the kind of expressive behavior identified here. A special effort is made throughout this discussion to shed light on some of the more problematic features of public rhetoric on race-related issues in the United States.

2. STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR IN THE FORUM

George Orwell's skepticism about political rhetoric, elaborated in his essay "Politics and the English Language" from which I quote above, has much to recommend it. Political communication—the transmission of ideas and information about matters of common concern with the intent to shape public opinion or affect policy outcomes—is tricky business. Both those sending and those receiving messages must be wary. Senders want to per-suade or inform via spoken and written words. They strive to convey their intended message while avoiding misinterpretation, or discovery. Receivers want to distill from incoming rhetoric information useful for forming an opinion or making a decision, but they want not to be manipulated or deceived. To be effective, both parties need to behave *strategically*. Naive communication—where a speaker states literally all that he thinks, and/or an audience accepts his representations at face value—is rare, and foolish, in politics. A political speaker's *expression* is more often a calculated effort to achieve some chosen end, and an audience's *impression* of the speaker is usually arrived at, recognizing that this is so.

Recall the oratorical confrontation in Act III, Scene 2 of *Julius Caesar*. Caesar has been murdered by a group of conspirators including Brutus. Antony, close to Caesar and no part of the conspiracy, is outraged and bent on revenge. Brutus goes before the crowd to explain his actions, saying

Caesar was ambitious, a man who would be king, who had to be stopped for the sake of the Republic. "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more," he declares, relying on his reputation for honor and decency to sway the crowd. He argues directly; his speech is naive, guileless, literal. He seems to prevail as he takes his leave. Then Antony rises, saying, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." This, of course, is not true. He praises Caesar profusely, reminding the audience of Caesar's greatness in war, of his kindness and generosity in peace. ("Ambition should be made of sterner stuff!") Nevertheless, the assembled citizens take Antony at his word. As for his view of Brutus and the others, he does not overtly disparage them; he seems to accept their stated motives: "Brutus says Caesar was ambitious, and Brutus is an honorable man." He never reveals that revenge is his own motive. Yet, by its end, his powerfully manipulative oration has made the words "honorable man" in reference to Brutus mean exactly their opposite, and defense of Brutus by anyone in the crowd has become impossible. Shortly, civil war breaks out. Shakespeare shows us here the potential for political gain through strategic expression, and also the dangers—for an advocate as well as for the public good—of naive behavior in the forum.

I want to explore how the form and substance of collective deliberations on sensitive issues are affected by strategic behavior in the forum. There is always some uncertainty when ideas and information are exchanged between parties who may not have the same objectives. Each message bears interpretation. There is no such thing as context-free expression. We are inevitably reading and writing "between the lines." Because political rhetoric engages interests, expresses values, conveys intent, and seeks to establish commitment to certain courses of action, the risk of manipulation is particularly great in political argument. When people address us in the forum, we must consider what they will do if they get power; we must decide whether they can be trusted; we must wonder, "What type of person is it who would speak to me in this way?"

Erving Goffman has brilliantly analyzed the dilemmas and complexities of communication in the face of this kind of bilateral calculation.[2] Goffman, in effect, considers the "game" played between two parties to an interaction as constituting a "sender," who expresses himself in some way, and a "receiver," who takes in and reacts to that expression, forming an impression of the sender.[3] We might, given the purposes of this essay, think of the sender as a political speaker participating in public debate, and the receiver as a member of the audience who must form an opinion on some controversial matter. Or the sender might be a professor lecturing on American race

relations, and the receiver a minority student drawing conclusions about the professor's sensitivity and commitment. The sender has views or values that are not directly knowable by the receiver but that, if known, would significantly alter the receiver's construction of the "meaning-in-effect" of any expression.[4]

The sender may want to "signal"—that is, credibly, but indirectly, convey—that he holds a certain point of view, or he may want to disguise the view he really holds. Knowing that these possibilities exist, the receivers will search each expression for evidence of their sender's true motivations and beliefs. From this perspective, using Goffman's terminology, each act of political communication is a small *performance*, bearing close interpretation. Its meaning-in-effect—the impression in the receiver's mind to which it gives rise—may depend very much on context, and, in particular, on what other senders, whose values and beliefs are already known to the audience, have been transmitting.

When speakers are choosing words intended to stimulate a particular response, strategic listeners cannot simply accept the literal content of an expression as its meaning-in-effect. To take the speaker literally is to behave naively, and thus to risk being deceived. Sophisticated listeners must look behind what is spoken or written, in an effort to discern all that is implied by the act of speaking or writing in a given way.

The sender of a public message intended to shape opinions and influence policy may have ultimate aims that are not apparent to his audience. And yet, because that sender's values, ideals, and intentions will shape the strategy he adopts in the forum, a proper decoding of his message requires knowledge of his ultimate aims. For this reason, interpretation of political expression involves, in an essential way, making inferences from the expressive act about the sender's motives, values, and commitments. *The search for "true" meaning entails judging the character of speakers*—asking whether they really believe what they say and, just as important, whether they hold other, unexpressed views, which if known to us would affect our reception of their arguments.

At the same time, being aware that his speech act is subject to such interpretation, and wanting to create a desired impression, a skillful speaker will structure his message mindful of the inferences that listeners are inclined to make. He will try to use the patterns of inference established within a given community of discourse to his advantage. He will avoid some expressions known to elicit negative judgments or associations and he will deploy others known to win favor with his audience or to cast him in a positive light. Thus, in the context of political communication, speakers and listeners, writers and

readers, play an "expression game." The appropriate behavior for every party depends on the strategies being used by all the other "players." An *equilibrium* in this game can be thought of as a convention governing the rhetoric used by senders and the strategies of inference and interpretation employed by receivers, such that each party is content to behave as he does, given the pattern of behaviors adopted by all of the others.

Take this essay as a case in point. It is public and political, despite the academic veneer. To address the subject of "political correctness," when power and authority within the academic community is being contested by parties on either side of that issue, is to invite scrutiny of one's arguments by would-be "friends" and "enemies." Combatants from the left and the right will try to assess whether a writer is "for them" or "against them." How an essay like this is read and evaluated, what in it is taken seriously and what is dismissed as out-of-hand, depends for many readers on where they presume the writer is "coming from"—what they take to be his ulterior motives. This assessment, in turn, is based not simply upon words on the page, but also on whatever else can be learned about the writer's character and commitments. One way to gain insight into the writer's values is to measure his treatment of certain sensitive themes against the standard set by others whose values may be known.[5]

It is even possible that some readers, based on what they think they know about my opinions from reading other things I have written or from knowledge of my general reputation, approach this essay with a strong prior assessment of the "real" purposes of my argument—a neoconservative apology for the status quo, let us say. Knowing that I may be read in this way (which can either aid or damage my credibility—depending on the reader), I will (perhaps unconsciously) edit my writing so as to avoid conveying the "wrong" (that is, unintended even if accurate) impression. I can pander to the presumed prejudices of my audience, or I can denounce them, or I can strive to dispel them, but, in any event, I ignore them at my peril.

Although this essay is an argument about how we argue in public, the discussion also engages substantive matters of controversy. Because I am particularly interested in the structure of public discussion in the United States on racial issues, I occasionally point to those issues to illustrate general principles developed in the argument. For example, I refer to troubling aspects of the public debate on affirmative action. Some readers may question my motives for using these illustrations, suspecting that my argument about deliberative process is really a disguised argument about substance. They may take my observation that discussion of affirmative action is not always fully candid as an indirect attack on the policy itself. They may impute to me

a hidden agenda. This possibility has implications for the form of argument that I should make here, if I want to succeed in communicating my general ideas.

