

THIS IS THE MANUAL USED BY FUSION GPS, ELON MUSK, GAWKER MEDIA, GIZMODO MEDIA, BLACK CUBE, PODESTA GROUP, MEDIA MATTERS, SID BLUMENTHAL AND OTHER WHITE HOUSE PARTNERS TO ATTACK CITIZENS AND REPORTERS ONLINE -

[The Gentleperson's Guide To Forum Spies](#)

Index:

COINTELPRO Techniques for dilution, misdirection and control of a internet forum:

Technique #1 - 'FORUM SLIDING'

Technique #2 - 'CONSENSUS CRACKING'

Technique #3 - 'TOPIC DILUTION'

Technique #4 - 'INFORMATION COLLECTION'

Technique #5 - 'ANGER TROLLING'

Technique #6 - 'GAINING FULL CONTROL'

8 Traits of the Disinformationalist:

1. Avoidance.
2. Selectivity.
3. Coincidental.
4. Teamwork.
5. Anti-conspiratorial.
6. Artificial Emotions.
7. Inconsistent.
8. Time Constant.

17 Techniques for Truth Suppression:

1. Dummy up.
2. Wax indignant.
3. Characterize the charges as "rumors"
4. Knock down straw men.
5. Call the skeptics names like "conspiracy theorist"
6. Impugn motives.
7. Invoke authority.
8. Dismiss the charges as "old news"
9. Come half-clean.
10. Characterize the crimes as impossibly complex and the truth as ultimately unknowable.
11. Reason backward
12. Require the skeptics to solve the crime completely.
13. Change the subject.
14. Lightly report incriminating facts, and then make nothing of them.
15. Baldly and brazenly lie.
16. Expanding further on numbers 4 and 5, have your own stooges "expose" scandals and champion popular causes.
17. Flood the Internet with agents.

25 Rules of Disinformation:

1. Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil.
2. Become incredulous and indignant.
3. Create rumor mongers.
4. Use a straw man.
5. Sidetrack opponents with name calling and ridicule.
6. Hit and Run.
7. Question motives.
8. Invoke authority.

9. Play Dumb.
10. Associate opponent charges with old news.
11. Establish and rely upon fall-back positions.
12. Enigmas have no solution.
13. Alice in Wonderland Logic.
14. Demand complete solutions.
15. Fit the facts to alternate conclusions.
16. Vanish evidence and witnesses.
17. Change the subject.
18. Emotionalize, Antagonize, and Goad Opponents.
19. Ignore proof presented, demand impossible proofs.
20. False evidence.
21. Call a Grand Jury, Special Prosecutor, or other empowered investigative body.
22. Manufacture a new truth.
23. Create bigger distractions.
24. Silence critics.
25. Vanish.

CONCLUSION

Remember these techniques are only effective if the forum participants DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THEM. Once they are aware of these techniques the operation can completely fail, and the forum can become uncontrolled. At this point other avenues must be considered such as initiating a false legal precedence to simply have the forum shut down and taken offline.

This is not desirable as it then leaves the enforcement agencies unable to track the percentage of those in the population who always resist attempts for control against them. Many other techniques can be utilized and developed by the individual and as you develop further techniques of infiltration and control it is imperative to share them with HQ.

More Info

25 February 2014. Related: GCHQ Full-Spectrum Cyber Effects:

<http://cryptome.org/2014/02/gchq-cyber-effects.pdf>

24 February 2014. Related: GCHQ Online Deception:

<http://cryptome.org/2014/02/gchq-online-deception.pdf>

GCHQ DISRUPTION Operational Playbook:

<http://cryptome.org/2014/02/gchq-disruption.pdf>

29 January 2014. Related: GCHQ Squeaky Dolphin Psychological Operations:

<http://cryptome.org/2014/01/gchq-squeaky-dolphin.pdf> (18MB)

4 March 2012. Precursor to this sabotage, OSS Sabotage of Organizations:

http://svn.cacert.org/CAcert/CAcert_Inc/Board/oss/oss_sabotage.html

https://www.reddit.com/r/btc/comments/72iqux/hello_rbtc_here_is_what_you_are_up_against/

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Propaganda and Debating Techniques

by [A. Orange](#)

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle acknowledges that it would be better if we could make our case without either browbeating or flattering the audience; nothing should matter except "the bare facts." Yet he laments, "other things affect the result considerably, owing to the defects of our hearers."

— Stanley Fish, in his blog "Think Again" in the New York Times, 2008.11.09

<http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/psychology-and-torture/?page=1>

"I soon realized that the correct use of propaganda is a true art which has remained practically unknown to the bourgeois parties. Only the Christian-Social movement, especially in Lueger's time, achieved a certain virtuosity on this instrument, to which it owed many of its successes."

— Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Volume 1, Chapter 6, "War Propaganda"

"Through clever and constant application of propaganda, people can be made to see paradise as hell, and also the other way round, to consider the most wretched sort of life as paradise."

— Adolf Hitler

"Propaganda," Goebbels once wrote, "has absolutely nothing to do with truth."

"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

— George Orwell

"This election is not about issues," Rick Davis, John McCain's campaign manager said this week. "This election is about a composite view of what people take away from these candidates." That's a scary thought. For the takeaway is so often base, a reflection more of people's fears and insecurities than of our hopes and dreams.

— Judith Warner, New York Times, September 4, 2008

As you read the following pages, you will be exposed to quite a variety of deceptive propaganda techniques, logical fallacies, and lies (hopefully, none of them mine). You might as well learn a little about how the art and science of propaganda works, so that you can recognize the techniques as people try to fool your mind with them.

You probably already know a lot about this, whether you realize it or not, because politicians pull many of these standard stunts on you every election year, and you have grown immune to some of them. And modern advertising uses a lot of them, too, and you just tune them out. Nevertheless, let's just do a quick over-view of propaganda techniques.

Bear in mind that "propaganda" is not inherently a dirty word — it just usually is. Any time you are trying to convince anyone of something, you are using some kind of persuasion, debating, or propaganda technique. Just

telling the whole truth about something is one simple propaganda technique, and a highly effective one. But lying often works better, at least with some audiences...

Master these propaganda techniques, and you too will be able to proselytize and promote cult religion and radical politics just like a battle-hardened old-timer.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES:

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- [Lie With Statistics](#)
- [Scream Accusations of Lies and Lying](#)
- [Observational Selection](#)
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- [Hypnotic Bait and Switch](#)
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- [Non Sequitur](#)
- [Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc — "It happened after 'X', so it was caused by 'X'"](#)
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 - Escape via Ignorance
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 - Escape via Relativism
 - Escape via Irrationality
 - Pack the House
 - Embarrass Your Opponent
 - Obtuseness — Refuse to See the Point
 - Laugh It Off
 - Dominate the Conversation, Talk Non-Stop, and Interrupt Constantly
 - Escape via Bullying and Intimidation
 - Shut Down the Debate
-

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES:

- **Tell The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But The Truth.**
This can be highly effective, and very convincing, if you know your subject material well, and are a good speaker.

... And **IF** the truth is really what you want your audience to hear and believe.

The Truth, as a matter of habit, has some disadvantages: You have to learn and remember a whole lot of facts, and keep them straight in your head. The facts might not always be what you wish them to be. And, alas, the truth is sometimes very boring...

