

Book Reviews

Consciousness in Action:

The Power of Beauty, Love and Courage In a Violent Time

By Andrew Beath

(Lantern Books, 2005; www.lanternbooks.com)

Order Now from Amazon.com

Andrew Beath weaves his considerable wisdom throughout this important book in juxtaposition to interviews, poetry, and the narratives of life experiences of carefully selected activists and thinkers.

The activists are progressive leaders whose lives show that courageous choices come from the heart in service to life. This book can be read and referred back to again and again because of its clear organization. Readers will want to return to its wealth of knowledge and also to the important quotes that the author has selected to support and inspire social change.

Andrew Beath guides the reader to a broader awareness of our worldview, and its consequences, through his profound insights. His focus on seven vital attributes of consciousness will help readers on their own journey to make whatever contribution they can toward the creation of a peaceful, sustainable and habitable Earth. He points out the crucial importance of personal transformation, joy and Eros (a quality of loving connection that is inherent in all beings) for anyone taking action to improve our situation on our planet. He does not avoid the pain and despair we feel about the destruction of Earth and shares his experiences, along with those of others, on how to cope and remain whole.

The author believes in “natural harmony,” which he defines as “a healthy human-god-nature relationship,” saying that connection and interdependence is its essence. This is an important book to help us to wake up from a society-induced trance where we turn away, out of fear and hopelessness, when we can make a difference through the power of beauty, love and courage in a violent time.

--Trish Corbett

The Biology of Belief

By Bruce Lipton

(www.brucelipton.com)

Order Now from Amazon.com

Bruce Lipton is a renowned cell biologist who has produced an exciting book about his ground-breaking research into the role of perception in shaping our genetic and biological life. His stunning findings show that our thoughts affect every cell in our bodies. In clear, simple language, Dr. Lipton describes with precision the molecular pathways through which this occurs. This book is a wonderful introduction to the new science of Epigenetics that is fundamentally altering our understanding of the nature of mind and matter, as well as the manner in which they interact.

The science of genetics is affecting ever more private and public corners of our lives, creating many problems along with the solutions it offers. Bruce Lipton introduces readers to the short-comings of the dominant genetic science of the day and provides a new view of the way genes function.. For him, DNA does not control our biology. Instead, genes respond to signals from outside of the cell—including the energy of our thoughts, both positive and negative.

The implications of the knowledge contained in *The Biology of Belief* are broad and deep. And Bruce Lipton has made it a pleasure to learn about the new science that is changing our world.

--Michael Mannion

The Fragrant Veil: Essential Oil Recipes to Enhance The Sensuous Pleasures of Living and Loving

By Elisabeth Millar

<http://www.fragrantveil.com>

Order Now from Amazon.com

Elisabeth Millar's exquisite book, *The Fragrant Veil*, is both a pleasure to read and a delight to put to practical use. Too many of us, too often, forget that we deserve to be loved also. Ms. Millar's easy-to-use book is a great guide to the many ways in which essential oils may be used lovingly purely for the pleasures they bring—in the bath, as facial or body lotions, or as room fragrances.

Ms. Millar provides detailed descriptions of 28 essential oils and creative suggestions for living more sensually through scent. Elisabeth Millar runs the website [fragrantveil.com](http://www.fragrantveil.com), the premier source of information on using essential oils to make everyday life more pleasurable. At this website, visitors can also find her Fragrant Veil Perfumes, which

“resurrect the 19th century art of natural perfumery.” Her products are created without synthetic scents or chemical additives.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I must admit that, although the cover of this book contains the phrase, “Scents for the Sensuous Woman,” I have used the essential oils as room fragrances when writing. The “Fragrances for Study” are recommended to help focus concentration and increase determination.

Elisabeth Millar encourages readers to “...reach out to embrace the world with our senses, and receive its wonders in return.” And there is no better way to begin than with The Fragrant Veil and the essential oils that go along with it.

--Michael Mannion

The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy

by Noreena Hertz

(The Free Press, New York, 2001)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Noreena Hertz is the Associate Director of the Centre for International Business at the University of Cambridge. This brilliant author, academic and broadcaster is one of the leading voices of the younger generation on economic globalization. She has written a passionate book that is unabashedly on the side of people, democracy and justice. It is a call to arms and action while there is still time.

In the United States, 20% of children live in poverty. In New York City, whose mayor has a net worth equal to the city's budget gap of \$4-5 billion dollars, 20% of the people earn less than the poverty level of \$10,700. Bill Gates has accumulated as much wealth as have the bottom 50% of the American public. Hertz believes there has been “a silent nullification of the social contract.”

“The political state has become the corporate state,” she writes, not hedging her view. She recognizes that we are at a critical juncture in our life here on Earth. “If we do not challenge the Silent Takeover,” Hertz says, “...then all is lost.”

What is The Silent Takeover? It is the seizure of government, media and “the commons” by corporate interests for their own economic ends. The corporate media do not report on this phenomenon, so the general public is unaware that it is taking place. Younger people are learning about The Silent Takeover on the Internet, which offers an end-run around the corporate media to those willing to put in the effort to learn what is happening in our world.

Hertz believes that The Silent Takeover began during the Reagan-Thatcher years. Nearly 80 years ago, President Calvin Coolidge said that the business of America is business. So we know that government and private commercial interests have been in league long before the 1980s. However, the depth and breadth of the interconnections between the corporate world and the world of government have increased to dangerous levels. In the U.S. and around the world, governments are now loyal to corporations, not to the public. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln feared that the corporation would become the greatest threat to the American democracy. His fears have been realized.

Recently, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas—the author of legislation that made criminal corporate activities such as Enron's possible—was rewarded for his work on behalf of his corporate masters after leaving the Senate. He was given a cushy job at the investment bank UBS Warburg, in the industry he served so well while supposedly serving the public. There are hundreds and hundreds of such seamy examples of government officials serving corporations at the expense of the public and then receiving great financial rewards when they leave government.

Hertz understands that the corporation is now king and the state is its servant. A nation-state like the United States that serves corporate needs instead of public needs fits the definition of a fascist state as it existed in Italy under Mussolini. Who actually won the Second World War after all?

Silent Theft: The Plunder of Our Common Wealth

By David Bollier

(Routledge, New York, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The means of usurping “the commons” are many. Busy-ness enterprises the world over are using clever, obscure and outrageous methods to seize ownership of what belongs to all of the people, and all of the other life forms, on Earth. What are the commons? Bollier includes such everyday things as water, forests, minerals, copyrights, government research, the TV and radio airwaves, the Internet and public spaces. Citizens own these things, not corporations—in theory. In practice, corrupt government officials are participating in the looting of these public treasures in giant “corporate welfare” giveaways.

Day after day; week after week; year after year, Americans are losing the right to control dozens of such “commons” that they actually own. This brazen theft can take place in the open because few Americans have ever heard of “the commons” or know that it is owned by the public. Corporate media brainwashing has been so successful that millions of Americans see themselves as “consumers” (an ugly term if you really think about it) who define themselves by their purchasing power, what they own and the products they use,

and not as human beings. Too many Americans are now go through life in a trance. They have abdicated power over their own lives. They do not see, and do not want to see, what is going on around them.

According to Bollier, we are in the midst of a massive business seizure of our common treasures. Their government is complicit in this robbery and individuals in government benefit personally through a legally sanctioned form of bribery that allows vast sums of money to flow from corporations to politicians. There are very few on the public scene to defend the commons against corporate predators and their governmental allies. Like Hertz, Bollier understands that this corporate-government “axis of economic evil” is undermining our democracy.

Rampant, unfettered commercialism has become our ideology. After 9/11, what did Bush-Laden urge us to do? Shop! Keep spending! What does this crass ideology lead to? Bollier suggests it results in the siphoning of billions of dollars from vital environmental and social programs; reducing competition; increasing prices; and replacing open, democratic decision-making processes with closed, secret, corporate decision-making.

Market values and the view that everything is a commodity lead us to such grotesque situations as sending our children to schools that inundate them with advertising and then sell them unhealthy junk food; to corporate control of fresh water, which is essential to all life; to the forced distribution of unwanted bioengineered foods; and many other practices that endanger the survival of humanity and all other animal and plant species on earth.

What can we do? Bollier believes the first step is to recognize what “the commons” is and understand that it belongs to all of us. The second step is to learn how to take back control from those who have plundered our common heritage. We need to learn to restore democratic, humanistic concerns to public policymaking. We are all connected. By reclaiming our common wealth, Bollier asserts, we can reinvigorate our social commonwealth.

Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth can do much to help people see what needs to be done and how to do it. Bollier writes, “Honoring the commons is not a matter of moral exhortation. It is a practical necessity.”

Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water

By Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke
(The New Press, New York, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Maude Barlow is the national volunteer chair of Canada's largest public advocacy organization, the Council of Canadians (www.canadians.org; see the Blue Planet project). Tony Clarke is the director of the Polaris Institute and chairs the Committee on Corporations for the International Forum on Globalization. Together they have produced a powerful book that deserves a wide audience. Along with many others, they are sounding an alarm, loud and clear: the global fresh water crisis is a threat to planetary survival.

Water privatization is going on quietly, in the open, with few noticing or understanding the implications. In England and France, where water privatization is well underway, rates are soaring and shortages have been severe. Coke, Pepsi, Perrier, Evian and Naya are among the big players in an almost completely unregulated market. They are buying up fresh water rights and depleting crucial supplies.

Water consumption is now growing at twice the rate of population growth. The world is running out of fresh water. This has already led to international conflicts, great human suffering, and tremendous harm to the other life forms on Earth. Within 25 years, 50-66% of humanity will lack sufficient fresh water.

Until recently, access to fresh water was considered a human right. In March 2000, at "The Second World Water Forum" held at The Hague in The Netherlands, it was decided that access to fresh water is not a human right, but only a human need. This small change in language has allowed water to be considered legally as a commodity in the global marketplace and opened the way to the corporate theft of the world's water.

Governments around the world have abdicated their responsibilities to protect the water supply. Lawbreakers in legislatures in the U.S. and abroad have given legal sanction to this outrageous crime against humanity. The WTO, IMF, World Bank and other transnational organizations fund and support the corporate theft of "the commons." If fresh water can be treated as a commodity, why not fresh air as well?

Profiting from the world's water crisis is the openly stated goal of the corporate predators. Those in power think the debate is over and the battle won. They believe they can now steal the world's water in broad daylight with the support of corrupt political leaders. They know the corporate media will not alert the public.

However, courageous people like Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke are getting the message out and waking people up. To them, water belongs to the Earth and all of the species on our planet. Water must be preserved in the public domain for all time. Access to clean water must be recognized as a fundamental human right, not as a human need that can be exploited by commercial interests. The authors recognize that a radical restructuring of societies and lifestyles is urgently needed to reverse the drying of the Earth's surface.

Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water provides crucial information that people need to know. This book also can help teach ordinary citizens all over the world how to maintain or take back control of local fresh water systems, saving themselves before it is too late.

Water: The Fate of Our Most Precious Resource

By Marq DeVilliers

(Houghton Mifflin, New York, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

As a child, the author learned that no one owns the world's water. It is part of "the global commons," he was taught. "I thought when I started this book," he wrote, "that I understood water. But I didn't...I didn't understand the wholesale assault our species is making on the system that sustains us."

