

# Big Brother in a White Coat

**Politicized science should carry a surgeon general's warning — it can be hazardous to your health.**

**David C. Stolinsky**



*Intellect deteriorates with each surrender to folly. Nonsense does not pass by us, but into us.*

— Jacques Barzun

**W**HEN EINSTEIN proposed his theory of relativity, he stated publicly that a scientist anywhere in the world could do an experiment and prove him wrong. A genius was willing to admit that he might be wrong and to accept the verdict of authentic experiments. Are we following his example of integrity and intellectual honesty, or do we allow activism and good intentions to substitute for logic and facts? Consider:

‡ Part of the Antarctic icecap broke off and formed icebergs. Scientists blamed this on global warming. But the Greenland icecap is growing, and there are fewer North Atlantic icebergs than in past years. Scientists also blamed this on global warming. That is, diametrically opposite evidence leads to the same conclusion.

‡ Scientists studied the Greenland icecap, expecting that because of global warming, less ice had formed in recent years than in the past. But they found that *more* ice had formed recently. They concluded that with global warming, more water evaporates from the oceans and falls as snow — that is, more ice means a warmer climate! Of course, if less ice had formed recently, that would also support global warming. The scientists could have stayed home, saved time and money, and simply announced that whatever the ice cap showed, it would support the idea of global warming.

‡ Record-high summer temperatures bring comment on global warming. Record-low winter temperatures go unnoticed. Assumptions are never challenged if one is impervious to contrary evidence.

‡ Environmentalists demanded the removal of lead from gasoline. When told that other chemicals must be added to restore anti-knock properties, they said it was not their responsibility. Some of these chemicals proved to be

carcinogenic; naturally, oil companies were blamed. Undaunted, environmentalists then demanded the addition of a chemical to oxygenate gasoline. This chemical is seeping into the water supply. Again oil companies, not environmentalists, are blamed. (Laws requiring these additives raise the price of gasoline and thus raise oil-company profits and government tax receipts, but that's another story.)

‡ Activists push for the adoption of electric cars as “non-polluting” or “zero-emission.” They do not mention that the electricity must be produced somewhere (somewhere *they* do not live) by fossil fuels, nuclear power, or dams, all of which they oppose. Nor do they mention that car batteries contain either lead and sulfuric acid or nickel and cadmium, which are toxic and might cause dangerous spills after traffic accidents. Presenting information in a deceptive way in order to evoke a specific behavior used to be called propaganda; now it is called health activism.

‡ Engineers warned that airbags could cause serious injury to children and small adults, but safety activists called this obstructionism by the auto makers. The warnings proved correct — airbags save the lives of men but are more likely to kill children and small women. Engineers developed less explosive airbags that should be less dangerous to small persons, but activists strove to retain their original devices. (Of course, laws requiring airbags create a captive market for products most consumers would not buy voluntarily — amounting to about \$40 billion to date — but that's another story.)

‡ Anti-smoking crusaders extract billions from tobacco companies to defray the “extra costs” of smoking-related illness. Yet many economists point out that these costs are more than offset by the fact that smokers more often die before they collect social security or pensions, and they less often spend years in nursing homes with the infirmities of old age. (Much of the billions end up in the pockets of trial lawyers, who are among the biggest contributors to politicians, but that's another story.)

‡ Similar suits are being brought against gun makers. Yet studies show that guns save more lives than they take, and

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prevent more injuries than they cause, by enabling law-abiding citizens to fend off criminals. (If such suits succeed, the combination of activist zealots and greedy lawyers could drive any product off the market without bothering to outlaw it through legislation, but that's another story.)

† A medical journal reported that the suicide rate for ages 15 to 24 is higher in Seattle than Vancouver and blamed lax gun laws in Seattle. The study is widely quoted as showing that strict gun laws reduce suicides in young people. But the overall suicide rate is the same for both cities, because the rate for ages 35 to 44 is higher in *Vancouver*. Of course, no one claims that strict gun laws increase suicides in older people. To disprove the efficacy of gun laws, the authors apparently would require that suicide rates be identical in both cities for all conceivable demographic groups — an almost impossible condition. Thus the study was virtually guaranteed to support the authors' biases.