- **Lie**

This one is simple, straight-forward, and obvious. Just lie and say whatever you want to. It has the advantages that you don't need to memorize so many facts, and you can make up new facts when the currently-existing ones don't suit your purposes. The disadvantages are that you might get caught in a lie, and that would destroy your credibility.

"You're never going to make it in politics. You just don't know how to lie."

Richard M. Nixon

Secret Lives of the U.S. Presidents, Cormac O'Brien, page 228.

- **Lie By Omission and Half-Truths**

This is also known as *Suppressed Evidence*.

This one is more subtle. It has the advantage that you can't get caught in a lie, because everything that you say is true. You just happily fail to mention all of those bothersome little facts that do not support your point of view. Should a critic point out one of those annoying undesired facts, you can at least feign innocent ignorance, or claim that the fact is really just an unimportant, trivial detail, not worth mentioning.

For example: In 1908, [the Lutheran minister Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman](#) got into a squabble over money with the trustee committee of their hospice for young men in Philadelphia, and in an angry huff, Buchman resigned and got on a boat for Europe. He ended up at a large religious convention in Keswick, England, where he felt that he had a spiritual transformation. He felt moved to write letters of apology to all six of the trustees with whom he had squabbled, humbly asking their forgiveness. Buchman said that none of them even bothered to answer his letters.

That was rather unkind of them, wasn't it? No wonder Buchman had a disagreement with them, if they were really so haughty and so inconsiderate that they would not even acknowledge a man's humble apology and request for forgiveness...

There is just one small detail that Frank Buchman left out in his telling of that story: [Buchman didn't put any return address on the envelopes](#) that he mailed back to Philadelphia.

Vice President Dick Cheney told CNN on May 8, 2001, that nuclear energy "doesn't emit any carbon dioxide at all."

(CNN, 8 May 2001. Also see <http://www.nirs.org/factsheets/KYOTONUC.html>)

That is lying by omission. It is true that nuclear reactors do not create carbon dioxide while burning their nuclear fuel, but the process of mining the uranium is done by machines like bulldozers that create lots of carbon dioxide and air pollution as they burn diesel fuel. And so does the process of refining the ore and converting it into usable nuclear fuel, and transporting it to the reactor. And then there is the problem of disposal of the nuclear waste. That's another giant hole to be dug with diesel-powered machines. If the whole fuel cycle is taken into account, then nuclear power creates several times as much CO₂ as renewable energy sources. (*The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies*, Richard Heinberg, page 135.)

Bill Wilson gave us lots of good examples of that technique. In chapter 8 of the *Big Book*, "To Wives", the wives of the recovering alcoholics seem to give advice to the wives of other alcoholics:

As wives of Alcoholics Anonymous, we would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We want to analyze mistakes we have made.

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 8, *To Wives*, page 104.

Sometimes there were other women. How heartbreaking was this discovery; how cruel to be told that they understood our men as we did not!

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 8, *To Wives*, page 106.

We wives found that, like everybody else, we were afflicted with pride, self-pity, vanity and all the things which go to make up the self-centered person; and we were not above selfishness or dishonesty. As our husbands began to apply spiritual principles in their lives, we began to see the desirability of doing so too.

At first, some of us thought we did not need this help. We thought, on the whole, we were pretty good women, capable of being nicer if our husbands stopped drinking. But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need God. Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every department of our lives. ... We urge you to try our program, for nothing will be so helpful to your husband as the radically changed attitude toward him which God will show you how to have. Go along with your husband if you possibly can.

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 8, *To Wives*, page 116.

Yes, Bill Wilson really would like you to feel that the wives understand as perhaps few can.

The big problem with those quotes is that the *To Wives* chapter of the *Big Book* was not written by Lois Wilson or any of the other wives of the alcoholics — [Bill Wilson wrote it all](#). Lois wanted to write it, but Bill didn't trust his wife to say the right things, or to get the "style" the way he wanted it, he said, so he wrote the whole chapter himself, while pretending to be his own wife.

What a huge difference that one tiny little fact makes. That chapter reads entirely differently, it becomes a sick twisted joke, when you know who the real author was.

Bill Wilson perceptively analyzed his wife's many mistakes for her, and confessed all of Lois' sins for her (in print), and honestly admitted her many failings: her moral shortcomings and dishonesty and selfishness and her silly thinking that she was too good to need God (page 116). (She was "selfish" while she worked in Loesser's department store to support his [unemployed thieving philandering drunken ass](#) for years and years.)

Then Bill the housewife even lectured "the other girls" not to nag their husbands about their drinking, or else those guys will [get mad and go sleep with their mistresses](#) (page 111)... [Like Bill did](#).

Bill Wilson gave us many more examples of that *Lie By Omission* technique. Here, he is talking about doing Step Five, where we confess all of our sins and moral shortcomings to someone else:

This is perhaps difficult, especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. **In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient.** Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: **If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking.** Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to **easier methods**. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. **We think the reason is** that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, **in**

the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 6, *Into Action*, pages 72-73.

Wow. That's really impressive. I guess we had better get down on our knees right now, and start confessing everything, *holding nothing back!*

Right?

Wrong.

Notice that the rest of the logic is missing. That is, where do we see the report on the other people, *who did confess everything*, and then successfully abstained from drinking? There is no such report, because they all relapsed too. The early New York group that Bill Wilson was writing about had [a very high relapse rate](#). Fully fifty percent of [the original Big Book authors relapsed](#) and returned to a life of drinking. In Akron, Bill Wilson and Doctor Bob calculated that they had only a 5% success rate in sobering up alcoholics (which is the same as the success rate of people who quit on their own). Bill Wilson couldn't keep 'em sober not for nuthin'. The cult religion routine didn't work at all.

But Bill didn't want to talk about that, because he was a faithful [Buchmanite](#) who believed that you must confess your sins to everyone else in your group if you are to be holy. So Bill was doing everything in his power to make everyone holy, even if it didn't make them sober.

And note how Bill also gave us illustrations of a few other propaganda techniques:

- [The Straw Man Tactic](#):

"We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves."

"They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty..."

Those people who think that they don't really need to do all of Bill Wilson's wonderful 12 Steps are really stupid egotistical dishonest cowards, aren't they?

- [Hiding Behind Others](#):

The use of "We" to create the false impression that it was more than just the opinion of Bill Wilson — that many people had done a whole lot of research on the subject, and had gained a lot of valuable experience in what really works to keep people sober: "*We think... We usually find...*" The truth is, when Bill wrote that paragraph in December of 1938 and January of 1939, [there were only 60 or 70 sober A.A. members in the whole world](#), and they didn't all agree with him. Their major experience was in watching Bill Wilson's religious program [fail to keep them sober](#), with most of the early A.A. members relapsing and leaving. Here, Bill Wilson was really just pushing his own strange Buchmanite religious beliefs, and trying to convince others that his ideas were the only things that work.

- [Lying by Omission](#) (some more):

Half of those few sober A.A. members didn't like or do Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps. They were the members who demanded that Bill's 12 religious steps be called "suggestions", not requirements, because they saw clearly that Bill's dogmatic religiosity would drive away many of the alcoholics whom the program was supposed to help. See page 59 of the *Big Book* — the steps are only "*suggested as a program of recovery*". But here, Bill wants to fool you into thinking that all of the sober members did Step Five thoroughly, holding nothing back, and that's why they were sober.