Civilizations rise, prosper and fall in large part because of the presence or absence of sufficient fresh water. Our culture, DeVilliers states, is characterized by a reckless and wasteful use of water, such as on golf courses across America. Water can no longer be taken for granted. Aquifers and water tables are dropping worldwide. Pollution is destroying clean water on a planetary scale. Deserts are spreading; forests are dying; drought is increasing. Drought has doomed earlier civilizations. Are we next?

Today, one child on Earth dies every 8 seconds from drinking contaminated water. Almost none of the water in the world's major rivers is fit to drink. Over 1 billion people have no access to clean drinking water. That number rises daily. Nearly 3 billion people have no access to sanitation services.

This book was originally published in the UK under the title *Water Wars: Is the World Running Out of Water?* Water wars have already been fought and bigger ones loom ahead. More than 300 major river systems cross national boundaries. Turkey is now making water management plans that threaten the stability of Iraq and Syria. China has 22% of the world's population, but only 6% of the world's fresh water supplies. How will China get the water it needs? Hot spots for water wars include the Golan Heights and Gaza; India and Pakistan; Iraq, Syria and Turkey; Argentina and Brazil; Mexico and the United States. Within the U.S., states have begun fighting with one another over water rights, politically, not militarily.

There are too many people. There is too much waste of water. There is too much pollution of our water. To DeVilliers, corporate rapists may not be as deadly as the daily destructive actions of billions of people in the United States, Canada, Mexico, the European Union,

Africa, South America, Australia and Asia.

Human beings can live for one month without food. They can live for only one week without water. How many billions of people will have to experience that long, excruciating week before humanity changes its ways?

The author also recommends *Last Oasis* by Sandra Postel and *Hydropolitics* by Leif Ohlsson for readers who want to learn more about this critical issue.

Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It

By Paul Simon

(Welcome Rain, New York, 1998)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Paul Simon, former U.S. Senator from Illinois, warns that a water crisis of catastrophic proportions is at hand. He urges that we take action now. He dealt with water crises in the Senate as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Simon recognizes that our political leadership is short-sighted and is refusing to face what he calls “the most devastating natural disaster since history has been accurately recorded.”

In 2002, nearly 50% of the United States experienced severe to extreme drought. California, Texas and Florida have been experiencing water crises for years and in more severe ways than most other states. Drought has persisted for over three years now, through all seasons, from Florida to Maine. In the summer of 2002, forests made kiln-dry after prolonged drought, burned from Arizona to Oregon. And natural disasters such as these are compounded by human waste and folly.

By 2025, 3 billion people will live in regions of severe water shortage. By 2025, in the Mideast and North Africa, there will be an 80% less fresh water than there was in 1960. The life-threatening water crisis upon us is not reported to the public. Instead, it is lost amidst the media barrage of pseudo-news.

There has been 10,000 times more coverage of “OJ” than the water crisis; there has been 1,000,000 times more coverage of “Monica” than of the water crisis. While the corporate media coverage focuses on trivia, 9,500 children die each day because of lack of water or water-borne diseases; 3,200,000 children die each year from water-related diarrhea. Water-borne schistosomiasis kills 200,000 people a year and debilitates 200,000,000. In Africa, 40% of the population will suffer severe or fatal water-related illness in the next 20 years.

In the United States, water in the corn belt is dangerously contaminated with agricultural

pesticides and herbicides, posing a severe danger for children in particular. In the 1990s, in Milwaukee, contamination of the water supply killed over 100 people and resulted in over 4,400 hospitalizations.

Human beings are 70% water. With a 1% deficiency of fresh water, we become thirsty; with 5%, we develop a slight fever; at 8%, our glands stop producing saliva; by 19%, we cannot walk; a 12% deficiency in water results in death. Less than 1% of the water on Earth is usable fresh water. And we are wasting it hour by hour. As supplies diminish worldwide, Simon asserts, life span will decline and wars will spread.

But there is still hope. Simon believes that the United States has the resources and capability to lead other nations toward a solution to the water crisis as a planet. The big question is-will we?

Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It offers practical steps people can take, personally and politically, to prevent the catastrophe ahead. But we cannot move inch by inch. We need to take big strides, Simon warns, or a very grim reality will hit us, all of us.

Every Drop for Sale: Our Desperate Battle Over Water in a World About to Run Out

By Jeffrey Rothfeder

(Tarcher/Putnam, New York, 2001)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The author, a former editor at Business Week, is now a national editor at Bloomberg News. He has reported on water issues since 1979. Water is essential to all life on Earth but, writes Rothfeder, "we humans don't have a clue about its true nature." This book is an evaluation of a world "already in crisis over water."

What are the signs that a crisis is underway? In the U.S., 37% of fresh water fish are at risk of extinction, as are 51% of crayfish, 40% of amphibians, and 67% of fresh water mussels, all as a result of poisonous agricultural run-off.

The High Plains Ogallala aquifer, which runs from South Dakota to Texas, is being used 8 times faster than it can be refilled. Atlanta, Florida and Southern California are "tapping out" through overuse, misuse and mismanagement. By 2025, if it continues to grow at the present rate, Atlanta could have no water left. States are fighting over water rights to resources they share. How profligate are U.S. citizens when it comes to water? One flush of the toilet equals 50% of the minimum daily requirement for sustaining human life in many parts of the world.

The waste of the world's water is not confined to the U.S. Mexico City uses 50-80% more water each year than can be replaced. In Africa, the aquifers barely refill. Lake Chad in Africa once covered 10,000 square miles. It has been pumped dry. In Beijing, the water table has dropped 37 feet in the last 40 years. In the UK, 30% of the rivers are down to one-third of their average depth. The Aral Sea in the former Soviet Union was once the largest body of fresh water outside of North America. It is now one of the most poisonous, polluted areas on the planet, reduced to three small, salty contaminated bodies of water. In Poland, 75% of the rivers are so polluted they are unfit even for industrial use. Such examples are, unfortunately, legion.

Less than 1% of water on earth can be used by humans and less than 0.0008% is now fit for human consumption. And this amount is dwindling at a terrifying speed. In dollar terms, water is now as valuable as oil. Enter the transnationals.

Water commodification and the theft of the world's water supplies by transnationals is well underway. It may not be too long before only those with money will have enough water. Water is a matter of life and death and "water starvation" has already led to riots, civilian deaths and casualties, and even wars.

Every Drop for Sale: Our Desperate Battle Over Water in a World About to Run Out is an important contribution to our understanding of the scope of the water crisis. It provides information needed to educate people and help them to take effective action. The author also recommends the website of the Foundation for World Health and Development at <http://www.fwhd.org>

Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit

By Vandana Shiva

(South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Vandana Shiva is a world-renowned environmental thinker and activist. She is a leader in the International Forum on Globalization. In 1993, she won the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize. Before she became a social activist, she was one of India's leading physicists. She is the author of many excellent books, among them *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* and *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*.

On April 16, 2001, *The New York Times* declared in a headline "For Texas, Now, Water, Not Oil, Is Liquid Gold." The increasing value of water, and battles over it, is new to most Americans. For Vandana Shiva, water wars are not new. They surround us, unrecognized. To her, they are part of paradigm wars of perception as much as traditional armed military conflicts.

In her excellent book, she tells how she was served a bottle of Pepsi's Aquafina brand of water while on the way to a conference on water. To her, the bottle of water represents one worldview, the one that is creating the corporate privatization of water. In Japan, during a drought, water was given for free to the thirsty as part of an ancient tradition. To Shiva, this behavior also represents a worldview, one that is quite different from that of the transnational corporations.

In one view, water is a commodity, a natural resource to be used to make a profit. The other sees water as something sacred, to be used for the preservation of life. For Shiva, this is the conflict, a battle between a mechanized, technological, polluting, non-sustainable culture versus a civilization based on soil, mud, water, renewal and rejuvenation.

Shiva asks the reader to imagine one billion Indians forsaking their ancient tradition of giving water freely and instead drinking water from one billion plastic bottles of water sold by Pepsi, Coke, Perrier or any of the other international corporations. Here we have complex cultures and ways of living is captured in something as basic as our relationship with water.

Shiva believes that paradigm wars are occurring in every culture all across the planet. On all continents, diverse, open cultures of sharing "the commons" are coming into conflict with closed corporate cultures of greed and theft of "the commons." The fate of humanity, and of billions of other life forms on Earth, hangs in the balance.

In this time of concern over terrorism in the United States, Shiva writes of her concern over the corporate terrorism, backed by armed force, that is causing great harm to the people of Earth and all other living things. She writes passionately about the terror of technology and destructive development, such as the terror of fossil fuel pollution, which is causing the destruction of forests, the contamination of water resources and contributing to climate change. She sees clearly that terrorists hide, not only in Afghan caves, but also, in corporate boardrooms.

Today, 20% of the Earth's population uses 80% of the Earth's resources. "We cannot survive as a species," Shiva writes, "if greed is privileged and protected and the economics of the greedy sets the rules for how we live and die." The water crisis we are facing is invisible to many people in the developed nations. However, it may be the most severe aspect of the terrible environmental devastation of our planet. We have destroyed the ecology of water, the basis of life.

Since 1970, global per capita water supply has fallen by 33%. And this process is picking up its pace. Globalization has reversed environmental gains of the last 30 years; mining, deforestation and destructive water projects have all returned with a vengeance. Globalization is also reversing the local laws people have enacted to protect their water, air, food, health and environment.

What can be done? Shiva believes that only direct action by citizens to force corporations to stop their destruction has ever worked. Each of us-each and every one of us-is responsible

for protecting and preserving Life on our planet. What can make people change and take positive action? Shiva writes, “My own transition from physics to ecology was spawned by the disappearance of Himalayan streams in which I played as a child.”

Her powerful, passionate prose may be what shakes many readers out of their trance and leads them to take action now to protect their own lives, the lives of their families and loved ones, the lives of all the life forms on Earth—and the life of the Earth itself.

Water Wars: Drought, Flood, Folly and the Politics of Thirst

By Diane Raines Ward

(Riverhead Books/Penguin Putman, New York, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The author, along with her husband, now runs a nonprofit organization that is devoted to conservation efforts in India. Her environmental concerns are evident on every page of this important book. Ms. Raines asks tough, basic questions: Why have we allowed something so precious, elemental and vital to our existence to reach such a catastrophic state? Can we change the course we are on? If we can, how do we do it? *Water Wars* seeks to give the reader the answers to those questions.

Her book, which is based on 10 years of research that took her to all five continents, brought her to the world's embattled water regions. Raines provides an intimate look at the people who are trying to ensure that the disaster just ahead does not strike us. She tells the big story through the individual stories of the men and women struggling to protect our water so it is available for people all over the planet for generations to come.

We live in contradictory times. Every year, 23,000 square miles of our planet become desert while devastating floods occur with increasing frequency. In 1999, in Orissa, India, more than 10,000 people drowned in flooding. In 2000, in Mozambique, thousands died in floods and over 50,000 became homeless.