I must tread carefully as I try to express my particular "truth." If you will "read between the lines" for my true meaning, that characteristic of my actual, if not fully expressed, sentiments, then I am determined to "write between the lines"—avoiding (or embracing) certain "code words," choosing carefully my illustrative examples, concealing some of my thinking while exaggerating other sentiments—so as to control the impression I make on my audience. I want to write persuasively, but is that really different from manipulation? You want to be informed, or perhaps entertained, but you certainly want not to be fooled.[6]

3. THERE IS NO (ENTIRELY) FREE SPEECH

From this strategic perspective, a regime of political correctness may be viewed as *an equilibrium pattern of expression and inference within a given community where receivers impute undesirable qualities to senders who express themselves in an "incorrect" way and, as a result, senders avoid such expressions.* To illustrate, if known enemies of progressive ideals regularly make a certain argument, then one who wants to be seen as standing on the right side of history cannot make a similar argument without the risk of being labeled a "reactionary." In a social environment where there are some real racists, should proponents of diversity insist that Blacks be referred to as African Americans and American Indians as Native Americans, a speaker who eschews that terminological fashion in the course of an otherwise admirable argument about diversity invites the conclusion that he is intolerant of ethnic difference. His more prudent course is to use the "politically correct" terms, even when he prefers not to. In a south Florida enclave, where hatred of Castro is universal, to argue that the normalization of relations with Cuba should be studied amounts to announcing that the arguer cares nothing whatever about remaining in good standing with his fellows. And in a nearby precinct, where reaction against the Cuban immigration runs high, to question the wisdom of making English the state's official language has a similar meaning-in-effect.

In economics, Gresham's Law holds that the bad money tends to drive out the good. When two types of currency circulate and one is intrinsically more valuable, people hoard the good money and make purchases with the bad. Soon only the bad money remains in circulation. Similarly, people with extreme views can drive moderates, who want to avoid the "reputational

devaluation" of being mistaken as zealots, out of a conversation. In effect, the moderates "hoard" their opinions. Hence the public discourse on some issues (abortion?) can be more polarized than is the actual distribution of public opinion.

What forces, we should ask, could create and sustain such patterns of inference? Note that in the examples above what might be called an *ad hominem impulse* determines the audience's response: their question is "What type of person would say such a thing?" and not "Does this argument have merit?" Ad hominem reasoning lies at the core of the political correctness phenomenon. A speaker's violation of protocol turns attention from the worth of his case toward an inquiry into his character, the outcome of which depends on what is known about the character of others who have spoken in a similar way. When sophisticated speakers are aware of this process of inference, many of them will be reluctant to express themselves in a way likely to provoke suspicion about whether their ultimate commitments conform with their community's norms.

Ad hominem inference, though denigrated by the high-minded, is a vitally important defensive tactic in the forum. When discussing matters of collective importance, knowing "where the speaker stands" helps us gauge the weight to give to an argument, opinion, or factual assertion offered in the debate. If we know a speaker shares our values, we more readily accept observations from him contrary to our initial sense of things. We are less eager to dismiss his rebuttal of our arguments, and more willing to believe facts reported by him with unpleasant implications.[7] The reason for all of this is that when we believe the speaker has goals similar to our own we are confident that any effort on his part to manipulate us is undertaken to advance ends similar to those we would pursue ourselves.[8] Conversely, speakers with values very different from ours are probably seeking ends at odds with those that we would choose, if we had the same information. The possibility of adverse manipulation makes such people dangerous when allowed to remain among us undetected. Thus, whenever political discourse takes place under conditions of uncertainty about the values of participants, a certain vetting process occurs, in which we cautiously try to learn more about the larger commitments of those advocating a particular course of action.[9]

If, by the various means available, an individual is discovered not to share in the deepest value commitments of a particular community, the reaction may well be to exclude that person from participation in future deliberations and to disparage him publicly for his deviance. The social ostracism, verbal abuse, extreme disapproval, damage to reputation, and loss of professional opportunity that can occur when one is judged to be deviant from some strongly held moral consensus are very unpleasant experiences. When there

is broad agreement concerning what are acceptable and unacceptable opinions, prudent persons will conduct themselves so as to avoid giving gratuitous offense to received orthodoxy. Those who speak in flagrant violation of the conventional wisdom must know the risks they are taking and must therefore be acting in full recognition of the possible consequences. Being sanctioned for the expression of disapproved opinions seldom befalls someone by accident. It is more often the result of freely choosing to say the disapproved thing. It is probable that real deviants within a given community—those who are in fact "incorrect" in their political sensibilities and who do not share the moral consensus of the community on the issues in question—find the prospect of ostracism less distressing than those who, in their heart-of-hearts, agree with the broad outlines of the consensus, although perhaps not with its every detail.

Crucial to my argument, then, is the following syllogism. Suppose that

(a) within a given community the people who are most faithful to communal values are by-and-large also those who want most to remain in good standing with their fellows and;

(b) the practice has been well established in this community that those speaking in ways that offend communal values are excluded from good standing. Then,

(c) when a speaker is observed to express himself offensively the odds that the speaker is not in fact faithful to communal values, as estimated by a listener otherwise uninformed about his views, are increased.

That (c) follows from (a) and (b) is a simple consequence of rational inference by listeners, given rational behavior by senders. But this reasoning implies that sanctions against some forms of expressions could become a self-sustaining convention: assuming a positive association between fidelity and sociability, there could easily exist an equilibrium of the communal expression game in which "apostates" are identified by their differential willingness to utter phrases known to be associated with disapproved belief. For, if it is commonly known that morally suspicious speech invites sanction, and if sanctions cause greater harm to those who really share our values than to those who do not, then the very fact that someone chooses to utter the disapproved phrases suggests (statistically) that the speaker (probably) does not share the consensus. Suspicious speech signals deviance because *once the practice of punishing those who express certain ideas is well established, the only ones who risk ostracism by speaking recklessly are those who place so little value on sharing our community that they must be presumed not to share our dearest common values.*

It is in this sense that I can say, "There is no (entirely) free speech." Anyone speaking out on a controversial matter pays the particular price of having

others know that he was willing to speak, under a given set of circumstances, in a certain way. When listeners know that not everyone would be willing to pay that price, and specifically that "true believers" are less likely than "apostates" to risk incurring the community's wrath, they can make empirically valid inferences about reckless speakers. Norm-offending speech then conveys more than just literal meanings. Anticipating these inferences, and wanting not to be seen as deviant, prudent "true believers" may elect to say nothing that risks offending collective norms. By doing so, they leave the field clear for the "apostates," thereby creating the meaning-in-effect that norm-offending speech identifies deviant belief. In a circumstance of this kind, a climate of self-censorship can become entrenched.[10]

Such self-censorship is the hidden face of political correctness. For every act of aberrant speech seen to be punished by "thought police," there are countless other critical arguments, dissents from received truth, unpleasant factual reports, or nonconformist deviations of thought that go unexpressed, or whose expression is distorted, because potential speakers rightly fear the consequences of a candid exposition of their views. As a result, the public discussion of vital issues can become dangerously impoverished, as the following examples illustrate.

4. EXAMPLES OF CENSORED PUBLIC DISCOURSE

A. AN INCORRECT DISCUSSION OF THE HOLOCAUST

Let us look briefly at the important case of Phillipp Jenninger, once the president of the Parliament in the former West German Republic. Jenninger was forced to resign in November of 1988, following a speech he gave at a special parliamentary session marking the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht. In that speech he rendered an account of events leading up to the infamous "Night of the Broken Glass" in 1938, when German Jews were set upon, their property destroyed, and their lives taken—a night that many historians mark as the beginning of the Holocaust. An uproar was created by the fact that many in his audience construed Jenninger's brutally frank account of prevailing attitudes among Germans in the 1930s as a disguised defense of National Socialism.[11]

Paradoxically, all agreed that Jenninger had for many years been an opponent of totalitarianism of all stripes, a fierce anti-Nazi, and an arch supporter of Israel. Thus he was an unlikely defender of Nazism. No one accused him of being anti-Semitic. However, even before his speech had

ended there were demonstrations of anger from some in the audience who, finding his words profoundly offensive, rushed ashen-faced from the chamber. Yet virtually all reviewers who examined the speech concluded that he had said nothing untrue, malicious, or defamatory; he simply said things that some people did not want to hear in a manner that they were unwilling to accept. The context of his remarks, and perhaps more importantly the voice he employed during a part of the speech, made his utterances impossible for many Germans to accept. According to one analyst, his mistake was that he had such confidence in his reputation as a friend of Jews and of Israel that he believed he did not need to use the subjunctive mood, or some other grammatical distancing device, when making what would otherwise be perceived as noxious statements.[12]

Jenninger began with a forthright condemnation of Nazi violence:

> What took place 50 years ago today in Germany had not been seen in any civilized country since the Middle Ages. . . . The violence . . . was a measure planned, instigated and promoted by the government. . . . The German people remained largely passive. . . . Everyone saw what was happening but most people looked the other way and remained silent.