- [Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc](#): "*It happened after 'X', so it was caused by 'X'.*"

"Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. ... Almost invariably they got drunk."

Bill Wilson doesn't really give us any evidence that withholding embarrassing personal secrets makes people drink alcohol, just like he doesn't give us any evidence that confessing sins to other A.A.

members makes people get sober. He just wants to fool us into thinking it. I can with equal validity argue that they all relapsed because they wore clothes to the meetings:

Time after time, we have seen newcomers make the stupid mistake of wearing clothes to A.A. meetings. *Almost all of the newcomers who relapsed wore clothes. (What sins and bodily imperfections were they trying to hide?) Almost invariably, they got drunk. And almost all of the people who wore clothes to A.A. meetings eventually dropped out.*

Conclusion: Obviously, wearing clothes to A.A. meetings causes people to drink alcohol.

- *Sly Suggestions, Fear Mongering, and Creating Phobias:*
"If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking."

Then again, we might. (I did.)

Notice how Wilson lies to you obliquely, by hints and suggestions, to lead you to an erroneous conclusion: "...we **may not** overcome drinking."

And Wilson does it again, here:

"... they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning."
"We think"? It's hard to prove that Wilson is lying when he plants a suggestion like that. He might actually think that all of that crazy stuff is really true.

And we can again use the clothes clause:

"We think the reason that they relapsed is because they never completed the task of taking off all of their clothes and fully exposing themselves to the whole group."

- And who says that Step Five is a "*vital*" step? Well, Bill Wilson does. That's assuming facts not in evidence, assuming facts yet to be proven, the trick called *petitio principii*. We have absolutely no evidence, other than Bill Wilson's deceitful declarations, that Step Five is in any way necessary, or even helpful, for quitting drinking.
- *Sarcasm, Condescension, and Patronizing Attitudes:*
"Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods."
If you won't do what Bill Wilson says, and humbly grovel before your sponsor and confess all of your sins, then you are just a weak, wimpy, unspiritual lazy bum who is guilty of seeking "*an easier, softer way.*"
(*You couldn't possibly be seeking a saner way to recover.*)
Real men are proud to masochistically grovel on their knees and wallow in guilt.

For another example of lying by omission, look closely at this text:

Despite four decades of AA research, no clear picture has emerged as to which patient characteristics can predict a positive outcome with AA and, therefore, can be used as criteria for matching patients to AA. ...

To date, only three randomized clinical trials have examined the efficacy of AA participation, either with or without additional simultaneous treatment approaches (Ditman et al. 1967; Brandsma et al. 1980; Walsh et al. 1991). The vast majority of AA studies, however, have focused on two narrower questions: Which factors predict whether a person will join AA? And how does involvement in AA predict outcome? In an attempt to answer these two questions, Emrick and colleagues (1993) reviewed 107 previously published AA studies.

Tonigan, J. Scott, Hiller-Sturmhofel, Susanne, Alcohol Health & Research World, 0090838X, 1994, Vol. 18, Issue 4.

1. The authors almost accurately stated that there have only been three good randomized clinical trials of the effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous treatment ever done. (Actually, they ignored two of the best

tests of all, the very large test done by [Drs. Orford and Edwards in England](#), and also [Dr. George E. Vaillant's clinical trial](#), which also had merit.)

2. But the authors did not tell us what those three good clinical trials actually found. They did not say one word about what Doctors Ditman, Brandsma and Walsh reported.
3. Instead, the authors did a quick tap-dance towards "the vast majority of A.A. studies" that were not properly done and are not scientifically or medically valid. Then they cited a survey done by Emrick where he examined 107 of those less-reliable "studies", essays, opinions, and [propaganda articles](#).

So what did those three valid clinical trails find? They found that Alcoholics Anonymous was a disaster:

- [Dr. Ditman found](#) that participation in A.A. *increased* the alcoholics' rate of rearrest for public drunkenness.
- [Dr. Brandsma found](#) that A.A. increased the rate of binge drinking. After several months of indoctrination with A.A. 12-Step dogma, the alcoholics in A.A. were doing *five times as much* binge drinking as a control group that got no treatment at all, and *nine times as much* binge drinking as another group that got Rational Behavior Therapy.
Teaching people that they are alcoholics who are powerless over alcohol yields very bad results. It becomes a self-fulfilling prediction — they relapse and binge drink as if they really are powerless over alcohol.
- [And Dr. Walsh found](#) that the so-called "free" A.A. program was actually very expensive — it messed up patients so that they required longer periods of costly hospitalization later on.
- And the authors could have mentioned that [Doctors Edwards and Orford found](#) that A.A. was completely ineffective, and that having a doctor talk to the alcoholic for just one hour, telling him to quit drinking or else he would likely die, worked just as well as a whole year of A.A. meetings.
- And the authors could have mentioned that Dr. George E. Vaillant, member of the Board of Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., found in his 8-year-long test that [A.A. was completely ineffective](#), and just raised the death rate in alcoholics. His A.A.-based treatment program had the highest death rate of all of the treatment programs that he studied.

But the authors mentioned none of that. They just started talking about matching patients to A.A. without ever having established whether A.A. works or helps alcoholics even a little bit, or that we *even should* try to match alcoholics to Alcoholics Anonymous. What is the point of sending patients to A.A. when it just makes them worse, and makes them binge drink and die? (So that also makes it an example of the propaganda trick [Assume The Major Premise](#).)

- **Hide the Truth**

Hide the truth by erasing it, or rewriting it, or destroying evidence, or stashing it someplace out of sight. Don't let people see the truth.

Such dishonest behavior is often rationalized by saying, "We don't want people to get the wrong idea." Which really means: "We don't want people to get the right idea."

The Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin was famous for this. He massively rewrote Russian history. His agents actually went into libraries and cut pages out of books, and replaced them with other pages that said what Stalin wanted the people to read. People whom Stalin did not like and had killed — particularly other old Communists who could compete with Stalin for leadership — were simply erased from history. They became "non-persons" (which was the official term for someone who was erased from existence). They supposedly had no part in the Revolution. Their pictures were airbrushed out of historical photographs. All records of their existence were erased. They were never born. They simply never existed.

Bill Wilson taught hiding the truth as a standard recruiting trick. In his history of Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age*, Bill Wilson wrote:

When first contacted, most alcoholics just wanted to find sobriety, nothing else. They clung to their other defects, letting go only little by little. They simply did not want to get "too good too soon." [The Oxford Groups' absolute concepts](#) — absolute purity, absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love — were frequently too much for the drunks. These ideas had to be fed with teaspoons rather than by buckets.

Besides, the Oxford Groups' "absolutes" were expressions peculiar to them. This was a terminology which might continue to identify us in the public mind with the Oxford Groupers, even though we had completely withdrawn from their fellowship.

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age, William G. Wilson, pages 74-75.

The alcoholics ([whom Bill Wilson deprecatingly called "drunks" who didn't want to be good](#)) just wanted to quit drinking; they didn't want to join Bill's crazy Buchmanite cult religion with its ridiculous Absolutes. So Bill Wilson's answer to that problem was to deceive the newcomers, and hide the intense religiosity of A.A., and to also hide [the Buchmanite Oxford Group cult religion roots](#) of Alcoholics Anonymous, until after the newcomers had been indoctrinated and brainwashed enough... Mr. Wilson candidly admitted that he was practicing [deceptive recruiting](#), not honestly telling the newcomers what membership in his group would really entail. And now, the A.A. slogan "*Teaspoons, Not Buckets*" teaches standard A.A. recruiting procedure.