The ever-expanding population of Earth puts more and more people at risk. In 1830, there were 1 billion people on Earth; by 1930, 2 billion; by 1974, 3 billion; and in 2000, the figure reached 6 billion. One New York City is born on Earth every month! Over-population is the cause of much pollution, scarcity and resource depletion. In the 20th century, 50% of the world's wetlands were destroyed. Today, 50% of the world's rivers are polluted or going dry. Fresh water systems worldwide are losing their abilities to support life-human, animal and plant.

There is no substitute for water. There is no alternative fluid that can replace it; no technological fix that can save us. Water is limited and competition for it is fierce and

growing. In Bombay, local gangsters are chaining water taps and extorting money from people for water. International criminals in their coats and their ties are stealing the world's water, aided and abetted by the world's governments. While it was engaged in rigging the electricity market in California, Enron came perilously close to owning the rights to the water for Southern California.

Water shortages are felt far from their sources. The draining of the Everglades has changed the climate of Miami. German pollution of the Rhine has affected The Netherlands. Aquifers are so depleted that the ground is collapsing underneath Mexico City, Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta.

Water Wars: Drought, Flood, Folly and the Politics of Thirst provides valuable information to guide us in changing the path we are on. It should be read now, while there is still time to prevent a disaster of unprecedented magnitude.

Into the Buzzsaw: Leading Journalists Expose the Myth of a Free Press

Edited by Kristina Borjesson

(Prometheus Books, Amherst, N.Y., 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The editor of this volume is an Emmy and Murrow award-winning journalist who has worked for CBS and CNN. Eighteen award-winning journalists joined forces to produce this book documenting the present state of American journalism.

Into the Buzzsaw details what happens to journalists who try to bring the public—not all the news that fits—but the news that Americans really need. All too frequently, American journalists who try to report controversial stories find themselves mowed down by what the call “the buzzsaw,” that is government and corporate collaboration to enforce the censorship of stories that threaten to affect profits or the politically powerful. When corporate media self-censorship fails, the government will step in directly. In this book, the term “the buzzsaw” is defined as “a powerful system of censorship in this country that is revealed to those reporting on sensitive stories, usually having to do with high-level government or corporate malfeasance.”

Ever since the Reagan administration, the major American media outlets increasingly have become the lapdogs of the powerful. The media are no longer a watchdog protecting democracy and the public interest. The networks, *CNN*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* now play the role that *Pravda* and *Izvestia* once played in the Soviet Union. They are the mouthpieces for the views of those in power.

The essays in this book invite the reader to face the problem of censorship in the United

States head-on. Brave journalists tell important stories in this collection, among them how publishers regularly kill off their own books through a process called “privishing;” the connections of the CIA to the international drug trade; the real story about the dangers of Monsanto's growth hormone; and how CNN reports the news more honestly in Europe than in America.

Ever wonder why the corporate media provided incessant, irrelevant coverage of Monica Lewinsky, Paula Jones, Michael Jackson, Madonna et al and no coverage of the privatization of our water or the radical biotech transformation of the food you eat, and that you feed to your infants and children? Read this book.

Forbidden Truth: U.S.-Taliban Secret Oil Diplomacy and the Failed Hunt for Bin Laden

By Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquie
(Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, New York, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

For many months after its publication in France, this explosive book was widely discussed in the press around the world—the Mideast, India, Russia, the European Union. But not in the United States. It was extensively reported on in Ireland, the UK, Canada and other English-language publications. But not in the United States. The near-complete lack of attention to *Forbidden Truth* by the corporate media since its release in the U.S. is just the latest example of the self-censorship that prevails in the major American media outlets. However, *Forbidden Truth* is in some bookstores and available on the Internet now. It should be read by everyone who cares about this country and the people of Earth.

The edition available to Americans is an expanded version of the original book. The authors—a leading French journalist and an intelligence expert—spent three years investigating American attempts to stabilize Afghanistan under the Clinton and Bush administrations. Why was the U.S. government so interested in bringing order to this nation? So American energy companies could build a pipeline there.

The authors ask and answer critical questions that will reshape the readers views on 9/11 and the U.S. government's involvement with terrorism and terrorists in a fundamental way.

- Was the American government involved in secret negotiations with the Taliban that involved Taliban betrayal of Bin Laden?
- Did American negotiators threaten to bomb the Taliban during these discussions, saying “Either you accept our carpet of gold, or we'll carpet you with bombs” ?

- Have US-Saudi oil and other business connections—such as the Bush family-Bin Laden family financial links through The Carlyle Group and the present business ventures of Bush sons in Saudi Arabia—hampered American attempts to defeat Al Qaeda and find Bin Laden?

If you get your news from ABC etc., you won't learn the answers to these questions. This critical information apparently is not fit for *The New York Times* either. You owe it to yourself, your children and everyone you care about, to read what these authors have to say about American oil interests, the financial connections between the Bush and Bin Laden families through The Carlyle Group, and the ongoing links between the Bush family and Saudi Arabia's rulers, who still support terrorism against Americans. After reading this book, you will not look at our nation's leaders in the same way ever again.

War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know

By William Rivers Pitt with Scott Ritter

(Context Books, New York, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The author of this “instant book” clearly demonstrates that the case for war against Iraq has not been made. Why did he write this excellent primer? “This book was written,” Pitt wrote, “to provide a compendium of the 'stubborn facts' that surround this dubious war with Iraq.” Scott Ritter, former UN weapons inspector, is a card-carrying Republican who voted for Bush in 2000. He spent seven years in Iraq removing weapons of mass destruction, as well as their production facilities, equipment and delivery systems. He believes there is no basis for war on the grounds put forward by the Bush administration. Read this book, find out why Ritter and Pitt hold the views they do, and then make your own informed decision.

Fallout: The Environmental Consequences of the World Trade Center Collapse

By Juan Gonzalez

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It may turn out that former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani will be remembered over the decades. But it may not be as the super-hero who defeated the “Squeegee Men;” as the tireless promoter of “the world's greatest city;” as the moralistic art critic who took his adulteress mistress to an art exhibit and then was offended by the immorality of the paintings; or as the man who “Disneyfied” Times Square.

Instead, he may be remembered because of the illness and premature death of thousands of New Yorkers who returned to lower Manhattan to work and live too soon, after being told by Giuliani that air “contaminants are either not detectable or are below the Agency's (i.e., EPA) concern levels.”

According to *New York Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez, when Giuliani made this reassuring remark, EPA tests actually showed high concentrations of toxic materials in the air in lower Manhattan, such as asbestos, dioxins, and heavy metals. The EPA decided not to test indoor air levels. Private companies did perform indoor tests and found astronomically high levels of harmful contaminants.

Giuliani, Pataki, Bush's EPA director Christie Whitman and other government officials will most likely be long associated with the profound, negative, long-term health consequences for New Yorkers of their misleading statements about the levels of toxicity in lower Manhattan after the terrorist attack. Along with political leaders, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Department of Labor; the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; and the New York City Department of Health all made reassuring statements to the public about the safety of the air and water. Others will pay for their false reassurances.

Even as they made these statements, officials were aware of troubling findings that contradicted their remarks. Christie Whitman's EPA conducted extensive clean-up efforts at its own Manhattan offices and then withheld documents about its clean-up efforts from the public. She and her agency knew things were far worse than their public statements made them appear to be. They made sure to protect themselves, while citizens were exposed to harm.

To people like Giuliani, Pataki, Bush et al, it was more important that there be the appearance of a “return to normalcy,” that people get back to work and start buying things, than that citizens be told the truth about the environmental consequences of the collapse of the Twin Towers.

The miserable failure of the New York press to dig out the true facts about this disaster is, sadly, a “dog bites man” story. For decades, the New York and U.S. corporate media have missed or intentionally ignored almost every significant story that has come along. Fortunately, Guzman has provided the investigative journalism that is needed. This book should be read by every New Yorker and every American.

Perhaps the story Gonzalez tells will wake up readers and inspire a healthy dose of skepticism—not cynicism—about every statement made by public officials concerning the environment, public health and safety, national security, terrorism and war. If it were widely read, *Fallout: The Environmental Consequences of the World Trade Center Collapse* could even inspire a rational public response from the people of New York and the United States.

The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany

Editor's Note

By Michael Mannion

In 2002, a new film, *Amen*, by the acclaimed filmmaker Costa-Gavras was released in the United States. It vanished quickly and was little noted by reviewers. The drama, by the award-winning director of such films as *Z* and *Missing*, was based on a controversial play by Rolf Hocchuth, and was clearly out-of-sync with our times.

In 1962, Hocchuth's play, *The Deputy*, a powerful drama that towers over most other theatrical works of the period, caused a firestorm in Europe by charging that Pope Pius XII was complicit in the Holocaust. When the play was staged in the United States a few years later, controversy erupted in America as well.

The Holocaust took place in countries that had been largely Roman Catholic for many centuries. Some of the worst atrocities occurred, not in Germany, but in such devout Catholic countries as Austria and Poland. It seems only logical and necessary for historians and artists to investigate the period in question to see if there is a link between age-old Catholic-Christian attitudes toward Jews and the destruction of European Jewry in the 1930s and 1940s.

For over 50 years, The Vatican has been offended at the mere suggestion of connections between Roman Catholic teachings and hatred of Jews or between the actions and non-actions of the Vatican and the "Final Solution" under Hitler. With a resounding NO, the Vatican denies any responsibility for the extermination of Europe's Jews. In truly Jesuitical language, the Church concedes that while some Catholic leaders may have expressed opinions that could be termed anti-Judaism, none held views that were indicative of anti-Semitism.

To more objective eyes, the Vatican's claims of innocence appear to be nothing more than wishful thinking. As a child in Catholic schools in New York City in the 1950s, I was taught that Jews were Christ-killers. We were told that to attend a ceremony in a Jewish temple was a mortal sin, punishable by damnation forever and ever to the burning fires of hell. To marry a Jew was also a mortal sin punished by God with damnation-unless the Catholic raised the children as Catholics and converted the Jewish partner to Catholicism.

Anti-Semitism was not confined to Catholic schools. It made its appearance in sermons by priests, many of whom used such expressions as "to Jew 'em down" to describe haggling over prices. It was commonplace to hear a Catholic New Yorker in my neighborhood say, "Hitler wasn't wrong; he just didn't go far enough." Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, the rabid anti-Semitic radio priest Father Coughlin (the Rush Limbaugh of his day) and Senator Joseph McCarthy were all heroes to many Catholic adults during my childhood in New York.

Where did these ideas come from? The leaders of the Catholic Church have long warned

their "sheep" of the Jewish peril. Few are aware that the virulent Catholic Inquisition-which burned Giordano Bruno alive at the stake; jailed and suppressed Galileo; and murdered hundreds of thousands of nature-loving women as witches-continued to plague mankind in Italy as late as 1858. Few know that it was not Hitler and the Nazis who first forced Jews to wear a yellow star on their clothing as identification. It was the Papacy that led the way.

For centuries, the popes and cardinals have taught that Jews were greedy and merciless; were trying to control the world; killed Christ; were unpatriotic; and were a "foreign body" that threatened every society in which they lived. The Catholic Church taught that Jews should be restricted by special laws that affect only them and that Jews should be isolated from general society. The Catholic Church fought against all rights for Jews on every continent.