However, he was equally direct in conveying the positive perception that most Germans had of Nazi leadership. At one point Jenninger imagined, as though he were thinking out loud, how a typical German citizen must have viewed the political successes of Hitler, after a humiliating defeat in the earlier war:

> There is hardly a parallel in history to Hitler's series of political triumphs in those first years. The reintegration of the Saar, . . . a mass arms build-up, . . . the occupation of the Rhineland, . . . the "annexation" of Austria creating the "Grossdeutsches Reich," and, finally, only a few weeks before the November pogroms, the Munich Agreement, the partition of Czechoslovakia. The Versailles Treaty was now really only a scrap of paper . . . the German Reich had suddenly become the hegemonial power of the old continent.

And, perhaps most seriously, using a matter-of-fact tone meant to convey that these opinions were not at all extraordinary for the time, Jenninger vividly called to mind the suspicion of and contempt for Jews that many Germans felt:

> And as for the Jews: hadn't they in the past arrogated a role unto themselves that they did not deserve? Wasn't there a need for them to finally start accepting restrictions? Hadn't they even perhaps merited being put in their place? And, above all, didn't the propaganda—aside from wild exaggerations not to be taken seriously—correspond . . . to people's own suspicions and convictions?

Nevertheless, Jenninger's overriding purpose clearly was to engage in a serious moral discourse. For he dealt directly with the horrors that were to come, seeing in them the unavoidable conclusion of the Nazis' political logic:

> After this the death factories were built. . . . The offenders replaced the execu-
> tioner with grotesquely exaggerated industrial methods of vermin control—in
> keeping with what they said regarding the need to "exterminate vermin." We
> do not want to close our eyes to this last and very horrible fact. Dostoevski
> once said: "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted." . . . [This]
> turned out to be a prophetic anticipation of the political crimes of the twentieth
> century.

He went on to quote from an SS man's account of the machine-gun mass killing of many hundreds of Jews—a soldier sits idly, smoking a cigarette, legs dangling over the edge of a huge pit that is being filled with the bodies of Jewish victims. Even on the printed page, the passage is shocking. That, of course, is what Jenninger intended. Yet, by speaking in this way he was doubly offensive, paying insufficient deference to the sensibilities of the descendants of either the victims or the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Telling this particular, unpalatable truth in the way that he did, violated an unan-nounced but commonly understood taboo, and cost him his political career.

Phillipp Jenninger's experience illustrates a complex social reality. His personal sentiments, as evidenced by a lifetime in politics, could not have caused his downfall. On the contrary, it was his liberal reputation that led him to believe he could get away with such a graphic "truth-telling."[14] And, although everyone acknowledged the literal truth of his claims, in the end this seemed not to matter. Many even affirmed the importance of his evident goal with the speech—encouraging modern Germans to look candidly at their history, the better to avoid repeating it. Still, by violating a taboo against any expression that might be construed as sympathetic with this period in German history, by offending an etiquette of discourse that prevents the full truth of the period from being faced, by failing to limit himself to the platitudes that, although showing due deference to collective sensibility, cannot possibly advance the moral discussion, he committed an unforgivable offense.

Jenninger, it could be said, suffered the wrath of political correctness. But glibly comparing this event with the problems of dissenters from some campus orthodoxy risks missing its true significance. The limitation on public discourse in his national community that Jenninger's fate underscores is a profound phenomenon that reflects powerful social forces at work in many other contexts. Analyzing these forces is far more valuable than taking comfort by denouncing their consequences.

The case at hand illustrates how *the effective examination of fundamental moral questions can be impeded by the superficial moralism of expressive conventions. If exploring an ethical problem requires expressing oneself in ways that raise doubts about one's basic moral commitments, then people may opt for the mouthing of right-sounding but empty words over the risks of substantive moral analysis.* The irony here is exquisite. For, although the desire to police speakers' morals underlies the taboo, the sanitized public expression that results precludes the honest examination of history and current circumstance from which genuine moral understanding might arise. As we shall see, discussion of racial issues in the United States is plagued by a similar problem.

Another point worth noting is that Jenninger was apparently unable to create sufficient space between his spoken words (which in some of the most offensive passages were not even his words, but rather those of some long defunct propagandist) and his intended meaning. He failed to "bracket" or "frame" his utterances about realities of the Nazi era in such a way that the listeners could clearly distinguish between a recounting of others' feelings and an expression of his own. Once he began to talk in a certain way, the words had a life and meaning of their own, uncontrollable by any explicit qualification that he might have, or since has, issued. I elaborate further in Section 5 on the fact that it is often not possible to exempt oneself from punishment for deviant speech by a simple declaration of innocuous intent.

B. THE SANCTIONS "DEBATE"

In the mid to late 1980s we all knew that solidarity with the struggle of Blacks in South Africa required the U.S. government to impose trade sanctions against that nation and American universities to divest themselves of stock in companies doing business there. Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu and Rev. Allen Boesak, spokesmen for the African National Congress, and Black American antiapartheid activists repeatedly said so. People genuinely committed to justice did not become entangled in arcane technical arguments about the effects of economic boycotts. Nor were they unduly concerned about the possible deleterious impact of sanctions on Black South Africans, because the most visible proponent of *that* argument was the racist government. Remarkably, even those South Africans who had spent a lifetime fighting apartheid, but who opposed sanctions because they thought the policy would do more harm than good (Helen Suzman, for example), were not taken seriously by American activists.

Because President Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" was universally viewed by campus activists as morally bankrupt, few college

administrators openly countered demands for divestment with the plausible claim that, instead of selling stocks, the institutions could accomplish more by being constructively engaged, through educational exchanges and the like, with the South African people. Moreover, even to propose an analysis of the impact of sanctions, with the judgment about their advisability contingent upon the outcome, was to tread on politically dangerous ground. There was a consensus among decent people of the need to stand in solidarity with victims of racism.

Consider the dilemma of a politically liberal university president during this period. Whether or not he believed in the efficacy of the sanctions policy he could not credibly claim to be ignorant, either of what this action had come to mean-in-effect, or of the students' knowledge of *his* knowledge of its meaning. If he nevertheless chose to resist student demands for radical change in university investment policies, saying, "Divestment is a well intentioned but unwise policy for our university; there are better ways for us to proceed," then he must have intended that the students draw the inference that he was an obstructionist of doing a "progressive" thing.[15] Most college administrators and trustees dubious about the morality or wisdom of divestment found the prospect of this reaction from students to be unpalatable.

It is plausible to suppose that those college presidents with a greater than average commitment to the fight against racism would also have been more concerned than the typical administrator about adverse student reaction. Thus, although they may have thought divestment unwise, such people, not wanting to risk damage to their reputations as good liberals, would have succumbed early to student pressures to divest. Over time, those college administrators openly resisting divestment came more and more to consist of persons who, by their other public utterances and actions, had given evidence of a lack of fidelity to progressive causes. This made it even more difficult for their genuinely progressive, but dubious, colleagues to voice their doubts about divestment or, for that matter, about the tactics (tents on the campus green, occupation of administrative offices) employed by student protesters promoting the policy. In the end, "resistance to the policy" became an accurate signal of "lack of commitment to the cause," because the "truly committed" who doubted the virtues of the policy had censored themselves, while the "truly uncommitted" continued openly to oppose the policy.[16] This process took place not just on campuses, but in legislatures and on Op-Ed pages as well.[17]

An important consequence of these developments was that sustained rational discussion of the many complex ethical and political considerations raised by the sanctions policy and by the tactics used to promote it simply did not take place on the campuses in those years. Decisions were taken

without the benefit of a full analysis and debate. This highlights an elemental, and potentially dangerous, logic that can operate in a climate of self-censorship:

> A certain course of action is imbued with a symbolic meaning-in-effect, quite apart from the real-world consequences of its pursuit. Expression of doubt about the wisdom of this course of action is suppressed because dissenters want not to be labeled as deviant from some communal norm. As a result, the policy is pursued willy-nilly, and on a broad scale, with perhaps benign but perhaps disastrous consequences. Because the alternatives are never properly studied, one cannot be sure. In any case, the consequences, which should be the primary consideration, become subordinated to the goal of expressing virtuous sentiments.

