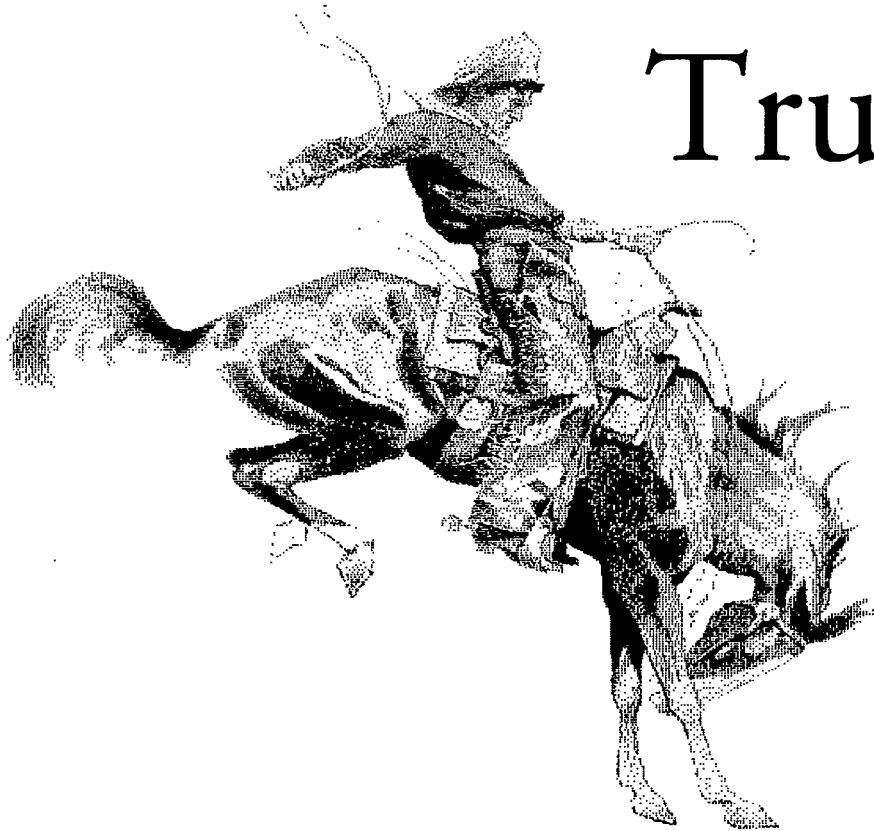


REAFFIRMING REAGAN'S GOP



# Truth *Does* Matter

AMERICA'S FREEDOM  
AND  
REPUBLICAN  
VICTORY  
RELY ON HONESTY

JOHN KURZWEIL

**M**Y THANKS to all participants in this discussion and to readers for indulging us. Although Rabbi Lapin calls my essay in the last issue "bashing," when I invited Mr. Horowitz to respond to it, he thanked me for my "respectful (if critical) treatment of my views." I instigated the discussion because I believe Western civilization, which is my cause, advances not as the left does by imposing iron thought control, but by argument about the essential question: what is the truth? Perhaps we mere mortals are presumptuous to take it up, but, with God's help, we advance by it nonetheless. In this same vein, I also believe a true friend will tell you when he thinks you are wrong. I thank my friends who have done so on the preceding pages. I will now try to return the favor.

I thought I had made a straightforward argument: I said, in contrast to Bernd Schwieren's idea that Republicans have exhausted the usefulness of conservative ideas and must move on, that many top Republicans had long ago dropped those ideas and quit being Reaganites at all. I said that, beginning with George Bush's "read my lips" escapade, these Republicans had in fact cut their ties with Ronald Reagan specifically by lying to the voters and, thus, betraying their trust, that their particular lie lay in pretending to be mo-

tivated primarily by a desire to serve the people when, in fact, they were in politics to serve themselves. Promise tax cuts, deliver tax increases; promise to lead a restoration of respect for family, religion, and basic freedoms; deliver scorn for the people and their social issue concerns and respect only the power that would crush them. Some respondents apparently think I can't tell the difference between honest, unavoidable compromise and Wilsonite lying and betrayal. I can, and, of course, I was talking about the latter, which has been rampant in the Party, especially at the top.