All of the above was actively promulgated by the Catholic hierarchy long before Hitler emerged on the social scene. It is apparent to many serious historians that the teachings of the popes helped make the extermination of the Jews possible.

And let's not forget that Hitler was a Roman Catholic who was never once condemned by name by the Vatican for his crimes against the Jews in particular and against humanity in general. In the ground-breaking book *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* by Guenter Lewy (McGraw-Hill, 1964) the author asks "Is there any significance in the fact that Adolph Hitler, a baptized Catholic, spent his early years in Austria where the Vatican-supported anti-Semitic Christian Social movement was then so active? Hitler himself admitted to being inspired by its leader, Karl Lueger." (p.10) It is stunning that 50% of the Holocaust took place in Austria, which composed only 10% of the population of the Nazi state.

Hitler assumed complete power on January 30, 1933 and became Chancellor of the German Republic. On February 27, the Nazis burned down the Reichstag and blamed it on the Communists. New elections and legal oppression of dissent and political opponents followed. One month later, on March 28, the German Catholic leadership withdrew its ban against membership in the Nazi Party for Catholics. Only weeks earlier, Catholics had been told by the very same Church leaders that they must vote against Hitler. These Church officials were now instructing their "sheep" to be loyal and obedient to Hitler.

Also in March 1933, the Vatican became the first government to recognize officially the legitimacy of the Hitler regime. The Concordat of 1933 made it apparent to all concerned that the Vatican did not take a hostile attitude toward Hitler. The agreement conferred legitimacy on the Nazi government. Under the terms of the Concordat, the Vatican was assured its property and wealth would be secure under the Nazi regime and the Hitler government agreed to continue to pay subsidies to the Church. In addition, the independence of the Catholic school system was protected from the Nazis and Catholic parents could choose to send their children to Catholic schools instead of state schools.

In return, the Catholic Church taught obedience to Hitler. Article 32 of the Concordat gave Hitler what he really wanted: the exclusion of the Catholic clergy from all political activity. Catholic clergy were forbidden to be political candidates, political office-holders or to

support any politicians. The Church maintained friendly relations with Mussolini's fascist government in Italy; Franco's fascist government in Spain; and Hitler's Nazi government in Germany. This is not surprising. For millennia, the Catholic Church has been the arch-enemy of human freedom in all of its aspects, individual and societal.

Guenter Lewy noted, "Finally one is inclined to conclude that the Pope and his advisers-influenced by a long tradition of moderate anti-Semitism so widely accepted in Vatican circles-did not view the plight of the Jews with a real sense of urgency and moral outrage...It is a conclusion difficult to avoid..." (pp. 304-305)

Over 40 years ago, Guenter Lewy and Rolf Hocchuth were lonely voices speaking the truth about the activities of the Roman Catholic church before and during the Hitler era. In the last few years, a number of excellent books have been published that support the findings of these two brave writers.

In the Clinton years in America, the phrase "Don't ask, don't tell" became popular as a means of avoiding truthful answers about sexual orientation. In our era, a more appropriate phrase might be, "Don't ask, don't know." Far too many Americans today act as if asking questions is itself unpatriotic. However, the books reviewed below ask-and answer-many difficult questions about human history.

Although these questions and answers specifically concern Nazi Germany and the Catholic Church, they are about issues we face today: the fear of authority ingrained in almost all of us, the prejudices and hatreds just below the surface in individuals and societies, and the powerful destructive drives that can be unleashed in a nation when the public empowers dishonest and deluded leaders. The Nazi era presents us with lessons that are crucial and relevant to our lives in the United States today. Will we learn those lessons or repeat the errors of the past?

The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism by David I. Kertzer (Knopf, 2001)
Order Now from Amazon.com

This thorough study of crucial and previously concealed documents in the Vatican's secret archives shows how the Catholic Church helped to create the Holocaust through its consistent anti-Semitism over the centuries. Its attacks on Jews were particularly severe in the 19th and 20th centuries. The author was given access to these secret archives by Pope John Paul II. Kertzer is not an anti-Catholic scholar. However, the evidence he gathered demonstrates convincingly how the demonization of Jews by the Catholic Church laid the groundwork for the Holocaust in Europe. This book is the work of a superb historian who is in command of difficult facts.

Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy by Susan Zuccotti (Yale University Press, 2000)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

When asked why Pope Pius XII was silent in the face of the extermination of the Jews, apologists for the papacy often claim that the Catholic Church was quite active in its efforts to protect Jews. Stories of good and decent monks, priests, bothers and nuns who helped individuals, families or small groups of Jews are recounted.

However, it remains a fact that Pius XII did nothing to help. It is also clear from this author's scholarship, and the excellent work of other historians, that anti-Semitism was rampant in the Vatican. When the Vatican did help Jews, it helped mostly Jewish people who had converted to Catholicism. In contrast, in October 1943, when over 1,000 Jews were deported to their deaths by Germans in the Pope's own diocese of Rome, Pius XII said nothing. In fact, this pope never even used the word "Jews" in his public speeches. For him, papal political interests were placed above all else, particularly challenging the power of the Fascist or Nazi states. Pius XII never denounced the Holocaust or denounced Hitler by name. According to the author, as of 2003, the Catholic Church has not yet dealt honestly with its actions in Italy and Germany under Mussolini and Hitler. This is an excellent book, thorough in its scholarship.

Hitler's Pope-The Secret History of Pius XII by John Cornwell (Viking Penguin, 1999)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Author Cromwell began his excellent book as a defense of Pius XII. But something unexpected happened along the way. "By the middle of 1997," he wrote, "nearing the end of my research, I found myself in a state I can only describe as moral shock. The material I had gathered, taking the more extensive view of Pacelli's life, amounted not to an exoneration but to a wider indictment." (p. viii)

According to the author, Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) drew the Church into complicity with the darkest forces of our era. Why? He did so in his bid for unprecedented papal power. Cornwell also documents Pacelli's deep anti-Semitism, which was apparent in his attitudes and behavior from his earliest years. It is a tribute to the author that he does not flinch from the painful truths he discovered, which were so unlike what he expected to find, concerning a man who is now being promoted for sainthood by Pope John Paul II, another man intensely interested in expanding the worldly power of the papacy.

A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (Knopf, 2002)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The message of Jesus Christ was "Love one another as I have loved you." The message of the heirs of Christ over the millennia has been, according to Goldhagen, that the Jews are "Christ-killers, children of the devil, desecrators and defilers of all goodness." The historical record, including the Vatican's own publications and archives, support this view.

Over the last 2,000 years, it is clear that Christianity has betrayed its own essential message of love and regularly violated its own moral principles. The history of the Catholic Church's relations with the Jews is characterized by numerous crimes, murders, pogroms, and finally, the Holocaust. The author asks, regarding Christians, especially Roman Catholics, "What must a religion of love and goodness do to confront its history of hatred and harm..." In his opinion, Christians must face three big questions: Who did what? Why did they do it? In what ways are they culpable? These three questions are also explored in the author's earlier book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*.

Goldhagen confronts the Catholic Church with these questions, trying to bring it to a vital "moral reckoning" with its past behavior, namely, allowing or abetting the Holocaust. Many in the Church argue still that more Jews would have suffered if the Pope had spoken out against Hitler and that doing nothing was the best course. To Goldhagen, and many in the world today who hold a wide range of religious beliefs, or no religious beliefs at all, this view of the Church's behavior is not acceptable.

Goldhagen offers both a powerful indictment of the Catholic Church and a way for it to acknowledge its "sins" and seek forgiveness.

Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (Knopf, 1996)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

In this powerful book, the author interviewed the men and women who carried out the Holocaust. He did not focus on "the usual suspects," that is, monstrous SS officers or sadistic concentration camp guards. Rather, he spoke with the average men and women who enacted all of the Nazi plans, including the extermination of the Jews. According to Goldhagen, a long-standing, deep-rooted and pervasive anti-Semitism existed in the average person and that played a key role in the brutal behavior manifested toward the Jews.

By bringing us face to face with the actual perpetrators of the Final Solution, Goldhagen frees us from the false image of the Holocaust as the province of "a few madmen" and

confronts us clearly with the more troubling reality, that the Holocaust in Europe arose from within the average person, as did the mass murders in the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda in the decades that followed. No nation on earth should feel that "it can't happen here." The conditions that created the human beings who were capable of carrying out the Holocaust are present everywhere on earth. Everywhere.

Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killings by James Waller (Oxford University Press, 2002)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The author is Professor and Chair of the Psychology Department at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington. He has written two previous books on racism in the United States. The dedication that opens this book is powerful and a clear guide to his thinking on the subject. *Becoming Evil* is dedicated to the more than 100 million men, women and children who met violent death in the 20th century at the hands of fellow human beings.

Too often, we look for "monsters," "new Hitlers," or "cruel, unhuman, despicable tyrants" when seeking someone to blame for terrible acts or crimes against humanity. Over the centuries, human beings all over the world have deposed tyrants only to empower new ones in their place. The fault, it seems, is not in our leaders, but in ourselves.

Waller states it plainly, "In short, the majority of perpetrators of extraordinary evil were not distinguished by background, personality, or previous political affiliation or behavior as having been men or women unusually likely or fit to be genocidal executioners. This reality is unsettling...but we cannot evade this discomfoting reality."

The more that serious scholars like Waller examine the phenomenon of great evil, the more obvious it becomes that the answers to this problem lie not in the Bushes or Bin Ladens, who exploit human defects for their own purposes, but in the character structure of ordinary people who listen to them and act out their life-negative ideologies. Wilhelm Reich observed that the problem is not that Hitler wanted power. The problem is that Hitler got power. Waller offers insight into the ordinary people who empower the Hitlers of every era.

Hitler's Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich by Ingo Muller. Translated by Debra Lucas Schneider. (Harvard University Press, 1991)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Although this book was published more than 10 years ago, recent events have made it quite timely indeed. As the Bush administration seeks to pack the courts with men and women who, like Bush, Cheney et al, are destroying the freedoms we enjoy in America, revisiting what was done to the German legal system in the Nazi era is extremely important if we are not to make the same mistakes again.

In the Introduction, Detlev Vagts writes that Muller "...tells a depressing tale, one that reminds us how fragile the safeguards of a civilized society can be in the face of the powers of darkness. It is particularly significant for judges and lawyers."

The German legal system made a substantial contribution to the Nazi efforts. Almost all of what the Hitler government did was legal in Germany. The laws were changed to make the formerly unthinkable not only possible but also legal. When the Nazis acted against the Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and communists and other political opponents, laws were on the books that made it all possible. Nazi judges could simply say they were "merely declaring the law that was there." This book provides evidence that "many judges went beyond the bounds of what they had to do and strove to anticipate the underlying will of the Fuehrer."

Today, the Patriot Act turns librarians into spies for the state. The President appoints a convicted criminal who helped conduct an illegal war that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, to head a program called Total Information Awareness, a government effort to spy on innocent citizens. The Attorney General promotes a new law that will allow secret arrests of American citizens who are charged with no crime, permitting the state to jail them for an unlimited time, while denying them the right to see an attorney. The Attorney General further asserts that the government need not even admit to having arrested these individuals. The phenomenon of "the disappeared" will no longer be restricted to foreign police states, but could become a reality in America. Even so-called liberal attorneys like Alan Dershowitz are calling for government torture to be approved by the courts under "certain circumstances."