I am not arguing that the sanctions policy was disastrous, merely that it was often pursued without due consideration of its objective consequences or, sometimes, in spite of what were thought to be the likely results.[18] Perhaps as important to the universities, decisions about the handling of student protests on behalf of the policy were colored by a concern for the negative symbolism that applying discipline in that context was sure to have. The inaction of those years set precedents that have outlived the sanctions "debate."

Moreover, instead of a university's decision on divestment, consider a nation's decision about whether to wage war, or a union's decision about whether to strike. The same dangerous logic well might apply. Yet now, when opposition to the proposed course of action takes on a meaning-in-effect that precludes vigorous deliberation on its merits, the result could be that enormously harmful actions, affecting millions of lives, will be wrongly undertaken.[19]

C. A CLASSIC POLITICAL WITCH HUNT

As a final illustration, consider the climate of opinion that must have prevailed in a congressional hearing room in the 1940s and 1950s, when investigations into the loyalty of prominent Americans were openly conducted. It was commonly understood at that time that the United States faced a formidable adversary in a cold war and that many U.S. citizens sympathized with the espoused ideals of this adversary. It was thought entirely appropriate that steps be taken to protect our national interest against possibly disloyal acts by these misguided souls. Some of these steps, to be sure, raised constitutional questions, but one had to weigh the relative importance of liberty and security. After all, there were real communists amongst us, committed to advancing the agenda of the Soviet Union. Besides, who exactly were these people, voicing such vehement procedural objections to the

employment of reasonable safeguards against possibly damaging breaches of security? Just what kind of person would, under the circumstances, quibble about the civil liberties of a few communists and their fellow travelers?

The Soviet Union was expanding rapaciously in Eastern Europe; the "Reds" had taken over in Beijing; the State Department had apparently been infiltrated; atomic secrets had been stolen. Under these circumstances, what kind of people quibbled over such details as whether a line of questioning entirely comports with some standards of due process? Could we not infer something about their values from their refusal to "name names" or their willingness to speak openly on behalf of an accused? Perhaps those objecting to our methods of inquiry should themselves be sanctioned.[20]

In such a climate, an anticommunist civil libertarian who wants not to be mistaken for a fellow traveler might find silence to be the wisest course. And those bent on ferreting out the deviants might find that they can say just about anything, about just about anyone, without being called to account for it. The more widespread the silence among unquestionably loyal Americans and the more prominent the fellow travelers among those protesting the witch hunt, the more reliably does the fact of protest provide a signal about political belief. A demagogue like Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy could enjoy a prolonged career under such circumstances. When people, once having become targets, can be smeared with lies and innuendo ("I have in my hand a list of names"), and when guilt can be based on a decades-old association with a suspicious cause, caution must be the rule of the day. Such caution plays right into the hands of the demagogues.

A generic problem with conventions of values-signaling is the ease with which they can be abused by partisan opportunists. When listeners are keen to discern a speaker's basic values on a crucial issue, a speaker has to worry that his political enemies will, by distorting or misrepresenting his expressions, falsely depict him as being morally unsound. He has to take care, in other words, not to be *smeared*. To minimize this risk, the speaker may need to avoid some issues altogether, or to speak only in the most circumspect and indirect way, especially if he is criticizing the consensus view. Pointed remarks on a sensitive topic lend themselves to caricature and distortion. Thus, and again ironically, the public's heightened moral sensitivity together with a political climate of intense partisan conflict may actually result in a lower level of effective moral discourse, as the making of nuanced arguments and the drawing of fine distinctions become too risky for political speakers.

The smear campaign as an instrument of political warfare was made famous during the McCarthy period. This had a clear and lasting effect on the formulation of foreign policy. Arguments about relations with communist

China, for example, were encumbered with a host of collateral meanings, thereby inhibiting public discourse.[21] Moreover, unprincipled conservatives tried to pin the "commie" label on political enemies whose real offense was the holding of liberal views on domestic policy.[22] More recently, the public's desire to infer a political figure's true values on race and gender issues has been exploited for partisan purposes in this way. Reagan and Bush nominees, lacking the benefit of a track record giving them credible "cover" against the charge of being racists, have been especially vulnerable to this sort of smear tactic.[23]

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHARACTER AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC DEBATE

A. THE FUTILITY OF PROTESTING TOO MUCH

All of these examples illustrate an important feature of regimes of tacit censorship—one cannot break their grip through a simple declaration of sincerity. ("Despite my violation of the norm, please understand that my values are pure.") Reliance on such literal claims is a common mode of naive behavior in the forum. The act of making the claim may itself become a signal of the claimant's deviance. When a form of expression has the meaning-in-effect that "those speaking in this way are likely to have 'bad' values," overt demands for credulity by a speaker, or complaints about the limits being placed on his freedom of expression, quickly become futile. *Conventions of tacit restraint in public expression are made more durable by the fact that they do not themselves easily become objects of criticism, because it is often the "truly deviant" who have the greatest interest in criticizing them.*

Meta-argumentation—arguing at the secondary level about the form that primary arguments should be allowed to take in the community—can become the refuge of scoundrels seeking to avoid the righteous condemnation that their morally dubious expressions have earned. And it is indeed the case that complaints about the PC "reign of terror" on campuses, even when not exaggerated, have had little effect on the administrators, professors, or student activists enthusiastic about one or another of the favored, "correct" causes. Complaints about PC, though divorced from explicit advocacy for any policy position, nevertheless have the faint but distinct odor of conservatism about them.

We all know the phrase "Some of my best friends are . . . but . . . ," as in "Some of my best friends are Blacks, but their affirmative action claims have

gone too far" and "Some of my best friends are Jews, but Israel's policies are barbaric" and so on. Note that this verbal construction is no longer used literally; instead it now serves as a sarcastic reference to people who unsuccessfully affect a concern for values they do not really share. The strange career of this expression—its literal meaning being overtaken by a symbolic one—highlights the fact that strategic political expression has become much more salient in American public life.

Literal use of the phrase is now patently naive. Although the purpose of the "Some of my best friends" clause is to spare the speaker ill-judgment about his values as the "but" clause is spoken, it serves instead to alert listeners that a bigot's statement is about to come. Listeners know that the speaker is aware that people making such statements are suspected of racism (or anti-Semitism, misogyny, sympathy for communists, homophobia, etc.); after all, issuing the qualification acknowledges the suspicious nature of such talk. What type of person, the listener then asks, requests this exemption?

Those, for example, who genuinely value racial equality know that, even if they harbor reservations about affirmative action, in the interest of supporting a good and decent policy they ought not to utter them. And those less interested in racial equality can be relied upon to see no such constraint. So, not only will "progressives" abstain from criticizing affirmative action, they will also not complain about not being able to express their criticisms!

About the person arguing for the right to tell a racial joke, prefacing his argument with "Some of my best friends are Blacks, but" we must say, "methinks he doth protest too much!" Under a convention of restrained public expression, prudent people do not protest for the right to say imprudent things.