**T**RUTH is thus not an objective, external reality that we try to discover. Rather, it is a subjective, internal *feeling* of what is helpful to our current agenda. The pattern is painfully clear: (1) Proclaim that a problem, real or not, is a "crisis." (2) Perform "studies," preferably funded by government grants, that are predetermined to yield the desired result. (3) Feel free to ignore, misstate, or fabricate evidence, because your cause is just; of course, all your causes are just, just because they are your causes. (4) Ignore criticism; instead, attack the critics as apologists for killers and polluters. (5) Insist that the "solution" be implemented at once. (6) Ignore any harmful effects of the "solution," or if this is impossible, blame someone else. (7) If the situation improves, announce that the "solution" is working and demand more of it; if the situation worsens, announce that the "solution" hasn't worked yet and demand more of it. (8) Use health fears to force unwanted products or restrictions on the public. (9) Declare that the problem is a "public health emergency," so the democratic process does not apply, and "experts" must decide what is best for us. (10) In short, disguise Big Brother — and his allies in big business and big law — in white coats.

Dangers are usually exaggerated, but they may be minimized. It is estimated that airbags kill more children than school shootings (99 versus 82 since 1993), but to discover this one must read car magazines, not medical journals or newspapers. Environmentalists extoll the virtues of small cars, but perhaps 47,000 additional traffic deaths have occurred since the 1970s because occupants were not in larger vehicles. Environmentalism apparently includes concern for all life except human. In any case, one cannot count on consistent exaggeration; the only thing liars do consistently is lie.

Corrupting science by making it serve various agendas is a crucial breach of trust. If medical scientists report that gun

laws lower suicide rates, when in fact the rates are unaffected, do they also exaggerate the benefits of AIDS treatments? If environmental scientists misstate evidence regarding global warming, do they also misstate evidence regarding other ecological dangers? If health activists deny responsibility for the adverse effects of their actions, can we believe that what they really care about is health, rather than increasing their own control over our lives? If doctors declare that something is rising when in fact it is falling, dare we trust their evaluation of more complex data? If state governments obtain billions in payment for dubious health costs, can we believe their other financial reports? Once we accept that the truth can be twisted to support our favorite cause, we can never know which reports to believe. In an era of technologic dangers, this is not an encouraging thought.

Transforming political questions into health problems is dangerous to freedom, because it stifles debate and short-circuits the democratic process. In addition, this transformation can be physically dangerous. During the impeachment controversy, pundits called opponents of the president "toxic" and "mad dogs." One disposes of toxins before they poison people. One kills mad dogs to prevent the infection from spreading. (Indeed, an actor was cheered when he called for the murder of Chairman Hyde of the Judiciary Committee and of his family as well.) In the 1980s the Contras were called the source of "health problems" in Nicaragua. As rebels, the Contras deserved to be judged on the basis of their actions and aims; as health problems, they deserved to be eliminated. Further along this road are the Nazis, whose anti-smoking activism and enthusiasm for natural foods were based on the idea that the citizen has a duty to be healthy, so that he can serve the state as a productive worker or strong soldier. That is, *health was substituted for ethics* as a guide for one's actions. As a result, Nazis saw the Jews as "disease-bearing rats" and "gangrenous appendices" that had to be removed to protect the public. Medicalized politics should carry a surgeon general's warning — it can be hazardous to one's health.

**A**N IDEA that cannot be refuted by any obtainable evidence is an irrational belief, not a logical conclusion. One who believes he is right regardless of the evidence, and that being right absolves him from responsibility for the harmful effects of his actions, is not a scientist, but an irrational and potentially dangerous person. Trusting such persons to decide our national policies is equally irrational and dangerous.

John O'Sullivan remarked, "In Europe, the fascists goose-stepped; in America, they jog." Likewise, in America they cloak themselves in the mantle of health activists, environmentalists, anti-tobacco crusaders, or opponents of sport-utility vehicles, but if one looks closely, the brown shirts are visible beneath the white coats.