The undermining of the integrity of the legal system in Germany was essential for the Nazis to achieve their ends. The American legal system is under assault today. Laws are being enacted that will make possible government actions that could bring about the end of our republic. So few are paying any attention.

Hitler's Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich gives the reader insight into an aspect of the Nazi takeover of the German state that is not as well known as it should be, particularly given its relevance to the political and legal situation in the United States today.

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The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany by Guenter Lewy (McGraw-Hill, 1964)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

This ground-breaking book stood virtually alone for decades in its assessment of the role of the papacy and the Vatican in the Holocaust. While more recent books contain information from archives and documents not available to Lewy, modern scholarship confirms his conclusions in the main and deepens and extends his findings, rather than contradict them. Lewy's work is a classic that has stood the test of time.

The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies by Guenter Lewy (Oxford University Press, 2000)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

The persecution of the Gypsies did not involve a systematic program such as the "Final Solution" designed to exterminate the Jews. However, the first people to go to concentration camps under the Nazi regime were not Jews but Gypsies, homosexuals and political enemies. Because of the magnitude of the atrocities enacted against the Jews, the terrible treatment of other groups by the Nazis is often overlooked. In his excellent book, Lewy uses archives from Germany and Austria that were previously unavailable to scholars. In this comprehensive work, he creates a powerful portrait of the terrible treatment of the Gypsies at the hands of the Nazis.

War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning
by Chris Hedges
(Public Affairs, 2002)
[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Chris Hedges is a Professor of Journalism at New York University. He joined *The New York Times* in 1990 and was a member of the team at *The New York Times* that won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting in 2002. He was a foreign correspondent for 15 years and knows war well. He writes that he partook of the "narcotic of war" for many years and found that "the rush of battle" was addictive for him. He warns, "We must guard against the myth of war and the drug of war...that will blind us."

Hedge's new book is one of the best nonfiction books ever written about war. The author is brutally honest about himself, as well as about the realities of war and what war does to human beings and societies.

At present, during the war in Iraq, many hypocrites in government and the media are

complaining about foreign TV news coverage that shows stark images of the dead and wounded. How dare they! On American TV, the images of war consist almost entirely of American mass-death technology and the pyrotechnics of terror-bombing. War as presented in America is as unreal as the "reality TV" shows so popular now. War is presented in the abstract with no embarrassing dead or mutilated women, men, children, or grandparents to look at.

Fox News presents death and destruction with all the gusto of football games on Sunday afternoons. There is great puffed up patriotic pride in war evident on the faces of the TV talking heads and jingoistic politicians, most of whom have never gone to war themselves.

Hedges writes, "As long as we think abstractly, as long as we find in patriotism and the exuberance of war our fulfillment, we will never understand those who do battle against us, or how we are perceived by them, or finally those who do battle for us and how we should respond to it all. We will never discover who we are. We will fail to confront the capacity we all have for violence. And we will court our own extermination."

Two all-good "leaders" strut the world stage today, proclaiming themselves to be fulfilling God's mission by fighting pure evil: George W. Bush and Osama Bin Laden. To each, the world is black and white, good and evil. Although the Bush family and the Bin Laden family are business partners through the Carlyle Group, George W. Bush is engaged in a holy war against Osama Bin Laden as part of God's plan, Bin Laden is likewise engaged. (Interestingly, both the Bush and Bin Laden families are making billions out of the carnage, having taken P.T. Barnum's observation to heart and to the bank-there's a sucker born every minute.)

The American media in general accept the good guy-bad guy dichotomy, as does the majority of the American public. God is invoked today by all the political mass murderers on Earth. According to Hedges, "By accepting the facile cliché that the battle underway against terrorism is a battle against evil, by easily branding those who fight against us as barbarians, we, like them, refuse to acknowledge our own culpability. We ignore real injustices that have led many of those arrayed against us to their rage and despair."

Hedges writes powerfully about the myth of war as it is peddled by the mythmakers in government, the media, the entertainment industry, public relations flacks, think tanks, universities, houses of worship, and neighborhoods across the nation where barroom heroes parrot the militaristic phrases of the masters of war and their war wimp acolytes.

He demolishes the myths of the excitement and power of war; the Hemingwayesque dark beauty, bravery, camaraderie and bonding of war. He does this by bringing the reader into emotional and intellectual contact with the realities of war-a force that dominates, distorts, destroys and corrupts cultures, individuals, memory, and language. War brings people to their lowest, ugliest depths. War is death.

Yet Americans rally for a war they say they do not want, to kill people they know have done nothing to them, urged on by a leader who was AWOL from duty when he was supposed to

serve and who seeks to escape his own demons of alcoholism and drug addiction in God...and war. Why do people the world over throw away their lives, and destroy the lives of others, at the behest of these parasites of society, the so-called elite? Why does war attract human beings across the globe?

Hedges believes that "The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage, it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living. Those who make war do so for many reasons, although many of those motives are never acknowledged publicly."

How long can the killing continue? Are human beings nearing the end of their 4-6,000 year reign of slaughter of themselves and the other life forms on Earth? Humans killed over 100 million of their fellows in the 20th century, approximately 63 million civilians and 43 million military personnel. In the 1990s alone, there were 3 million murdered in war in the Congo; 2 million dead in Afghanistan; 800,000 massacred with machetes in Rwanda in 90 days; 500,000 killed in Angola; 250,000 in Bosnia; 150,000 in Liberia; and 75,000 in Algeria.

Are people suicidal? Was Freud correct in believing that human beings have a "death instinct"? Does the Catholic concept of "original sin" explain the degeneration of the human animal into a sadistic killing machine? No. Neither the Freudian nor the Catholic views are correct. So what is the origin of the outbreaks of mass sadism and of the helplessness of the average human being on Earth today. Why do beautiful human dreams so often fail to come true, when human nightmares come to full fruition with increasing regularity and destructiveness? A good place to begin looking for answers to these questions is in Wilhelm Reich's work, in such books as *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, *Character Analysis* and *The Function of the Orgasm*.

As society struggles along without the answers to these and other questions, Hedges points the way toward something we desperately need to know, or remember. He wrote, "To survive as a human being is possible only through love...love, in its mystery, has its own power. It alone gives us meaning that endures...And love, as the poets remind us, is eternal..."

War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning will bring each reader face-to-face with the reality of war and help begin the process of grappling with the deep, difficult dilemmas that confront us all, as individuals and societies, even if we seek desperately to hide from them.

Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers

by Daniel Ellsberg

(Viking Penguin, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

In the fall of 1971 and spring of 1972, I worked in a small bookstore on 42nd Street, just across from the main branch of The New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue. One evening, a troubled man came into the shop, and quickly stepped into a small alcove near the front of the store. Within seconds, two men stopped by the front window and peered searchingly into the bookstore. They were obviously police of some kind.

I suddenly recognized the man who had entered the bookstore as Daniel Ellsberg. The other book clerk identified him immediately and led him into a small office at the back of the store. It became clear that Ellsberg was hiding from government agents who were tailing him. Two years into Nixon's "Secret Plan" to end the war, the casualties in Vietnam continued to rise and the war had expanded beyond Vietnam into Cambodia, sowing the seeds for the Khmer Rouge and their mass murder of 2 million people in the years to come.

After five minutes or so, the two agents came inside and looked around. The store was about 20 feet wide and fifty feet deep. It could be surveyed in seconds. I was asked if there was another section to the store and answered no. I was then asked what happened to the man who had entered a few minutes previously. Feigning boredom, but feeling anxiety, I told the agents that I hadn't seen anyone come in. They didn't believe me but left the bookstore.

Daniel Ellsberg remained hidden for awhile and then he left the store. I don't know if he managed to ditch his tails momentarily or not. But I knew they would find him soon and begin again their harassment. A man who told the American people the truth about the lies they had been, and were being, fed by Republican and Democratic administrations-lies that led to the deaths of 58,000 Americans and 2-4 million Asians-was being hunted by those whose power rested on such lies.

Today, 32 years later, Daniel Ellsberg is still presenting Americans with unpalatable and unpopular truths. For all I know, Nixon's Plumbers have been replaced by Ashcroft's Homeland Security agents and Ellsberg is still being bugged, wiretapped, followed, photographed and digitally taped. Why? Because his story of the ruin brought about by government secrecy is perhaps even more important to us today than ever, when we have an administration obsessed by secrecy, one that has given the vice-president the power to declare "secret" anything he wishes to conceal for whatever unexplained reason... in a free country?

In *Secrets*, Ellsberg tells his story for the first time in book form. Daniel Ellsberg was a committed Cold Warrior as a young man. His work up until 1961 had been focused on preventing a surprise attack on the U.S. by the Soviet Union. In the fall of 1961, Ellsberg volunteered for a two-year tour of duty with the U.S. State Department in a small country few Americans had ever heard of-Vietnam. After only one week in the country, he saw

clearly and vividly that the U.S. military effort in Vietnam was doomed.

Secrets tells the gripping story of an anti-communist patriot turned whistleblower and antiwar activist. In it, Ellsberg meticulously examines the U.S. government secrets and lies that led to the disastrous Vietnam War.

He risked his freedom to tell the American people the true story of Vietnam, a story that differed dramatically from the one told by the Johnson Administration (and the Kennedy and Eisenhower administrations before that). As an insider, Ellsberg understood that LBJ's policies were hopeless. Richard Nixon barely won the 1968 election, in large part because he claimed to have a "Secret Plan" to end the war. Ellsberg saw clearly that Nixon's so-called plan to end the war was a hoax and a lie perpetrated simply to get elected president. The Vietnam War continued for five more years. Many believe that Nixon and his aides committed treason by persuading the South Vietnamese not to cooperate with President Johnson's peace initiatives in 1968. They interfered with and undermined U.S. foreign policy, jeopardizing national security for private political gain.

Ronald Reagan's aides committed similar treasonous acts by convincing the Iranian mullahs not to release the American hostages while Jimmy Carter was president. These republicans, too, undermined a president's foreign policy and endangered national security for personal political gain. Reagan's team also committed a felony by stealing President Carter's briefing book for the 1980 presidential debates. George Will, a pompous pseudo-conservative who gives the love of baseball a bad name, appeared regularly on ABC-TV back then as he does now. He used the stolen Carter presidential papers to coach Reagan on his debate performances. Law-and-order demagogue Will did not think it fit to report the criminal theft of Carter's papers to the authorities. Neither did he think it proper to inform his viewers and readers that he was using stolen material while he worked for Ronald Reagan's election campaign. He did not let on that he was a political partisan posing as a journalist. Reagan was elected; his secrets remained hidden.

Such secrets can have deadly consequences. While in power, Reagan's people, including Donald Rumsfeld, then allied themselves with an unknown tyrant in Iraq named Sadaam Hussein. They helped him in his war against Iran, a war in which one million people were killed. Other Reagan aides also conducted a covert illegal war in Central America in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed. There was no Daniel Ellsberg to alert the public about these crimes. What secrets are being kept now about 9/11, the war in Iraq, and other crucial matters? And what heavy price will innocent people soon pay?