B. STRATEGIC IMPRECISION

In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell, describing the poor state into which political writing had fallen in postwar England, observed:

> The word *Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies "something not desirable" . . . a word like *democracy* not only [has] . . . no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using the word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way . . . the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different. (Pp. 132-33)

This is an insightful observation, directly relevant to the present discussion. It is clear that ambiguous and imprecise expression is a valuable tactic for the strategic speaker. By expressing himself in generalities, a sender allows various receivers to impute their own, possibly inconsistent, meanings to his pronouncements. With a euphemism, well chosen for its vagueness, a speaker can say palatably (that is, in a manner consistent with extent communal norms) what, if said more incisively, might offend some listeners. The circumlocution may be intended to deceive, or merely to obscure, but in either case the result is a debasement of the currency of public discourse.

Consider, for example, some uses of the term "minorities" in contemporary American public speech. The speaker may actually mean "Blacks," but find that term embarrassingly specific. (This is usually the case when the reference is to some aspect of urban life that has negative connotations.) Or, as in the phrase "women and minorities," the speaker may hope by the use of words alone to create a coalition of interests in the listener's mind, when none exists in fact. Or finally, consider a recent addition to the progressive lexicon, "disadvantaged minorities." One finds this phrase used in educational philanthropy circles when the speaker really means "non-Whites, excluding Asians." Never mind the fact that many Asians are disadvantaged! Imagine the uproar were a foundation to candidly announce a scholarship program intended to help "non-White persons belonging to groups that perform poorly on standardized tests." So the strategic speaker sacrifices honesty and accuracy by declaring instead that the program is aimed at "disadvantaged minorities." A variation on this theme is the "underrepresented minority"—though in current times talk of any minority group being "overrepresented" is clearly taboo![24]

Such linguistic imprecision impairs analysis. But that is often its purpose. The person who utters the phrase "women and minorities" may want not to reckon with the fact that the majority of women, being married to White men, share significant resources and fundamental interests in common with their putative oppressors. An advocate for "diversity" may prefer not to be explicit about which differences are included, and which (religious and political beliefs, for example) are excluded from that advocacy. No sane person could relish the task of explaining to poor but studious Vietnamese immigrants why they do not qualify for some "minority" scholarships. And if one wants to accommodate more "underrepresented" Black and Hispanic students at a university by admitting fewer Whites, but not fewer Asians, then one surely would rather not dwell on the statistical "overrepresentation" of the latter.

Another way in which the lack of clear language can be helpful is illustrated by *the use of emblematic speech to signal moral values.* The

speaker advertises his beliefs by using words in a way that, for political or aesthetic reasons, someone not holding that belief would never emulate. Then the speech act has the effect of waving a banner: "queers," "at-risk group," "institutional racism," "fascist America," "differently-abled person." When words are spoken in a given manner only by those holding a discrete set of opinions, their use in this way signals that the user adheres to that party's line.

Two strangers conversing on an airplane feel each other out to learn if they have similar views on matters that it would be better to avoid were they to become a source of disagreement. Such conversations involve the tentative and halting display of one's position by use of emblematic speech. Each speaker, seeking recognition and reinforcement, looks for the positive feedback that encourages that candor in discussion possible only among the like-minded. The dialogue may evolve into an intense and intimate exchange, or it may lapse into vague and meaningless banter, depending on what the speakers are able to learn about one another. If real communication eventually occurs, the path to it will have been paved by overtures of calculated imprecision.

Alternatively, consider a political speaker addressing a crowd in the forum. If the significance of some words as signals of belief is known only to "insiders," their use in public allows the speaker to convey a reassuring message to some listener—"I share your values"—without alarming the others. These words are *coded emblems of belief*. A racist politician might use code words—"welfare queen," "criminal element," "states' rights"—to appeal to like-minded voters, while maintaining what in the intelligence world is called "plausible deniability" of this motive: if challenged, the speaker exploits the code words' ambiguity of meaning and claims that he intended no offense. Once words become emblems in this way, speakers with different values, who want not to risk being misunderstood, must abandon their use altogether.

C. MULTIPLE AUDIENCES

The use of code words is characteristic of a situation in which the speaker faces multiple audiences—distinct communities of listeners that do not share communal norms. This situation is rich with strategic possibilities. The presence of distinct audiences may lead to more candid expression, as each group keeps the speaker honest on issues of concerns to the other.[25] Or, if one audience is naive and the other sophisticated, a duplicitous speaker may "talk over the heads" of the naive listeners to get his true message across to those "in the know."[26] Another possibility, frequently observed with discussion in "mixed company" is that *standing to address an issue is restricted to a certain*

class of persons who have what I will call "natural cover." These are people who, because of their group identity, are not immediately presumed to have malign motives for expressing themselves in a potentially offensive way.

Thus Blacks, but not Whites, can make movies or report news stories on the problem of skin color prejudice, which continues to affect African American society. Women, but not men, can publicly question whether in a given case the crime of date rape has been manufactured on the morning after by a "victim" who wishes she had made a different decision about sexual intimacy the previous night. The censorship in these cases is partial; those who have "cover" express themselves freely; those who lack it must be silent. When the combination of an ascriptive trait with an offending expression is necessary to mark the speaker as "bad," words spoken in mixed company have a meaning-in-effect that is contingent upon who has spoken them. A White is taken to be a racist if he says "nigger," but Blacks use the term all the time. Used by Blacks, its meaning ranges from an endearment to an epithet, but for Whites, whatever their intent, it can only be an epithet.

When the effective meaning of some expression is contingent on both the speaker and the audience, then the rules of permissible expression in mixed company will generally differ from those applicable to homogeneous gatherings. Men talking among themselves have rules concerning what can decently be said about women, but these are generally less restrictive rules than the ones governing a mixed conversation. This is one reason why the "token woman"—the only one at a table of men—can be more than marginally significant. She may have only one vote, but by her presence, and without saying a word, she can profoundly influence the tone and substance of the debate, by narrowing the boundaries of legitimate discourse.[27]

Notice also that when the rules of permissible expression vary with the audience prudent speakers must be sure to remember to whom they are speaking at any moment. And they must also worry about how an expression made in one context will "sound" in another. Indeed, a common source of the political gaffe is the rendering in public by the news media of a remark made privately, in a setting where different rules applied. For example, Jesse Jackson's gaffe during the 1984 presidential campaign, when he referred to New York City as "Hymietown," was spoken to an all Black audience of reporters and staff. Although it should not have been said even there, his intention was probably less malign than the anti-Semitic meaning ascribed to the comment after it became public. Still, once the remark had been revealed, the ad hominem query—"What kind of person speaks, even privately, in this way?"—became irresistible.[28]

An interesting feature of multiple audience situations is that *sometimes it is insiders, not outsiders, who are specifically forbidden to voice certain*

opinions or address certain issues in mixed company. "Washing dirty linen in public" refers to injudicious speech by an insider that is taboo in mixed company, but that would be appropriate if no outsiders were present. This can be speech—criticism of one's group, especially—in which outsiders routinely engage. The taboo may derive from a concern that outsiders will misinterpret the information, a fear that the insider's words will be exploited by outsiders against the group's interest, or a worry that outsiders will feel legitimized in their own criticism of the group, once an insider has confirmed it.

In general, conflict or competition between groups in an audience changes the strategic implications of critical expression. If a partisan opponent criticizes our party, we respond by saying that the critic "doesn't know what he's talking about," and in any case seeks only to discredit us. If one of our own makes the same criticism, no such defense is available, and moreover, our opponents are emboldened to make some points of their own. The insider critic is more persuasive than the outsider because he has superior information about group functioning, and his criticism is more likely to be motivated by a genuine concern for the group's welfare. For these reasons groups often try to discourage insider criticism by punishing the members who engage in it—a tendency that has important implications for the ethics and efficacy of public discourse.[29]

I am often struck by the intensity of critical debate among Black Americans over such issues as the social problems of the "underclass"—when that debate takes place out of the hearing of Whites. The same theme being explored by a Black speaker in mixed company causes other Blacks to severely sanction the deviant. If, for example, a White gives voice in mixed company to his fear of criminal victimization, he may be perceived as criticizing Blacks. (And that may be his intent.) This perception will be enough to keep some, but not all, Whites from expressing their fear. But if a Black in that audience supports or confirms the White's feeling, when everyone knows that complaint over the "criminal element" has racial connotations, he courts serious trouble with other Blacks. So does the Black who worries publicly about the fairness of affirmative action.