The Alcoholics Anonymous shrine called "Stepping Stones", that was Bill Wilson's house in Bedford Hills, has been similarly cleansed of undesired information and unwanted history. There used to be a "spook room", downstairs to the left, where Bill Wilson would conduct séances each day, and play with a Ouija board and talk to ghosts and the spirits of dead people. [Bill Wilson routinely practiced necromancy and spirit-rapping and channeling of spirits](#), and fancied himself a skilled medium. The bookshelf in the room was full of spiritual and occult books. All of that is gone. The room has been "refurbished" to the point that nothing original is left, not even the wallpaper. Now the room features new furniture and a clear plastic bookshelf that contains only A.A. council-approved books (which are for sale in the bookstore). All documents pertaining to Bill Wilson's "spook sessions" have been removed and locked up in the sealed A.A. historical archives, where no one may see them.

For that matter, those historical archives are loaded with documents and history that you are not supposed to see (and probably never will see). There are the early financial records where [Bill Wilson stole the Big Book publishing fund](#) and [the copyright of the Big Book](#). There are the letters where [Clarence Snyder complained about Bill Wilson's financial dishonesty](#). There are accounts of [Bill Wilson's misbehavior, like philandering](#) and [LSD consumption](#). There is so much interesting stuff in that archive that the leaders of A.A. will not even release a list of what all is really in there.

- **Lie With Qualifiers**

Make sweeping statements to give the impression you want, but insert so many qualifiers that the statements are meaningless, or downright dishonest. This is also known as "insert loopholes" into statements.

You get bombarded with advertisements that say,

"Make up to \$6000 per month working from home."

Up to? Why the upper limit? Why not a lower limit? Why don't they advertise,

"Make at least \$3000 per month working from home"?

And Qwest says, "You get free long distance (except for a 10 cents per minute surcharge)."

If you have to pay 10 cents per minute, then it isn't free at all.

A bank advertises: "We can close your loan in as little as two weeks. Guaranteed."

That isn't a guarantee. That open-ended qualifier. "In as little as" means that they might close your loan in

two weeks, or two months, or two years, or whenever...

2010-05-24: BP (British Petroleum) says that it "will pay all legitimate claims for damage" from their immense oil spill. What is "legitimate", and who gets to decide which claims are "legitimate"? Is BP really going to pay much at all? After the Exxon-Valdez ran aground and dumped its load, Exxon delayed payments for the Prince William Sound disaster for 20 years and then got the Supreme Court to reduce the payments to nearly nothing.

And then of course there is the recent example of the crazy Republican politician Rep. Todd Aiken who ranted about "legitimate rape", and claimed that women wouldn't get pregnant from "legitimate rape". (I guess only insincere rape gets a girl pregnant.)

And A.A. gives us numerous examples:

"It works, if you work it."

"It works, if you make it work."

Yes, and [eating vanilla ice cream works](#), **if you make it work**.

Dancing in a ballerina's tutu works, if you make it work.

Likewise,

"The Alcoholics Anonymous program works great for the rare few people for whom it works great."

In *The Promises*, Bill Wilson wrote:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development [Step 9], we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd Edition, page 83.

So of course if we are not amazed, then we were not painstaking enough...

Another example: the A.A. faithful read this statement out loud at the start of every A.A. meeting:

RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd Edition, Chapter 5, "How It Works", page 58.

How could Bill Wilson write such a line when A.A. had [a horrendously high failure rate](#)?

Simple: the A.A. program requires people to abstain from drinking alcohol, so if they relapse and drink, then they aren't "*thoroughly following our path*", are they?

With that qualifier, Bill Wilson could have written,

"NEVER have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path".

For another example, in the Foreword to the Second Edition of the *Big Book*, page XX, Bill Wilson wrote:

Of alcoholics who came to A.A. **and really tried**, 50% got sober at once and remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement. Other thousands came to a few A.A. meetings and at first decided they didn't want the program. But great numbers of these — about two out of three — began to return as time passed.

The impression we get is that A.A. worked great, and sobered up 75% of the alcoholics pretty fast, and that all of the alcoholics benefited at least a little bit, if they just tried. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Later, Bill Wilson told the truth:

You have no conception these days of how much failure we had. You had to cull over hundreds of these drunks to get a handful to take the bait.

Bill Wilson, at the memorial service for Dr. Bob, Nov. 15, 1952; file available [here](#).

This quote gives us the impression that A.A. had about a one or two percent recruiting success rate: *You have to "cull over hundreds of these drunks to get a handful to take the bait."* But that "handful" is people who just "take the bait" and join Bill's club. How many of those gullible joiners actually stayed sober for a year or more? *Even less*, for sure. So [the real long-term A.A. success rate](#) was **under one percent**, even by Bill Wilson's own reckoning.

So how do we reconcile the vastly different numbers in those two statements? Easy. We use qualifiers:

- First off, Bill Wilson began the first quote with a major qualifier about those alcoholics "*who came to A.A. and really tried*". If they didn't join A.A., or they didn't "*really try*", then they weren't counted.
- And who decided whether they had *really tried*?
Well, Bill Wilson, of course.
Heck, with that qualifier, Bill Wilson could make the numbers into anything he wanted them to be.
- The last qualifier counted only "those who stayed on with A.A.", so those who relapsed and left A.A. and didn't "Keep Coming Back" didn't count either. That conveniently eliminated all of the drop-outs, deaths, and failures from the statistics. So there wasn't a single case "of those who stayed on" that didn't "show improvement" in the statistics that Bill manufactured.
- So we can have the reality that less than one percent of the alcoholics were actually success stories, joining A.A., quitting drinking and staying quit for many years, while, [in the Big Book](#), after Bill Wilson prettied up the numbers with those qualifiers, it looked like at least 50% of the alcoholics were eventually getting sobered up by A.A. (75% of the two thirds who kept coming back).

Cute, huh? Now that's lying with qualifiers.

(And it's also a fair example of [lying with statistics](#).)

"Keep Coming Back! It Works! (...If you work it...)"

- **Lie With Statistics**

Speaking of which, there is the time-honored method of lying called *Statistics*.

Both Mark Twain and Desraeli said that there are three kinds of lies:

- Little White Lies,
- Damned Lies,
- and Statistics.

You can have all kinds of fun with statistics:

- Ninety-nine percent of all of the people who ate carrots between 1800 and 1900 are dead, so carrots are obviously very hazardous to your health. If you eat carrots long enough, you will certainly die.
- President Eisenhower expressed astonishment and alarm when he was told that fully half of all Americans had below-average intelligence.
- Likewise, fifty percent of all Americans have below-average income, or savings, or beauty, or housing, or education. It's no wonder why the politicians don't want to associate with all of those stupid, ugly, poor people, but guess who elects the politicians? If 80% of the stupid people, and 75% of the poor

people, and 65% of the ugly people voted for a politician, then 220% of the poor, stupid, ugly people voted for the politician. No wonder that bozo got elected.