To return to our story: by 1969, Ellsberg came to believe that his only method of getting the truth out to the public was to smuggle 7,000 pages of a top secret history of American involvement in Vietnam out of classified government files and bring them into the light of day. He was ready to go to jail if need be.

The papers were eventually published by *The New York Times*. (The pro and con behind-the-scenes discussions at the newspaper of record about whether to publish the classified documents is a story in itself). The secret history became known as "The Pentagon Papers"

and their publication led directly to the formation of Nixon's "Plumber's Unit," and the illegal White House domestic spying operation that attempted to plug future "leaks" of such embarrassing information. The "Plumbers" were the so-called "third-rate burglars" whose incompetence led to the Watergate scandal and the downfall of Richard Nixon.

Adult Americans know so little of their history and a large percentage of American students do not know when the Vietnam War occurred, why it was fought or even which side the U.S. supported in the war. Because this is true, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* is an important book; chilling reading in these chilling days when "patriots" act to undermine and destroy the very freedoms they urge others to kill and die for. Let us hope there is a Daniel Ellsberg working in the U.S. government today, one who will answer vital questions concerning the last two years of American history, one who will expose the dark secrets of the current administration to the light of day.

High and Mighty-SUVs: The World's Most Dangerous Vehicles and How They Got That Way

by Keith Bradsher
(Public Affairs, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Keith Bradsher has been with *The New York Times* since 1989. He was formerly the Detroit Bureau Chief for the paper and is currently the Hong Kong Bureau Chief for *The Times*. Bradsher has produced a brilliant expose that needs to be read widely-and then acted upon.

SUVs have taken over. There are 20 million of them on our roadways now and the number is growing rapidly. I know many people who care about the planet, support environmental organizations, vote for "green" candidates and yet somehow rationalize driving SUVs. Even super-environmentalist Robert Redford owns a SUV. Full-size SUVs produce 5.5 times more smog-causing gases than automobiles. Large SUVs contribute 100% more carbon dioxide than cars; midsize SUVs create 50% more carbon dioxide. These vehicles contribute significantly to global warming. In addition, they are gas-guzzlers that chain us to dependence on foreign oil.

These vehicles are extraordinarily popular even though they present a wide range of huge problems: they roll over easily; they kill and injure their occupants at an alarming rate; they are catastrophic to regular cars they hit; and they are lethal to pedestrians. SUVs are killing thousands of Americans each year but each year sales go up. Soon, teenage drivers will be getting behind the wheels of used SUVs as "Boomers" trade in their old models. These inexperienced young drivers will cause even more harm to themselves and others on the road.

People who drive SUVs falsely believe they are safer in their behemoths because of very misleading advertising. The brakes on SUVs are far less reliable than the brakes in regular cars. The death rate for drivers of SUVs is actually 6% higher than for drivers of regular cars. The death rate for drivers of the largest SUVs is 8% higher. SUV occupants face a higher risk of paralysis after accidents in these vehicles. SUV rollovers account for less than 1% of all crashes but *these accidents account for nearly as many paralyzing spinal injuries as illness, falls and every other form of traffic accident COMBINED.*

We are only at the beginning of the SUV menace: 3,000 Americans die each year because of these vehicles and the number is rising. What Bradsher and others consider to be "the world's most dangerous vehicle" is spreading to new markets in Europe, South America and Australia. Why are they unsafe? Cynical design and marketing, combined with poor government regulation, are key root causes. Legal loopholes, and tax policies pushed by the Bush administration, encourage automakers to continue producing these dangerous SUVs.

Bradsher provides the reader with everything he or she needs to know about the hazards to all of us from SUVs. If this book doesn't wake people up to the truth about SUVs, nothing will.

A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Consumption in Postwar America

by Lizabeth Cohen

(Knopf, 2003)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Lizabeth Cohen is the Howard Mumford Jones Professor of American Studies in the Department of History at Harvard University. She grew up aware that she was in a privileged position, living in prosperity as the daughter of upwardly mobile parents. As she looks back at those years now, she sees herself as "a child of the Consumers' Republic."

In the 1940s and 1950s, many in positions of power in the United States saw the U.S. as, in the author's words, "a model for the world of a society committed to mass consumption and what were assumed to be its far-reaching benefits." Many working class and middle class Americans incorporated the ideology of the power elite into their own worldviews, even though the material circumstances of their daily lives did not correspond with these social and political beliefs.

Her new book describes the development of America into "an economy, culture and politics built around the promises of mass consumption, both in terms of material life and the more idealistic goals of greater freedom, democracy and equality."

In Cohen's view, mass consumption *dictated* American political economy, political culture and social values. She has an interpretation of the development of post-World War II

America that is fundamentally different from the dominant historical viewpoint. Rather than focusing on the Cold War as the major factor shaping post-war America, Cohen sees materialism and consumerism as perhaps even more influential in shaping who mainstream Americans are as a people and a world political power.

For her, Mass Consumption is the central phenomenon of 20th century America. In 1899, Thorstein Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption," a phrase that has helped describe the materialistic excess that has defined the U.S. over the past 100 years, through prosperity, periods of recession, and even the Great Depression.

Over the course of the last century, *consumption* has come to define the American citizen, a majority of whom are now sedentary, obese, physically unfit, self-centered, poorly educated-and yet arrogant and willing to wage war in order to bring their so-called "American values" to the "less enlightened" peoples of the world. In Cohen's view, in America, a citizen is no longer a person who participates in the political and social life of his society in a mutually beneficial relationship between the individual and the social administration. If active participation in the creation of a society no longer defines a citizen in America, what then does? *Purchasing power* defines the citizen. And the satisfaction of personal material wants is identical with "the national interest."

Does this sound far-fetched? After 9/11, how did George Bush and New York's mayor Rudy Giuliani urge people to respond to the first successful deadly attack against citizens on American soil? The exhorted the public *to shop, to return to the malls, to spend, spend, spend.*

In New York City, Giuliani, Governor Pataki, and Christie Whitman of the Bush EPA urged people to go back to work in lower Manhattan when they knew the levels of toxic chemicals and heavy metals in the air was extremely dangerous. Thousands of people heeded their calls and are now suffering from a variety of illnesses, most notably fire fighters, police officers, EMS personnel and others who labored so strenuously day and night at Ground Zero.

Cohen charts the "Consumerization of the Republic" from President Ford through the current President. She writes, " ...Presidents Reagan, George Herbert Walker Bush, Clinton and George W. Bush would justify their different policy orientations as efforts to satisfy citizens who were also deserving consumers...By the end of the 20th century, citizen and consumer had become interlocking identities for most Americans."

How far we have fallen from the Declaration of Independence and its exaltation of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Now the United States is defined as a consumer nation, one that devours resources and then fills the world with the waste its voracious consumption creates.

Nearly a century ago, the poet Robinson Jeffers wrote "Shine, Perishing Republic," a prescient poem which opens:

*While this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity, heavily thickening to empire,
And protest, only a bubble on the molten mass, pops and sighs out, and the mass hardens
I sadly smiling remember that the flower fades to make fruit, the fruit rots to make earth."*

The flower of the American Revolution bore the fruits of the attempts to create a free nation. But are those fruits of freedom now rotting in our country, defined by the vulgarity and vain visions of empire on the part of the oh-so-little men and women exercising power today?

A Consumers' Republic is a troubling book that makes its case extremely well. Cohen convincingly demonstrates that the character of our nation has changed from that of a representative republic of citizens to a Consumers' Republic in which mass consumption is primary. Cohen leaves the reader with a crucial question, the answer to which will shape the rest of our lives, "The question then becomes, United States citizen: consumer in what kind of republic."

With Americans now engaged in a war many believe is for oil, the lifeblood of the Consumers' Republic, and with many more wars looming on the horizon in the near future, Cohen's is a critical question indeed.

Tilting at Mills: Green Dreams, Dirty Dealings and the Corporate Squeeze

by Lis Harris

(Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Lis Harris is a Professor of Writing at Columbia University in New York City and has written for *The New Yorker* for over 20 years. Her new book tells the story of how an outstanding environmental and social project was destroyed by conflicts and behind-the-scenes maneuverings by big business, big government, neighborhood politicians and even true-blue environmentalists.

Alan Herskowitz, a veteran environmentalist, tried to develop a recycled-paper mill in New York City in 1992. His mill would create desperately needed jobs, help reduce pollution from waste, and further benefit the environment by recycling paper, which then could be sold at a price that would benefit businesses. Harris takes the reader from the hopeful, idealistic beginnings of a project that had "win-win-win" written in big letters all over it, through the morass of competing self-interests, to the frustrating end of a dream. Her book is must-reading for anyone who is envisioning a business project that requires the cooperation of the private sector, government, local political groups, and non-governmental organizations. The narrow interests of each group may far outweigh the

obvious benefits of the project.

By the end of this instructive tale, Herskowitz is sorry he ever undertook his project, although he admits he might be tempted to try again. But if he once more tilted at mills, who could he count on to help him? Is there even a place for a Don Quixote in our world of Babbitts?

Surviving Cancer

by Margie Levine

(Broadway Books, 2001)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Margie Levine has written an eminently practical book, yet every page is suffused with the wonderful emotions of a person with a big heart. She gently introduces the reader to usable healing techniques that form the foundation for a reasonable hope of being able to not only survive the illness, but also, thrive in the years to come.

At the age of 43, Ms. Levine was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a rare, very aggressive, asbestos-related lung cancer. She came face-to-face with the end of her life from a rapidly growing form of cancer for which there was no real treatment. The surgery that was available was brutal. Few recovered from it. Those who did endured a long and painful period of recuperation.

She writes, "Instead of preparing for death, I started that very night from my hospital room battling to live, calling everyone I knew, networking." Ms. Levine reached out for help and made sure she was in close contact with family members and friends. She arranged her life so that daily, practical needs were as simple and easy to meet as possible.

She decided to have the radical surgery, which was followed by chemotherapy and 25 sessions of radiation therapy. But she also tried acupuncture, energy healing, hypnosis and prayer hotlines. She meditated, kept an affirmation journal, and practiced visualization, imaging her own victory over cancer. She did wonderful things that she loved like picnicking by the sea.

How did the author survive? "...I decided to become my own advocate," she wrote. "I worked hard integrating traditional medicine with complementary techniques." *Surviving Cancer* had its origins in a manual Ms. Levine created, "41 Steps to Wellness." It was her answer to the many, many people who asked her to explain how she had successfully fought her battle with cancer. The manual was later self-published under the title *Embracing Challenge*.

This marvelous book is not just for cancer patients. It can help anyone who is trying to cope

with chronic illness. Faced with a catastrophic illness, Margie Levine found a way to save her own life. Her excellent book will help countless others to find their own ways of doing the same.

Margie Levine's website is <http://www.margielevine.com>

Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origin of Species

by Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan

(Basic Books, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Evolution is still a "fightin' word" in America. This theory has an amazing range of detractors. From George W. Bush all the way up the evolutionary ladder to intelligent, educated scholars, Darwin's legacy finds itself under attack. Darwin even makes an appearance in a recent song by Bob Dylan, "High Water." Dylan sings "They've got Charles Darwin out there on Highway 5/The judge says to the High Sheriff, I want him dead or alive/Either one, I don't care."