I said that as a result of this GOP course change from honesty to humbug and from public service to self service, the people, unsurprisingly, have lost faith in the Party. Finally, I said that into this context walks David Horowitz telling us to respect the American people, but not by restoring Reagan's honest relations with them. Rather, we are to jettison what little fig leaves of honesty remain. He specifically urged GOP Congressmen to betray the public trust and their oaths to uphold the law by bringing "plainly phony" charges against their adversaries — a banana-republic abuse of power of the kind used against Pat Nolan. I quoted Mr. Horowitz's statement that our actions should be "consistent with [our] deeply held principles," concluding that, apparently, he did not count honesty among them. I said honesty is at the core of American political institutions, going to some lengths in

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offering supporting evidence, and concluded that Mr. Horowitz's advice on lying must be rejected precisely because it betrays our most "deeply held principles" — the very principles upon which past Republican victories were built and the only possible basis for future ones. That was my case.

**N**EITHER RABBI LAPIN nor William Saracino directly address my charge that Mr. Horowitz advocates dishonesty. But I infer that Rabbi Lapin would probably dispute it from his statement

that "the techniques Horowitz recommends" include "demonstrating trust in the ultimate wisdom of the electorate." Mr. Saracino is more explicit: "all Mr. Horowitz is urging is that we think about how we present our message and the best way to 'win friends and influence people.'" Others have told me they do not think *The Art of Political War* says we should lie. I fail to see how advice to file "completely phony" charges can be reconciled with honesty, and, in his response to my article, Mr. Horowitz himself does not attempt to reconcile it. As this charge is central to my complaint — I will gladly retract my major criticisms any time Mr. Horowitz repudiates lying as GOP policy — I will try here to distill my reasons for concluding that he does say "lie," which I contend is the opposite of placing "trust in the ultimate wisdom of the electorate" and far more than merely urging thoughtful efforts to "win friends and influence people."

(1) In his reply in this issue of *CPR*, Mr. Horowitz summarizes his advice in *The Art of Political War* to Republicans regarding Newt Gingrich as:

... simple: fight back. Strike first when you can, but always fight back. When the first spurious ethics charges were filed against Gingrich, the Republican leadership should have formed a war room and begun filing parallel ethics charges against Minority Leader Richard Gephardt or Minority Whip David Bonior. They should have matched charge for charge until the Democrats gave up. Kurzweil is appalled at this advice to copy a Democrat tactic in order to neutralize it.

He then quotes my question "should [Republicans] have fought back 'in kind'?" but without reminding readers of the specific passage in his pamphlet to which my question referred. *The Art of Political War* says more than just "fight back." It says:

Republicans would never think to file charges they knew had

no chance of sticking, let alone charges that were completely phony. But Democrats understood that while the phony charges were filed in public, they would be discarded in private ....

[Republicans] should have remembered they were in a war. They should have responded in kind ....

And then the advice about matching "charge for charge." Any fair reading of this passage, to borrow Mr. Saracino's apt phrase, certainly indicates that Mr. Horowitz considers filing dishonest charges to be not only admissible but wise

tactics. But he says more: in the full passage and in his reply here, he virtually equates "responding in kind" with "fighting back," as if to say that any objection to the idea of Republicans filing false charges is tantamount to telling our side *not* to fight back, to quit. That is, not only is dishonesty fair, it is necessary. After all, we are in a war.