- Another good one: Statistically, men who have survived two heart attacks almost never die from lung cancer or cirrhosis of the liver. There is just something about having heart attacks that protects people from death by cancer or cirrhosis. So, after you have had two heart attacks, you can smoke and drink all you want.
- Ninety-three percent of the people who use statistics in their arguments just make them up, and the rest get the numbers wrong.
- Fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce.
If you think that's bad, consider that the other fifty percent end in death.
- If you don't buy a lottery ticket, then your chances of winning are zero. If you do buy a ticket (Powerball), your chances of winning are only 0.00000002 — 1 in 50 million. Both numbers are so close to zero that there is little point in your actually handing over your two dollars and buying a ticket — you still aren't going to win.
On the other hand, if you do buy a ticket, then your chances of winning are infinitely higher than if you don't.
- Public service announcements on TV and radio declare:

"2 out of every 5 fatal automobile accidents was due to drinking. 33% of the drivers involved in fatal accidents had been drinking. 24% of the pedestrians involved in fatal accidents had been drinking. Therefore, alcohol intoxication is a major cause of automobile accidents, and drunk driving must be dealt with harshly."

That logic sounds impressive, but it's completely wrong. Consider the reverse logic:

"3 out of every 5 fatal automobile accidents did not involve drinking. 67% of the drivers involved in fatal accidents had not been drinking. And 76% of the pedestrians involved in accidents had not been drinking. Therefore, sobriety is undoubtedly the major cause of fatal automobile accidents, and sober driving must be outlawed immediately, and punished harshly."

- And we could really have fun, starting a big war with statements like, "Forty-five percent of the drivers in fatal automobile accidents were women, therefore women shouldn't be allowed to drive." (But if we did that, then 100% of the accidents would be caused by men. So men shouldn't be allowed to drive.)
- Some people often cite statistics like,

"95% of all heroin addicts smoked marijuana before they graduated to the hard stuff. Therefore, marijuana is a gateway drug that leads to heroin."

That is also false logic. Consider this:

"Further research has revealed that 99.8% of all heroin addicts consumed the white drug called milk for years before they graduated to the white powder called heroin. Therefore, giving children milk at school turns them into heroin addicts."

Or:

"99% of all heroin addicts, cocaine addicts, amphetamine addicts, and marijuana users drank alcohol before they graduated to the harder stuff. Therefore alcohol is the universal

gateway drug."

(Actually, there is a lot of evidence that alcohol really *IS* the universal gateway drug, but the cigar-smoking, whisky-guzzling Senators and Congressmen in Washington don't want to hear that. They never tolerate hearing something bad about their own favorite drugs; they just want to hear bad stuff about other people's favorite drugs — preferably other people who are poor, a different color or subcultural type, and not registered to vote.)

- o Another piece of propaganda on TV now says,

"In roadside tests of reckless drivers after auto accidents, one out of three drivers tested positive for marijuana. Marijuana: It's more harmful than we thought."

- They fail to establish any connection between having smoked marijuana some time in the previous 30 days (which is what the drug test detects) and driving recklessly or being in an auto accident today. They could just as well have tested for coffee, and then found that "*Coffee! It's more harmful than we thought.*"
- **And more harmful than *who* thought?**
The anti-drug lunatics have been swearing that marijuana produces instant insanity and addiction ever since they made that *Reefer Madness* movie back in the 'thirties. They have never said that marijuana was harmless. So they are also using the [Sly Suggestions](#) propaganda technique, implying that we thought it was less harmful than it really is.
- Also note that two thirds of those reckless drivers managed to get into their accidents without any help from pot. Logically, we must conclude that *NOT smoking* pot causes more reckless drivers to get into auto accidents than smoking it.
- That propaganda also did not say that the pot-smoking drivers actually caused any of the car accidents — they were just involved in the accidents. For all we know, they might have been hit from behind by drunk drivers.
- Which brings up, **how many of the drivers involved in the accidents were drunk?**
They didn't tell us anything about that, did they? Why weren't they saying, "*Alcohol — it's more harmful than we thought*"?
The propagandists appear to be hiding all evidence of drunk driving ([lying by omission](#)) and just trying to blame all of the auto accidents on marijuana. But we know from other propaganda, especially that disseminated by *Mothers Against Drunk Driving*, that alcohol is the major cause of fatal auto accidents. (But that's a different TV commercial.)
- One of the factors that really biases such a test is the fact that traces of marijuana will linger in body fat for up to a month, while the evidence of any use of alcohol, speed, cocaine, or heroin disappears within a day or two. That can make it look like there is a lot more pot smoking going on than there really is, while it fails to detect the chronic abuse of other drugs.
- Speaking of which, they didn't even say that they tested for those other drugs, did they? They only told us that they tested for marijuana. What else were the drivers on?

Obviously, such propaganda is not designed to tell anyone the truth about drugs. It is just more lying politics as usual.

- **Scream Accusations of Lies and Lying**

This is just the opposite of telling a lot of lies: When your opponent tells some unpleasant truths that you don't

want to hear, scream accusations of lies and lying. Dismiss everything he says as a lie, no matter how true it is.

Alcoholics Anonymous members use this technique often. Whenever they are presented with really undesired facts, like the fact that [A.A. Trustee and Harvard Professor Dr. George E. Vaillant](#) found from eight years of testing A.A. as a treatment for alcoholism, that A.A. was completely ineffective and just produced an appalling death rate, [A.A. defenders simply complain that that is a lie.](#)

- **Observational Selection**

Observational selection, also known as "cherry-picking", is a tactic like counting the hits and forgetting the misses. See only what you wish to see. Overlook and ignore evidence you don't wish to see. And encourage your audience to be equally blind. Observational selection will destroy the validity of any statistical study.

**All lies and jest,
Still a man hears what he wants to hear
And disregards the rest.
Ooh-la-la-la-la-la-la-la.**
The Boxer, by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkle.

The classic example of this is: Something very unusual happens, and it turns out that a tabloid "psychic" predicted it. So the "psychic" must be the real thing, able to see the future, right? Wrong. It turns out that the self-proclaimed "psychic" made many hundreds of screwy, off-beat "predictions", and just by chance, one of them came true. The "psychic" just doesn't bother to tell you about all of the wrong guesses that didn't come true... Fans of Nostradamus still do this for him.

That "psychic's" stunt can be staged in very convincing ways, like:

- The "psychic" writes his prediction on a piece of paper.
- The paper is put into an envelope, which is sealed by several witnesses who put their seals on the envelope, and sign it and date it, and even add code numbers to later verify that it's the envelope they sealed.
- The envelope is kept locked in a safe or bank vault for a long time, until after The Big Event has happened.
- Then, in a big showy ceremony, in front of hundreds of witnesses and many TV cameras, the safe is opened and the envelope is removed from the safe and opened, and there it is for all to see: **unquestionable proof** that the "psychic" predicted the event.

You guessed it: the safe is also *full* of failed predictions, which the con artists happily ignore. (There may even be another envelope in the safe that contains a prediction that is the exact opposite of what just happened... The code numbers on the envelopes tell the con artists which prediction is in which envelope.)