How do the authors of this book view evolutionary theory and Darwin's legacy? "Evolution is a science of connection," they write. "...all organisms alive today are connected in time by a common ancestry...At no time in the past since life first began did our lineage or the system itself ever die...Darwin's legacy is that of the connectedness of life through time."

Margulis and Sagan explore a major mystery that Darwin could not explain: the source of the inherited variation that gives rise to new species. The authors assert that the widely accepted (but never scientifically demonstrated) explanation for this phenomenon-*random mutation*-is actually of marginal importance. What process do they think is operating in nature that is at the heart of the mystery? A natural process they term *symbiotic merger*. In their view, this is how organisms acquire new genes. This is no small claim. Their theory directly challenges the assumptions of mainstream biology about the origin and diversity of life on earth.

What is a common example of symbiotic merger? Lichens are a classic example of symbiosis because in lichens we find a fungus associated with an alga or cyanobacterium. At first, symbiosis was considered to be rare. Now it is thought to be universal. Margulis has succeeded in convincing the scientific world that mitochondria are *symbionts* in both plant and animal cells. She is a pioneer in the study of *symbiogenesis* and this is a major theme of this new book.

For Margulis and Sagan, the world does not only consist of "independent" species. Every individual life form of most species is actually a "consortium" of several species. Microbes and larger organisms, for example, are mutually, beneficially connected. The authors

present the reader with an ever-deepening view of life. Bacteria, it seems, are fundamental to our lives and to Life on Earth.

The authors write, "Indeed, as Wallin said in 1927, 'It is a rather startling proposal that bacteria, the organisms that are popularly associated with disease, may represent the fundamental causative factor in the origin of the species.' We agree."

Margulis and Sagan go out on an evolutionary limb and take a controversial stand about the acquirability of inherited characteristics, saying "We suggest that at least some of Jean Baptiste de Lamarck's 'acquired characteristics' that sensitively respond to the exigencies of the environment are foreign genomes...The branches of the evolutionary tree fork, but they also fuse. Genomes integrate. The mergers persist past the point of no return."

Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origin of Species is a clear, well-written presentation of fascinating ideas about the greatest mystery of all-Life. The following quote will give some of the flavor of the writing and the thinking to be found in this impressive work:

Only at the very end of this long history does the social ape who walks upright and gossips nonstop take center stage. The ape who is nearly hairless, the one who cuts down rainforest trees with abandon, is deluded by visions of his importance...But this story is not about that ape, his lovemaking, his cohabitators, or his victims. Before campfires, before proclamations of independence, before cities and urban sprawl, the earth around the sun was populated by innumerable kinds of superficially alien life. The whole evolutionary saga of how species originate and how they extinguish may be the greatest tale ever told. It is everybody's story."
And Margulis and Sagan tell a very good story.

Tycho and Kepler: The Unlikely Partnership That Forever Changed the World

by Kitty Ferguson

(Walker and Company, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

When Isaac Newton made his famous remark that he was able to make his discoveries in science because he had "stood on the shoulders of giants," he was referring to Copernicus, Galileo, Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. Kitty Ferguson has contributed a well-written book that not only tells the stories of the lives these important figures in an engaging manner, but also, provides a lucid explanation of their thought. Her book is accessible to the general reader and sophisticated enough to hold the attention of those more knowledgeable in the field.

According to the author, when they met, both men were highly unlikely candidates for scientific immortality. Tycho was a formidable world figure. He was highly regarded for his astronomical observations which were a unique treasure gathered painstakingly over decades. At 53 years of age, he was feeling weary. Kepler was a modest, pious young man of

28 who was in awe of the great Tycho. Theirs is a remarkable scientific and personal tale which the author renders well.

Kepler changed our view of the universe forever. He developed a profound new understanding of how heavenly bodies move. Kepler's Three Harmonic Laws are used to help guide our spacecraft today as they traverse the solar system. And Tycho's superb astronomical charts provided the foundation for Kepler's revolutionary contributions to astronomy.

Kitty Ferguson has written an intelligent and enlightening book about two men whose work still influences our world nearly 400 years after their deaths.

The Pope and the Heretic: The True Story of Giordano Bruno, the Man Who Dared to Defy the Inquisition

by Michael White

(William Morrow, Harper Collins, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

In 1968, through Wilhelm Reich's book, *The Murder of Christ*, I first learned about Giordano Bruno. Reich's bibliography included *Bruno: His Life and Thought* by Dorothy Waley Singer, which I read, along with a number of original works by Bruno including *On the Infinite Worlds and Universe* and *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*. Bruno has been an inspiration to me ever since.

Michael White has written a very good introduction to Bruno's life and thought, with an emphasis on the dramatic last eight years of Bruno's life. Bruno was betrayed into the hands of the Inquisition, endured eight years of torture at the hands of the Catholic Church, and, finally, was burned at the stake. At the time, most people condemned by the Inquisition were burned in effigy in public; a few were killed and had their dead bodies burned at the stake. The Catholic Church was so threatened by Bruno's writings on an infinite universe, which was populated with other intelligent beings, that they resorted to actually burning him alive.

White's book is easy to read and accessible to readers with no knowledge of Bruno or the theological, philosophical and scientific issues involved in his challenge to the powers of his day. The author makes all of this clear and understandable. Those who want to learn more about Bruno after reading this book, and more scholarly, detailed investigations of Bruno's cosmology can be found in *The Acentric Labyrinth: Giordano Bruno's Prelude to Contemporary Cosmology* (Element, 1995) and *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science* (Cornell University Press, 1999).

According to Vatican records of Bruno's trial, when he heard his death sentence from the

judges, Bruno remarked that they delivered the sentence with more fear than he received it. In February 1600, Bruno died a horrible death at the hands of those who claimed to be the heirs of Jesus Christ. But Bruno's life-positive thought survives and still has significance for our times. Michael White has performed an important service by bringing Bruno's powerful story and ideas to a wider audience.

Animal Rights: A Mindshift is Overdue

Americans love their pets. They spend billions of dollars a year on pet foods. They buy their pets birthday presents. Many bring their animals to veterinarians for high-tech medical diagnostic and surgical procedures. Others prefer complementary care vets for their pets. All of this is paid for out-of-pocket and is costly.

Although Americans demonstrate a great deal of love for their pets, it cannot really be said that they love animals. There is little public concern about the atrocious treatment of animals slaughtered for food, or over the horrifying treatment of animals by scientists who use them in experiments. Animal rights activists are regularly mocked by TV comedians and reactionary political pundits. They are also generally ignored by a public that is, at most, dimly aware that there may be something unpopular about wearing fur.

My first awareness of the widespread cruelty to animals came about 20 years ago when, as a medical writer, I encountered the pointless torture and slaughter of animals-for example, rabbits, dogs and chimpanzees-to test worthless "me-too" drugs, unneeded cosmetics and other spurious commercial products. I also learned how animals were brutalized in academic settings by researchers who were, yet again, pointlessly performing the same tormenting experiments on animals. These excruciatingly painful experiments did not even yield any new information.

The issue of the human mistreatment of animals is one that I have shied away from. It is too painful. It is extremely difficult for me to read or listen to the descriptions of the horrors that are inflicted on animals so that I can walk into a supermarket and buy meat, to give just one example.

The books listed below bring the reality of the situation home in ways that cannot be denied. They have changed my understanding of human attitudes and behavior toward animals. They have dramatically altered my own attitudes. The authors of these important works bring to the fore a part of our existence that is long overdue for a mindshift.

Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights

by Steven M. Wise

(Perseus Books, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Steven M. Wise is a pioneer in the field of animal rights law. He teaches law at such universities as Harvard, Vermont and John Marshall. He has practiced animal rights law for over 20 years; litigates animal protection cases; and writes and speaks on animal rights. Mr. Wise has sued the U.S. Patent Office to stop it from issuing patents on genetically engineered animals. He is working vigorously to win the status of "legal personhood" for some nonhuman animals. He is also the author of *Rattling the Cage-Toward the Legal Rights of Animals*.

Science has expanded our understanding of the minds and nature of animals dramatically in recent decades. But this new understanding has not yet had a major impact on the public, the scientific and medical professions, the political system or the law.

In earlier publications, such as *Rattling the Cage*, Wise has written about Bonobos and chimpanzees, the two species that are closest to humans. In this book, he focuses on other species. His cause is legal rights for animals. In a society where it is increasingly difficult to protect the legal rights of humans, can he make his case? Wise writes, "Based on the present state of scientific knowledge about the minds of these animals, I will argue that the case for legal rights for some of them is overwhelming; for others, currently not."

For Wise, it is simply unjust to deny animals that are aware and self-aware their legal rights and protections. And, quoting St. Augustine, he notes that states without justice are nothing but robber bands. Most people are unaware of the scale of this injustice to the other animal life forms. According to Wise, "...the sheer number of nonhuman animals we kill is beyond understanding. More than 300 mammals and birds are killed [in the U.S.] each time your heart beats. The number triples for the rest of the world. In the United States, more than 100 billion are slaughtered annually just for food. Tens of millions are consumed in biomedical research, hundreds of millions more by hunting and entertainment, for clothing, leather and through numerous other activities."

The economics of the mass killing of animals involves vast sums of money. Even those who work to change things for the better find it impossible to avoid products that are made from slaughtered animals. For example, let's look at one animal, the cow: slaughtered cow blood is used in plywood adhesives, fertilizer, fire extinguisher foam, and dyes. Cow fat helps make plastic, tires, crayons, cosmetics, lubricants, soaps, detergents, cough syrups, contraceptive jellies and creams, ink, shaving cream, fabric softener, and synthetic rubber. Cow collagen is used in pie crust, yogurts, matches, bank notes and cardboard glue.

The magnitude of the exploitation of animals has led to gigantic rationalizations on the part of human beings. It is only in this way that such cruel and heartless activity can be continued. These rationalizations affect major areas of our social life:

Politics: Almost all politicians in the U.S. today, at every level, are beholden to money from one interest group or another. They do not represent the public any longer. They represent the entities that give them the money they need to get re-elected. This makes it extremely difficult to bring about better treatment of animals through political means.

Religion: The Judeo-Christian religious view of animals, as expressed in the Bible, is that God gave man dominion over the animals. The Biblical text promotes the belief that animals are soulless things that can be exploited without any regard for them as living beings. It is useful to remember that Biblical texts were used, until relatively recently, to justify slavery.

The Law: The law divides the physical universe into persons, who have rights and protections, and things, which do not. Legally, animals are things without rights.

Human Psychology: Today, human beings believe that animals are inferior creatures, despite the fact that at times people gush sentimentally over Disneyfied portrayals of animals or admire the power and diversity of the "beasts" of the earth on TV nature shows. Is there any hope of changing human behavior and psychology toward animals when vast sums of money are involved, as they are in the killing of animals? People are quite willing to slaughter one another in criminal activity, in corporate enterprises, and in war in order to gain wealth. How could they ever begin to alter their behavior toward animals?