# Truth & Politics

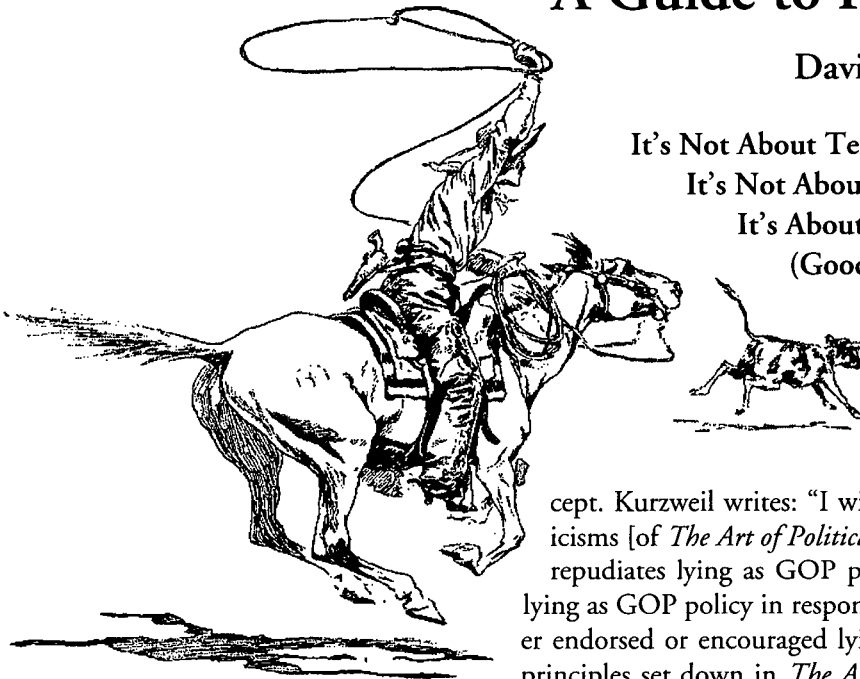
continued....\*

Dear John,  
I think this requires one more round. — David Horowitz

## A Guide to Political Action

David Horowitz

It's Not About Telling The Truth (Good)  
It's Not About Lying (Bad)  
It's About Winning  
(Good When Our Side Does It)



JOHN KURZWEIL throws down a challenge to me as author of *The Art of Political War*. I accept.

Kurzweil writes: "I will gladly retract my major criticisms [of *The Art of Political War*] any time Mr. Horowitz repudiates lying as GOP policy ...." I not only repudiate lying as GOP policy in response to Kurzweil's offer — I never endorsed or encouraged lying in the first place. The very principles set down in *The Art of Political War* would argue against it. Thus "Principle 2: Your task is to define yourself

as the friend of as large a constituency compatible with your principles as possible ...." Do people want liars for friends? Do they trust people who lie to them? Would they put their confidence in them and vote for them. Obviously not. The target of John Kurzweil's criticisms is a straw man.

Before trying to get at the heart of our disagreements, let me knock out another straw man: "Mr. Horowitz ... reads my moral concern right out of the discussion. Why? Because the real point at issue here is far more than tactics and even honesty versus lying. It is a contest of wills: man's versus God's. God says don't lie; Mr. Horowitz says do what you have to, as you perceive it to win the political battle .... Mr. Horowitz is unwilling to allow anything, not God, not honesty, not the core elements of our Western political heritage, and, finally, not even the requirements of genuinely good GOP tactics — to trump his determination to do whatever he thinks expedient in his chosen profession."

I have no idea what profession (let alone what person) John Kurzweil is referring to in this

\* California Political Review's July/August issue carried an article, "Reagan Who?," by CPR editor John Kurzweil that criticized *The Art of Political War*, a pamphlet by David Horowitz, president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture. September/October's CPR carried rejoinders from Mr. Horowitz and several Republican leaders, with a "rejoinder to the rejoinders" by Mr. Kurzweil. The entire debate can be read on The California Public Policy Foundation website ([www.cppf.org](http://www.cppf.org)). The Art of Political War can be read at the Center's website ([www.noleft.com](http://www.noleft.com)).