Another way to use observational selection to get desired results is to do many studies or tests, and only report the results that you like. For example, suppose you are a P.R. firm hired to make Buzz Cola look better than Fizz Cola. You could get 1000 people to do a taste test, to see which they liked better, but you don't. You do 100 "tests", each of which have only 10 people in them. In 95 of the tests, the people liked Fizz Cola better. But by random chance, in the other 5 tests, a majority of the people liked Buzz better. So you report, **"In test after test, a majority of the people chose Buzz Cola over Fizz."** Technically, that statement is true, even if it is deceptive as can be. You just don't bother to mention all of the other tests where the people liked Fizz better.

I didn't mean to pick on any real cola brand names there. I wrote that paragraph many years ago, and just made up the names "Buzz" and "Fizz" to avoid using names like "Coke"® and "Pepsi"®. That was years before I ever heard of any Buzz or Fizz Cola. Years

later, I was really surprised to find that somebody used **both** of those names for actual brands of soft drinks. Sometimes, reality mimicks satire.

And obviously, another way to rig any test or study is to *cherry-pick* the people who will be in the test. If you want 'Group A' to look better than 'Group B', then put all of the promising candidates in Group A, and put all of the losers in Group B. (That is why real valid tests must be randomized. You must throw dice, or pick names out of a hat, or something like that, to choose which people go into which group.)

The government uses a subtle form of observational selection and cherry-picking in reporting the national unemployment rate: They only report those people who are actively looking for work *at the unemployment office*. People who have despaired and given up looking for work, or who are still looking but have simply stopped asking at the unemployment office, are erased from the rolls of "the unemployed", and are not counted when the government calculates the national unemployment rate. (Likewise, someone who accepts a menial job for minimal wages out of sheer desperation — even a part-time minimum-wage job — is considered no longer unemployed.) The real unemployment rate is always much higher than the government reports, no matter which political party controls the government. They all misreport the facts.

Another example of observational selection:

Smith: "I have here 29 files that describe cases where people went to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and quit drinking. So we have a *demonstrated relationship* between people going to meetings and quitting drinking."

Jones: "How many cases of failure were there, where the people went to A.A. meetings but didn't quit drinking?"

Smith: "I didn't study them. They weren't interesting, because they were just failures. I'm more interested in what works. Besides, those other people don't count because they didn't keep coming back."

That is just like Bill Wilson only printing selected success stories in the *Big Book*.

And that is just like how Alcoholics Anonymous claims a great success rate today. [The people who relapse and leave are not counted](#) — A.A. says that they didn't "work the program" right, or they didn't "keep coming back", so they don't count. Only the people who stay in A.A. and attend many meetings (usually because they quit drinking) get counted.

Some treatment facilities use a variation on *Observational Selection* — they cherry-pick their patients, drafting into their program as many of the most promising prospective patients as they can get, in order to improve their "success rate":

"You have someone who just quit drinking two weeks ago? You say that he quit once before, and stayed sober for three years, all on his own, without any treatment or A.A. or anything — just going it alone? Quick! Shove him into our treatment program, so that we can 'treat' him, and teach him how to stay sober for six months. Then we can score him as one of our 'success stories'."

(That story is [100% autobiographical](#) — that's my own personal experience with a "treatment program".)

Likewise, most all treatment centers are very deceptive when they advertize their success rates — they only reveal what percentage of the *program graduates* are sober shortly after the end of the program. They ignore all of the people who drop out, flunk out, and relapse and disappear, and do not include them in the reported statistics. (They [rationalize](#) that deception by saying, "Well, they didn't finish the program, so they don't count.")

If 100 people start a program, and ten of them last until graduation, and 8 of them are still clean and sober a month later, then the treatment center advertizes an 80% success rate. That is obviously false. A mere 8% success rate is obviously closer to the truth. But then the treatment centers do not do a follow-up a year later, to see what the real long-term success rate is. That would reveal even more failures. In the final analysis, the success rate of the treatment programs is little or nothing more than [the normal rate of spontaneous remission](#) — the success rate of people who get no treatment at all (approximately 5% per year).

And I know of a drug treatment program that rejects, and will not even try to treat, any and all people who have been treated before and then relapsed — even their own graduates — because the program managers are afraid that those relapsers will relapse again and pull down the program's average "success rate". That program also discounts all of their dropouts and relapsers. When someone "goes out" and uses drugs, or gets arrested for something, the counselors simply erase that person's name from the list of patients, and they do not count him in computing their success rate. Then they claim that their program is very successful and greatly reduces the crime rate of their patients (those few remaining patients who are not currently out stealing to get a fix).

When such a treatment center announces that it has reduced crime in its patients by a certain amount, it is lying with statistics. It is not revealing the resulting average crime rate of all of the clients who started treatment; the T.C. is only revealing the average crime rate of those few successful patients who are still sticking with the program and still abstaining from drugs and alcohol.

Another kind of observational selection is interpreting data in a biased manner, seeing what you wish to see. That is illustrated in this story:

A drug and alcohol treatment center that used acupuncture on its clients ([PAAC](#)) wanted to show that acupuncture reduced cravings for drugs and alcohol in patients who were in recovery, so that the treatment center could produce a report that justified continuing to bill health insurance companies and state agencies for more acupuncture treatments. So they conducted a survey where they questioned their patients to see how the acupuncture treatment was affecting them:

Counselor: "How are you doing with cravings for alcohol?"

Patient: "No problem. I don't have any."

Counselor: "That's because of the acupuncture."

Patient: "No, it's because I don't have any cravings for alcohol. I am craving cigarettes like mad, because I also quit smoking, but I'm not craving alcohol."

Counselor: "That's because of the acupuncture. I'll write down that acupuncture has reduced your cravings for alcohol."

Patient: "No, actually it hasn't. I just don't have a problem with cravings for alcohol. I didn't have any cravings the last time I quit drinking, all on my own, without any treatment or acupuncture, and I don't have any this time either. I am too busy crawling the walls for a cigarette to crave alcohol."

The counselor wrote "acupuncture reduced cravings" anyway.

That story is also autobiographical, and 100% true.

Later, the city and state agencies received a report that declared that a survey of the patients found that acupuncture was very helpful for reducing their cravings for drugs and alcohol, so the city agencies and the state health plan should continue to fund acupuncture treatment of patients in recovery.

Notice that there was also no control group. That is, there should have been another group of patients who received no acupuncture, who were also surveyed to find out how much they were bothered by cravings. Then you compare the results from the two groups to determine what effect, if any, the acupuncture actually had on cravings for drugs or alcohol.

Unfortunately, such properly-conducted research is almost never done by substance-abuse treatment centers. [Their findings](#) are usually just as phony as their [claimed success rates](#).

Another good stunt is to take surveys at A.A. or N.A. meetings. Only the faithful members who *Keep Coming Back* will be there to answer the questions. Asking,

"Is there anyone here for whom the Twelve Steps did not work?"

is the same stupid thing as asking,

"Will everyone who isn't here please raise your hand?"

(Never mind the fact that it also immediately leads to an "Emperor's New Clothes" situation where no one wants to confess that he is the only unspiritual one for whom the Steps are not working...)