Both are expressing themselves in ways that cause their fellows to question their basic commitments. By departing from the convention of restrained expression they are seen as violating a cardinal principle of group loyalty. (Although, as Albert Hirschman has noted, the willingness to deviate in the face of sanction for the sake of the group's welfare, as one understands it, might be seen as an expression of true loyalty.) It is therefore not surprising that *these deviants are often accused of being racially inauthentic.* Breaking of the no-group-criticism-in-mixed-company taboo raises in the minds of

"blind loyalists" the question of whether the critics are "genuinely" Black.[30] And yet, as Michael Walzer has observed, serious political analysis in a democracy cannot take place in private, among Blacks alone, out of Whites' hearing. So, by making racial authenticity contingent on rhetorical conformity, the blind loyalists succeed in diminishing the vitality of the American political forum.

D. FORBIDDEN FACTS

The French intellectual Jean-Francois Revel (1983), lamenting the difficulty of keeping the truth about the Soviet Union before the West European public, observed: "It is around the circulation of facts that the taboos are strongest in the evolution of public information and debate into national policy. . . . As a rule, concern that a fact might influence public opinion in a way we dislike overrides our curiosity about it and our honesty in making it known" (pp. 24-25). Revel identified three reasons for these taboos: (1) Leftists who embraced socialist ideals saw criticism of the Soviet Union as a disguised attack on socialism; thus they avoided it themselves and looked askance at people willing to sound the alarm. (2) Conservatives seeking a more militaristic posture justified their policy arguments by characterizing the Soviets as aggressors. So, to counter their arguments, evidence of Soviet aggression had to be denied. (3) The prospect that the nuclear superpower to the East might actually pose a threat to the European democracies was so frightening that many people simply preferred to deny the reality of the threat, hiding their heads in the sand.

These observations are relevant to our general analysis of censored public discussion. Notice that points (1) and (2) above both involve strategic factors: if reporting a fact symbolizes that the reporter has "bad" values or strengthens the hand of those on the "wrong" side in a public debate, then prudent people with "good" values, who want to be seen as standing on the "right side of history," do not report that fact. If some truth about the world is inconsistent with a firmly held communal value, listeners may punish the messenger who asserts that truth, reasoning that only someone who disdains the value would act so as to undermine it. Anticipating this punishment, investigators will not only be dissuaded from saying what they know but also from asking questions that might have unpleasant answers. When rhetoric about facts comes in this way to signal one's values on an important ethical matter, the identification and analysis of significant social problems can be impeded.

This problem is classically illustrated in the historic conflicts between religion and science. Galileo was forced by the church to recant his views; Christian fundamentalists have attacked the teaching of evolution. But in our

time, other, secular motivations for suppressing facts and limiting analysis loom larger. Scientists looking into the genetic basis, if any, for gender or racial differences in behavior, have met with vocal opposition from "women and minorities" who regard the very act of such speculation to be evidence of bigotry. The search for biological factors influencing violent behavior has been denounced as racist, although this plausible hypothesis has no evidently racial connotation.[31] Yet ironically the speculation that sexual preference *is not* rooted in biology has been denounced as well, and by the very same people!

Consistent with my theory that expression is often curtailed for fear of offending communal norms, one finds that the pressure on researchers not to carry out an investigation, or to withhold its findings, often originates from *within* scientific communities, not from without.[32] This is especially so in the social sciences. Sociologist James Coleman, perhaps the world's leading scholar of educational policy, recalls that in 1976 the president and a number of prominent members of the American Sociological Association (ASA) tried to have him censured for the "crime" of discovering, and announcing, that citywide busing for school desegregation purposes caused White flight. This claim had been denied for years prior to Coleman's research, and far reaching social policies had been erected on the presumption that it was not true. We now know that Coleman had been right. The taboos around the circulation of facts then prevalent among American sociologists have had seriously deleterious consequences. Yet, when presenting his work at the ASA meetings that year, the corridors outside of the lecture hall and the wall behind the podium from which he had to speak were covered with posters displaying, along with his name and the title of his talk, Nazi swastikas and other epithets suggesting that he was a racist.[33]

Some areas of social science inquiry are so closely linked in the public mind to sensitive issues of policy that an objective, scholarly discussion of them is now impossible. Instead of open debate—where participants are prepared to be persuaded by arguments and evidence contrary to their initial presumptions, we have become accustomed to rhetorical contests—where competing camps fire volleys of data and tendentious analyses back and forth at each other, in an effort to win the battle of public opinion for their side. Sometimes the press is an active participant in these struggles, selectively reporting the findings that confirm the "politically correct" point of view. Issues of race, gender, and sexual preference are particularly susceptible to this process of politicization.

Investigators identifying with certain groups advocate approaches to their disciplines said to reflect their particular perspective—a feminist, or a Black, or a gay approach to history, sociology, economics, anthropology, and so on.

This fragmentation (now well advanced and seemingly irreversible, whatever one may think of it) is closely connected with the fact that *public rhetoric in many areas of the social sciences is self-consciously undertaken as "multiple audience talk."* The disciplines are not insular venues of discourse, governed by internal norms of scholarly expression accepted by all who have been trained to do research in the field. Social scientists not only address each other, they participate in a larger discussion with extrascientific implications. Perhaps it was ever thus, although growth of the regulatory and welfare state has undoubtedly enlarged the extent to which scientific expression has political consequences.

The notion of objective research—on the employment effects of the minimum wage, say, or the influence of maternal employment on child development—can have no meaning if, when the results are reported, other "scientists" are mainly concerned to pose the ad hominem query: "Just what kind of economist, sociologist, and so on would say this?" Not only will investigators be induced to censor themselves, the very way in which research is evaluated and in which consensus about "the facts" is formed will be altered. If when a study yields unpopular conclusions it is subjected to greater scrutiny, and more effort is expended toward its refutation, an obvious bias to "find what the community is looking for" will have been introduced. Thus the very way in which knowledge of the world around us is constituted can be influenced by the phenomenon of strategic expression.

6. CONCLUSION

There are many questions that remain to be investigated: Why do certain issues seem to be especially effective vehicles for the tacit communication of the values of those who speak and write about them? Who, if anyone, chooses the vocabulary of symbolic expression? When is political correctness—understood as consensual restraint on public expression in a community—on balance beneficial? (I have mainly discussed its problematic nature.) What can be done to reverse a regime of rhetorical reticence, once established? What are the responsibilities of individuals within a community whose public discourse on important matters lacks in candor? Is there a role for courage and heroism?

These are matters of great seriousness, raising ethical as well as political questions. Who, we must ask, will speak for compromise and moderation in negotiations, when to speak in this way is seen to signal a weak commitment to "the struggle"? Who will declare the emperor to be naked, when a leader's personal failings hurt the movement? Who will urge, under pressures of

economic or electoral competition, that the old ways of doing business in our company or our party require reexamination? Who will report the lynchers, known to everyone in town despite their hooded costumes? Who will expose the terrorists, or denounce the haters, once lynching, terror, and hatred have become "legitimate" means of political expression? Who will insist that we speak plainly and tell the truth about delicate and difficult matters that we would all prefer to cover up or ignore? How can a community sustain an elevated and liberal political discourse, when the social forces that promote tacit censorship threaten to usher in a dark age?

One of the finest statements ever written on these questions, I believe, is Vaclav Havel's (see Keane 1985) essay "The Power of the Powerless." Confronting the overarching repression of the "post-totalitarian system," Havel describes the existential and ideological features of late communism that gave the dissidents their power. "Between the aims of the post-totalitarian system and the aims of life there is a yawning abyss" (p. 29), he writes. While life moves toward "fulfillment of its own freedom," the system demands "conformity, uniformity and discipline." The system is permeated with lies: workers are enslaved in the name of the working class, the expansion of empire is depicted as support for the oppressed, denial of free expression is supposed to be the highest form of freedom, rigged elections are the highest form of democracy, and so on. For the system to continue, individual citizens must make their peace with these lies; they must choose to "live within a lie." The dissident, who quixotically refuses to go along with the program, defiantly attempting to "live within the truth," is profoundly subversive: "By breaking the rules of the game, he has disrupted the game as such. He has exposed it as a mere game. . . . He has said that the emperor is naked. And because the emperor is in fact naked, something extremely dangerous has happened" (pp. 39-40).