(2) In his reply, Mr. Horowitz quotes me saying "Right at the center of the Republican cause is honesty." He does *not* quote the next two sentences from my article: "In the context of the impeachment, honesty is the basis of the rule of law, which is the basis of constitutional government and of a republic — which is to say, it is the basis of the American system that Republican conservatives exist to conserve. If Republicans fight back 'in kind' they undermine their own position." Why skip this expansion on my point? Because its plain reasonableness complicates what Mr. Horowitz wants to do: ridicule the idea that honesty is central to the Republican cause. Instead, he writes:

I had the feeling reading this passage that I was watching the classic film *Casablanca*. Kurzweil is shocked, shocked! to learn that politicians sometimes make spurious charges and sometimes even shade the truth. According to Kurzweil, David Horowitz has forgotten Ronald Reagan who, like George Washington, would never tell a lie.

The *Casablanca* scene involves a "poor corrupt official" who, when his superiors tell him to find a pretext for closing Rick's Cafe, proclaims himself "shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here," even while a waiter is handing him his winnings from the tables. The scene illustrates a cynical hypocrisy so gross it's funny. Mr. Horowitz appropriates the humor at my expense, but somehow reverses the point. We're no longer laughing at cynical hypocrisy but at helpless innocence: foolish Kurzweil, being shocked that politicians



lie. He probably believes fairy tales about Washington and Reagan too. Ignoring, for the moment, his “completely phony” characterization of my argument about honesty and the Republican cause, I only ask here: what is Horowitz’s unmistakable message regarding lying? It is, of course, that no one objects to it, save naïve fools.

(3) Next we are told: “The relation between principles and politics is always complicated. Politics is about winning elections and implementing programs.” Because winning requires forming coalitions of diverse elements, he continues, politics is also “about compromise. This doesn’t mean it’s not also about principle. That is how you form your faction in the coalition. If you are not willing to go to the mat for your core principles, you will lose your base and eventually lose the cause as well. The art of politics is to know how to get your principles implemented without compromising them too much.” Principle, that is, serves at the convenience of winning. Go ahead and compromise, but not so much that you endanger your ultimate victory. Such principles have no intrinsic importance. We do not live by them because they are right, in accord with a moral imperative; we use them to “form [our] faction in the coalition.” We compromise or go-to-the-mat for them depending strictly upon which course seems most expedient. Again, in context, no “fair reading” here can bear any interpretation other than that Mr. Horowitz believes at least some lying is not only permissible but required. His examples of Reagan “compromises” are irrelevant. They did not involve matters of basic principle, only priorities. One could as well argue that the allies’ decision to knock off Hitler before going after the Japanese somehow amounted to a “compromise” of basic principle. Nonsense. But by bringing these examples into a debate with me about telling the truth, Mr. Horowitz plainly means to show us that Reagan’s compromises justify further GOP compromise with the basic principle of honesty.

That, as I say, is more than enough evidence for me. If anyone remains unconvinced that Mr. Horowitz advises lying, a simple way to settle the matter would be to ask him to repudiate it publicly. As I said earlier, if he does so, I will withdraw my main criticisms of his booklet. I do not think he will.

But is honesty a “basic principle”? The “this is tactics, not strategy” defense implies it is not, that, rather, it is just one of our tactical weapons to be pulled out or kept hidden depending upon the situation. Again nonsense. The trouble

with lying is knowing when, or even how, to stop. As long as we’re recalling classic Bogart films, think of the pathetic scene in *The Maltese Falcon* when Mary Astor — Miss Wonderly — moans about her weariness with “lying and making up lies” — that will give you a fair idea of the prevailing atmosphere in many American court rooms, and of our national political culture, especially whenever Bill Clinton hoves into view, an atmosphere Mr. Horowitz invites Republicans to add to even more than they do already.