Observational selection does not have to be deliberate. One of the ever-present dangers to a researcher is accidental or unconscious bias in making observations. In [a study of the use of LSD in therapy for alcoholism](#), the authors also studied the methods that other studies had used. Their observations were disconcerting — it seems that people have an unfortunate tendency to see whatever they wish to see whenever tests are not rigidly controlled. The various psychiatric treatments and medications being tested were successful in 83 percent of the *uncontrolled* studies, but only in 25 percent of the *controlled* studies. How curious. It would seem that looking too closely, and measuring too carefully, makes the medicines or treatments suddenly stop working.

That's a good example of *researcher bias*. The researchers just really wanted their experiments to be successes, so that's what they tended to see. But when their studies were rigorously controlled, then the researchers were forced to be more objective, and the observed success rate dropped sharply. (That is also why the FDA prefers *double-blind* studies, where neither the patients nor the doctors know whether the patients are getting the real medicine or a placebo.)

A variation on the theme of Observational Selection is getting biased data even when you don't wish to. In one survey, researchers sent out questionnaires that essentially asked people to honestly reveal their racist attitudes. Not surprisingly, a lot of the questionnaires were simply never returned, and lots more reported that the respondents just didn't have any racist attitudes at all. As you can imagine, the resulting statistics showed that racism and racist attitudes were almost non-existent.

- **The Statistics of Small Numbers**

Also beware of *The Statistics of Small Numbers*, which is a different kind of observational selection. It is an error caused by looking at too small of a sample. For instance, "They say that one out of every five people on Earth is Chinese. That can't be true. I know hundreds and hundreds of people, and only three of them are Chinese. So Chinese people must be pretty rare, really..."

A variation of that is: A wildlife program on Public Television says: "One out of every four mammals is a bat."

Well, let's see... "I know I'm not a bat, and my wife isn't a bat, and Joe isn't a bat, so Harry must be a bat." Variations on *The statistics of small numbers* include:

- Hasty Generalization: Generalizing from too-small a sample.
- Inductive Generalization
- Insufficient Sample
- Insufficient Statistics
- Leaping to Conclusion
- Lonely Fact
- Statistical Generalization
- Converse Accident

The statistics of small numbers problem appears in discussions of A.A. often. People will say things like, "We don't have any [nasty thirteenth-stepping sexual predators](#) in our group," and imagine that every other group in the whole country must be just the same, and that it doesn't happen anywhere else either. Unfortunately, it does.

Likewise, "Nobody in our group has committed suicide, so those stories about [A.A. Suicides](#) are ridiculous."

[How can you be sure](#), unless you know every member of your group very well, and keep track of all of them, and check up on them, and know what shape each drop-out, quitter, or disappearance is really in? You don't really expect them to commit suicide *at the A.A. meetings*, do you? And again, you have no idea what is happening in the other A.A. groups that you don't visit. They sure aren't going to email you to broadcast the news about their suicides.

And again, "[No sponsors in our group tell the newcomers to quit taking their doctor-prescribed medications, so those stories must be untrue.](#)"
[I wish they were.](#) (And how do you know what some sponsor is telling his sponsee, if you aren't listening in?)

- **Bury The Lead**

Burying the lead (pronounced, "leed") is a newspaper term. It means that you hide the most important fact in the story down at the bottom of the article.

For example, a recent newspaper article about the soaring price of oil tried to explain the price increases in terms of speculators buying oil futures, and political instability in foreign countries causing uncertainty in the market. Then they gradually got around to mentioning that India and China have booming economies that want ever more oil. And then finally, in the last sentence of the article, someone said, "Oil is getting harder to find."

Historically, one of the best examples of *Burying The Lead* was when the New York Times casually mentioned in a small article on page 9 of an issue, many months after the 2000 election, that if we had counted all of the votes (which is, after all, what you are supposed to do in a democracy), that Al Gore actually won the election.

- **The Big Lie**

The *Big Lie* is a technique that Adolf Hitler used with great success. The idea is that you just keep repeating the same lie over and over, in spite of all arguments or evidence to the contrary, until people believe it. Massive repetition is essential. (Think: "Why do they keep running the same stupid commercials on TV, over and over and over again, *ad nauseum*?")

"Tell a lie enough times and it will become the truth."
— Heinrich Himmler

"A big lie is more plausible than truth."
— Ernest Hemingway

Hitler explained his *Big Lie* technique in *Mein Kampf*,

The greatness of the lie is always a certain factor in being believed; at the bottom of their hearts, the great masses of a people are more likely to be misled than to be consciously and deliberately bad, and in the primitive simplicity of their minds, they are more easily victimized by a large than by a small lie.... Some part of even the boldest lie is sure to stick.

It's a strange fact of human psychology that giant, totally outrageous lies are sometimes more believable than small lies, just by virtue of their bodaciousness. People feel that there must be *something* to it, because the claims are so extreme. People can't help but feel that "*Where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire.*"

In using the *Big Lie* technique, Hitler said, essentially,

[The Jews are an inferior race. The Jews have always been the thieving greedy bankers and money-lenders, bleeding the lifeblood out of our country. Everybody knows that the Jews are the cause of all of](#)

our problems, and now that we are imposing the Final Solution, we will soon be much better off without them.

Today, the fascist rap is,

Drug users and dealers are inferior people. They are really low, dirty and disgusting bums who deserve to die because they are drug users and dealers, and they don't care about anything but getting high. Everybody knows that they are the major cause of all of our problems. When we impose the death sentence for more and more drug offenses, we will finally get rid of those dopers, and we will be much better off without them.

And:

Those poor, long-suffering rich people desperately need a tax cut. They have been treated so badly by the government for so long, it's the least we can do to make it up to them. (Heck, some of them are down to their last billion.) Giving the rich people a tax cut will stimulate the economy so much that soon the wealth will trickle down, and we will all benefit from it.

[Just like happened under Ronald Reagan and George Bush — Remember: "It's the economy, stupid!"]

And Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, said, in speaking of the "Shock and Awe" bombing war that he was waging against Iraq (March 21, 2003):

"You don't understand how compassionate our bombing is."

I'm sure that the children whose heads were blown off by malfunctioning smart bombs really thought that it was compassionate.

On Jan. 27, 2004, NBC Evening News reported that the death toll of civilians killed in Iraq in the Bush vs. Saddam War had reached 10,000. That is a lot more than the 2900 Americans who died on September 11, so that's a lot of pay-back. And Saddam Hussein of Iraq wasn't even the guy who attacked America; it was Osama bin Laden from Saudi Arabia, remember? (The guy whom the CIA armed and funded during the Russia-Afghanistan War.)

A few months later the score was 13,000 dead, and by April 16 it was up to 14,000, because of the battle in Fallujah That's a lot of pay-back to a country that didn't attack us.

In just the two-week period from April 1 to April 15, 90 Americans and 900 Iraqis died, mostly in Fallujah, most of them civilians (punishment for the killing of four American civilian contractors in Fallujah).

If reminds me of the Nazi reprisals during WWII. If one German soldier was killed by The Resistance in an occupied town, the Nazis would get their revenge by randomly shooting hundreds of civilians in that town, just making sure that somebody was always punished, even if it wasn't the people who did it.

When the German S.S. Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated in Czechoslovakia by the Czech underground, the Germans simply totally annihilated a nearby town — Lidice — in reprisal. They immediately shot all of the men, and sent the women and children to concentration camps, where most of them eventually died. Then they burned and blasted and bull-dozed the town until nothing was left but rubble, and then the Germans erased the name of the town from the maps.