A fundamental mindshift is required. Wise writes, *"Shifts occur only after people come to believe that something is possible. This book argues that at least some nonhuman animals should have basic legal rights."*

Science supports Wise's position. And after reading his book, you may find that you support his position, too.

Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals

by Steven M. Wise

(Perseus Books, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

In this book, the author focuses on Bonobos and chimpanzees, our closest relatives. In 1900, there were five million chimps in Africa and 500,000 Bonobos. Today, both are near extinction. These animals are very close to humans in their abilities and emotions. They can learn sign language. They love and care for one another. They have the range of emotional reactions people have. Yet we are annihilating them. Protecting them is as important for our own survival as it is for theirs.

Wise introduces the reader to fundamental new insights into animal consciousness and

animal emotions. It is essential that this new knowledge enter human consciousness and affect human emotions before the terrible treatment of animals by people can change, and the legal protection of animal rights can become a reality.

Wise marshals information that is stunning and potent enough to convince judges, scientists, lawyers and the general public that the cognitive, social and emotional lives of the great apes entitle them to freedom and protection from human abuse. The author's conclusions are based on years of research. The data compiled form the foundation for a new legal relationship between the human animal and other sentient animals.

What Wise is proposing amounts to a Magna Carta, Declaration of Independence and Universal Declaration of Rights for animals all rolled into one. New laws are urgently needed to protect animals from the assault on them underway by the pharmaceutical industry, academic science, agribusiness, cosmetic companies and other human activities that callously maim and kill these self-aware living beings.

Wise has written an valuable book that deserves to be read by as many people as possible.

Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy

by Matthew Scully

(St. Martin's Press, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

They say that politics makes strange bedfellows. Apparently, concern for animal rights brings about some unusual alliances as well. From January 2001 through June 2002, Matthew Scully was a special assistant and senior speechwriter for George W. Bush. He also worked on Bush's 2000 presidential campaign. In addition, he has also written for former vice-president Dan Quayle and current vice-president Dick Cheney. He was formerly literary editor at William F. Buckley, Jr.'s ultra-conservative magazine, *National Review*.

In *Dominion*, Scully parts company with his former employers. He writes, "Many of today's cruelties come at the hands of those quick to identify themselves as good Christian folk. It is galling." Whether or not Scully applies this judgment to the cruelties of today's so-called Christians toward human beings in the USA and around the world, he clearly sees the contradiction between Christian religious belief and human behavior in terms of human treatment of animals.

In his view, humans no longer respect Life. They manifest no compassion for other living beings. They deny the other sentient animals their dignity. Scientists torture animals needlessly in universities and in industry to test cosmetics and other consumer products. Scientists genetically engineer biologically weak cloned animals and strange hybrid animals for experimental and industrial uses. In the United States and the European Union,

millions upon millions of innocent animals are slaughtered in the most grotesque, horrifying manner as a result of the *industrialization of animals*.

In industrial factories and on industrial agribusiness "farms," cattle are killed, ground up, and fed to other cattle; 250,000 birds are stuffed into one hellish shed; one million pigs are crammed onto one so-called farm. This inhuman treatment of animals is growing more and more barbaric each year. And it is now a global phenomenon.

"Hunting" is also degenerating into a cold, systematic, sadistic enterprise. Hordes of animals are born and bred simply to be hunted by human beings-for "sport." Non-essential human development, such as golf courses and malls, destroy vital natural habitats, resulting in further death and destruction for animal life. Scully notes that humanity is in the process of saying "a long goodbye" to animals people feel they either do not need or need too much. He points out correctly that such animals as whales, dolphins and elephants are simultaneously beloved and brutalized by humans.

This ruthless, pitiless destruction of life is a clear indication of the degeneration of the human animal who no longer recognizes the value of life itself. Other sentient beings are measured by "market values;" the only measurement of worth applied to them is monetary value. Man arrogantly sees himself as everything and all other life as nothing.

Scully points out that research makes it abundantly clear that animals have emotions. They suffer and are happy. They love and care for one another. They mourn the loss of love and of loved ones. *Animals have consciousness*. Yet, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many scientists still claim that animals feel no pain. (just as some scientists and doctors still claim that infants feel no pain when circumcised, with or without anesthesia.) Such people claim that animals are "hardwired" to react to stimuli. It is actually asserted that animals are programmed to give *the appearance* of emotions such as joy, fear and pain!

Scully quotes the classic text from Genesis in the Bible, as do many other authors, in which God gives man "dominion" over the animals and all the things of earth. For Scully, dominion is not synonymous with merciless exploitation. In his view, "Dominion...requires our concentrated moral consideration." And morality demands that human beings put an end to the ever-deepening cruelty to animals that is a disgrace to us all. According to Scully, we need "legal reforms not only in our treatment of the creatures now raised and slaughtered by the billions, but of all within the reach of human recklessness, greed, cowardice and cruelty."

This is a significant book from an unusual source, a conservative who is truly compassionate when it comes to the treatment of animals.

The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain and Science (Expanded Edition)

by Bernard E. Rollin, Ph.D.

(Iowa State University Press, 1998)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Bernard E. Rollin is a professor of both philosophy and physiology at Colorado State University. He is also the author of *Animal Rights and Human Morality*; *Farm Animal Welfare*; and *The Frankenstein Syndrome*.

Over the last 5-10 years, more and more information about the abuse and mistreatment of animals is becoming available to the public, such as the atrocities in research labs and nightmarish conditions for chickens, turkeys, cattle and pigs etc. at industrial farms.

Although many scientists hold to the belief that animals feel no pain, Rollin is of the opinion that it is becoming more difficult to take this stance. The growing awareness that animals are self-aware, feeling beings is spreading. As a result, the view that animals are emotionless automatons is increasingly seen as absurd. A new concern on the part of the general public about the mistreatment of animals is causing pressure for change in academia, industry and government.

Rollin stresses that he has not written an "animal rights" book. Neither has he written an "anti-science" book. He writes, "The issue of animal consciousness, particularly subjective states like pain, which are directly relevant to moral thinking, forms the main subject of this book."

A majority of researchers today deny the existence of animal consciousness. It is not "scientific," they claim. According to Rollin, it is this very denial that is not scientific. It is, instead, "a contingent historical aberration which can be changed—and indeed must be changed—to make science both coherent and morally responsible."

Rollin's admirers include Jane Goodall and many others who care deeply about the treatment of animals and who have worked hard to change human behavior toward the other living beings with whom we share the planet.

Animal Experimentation: Opposing Viewpoints

by Helen Cothran (ed.)

(Greenhaven Press, 2002)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

This is an excellent introduction to the difficult issues involved in the animal rights debate now underway. Helen Cothran has put together an intelligently edited, well-organized overview that presents the reader with a range of diverse perspectives on an aspect of life in our society that is undergoing major changes.

Defending Animal Rights

by Tom Regan

(University of Illinois Press, 2001)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

Tom Regan is a professor of Philosophy at North Carolina State University, the author of many books on animal rights, and one of the leaders of the animal rights movement.

In this collection of his work from the 1990s, Regan puts the struggle for animal rights into an historical context. The phrase "Animal Rights" describes the theme of the book, but what exactly does it mean? Regan defines the term and differentiates it from related concepts such as "Animal Welfare" and "Animal Liberation."

The essays in the book explore both practical and philosophical issues. Theological and scientific rationales for the present treatment of animals are examined as well. Regan makes a comparison that offends some people: he draws an analogy between the battle to achieve animal rights and the struggles of human beings in many parts of the world to become free of oppression by other human beings.

Regan has been in the forefront of the effort to establish animal rights in this country. In a book published two decades ago, *The Case for Animal Rights* (University of California Press, 1983), he made radical yet practical proposals regarding the human treatment of animals. He presented the evidence indicating that animals have desires, memories, emotions and that they feel pleasure and pain, just as human animals do. His work is a challenge to almost every human being alive today, in every nation on every continent, of whatever political, social or religious persuasion.

However, after all these years of difficult effort, he recognizes that there are still many daunting obstacles in the way of recognition of the rights of animals. He understands that there are too few people involved in the struggle for it to make progress more quickly. The exploitation of animals provides many comforts for too many human beings.

Tom Regan's writings have inspired people to join the fight to end the cruel exploitation of animals. It is to be hoped that his passionate work will continue to inspire many more.

Inside the Animal Mind

by George Page

(Doubleday, 1999)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

George Page is best known as the creator, executive editor, host and narrator of the Emmy award-winning PBS series, *Nature*. Page's book is a companion to a PBS miniseries of the

same name. He has produced a very helpful introduction to a complex subject.

For most of the 20th century, the school of psychology called "behaviorism" dominated the American scene. According to the beliefs of this discipline, animals have no minds at all. Neither do they have emotions. This denial of animal self-consciousness and ability to feel pain, greatly influenced academia and science in the United States.

But this denial of animal intelligence and emotion goes back centuries. In the 17th century, Descartes denied animal consciousness. However, there was not unanimity of thought on the subject. In the 19th century, Darwin deemed animal consciousness a part of the evolution of life on earth. His book *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* is evidence of this belief on his part.

In the 21st century, there is great disagreement among scientists on the existence of animal consciousness and emotion. It is ironic that many scientists who assert that animals have no feelings are greeted when they come home by a beloved dog, its tail wagging furiously. Both pet and human are happy to see one another. Sadly, some pet owners have learned how powerful animal emotions are when a dog that they have put in a kennel dies of a broken heart while they are on vacation.

Many people can enjoy the emotions of their pets but simultaneously deny that animals experience joy and pain because of the implications of admitting that animals have feelings. How can we have zoos, animal theme parks, animal experimentation and nightmarish industrial slaughterhouses if we fully realize that animals are sentient beings.

In his book *Dogs Never Lie About Love*, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson correctly observes that if animals can be used in experiments to make conclusions about human beings, animals must have similar nervous systems. Therefore, they must also feel the excruciating pain inflicted upon them since human beings would.

Peter Singer, author of the 1975 book, *Animal Liberation*, the first book on the subject to reach a mass audience, says that studies of animal nervous systems, evolution and behavior make it clear that they feel pain, suffering and joy intensely. Humans deny these realities to spare themselves the horror of recognizing the cruelty done to animals.

Inside the Animal Mind is a book filled with information that will open your mind and shift your view on the nature of the minds of animals—if you let the knowledge in.

When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals

by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy
(Delta Books, 1995)

[Order Now from Amazon.com](#)

This is a ground-breaking book that made the best-seller list of *The New York Times*. It is highly regarded by reviewers, experts in the field, and readers nationwide. Masson demonstrates the absurdity of the pseudo-scientific claims that animals lack the capacity to feel. In his book, he brings to life animals who mourn, worry and anticipate; who feel disappointed, jealous and lonely; who experience passionately joy and heartbreak, love and hate. The animals Masson writes about engage in many activities for the pure joy it brings them.

Masson notes that animals in the wild, and in captivity, experience their emotional lives fully, unlike the emotionally-stunted human beings who project their incapacity to feel onto the animals. Many modern scientists are blind, deaf and dumb to the emotions of animals; many also cannot feel the emotions expressed by newborns, infants and children.

This is a fascinating, important book.