But countenancing lying not only consigns us to a chaos of endless deception — of ourselves as much, if not more, than of others. It also declares God no longer a matter of necessity, but of convenience. We conjure Him up when it suits our purposes to do so; we lay Him aside on the same basis. Most of Mr. Horowitz’s response is devoted to exploring from various angles the inappropriateness he sees in concerning ourselves with God or virtue or principle in the heat of political battle (except as necessary to maintain our faction in the coalition, like Stalin raising the cry of “Mother Russia” to rally the people against Hitler). For having done so, specifically with regard to His commandment to be honest, I am

shown, in Mr. Horowitz’s view, to be confused about the difference between tactics and strategy, to be like GOP politicians who foolishly won’t “go negative” (which may surprise readers of *CPR* the past 10 years), I am said to believe that it “is enough to win if Republicans will only stand on their principles,” I have confused “the realms of politics and religion,” I am a “purist” who does not “really want to face the real world problems that [my] purist attitude creates,” and, finally, I am marching the GOP straight into the ranks of “Hitler, Lenin, and Pol Pot” — others “who thought they were on a religious mission of social redemption.” About the only explanation for my strange objection to countenancing lying he does *not* consider is the simple one that God told us not to do it and I not only fear His punishment but observe that, as my Creator and the Creator of the universe, He surely knows better than I do the wisest way to proceed.

**B**UT THIS is by no means all Mr. Horowitz’s response ignores. We find, for instance, a confused explanation of morality, which Mr. Horowitz consigns to the “realm of religion” where we pursue “an ideal,” as opposed to the “realm of politics” where we do “the possible.” Being virtuous and right and having integrity, he says, are either good or bad depending on the context: in

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religion, they are good — “the very essence of its agendas” — but in politics, we find “a healthy development,” namely, that “compromises with the devil go on all the time, and — despite what John Kurzweil says — on both sides of the political divide.” Why is this healthy? Because “the 20th Century is littered with the corpses of people who got in the way of politicians — Hitler, Lenin, Pol Pot — who thought they were on a religious mission of social redemption.”

**W**HY ALL the hyperventilating? If he would calm down, Mr. Horowitz might notice the patent absurdity of this passage. I spend more than half my article criticizing Republicans for lying, and then he writes that, “despite what John Kurzweil says,” Republicans “compromise with the devil” as though he thinks that contradicts what I’ve said. Nowhere in this out-of-thin-air blather, which far more resembles a Ramona Ripston treatise on the Wall of Separation Doctrine than anything reasonably ascribable to a conservative writer, is the simple Western understanding of man’s moral problem: that there is good which we are free either to choose or reject, that it is wise to choose good, which includes honesty, and that failing to choose it brings evil. There is no ground anywhere in authentic Western thought for the idea of building a wall around right and wrong, sequestering consideration of them within Sabbath days, while sweeping them under the rug the rest of the week. Mr. Horowitz even attempts to transform what people normally call hypocrisy into a virtue (a virtue strangely exempt from the ban on moral concerns in politics): remembering that right and wrong, like God Himself, are matters of convenience is how we guard against the rise of mad, blood-witted tyrants.

Another conspicuous omission: Nowhere does Mr. Horowitz so much as acknowledge, much less justify, his throwing over Thomas Jefferson’s and the Founding Fathers’ specific application of the *preeminence of God’s law over political affairs* in the Declaration of Independence that is the justification for the nation’s founding. What possible conclusion does he permit except that he thinks unimportant and inapplicable the phrases: “all men are *created* equal, that they are *endowed by their Creator* with certain unalienable rights” and that “governments are instituted among men” to “secure these rights.” The Founders pronounced King George’s authority to govern them eviscerated and forfeit specifically because he had transgressed the limitations placed by God, not

men, on government. This is the American political reality conservatives exist to conserve. Now, Mr. Horowitz is free to jettison the moral, philosophical, religious, social, legal, and even political bases of America’s founding if he so chooses, but, when he does, *we* are not free to call it a mere matter of “tactics.” To countenance lying assaults our first principles, as Mr. Horowitz proves by extending his defense of it to the point of declaring religion out of bounds in politics and declaring “compromises with the devil” to be “healthy.” With reference to Rabbi Lapin’s comments, when we do that, we are not talking about tactics anymore.

