

## Abstract

**What is Unique About the Themes Addressed in the Book:** The initial question that prompted the writing of this book was: What is there about an American university education that enables so many graduates to make the seemingly seamless transition from the classroom to becoming advisors and supporters of President George W. Bush's policies? Further investigation led to an examination of the three main themes that set this manuscript off from other critiques of the policies of President Bush. First, the entire analysis, as well as recommendations for reforming universities, address how the current misuse of our two most prominent political terms of liberalism and conservatism leads to a basic misunderstanding of the policies that are being pursued under these two labels. I point out that the domestic and foreign policies of the Bush administration, as well as such think tanks as the CATO and American Enterprise Institutes, are based on the market-liberal thinking of John Locke, a partial reading of Adam Smith, and more recent libertarian thinkers. Thus, to refer to the policies that give corporations a greater influence over legislation in the areas of health care, energy, and the role-back of environmental protection as examples of conservatism is a problem that has its roots in the failure of universities to expose students to the history of conservative thinkers from Edmund Burke to Wendell Berry, and to the history of liberal thinkers from Locke, Smith, and Mill to current libertarians. I also provide an explanation of how the misuse of our political labels leads self-identified conservative students not to understand that they are actually proponents of market-liberal policies, and that many of their professors are in the social justice tradition of liberalism—and that both share a number of the deep cultural assumptions that give conceptual direction and moral legitimacy to the industrial/consumer culture that is now being globalized. The failure of social justice liberal faculty is in not introducing students to the history of liberal and conservative thinkers in the West, thus leaving most university graduates without an understanding of what separates the classical liberal theorists from the philosophic conservative thinkers such as Edmund Burke and environmental conservatives such as Wendell Berry and Vandana Shiva. The irony is that the ideas of Burke and Berry are essential to understanding the importance of revitalizing the world's diverse cultural commons as ecologically sustainable alternatives to the hyper-consumerism promoted by market liberals.

The second theme is that the fundamentalist Christians that are part of the president's base of political support hold the view that they know the will of God and that their political mission is to be "God's regents" until the Second Coming. Their theology, which is not shared by evangelical Christians such as Jim Wallis, leads them to adopt a friend/enemy approach to politics that contributes to undermining what remains of the traditions that support a democratic, open, pluralistic society that is able to move forward through compromise and negotiation. I also point out that conserving the traditions of separation of church and state, an independent judiciary, the separation of power between the main branches of government, is not part of the political agenda of these fundamentalists who now number in the millions. I also point out how the fundamental Christians view the destruction of the environment as yet another sign that the rapture and the end-of-time is near. As self-identified liberals are not comfortable using the language

of conservatism, they continue to emphasize the importance of the autonomous individual and of representing change as progressive in nature. Consequently they are not speaking out on the importance of conserving the traditions that are the basis of our civil liberties and the social justice issues that are still to be addressed. Thus, they are caught in a linguistic double bind. An example of this linguistic double bind is George Lakoff's reference to "progressive environmentalism."

The third theme is the need for educational reforms that address what university students need to know about the nature and importance of the cultural and environmental commons (aspects of the culture and environment that have not been monetized and incorporated into the industrial and consumer-dependent culture). A knowledge of how the world's diverse cultural commons represent sites of resistance to the further spread of a market economy that leaves increasing numbers of people in America vulnerable to the loss of jobs, of health benefits, and of pensions takes on special importance today. What remains of the world's diverse cultural and environmental commons (and they still exist across American, even in urban areas) hold out the possibilities of a more community-centered existence that involves reliance on intergenerational knowledge and skills that lead to mentoring, mutual support systems, and self-reliant activities that reduce dependence upon a money economy. The manuscript contains a chapter that explains how courses in existing disciplines can be used to help students understand why the importance of the intergenerational knowledge was marginalized by Western philosophers, the history of cultural forces that have contributed to the enclosure of the commons, how different technologies impact the commons, the economics and environmental impact of the cultural commons, and the connections between conserving the linguistic diversity of the cultural commons and conserving habitats and species.

The last chapter examines the similarities between the theocracy/market-liberal oriented policies and the characteristics of fascist societies that came to power through a weakened democratic process between the two world wars. While we are not there yet, the nearly forty percent of hard-core Bush supporters, as well as the nearly fifty percent of adults that think that evolution is a liberal-inspired myth suggest that we are further down the slippery slope than many people realize. If we continue to move down this slippery political slope, the future of the environmental movement will be further weakened. Indeed, any major environmental crisis, such as the topping out of oil production and its subsequent decline, may lead to the kind of social unrest that preceded the rise of earlier fascist governments.

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(At first glance this may seem an outrageous claim. Reading the short piece on my website that has been incorporated into this chapter, and that is titled the “real failure of liberal faculty”, will clarify the basis for the claim...<<http://cabowers.net/>>)

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