Thus the struggle between the "aims of the system" and the "aims of life" takes place not between social classes, or political parties, or aggregates of people aligned on either side, for or against the system. Rather, this struggle is fought within each human being:

> The essential aims of life are present naturally in every person. In everyone there is some longing for humanity's rightful dignity, for moral integrity, for free expression of being and a sense of transcendence over the world of existences. Yet, at the same time, each person is capable, to a greater or lesser degree, of coming to terms with living within the lie. Each person somehow succumbs to a profane trivialization of his or her inherent humanity, and to utilitarianism. In everyone there is some willingness to merge with the anonymous crowd and to flow comfortably along with it down the river of pseudo-

life. This is much more than a simple conflict between two identities. It is something far worse: it is a challenge to the very notion of identity itself. (P. 38)

Truth, Havel concludes, has its own special power in the post-totalitarian system: "Under the orderly surface of the life of lies, therefore, there slumbers the hidden sphere of life in its real aims, of its hidden openness to truth" (p. 41).

Although I certainly do not intend to compare the constrained expressive environment of a politically correct college campus with the systematic extirpation of dissent characteristic of the totalitarian state, I nevertheless find the moral dimensions of Havel's argument relevant to the dilemmas faced by individuals in our own society. Conventions of self-censorship are sustained by the utilitarian acquiescence of each community member in an order that, at some level, denies the whole truth: by calculating that the losses from deviation outweigh the gains, individuals are led to conform. Yet by doing so they yield something of their individuality and their dignity to "the system." Usually this is a minor matter, more like the small sacrifices we make for the sake of social etiquette than some grand political compromise. But, as I hope to have made clear in the foregoing exposition, circumstances arise when far weightier concerns are at stake. The same calculus is a work in every case.

How then are the demagogues and the haters to be denounced? How can reason gain a voice in the forum? How can the truth about our nation, our party, our race, our church come to light, when the social forces of conformity and the rhetorical conventions of banality hold sway? How can we have genuine moral discourse about ambiguous and difficult matters—like racial inequality in our cities, or on our campuses—when the security and comfort of the platitudes lie so readily at hand? Although it may violate the communal norms of my economics fraternity to say so, I believe these things can be achieved only when individuals, first a few and then many, transcend "the world of existences" by acting not as utilitarian calculators, but rather as fully human and fully moral agents, determined at whatever cost to "live within the truth."

NOTES

1. This ground has been covered by D'Souza (1991).

2. See Goffman (1959, 1963).

3. A simplified version of this game is formally analyzed by Crawford and Sobel (1982). Also noteworthy is Austen-Smith's (1992) article, and Bernheim (forthcoming).

4. Goffman's general approach is reflected in the following passage from *The Presentation of Self*:

[Consider] the point of view of the individual who presents himself before [others]. He may wish them to think highly of him, or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels toward them, or to obtain no clear-cut impression. . . . Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interest to control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him. This control is achieved largely by influencing the definition of the situation which the others come to formulate, and he can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan. (P. 3)

5. Thus the fact that I use the male form of the third-person pronoun when a gender choice is unavoidable (he, him, his) will not go unnoticed. My declaration here that this choice was taken at random and adhered to for consistency's sake will, I fear, avail me little with some readers. This is especially so if the ostentatious display of the female pronoun has become a convention among other men writing on these issues.

6. In a lecture, where communication is by spoken word, my options for strategic behavior are greatly expanded. I can use my inflection of voice, posture, gestures, physical appearance, and some carefully chosen words delivered with mock spontaneity, to manage the impression I convey.

7. For example, many readers are more confident about the accuracy of news reported in a paper whose editorial opinions they share, despite the fact that reporting and editorial functions are strictly segregated at reputable papers.

8. Crawford and Sobel (1982) show that, taking due account of the incentive for strategic expression, more information will be conveyed from sender to receiver the more similar are their views about how that information should be used.

9. The particular reason for seeking out deviants identified here—a desire to avoid being fooled or manipulated in collective deliberations—is not the only, or perhaps even the most important motive. Thus Kurtz (1983) suggests other factors that may drive the "hunt for heretics." One is a community's need to establish a distinctive identity and to maintain group solidarity: "Group solidarity is seldom strengthened by anything as much as the existence of a common enemy, and the heretic, as a 'deviant insider,' is close at hand" (p. 1085). Another is the need of elites in a community to justify their positions: "Through the labeling and suppression of heresy, institutional elites can rally support for their positions through battle with a common enemy" (p. 1087).

Howe (1982), in his memoir, recalls how the search for a common enemy led to an obsession with ideological purity among various left-wing political groupings in the 1930s and 1940s: "The political sect has to pin everything on the rightness of doctrine. The party line becomes its most precious good. To call into doubt even an inch of that line is to endanger its survival, so that, in a way, it is quite right to cast out heretics. In a sect, heresy is never incidental" (p. 38). Factors such as these may be at work in the contemporary political correctness movement.

However, most of my argument does not turn on the particular reasons that groups strive to maintain conformity. What matters is that they do so, using the expressive content of political speech to identify deviance.

10. Essential to sustaining this equilibrium pattern of inference is the consensus that obtains within a given community that some expressive acts convey normative, as well as literal, meanings. That is, receivers know that the sender knows that receivers think these words are offensive, callous, reactionary, suspicious, indicative of "softness," associated with disloyalty, and so on—it is common knowledge that such speech has a negative connotation, even when that is not the sender's literal intent. Thus, when an outsider, by the inappropriate use of some

loaded terms, makes a faux pas, we exempt him from a judgment about values initially, because we allow that he may not have known the rules. We say, "Perhaps he didn't mean it the way it sounded." His words cannot possibly have the same effective meaning for us when we cannot be sure that he knew how we might interpret them.

11. An excellent analysis of the speech and its reception may be found in "Die Opfer Wissen, was der November 1938 für sie zu bedeuten hatte," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 January 1989.

12. This is the conclusion of Benjamin Frankel, conveyed to the author in personal correspondence. It is consistent with views of the linguist Ernst Leisi as stated in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 January 1989.

13. These quotations are taken from an English translation of the speech provided by the German consulate in Boston, entitled "Remembrance Speech by Phillipp Jenninger, MP, in connection with the pogroms carried out by the Nazi regime against the Jews in Germany 50 years ago."

14. Thus this particular example does not exactly fit the theory sketched in Sections 2 and 3. Some in the audience may have known that Jenninger was no Nazi sympathizer, but thought that he had to be punished for sounding like one, or else the real neo-Nazis would gain authority to speak more freely. This view would explain why Michael Fuerst, deputy chairman of the Jewish Council in Germany, was also forced to resign his position after saying publicly, "I welcome that (Jenninger) described in full clarity what was happening in Germany between 1933 and 1938, especially the fact that everything that Hitler did was strongly supported by the masses of all Germans." Jenninger's reckless talk was not to be welcomed. That other Germans might begin openly to speak in this way was precisely the problem (Associated Press 1988).

15. The quotation marks are meant to convey the ambiguity implicit in calling the policy "progressive." Whether sanctions would in an objective sense promote progress for South African Blacks was debatable. Yet once the meaning-in-effect that "embracing sanctions implies standing with freedom fighters in South Africa" had been established, support for the policy definitely *gave a progressive impression* to many observers. Thus, in this subjective sense, it was in fact a progressive act.

16. Of course, I do not mean to say that all those who openly opposed divestment were uncommitted. Some prominent voices against the policy—David Riesman, Clark Kerr, Alan Pifer, for example—had, and have, solid reputations as liberals. I only claim that open opposition to the policy was more likely to be observed the further to the right of the political spectrum one moved.