Having excluded religion and the American heritage from the discussion, Mr. Horowitz finds it a small matter to dispose of Ronald Reagan’s lifetime dedication to integrity — we presume he once told lies about Iran-Contra, so that demolishes my notion that he would not approve of lying as policy. Again there is no basis outside the fever swamps of the left for the caricatured idea of morality Mr. Horowitz applies again and again: that the existence of moral failure among Republicans proves that urging them to strive for moral perfection is useless, foolish, and likely to breed the next Pol Pot. If men did not fall, we would

have no need to exhort them to virtue. The more we fall, the greater the need for the exhortation. It is as if the existence of broken bones was offered as proof that calling for doctors and hospitals was absurdly misguided. “John Kurzweil actually claims that the Republican Party is the party of ‘virtue’ ....” I said the cause of virtue provides the Republican Party a reason to *be* and that without that cause, the Party loses because the voters see it for what it then becomes: a Rube Goldberg contraption existing for no purpose except self-perpetuation. Mr. Horowitz chides me for writing that “lying is not what we expect of Republicans.” “Who is this ‘we’?” he asks. “It is certainly not the electorate, and especially not the undecided middle that decides elections.” I guess the universal perception that George Bush fell precisely for lying when he said “read my lips” must have been mistaken. On the topic of son George W. and the cocaine question, the *Wall Street Journal’s* Paul A. Gigot wrote August 20 that:

Democrats are desperate to define Republican deviancy down to Clinton levels .... All the more so because Mr. Bush’s lead in the polls is so clearly based on the American public’s desire to take a shower. In the latest “Battleground” survey, the GOP edge over Democrats on “restoring moral values” is an epic 41 percentage points. In Iowa last week, the only certain applause line from every Republican candidate was a version of, “I will restore dignity and honor to the Oval Office” .... Every Bush

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supporter I spoke with in Iowa explained that (a) he could win, and (b) he'd govern with integrity. No one cited his education or tax plans.

Democrats know this too, which is why Tom Daschle goaded the media to probe Mr. Bush's cocaine use earlier this month. The normally super-cautious Senate Democratic leader knows that *if Mr. Bush can be cut down to Clinton's moral size*, Democrats can run on peace and prosperity and keep the White House. [Emphasis added]

Mr. Gigot later explained that "Republicans can't get away with the same things Democrats can. Even if the underlying behavior is no different, the Republicans will always be scored for 'hypocrisy' because he [Bush] represents *the Party of personal responsibility*." [Emphasis added]

Who, indeed, is this "we"? Count, besides me: Paul Gigot, respondents to the "Battleground" survey, Bush's Iowa supporters, the Senate Democrat leader, and the press hoards who smelled blood in the water the minute George W. seemed caught in the merest hint of hiding the truth. Also William J. Bennett who, in a column urging George W. to answer the cocaine question, wrote: "we should want as our president a person of good character, candor, integrity." It cannot be too much to conclude that Mr. Bennett does not believe wanting such things invites another Pol Pot.

At first glance, it may seem strange that Mr. Horowitz brings out the heavy artillery just because I say we cannot countenance lying. If his main point is really just that Republicans' primary reason for losing is that they do a poor job of crafting sound bites, of marketing potent symbols that connect with The Middle at a level that will move them, and

so on, surely we can drop lying and still proceed on the basis of his advice without losing anything vital to it. But rather than say, indulgently: okay, hold onto your quaint notions about honesty if you must, but otherwise implement the approach I recommend, Mr. Horowitz instead 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. Even when we show,

with mountains of evidence, that lying is poor tactics for Republicans, he is not dissuaded. He answers it with ridicule. Again, why? Because 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. For him, there must be no rules, because rules might someday stand in the way of a maneuver he thinks might be effective. To restrain oneself in that circumstance requires faith in a reality larger than oneself and larger than politics.

As I wrote in my original article: "honesty is intrinsically important only 'under God.' By definition, if no authority exists above man, nothing exists to condemn lies or sanctify truth." Mr. Horowitz bears out this conclusion in his inability not only to see the importance of sticking to the truth, but in the scorn he heaps on the moral imperative I commend.

His advice is fatal to Republicans because it is fatal to the American proposition Republicans exist to defend: "a truth that lies beyond politics," to repeat John Courtney Murray's words quoted in my original article. The American proposition, Murray wrote, "imparts to politics a fundamental human meaning. I mean the sovereignty of God over nations as well as over individual men" — all the time, not just when convenient. Lose *that*, and you have found the real way to conjure up the next Hitler, Lenin, and Pol Pot — the exact method by which they were created in the past. CPR

## Haynes

(Continued from page 12)

balance and found wanting. Our strength can only come from unity, but we were anything but united. The Assembly Republicans and the Senate Republicans fought first within their caucus, and then with each other. In the process, no coherent argument was made for small government; no contrast was drawn with the Democrats. In the end, the last thing the public sees is a contest between Republicans over securing more money for their districts. It appears for all the world that we are pursuing an agenda of self-interest, and not policies based on principle. That is the consequence of a disunity. We are sowing the wind; I only hope that we do not reap the whirlwind. We are not doing much to avoid it. CPR



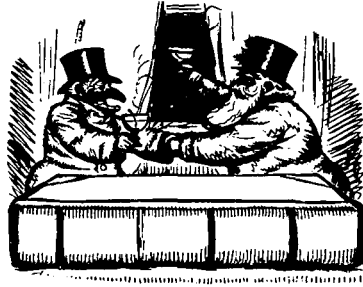
## Baldwin

(Continued from page 26)

is important for the Party; it is crucial for the nation. Republicans and the nation can use the truth as a political beacon, drawing the honest, sincere, and God-fearing home.

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## ARTS & CULTURE



C R I T I C U S

# The Squalor of Opulence

B Y G . B . T E N N Y S O N

*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city. . .*

**F**LYING INTO McCarron Airport in Las Vegas on one of those blindingly bright desert afternoons you see the Las Vegas Strip only a short distance away stretched out like the high end of the Monopoly board, with hotels piled up and packed together on Broadway and Park Place and all the rest a nondescript flatland. One knows that off in the distance are the lesser Tennessee, Atlantic, and Mediterranean Avenue areas, such as the old original downtown Las Vegas, and that farther away yet in north Vegas are the proliferating housing tracts and gated retirement enclaves lurking there like future dolmens or hecatombs in the wasteland. But it is the great pleasure domes that grab the eye and that on closer approach grow larger and larger as though they had collectively swallowed the contents of one of Alice's "Drink Me" bottles and begun swelling into immensity.

It was to one such immensity that Criticus betook himself on a warm summer week with the aim in mind of enjoying a small family reunion with three cousins suitable for the occasion, which is to say, three who

liked gambling and casinos. One, a first cousin twice removed whom Criticus had not seen for donkey's years, was celebrating his twenty-first birthday by being able to gamble legally in the gambling capital of the world. He was carded several times, once by a tart of a blackjack dealer who impertinently remarked of his driver's license, "That's a good forgery." Well, he does look young, but the help should know its place. The other two cousins, also not long seen — a first cousin *tout simple*, and her husband, hence a cousin-in-law — were seasoned gambling veterans and proved it by actually coming out somewhere near even when all was done, a considerably better record than Criticus himself could boast.

Criticus also took the occasion of visiting Las Vegas to arrange to have dinner with a longtime and rather raffish but ever good-humored friend who lives and, very occasionally, works there. We'll call him Seymour. To see him in operation one would think he was a bookie or drug runner, for he is inseparable from his mobile phone, but I discovered that the object of his endless phoning is simply to inquire after the well-being at any given moment of his girlfriend or the well-being at any given moment of his brother's dog. This, I suspect, is largely what all those other joined-at-the-ear cell phone users are up to. When I told Seymour I would be in Vegas to visit with my cousins, he took it

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