17. In due course, cities and towns across the country enacted their own sanctions policies, refusing to deal with businesses tainted by association with South Africa. Union pension funds developed divestment programs. Companies adhering to the so-called Sullivan Principles and providing substantial benefits to Black workers and their families in South Africa eventually found it impossible to justify their presence there.

18. Conveniently, the policy was painless for its American advocates, although it may have been a disaster for some Black South Africans. Note well, the logic of my argument also applies to the sanctions debate *within* South Africa.

19. Numerous examples of the potential for harm are provided by Janis (1982) in his classic study.

20. Mindful of my own "Jenninger Problem" I hereby declare, for what it may be worth, that this account does not express my personal views, but describes the hypothetical views of a "typical American" in the early Cold War period.

21. Consider the case of Phillip Jessup, nominated for a diplomatic post in the 1950s by President Eisenhower, and rejected by the Senate because some years earlier he had attended a

conference on whether U.S. China policy should be reconsidered. Indeed, it took 2 decades for that policy to be accommodated to reality by the staunch anti-communist Richard Nixon, who had "natural cover" against the claim of deviance.

22. Support for the New Deal was often raised in this context. Consider the comment of Nebraska Senator Hugh Butler about former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, after Acheson publicly supported Alger Hiss: "I watch his smart-aleck manner and his British clothes and that New Dealism, everlasting New Dealism in everything he says and does, and I want to shout, Get out, Get out. You stand for everything that has been wrong with the United States" (quoted in Victor Navasky 1980, 21). Evidently, there was more going on here than just the fight against communism.

23. The 1987 campaign against Robert Bork's Supreme Court nomination is a classic case. It was launched with a speech by Senator Edward Kennedy describing Bork's America as "a land in which women would be forced into back alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizen doors in midnight raids" (Gest 1987). This gross distortion was part of a calculated rhetorical strategy, which in due course prevailed. The strategy was spelled out with remarkable candor in a memorandum circulated among anti-Bork interest groups: "To offset the White House's emphasis on Bork's intellectual quali-fications, opponents need to imprint his non-judicious turn of mind with such labels as: closed minded, . . . insensitive, prejudicial, . . . injudicious, rigid, cold and indifferent, lacking empa-thy, flaming and inflexible, insensitive to injustice" (Advocacy Institute, "The Bork Nomination: Seizing the Symbols of the Debate," 14 July 1987, 5-6).

I am aware that many readers will object to my mentioning this episode in the context of McCarthyism. My point, however, is analytical, not political. I mean only to show how the *smear*—defined as the misrepresentation of a political figure's expression so as to cast him in morally dubious light before the public—is a ubiquitous tactic of partisan politics.

Smears of President Clinton's nominees have also occurred. Just after he withdrew the nomination of Lani Guinier to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division an issue of the conservative *American Spectator* appeared, trumpeting the fact that Guinier's father had been close to the Communist Party in the 1940s and 1950s!

24. It was not always so, witness the limits that many institutions imposed on Jewish enrollments earlier in this century—limits openly justified by a concern about Jewish "over-representation." When, in the late 1970s, the applications of Asians to elite colleges and universities began to grow more rapidly than their enrollments, no similar justification of restricting the access of these superbly qualified students could be made. In fact, what appear to have been informal ceilings on Asian admissions were swept away as complaint about the disparity between acceptance rates of Asian and White applicants were made public. Indeed, the combination of minority status with outstanding academic performance among Asian Americans has proved profoundly unsettling to the practice of affirmative action in college admissions. See Takagi's (1992) excellent study of these developments.

25. A corporate executive discussing his firm's financial status with bankers and union leaders both in the room is more credible with each, by virtue of the presence of the other: he wants the bankers to think the firm is doing well, and the union leaders to think it's doing poorly, and both parties know this! See Farrell and Gibbons (1989). A similar logic constrains the chances of rhetorical manipulation when a politician commits himself to giving *exactly the same speech* on racial issues to both a Black and a White audience, as Bill Clinton did during the 1992 presidential campaign.

26. Thus Strauss (1952) argues that by "writing between the lines" some medieval philoso-phers engaged in criticism of the status quo without provoking a charge of heresy. They disguised

their arguments so they would not be understood by lay authorities, but could still be grasped by other philosophers: "A man of independent thought can utter his views in . . . print without incurring danger, provided he is capable of writing between the lines. . . . For the influence of persecution on literature is precisely that it compels all writers who hold heterodox views to develop a peculiar technique of writing, the technique which we have in mind when speaking of writing between the lines" (p. 24). Very much in keeping with the spirit of this essay, Strauss goes on to draw implications for how these texts should be read from his presumptions about how they were written. His theory of reading rests fundamentally upon the fact that the philosopher speaks to multiple audiences.

27. Not just women, but men too, will apply the stricter rules. Thus a man can be condemned *by other men* for saying something in the presence of women that is commonly said in their absence. Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss this as an unfair "double standard" because, with a different audience, the same words do not have the same effective meaning.

28. Most "racist" remarks discovered to have been made by public figures have this character. Although this does not excuse the offender, it sharpens our understanding of the offense—more often one of "naivete" than of "malice." Yet, because the malign are more likely than the benign to overlook the fact that some expression might offend an unintended listener, calling such gaffes "racist" is consistent with the logic of strategic inference!

29. Discouraging insider criticism can have significant costs, a point explored at length in Hirschman's (1970) important book. Precisely because it is rooted in familiarity with and concern for the group, such criticism can be compelling, but also painful, to hear. Yet, when insiders are not permitted to "voice" their dissatisfactions, they may "exit"—that is, withdraw from active participation in the public life of the group—leaving the discussion to the contented, and forestalling needed reform. Hirschman stresses, therefore, the importance of "loyalty"—a speaker's willingness to stay and argue over how the group should conduct its affairs, even at great personal costs to himself. This is to be distinguished from "blind loyalty"—that reflexive and uncritical endorsement of one's communal norms captured in the phrase "my country, right or wrong."

The "loyal" political critic in a multiple audience environment faces the dilemma that, to be effective, his interventions must be spoken publicly, and heard by friends and enemies alike. Walzer (1988) describes this dilemma in his wise and elegant study of social criticism:

> Intimate criticism is a common feature of our private lives; it has its own (implicit) rules. We don't criticize our children, for example, in front of other people, but only when we are alone with them. The social critic has the same impulse, especially when his own people are confronted by hostile forces. . . . But the social critic can never be alone with his people; there is no social space that is like familial space, and so the critic's intimacy can't take the form of private speech; it can only shape and control his public speech. A certain forbearance qualifies or alternates with his stringency. He must speak, however, and speak out loud so long as there is any hope that he will be listened to among his own people. . . . The silence of the connected social critic is a grim sign—a sign of defeat, a sign of endings. (Pp. 151-52)

30. Thus conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas was described by a (Black) legal scholar critical of his nomination as "black on the outside, but white on the inside" (see Carter 1991, 33). And William Lucas, a Republican gubernatorial candidate, was savaged by a Black member of the U.S. House of Representatives who said, "Biologically he is black, but he is not black in the spirit of Martin Luther King or the Civil Rights Movement." Carter (1991)

discusses with insight some of the problems with the notion of racial authenticity implicit in these remarks (Loury 1986).

31. Frederick Goodwin was forced out as director of the National Institute of Mental Health in 1992 for suggesting publicly that study of the aggressive behavior of male primates in the wild might shed light on problems of violence in human societies. In a fatal error, he used the words "monkeys" and "inner cities" in adjacent paragraphs. In a resignation letter to President Bush he said, "I am appalled to see the way in which complex and important scientific issues can become distorted when they enter into the political arena during an election year." See Miller (1992). See also Sagarin (1980).

32. That the desire to avoid offending communal norms has shaped the doing of science is a basic theme in the sociology of knowledge, as developed, for example, in Kuhn (1962).

33. Coleman (1989, 76-8). Some years later, when lecturing on their important treatise *Crime and Human Nature* in the shadow of Harvard University, Richard Herrnstein and James Q. Wilson (1985) were drowned out by students chanting, "Wilson, Herrnstein, you can't hide. You believe in genocide!"

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