When the war ended, the Allies assembled at the Geneva Convention and wrote up the Geneva Accords, which made such group punishment a war crime. (But then Donald

Rumsfeld, G. W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, announced that the Geneva Convention was obsolete and that he did not wish to be limited by it.)

So after four Blackwater contractors were killed in Fallujah, 900 residents of Fallujah were killed in reprisals — the vast majority of them being civilians, including plenty of women and children.

On March 19, 2004, on the anniversary of the start of the war, it was revealed by major news networks that the U.S. forces had used cluster bombs against targets located in civilian areas of Bagdad during "Shock And Awe". Such cluster bombing of civilians is a violation of international law. It's a war crime. A U.S. military spokesman said that the American commanding officers felt that such usage was "appropriate".

As of December, 2004: Now the city of Fallujah has been destroyed to eliminate the resistance, with a loss of Iraqi lives so high that the American officials won't count them and release the count. They will not tell us how many civilians were killed by American firepower. The best study to date estimates that the total Iraqi death toll in the war is now over 100,000 — with most of them being civilians, including many, many children.

As of 4 August 2005, the score was:

- 1825+ U.S. military people dead in Iraq.
- 43,000+ U.S. wounded, maimed, and crippled for life.
- 113,000+ dead Iraqis, most of them civilians, including 30,000 children.

And still, the Bush administration constantly repeats the chant that the war is a good thing. "Freedom is on the march." That's the *Big Lie* technique.

UPDATE: July 2007: Now, of course, the war has gone on for two more years, and all of the body counts are much higher. The British medical journal *Lancet* reported last year that their estimation of Iraqi deaths was 600,000. The American deaths were 3546 as of 22 June 2007. And the people wounded, maimed, and crippled are uncountable.

And still, George W. Bush prattles on about "victory in Iraq", and "establishing democracy", and "creating a stable government there", and "when they stand up, we will stand down."

That's the *Big Lie* technique.

And A.A. says:

- Alcoholics Anonymous is the best — the **only** — way to recover from alcoholism.
- Nobody can do it alone.
- [Everybody knows that The Twelve Step programs work](#), and [keep millions of people sober](#).
- Alcoholics Anonymous is an enormously successful program.
- "RARELY have we seen a person fail, who has thoroughly followed our path..." (The Big Book, 3rd & 4th Editions, William Wilson, page 58.)
- [Everybody knows that A.A. is spiritual, not religious](#).
- If you are having a problem with drinking too much alcohol, then you have a disease which only a spiritual experience will conquer. (The Big Book, 3rd & 4th Editions, William Wilson, page 44.)
- Alcoholism is an incurable, progressive disease, often caused by an inherited gene, and a disease is respectable, not a moral stigma. (The Big Book, 3rd Edition, Marty Mann, Page 227.)

- Nobody can quit drinking until they hit bottom and are ready to surrender to the A.A. program.
- The best thing you can do for a loved one is force him to go to A.A. meetings, for his own good.
- In A.A., nobody has any power over anyone else. In A.A., everybody is equal (but some people are more equal than others).
- So Keep Coming Back! It Works if you work it... You die if you don't. So work it, you're worth it!

In an official A.A. history book, A.A. co-founder Dr. Robert Smith said,

He said, "Duke, I think this A.A. program will appeal to you, because it's psychologically sound and religiously sane."

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, page 253.

That statement is the exact opposite of the truth:

- A.A. is psychologically unsound.
- A.A. is based on superstition and gross misconceptions about how the human mind and alcoholism actually work.
- A.A. is completely irrational and unscientific, and even brags about it. A.A. even teaches that members can get miracles on demand from any old 'god' or 'higher power' that they chose.
- A.A. is religiously *insane* — it is just the old fascist cult religion of Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman with a new coat of paint on it.

And still, A.A. prints and distributes large quantities of propaganda that claims just the opposite.

That's the *Big Lie* technique.

Here, Bill Wilson quoted Dr. Harry M. Tiebout quoting Bill Wilson, as if that would add authority to Bill's faked numbers:

"Alcoholics Anonymous claims a recovery rate of 75 percent of those who really try their methods. This figure, coupled with their mushroom growth, commands respect and demands explanation."

[Reprinted from *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, January 1944, "Therapeutic Mechanism of Alcoholics Anonymous".]

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age, William G. Wilson, page 310.

Actually, such a figure commands contempt and derision, because it is a bare-faced lie. Alcoholics Anonymous never had a success rate anything like 75%; they didn't even get a tenth of that. Notice how Tiebout repeated Bill Wilson's grossly inflated and exaggerated claims of success as if they were true facts, and even cited them in professional journals. That is the *Big Lie* technique, one more time again.

[Also notice how cleverly Tiebout covered his own ass: He started off by saying that A.A. merely *claimed to have a 75% success rate* — a rate which Tiebout had to know was totally untrue, because Tiebout was Bill's psychiatrist, and Tiebout had a number of other patients in A.A., too, so he could see what was going on. But then Tiebout just accepted Bill's grossly exaggerated claims as correct, and declared that they "commanded respect and demanded explanation". If anyone called Tiebout on it later by pointing out just how inaccurate those numbers really were, Tiebout could always just pass the buck to A.A., and say that he was just using their numbers.

And the psychiatrist Dr. Tiebout accepted those inflated numbers as valid, in spite of his own diagnosis of Bill Wilson's mental state as "immature and grandiose", and stating that Bill Wilson was trying to live out "the infantile grandiose demands" of "His Majesty the Baby."

Since then, numerous A.A. shells have parroted those false numbers without doing any research of their own. The West Baltimore Group of A.A. has a web page on the A.A. success rate that declares:

Q - What is the success rate of Alcoholics Anonymous?

A - Of those sincerely willing to stop drinking about 50 per cent have done so at once, 25 per

cent after a few relapses and most of the remainder have improved. (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol. 44, Aug., 1944)

...

Of those alcoholics who wish to get well and are emotionally capable of trying our method, 50 per cent recover immediately, 25 per cent after a few backslides. The remainder are improved if they continue active in A.A. ... (N.Y. State J. Med., Vol. 50, July 1950)

What is A.A.'s Success Rate?, <http://www.voai.org/Success%20Rate.htm>

Notice how the West Baltimore Group of A.A. quoted the New York State Journal of Medicine as if it were endorsing Alcoholics Anonymous, and reporting the A.A. success rate. But that Journal was actually just publishing a piece of propaganda that was written by Bill Wilson, an article that Wilson got into the Journal with a letter of endorsement by [Dr. Harry M. Tiebout](#) — "**Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous**" by William G. Wilson. (So much for anonymity.) That article contained the same false claims as Bill Wilson wrote in the foreword to the second edition of the "Big Book" — lines which were blatant lies when they were written, and which are still lies.

[Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried](#), 50% got sober at once and remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement.

William G. Wilson, in the Foreword to the Second Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, page XX, 1955.

Those numbers were not even vaguely true, and still aren't. You can read an analysis of those false claims [here](#).

Likewise, [Bill Wilson wrote](#) that an A.A. newcomer said:

"Then I woke up. I had to admit that A.A. showed results, prodigious results. I saw that my attitude regarding these had been anything but scientific. It wasn't A.A. that had the closed mind, it was me."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, [page 27](#).

- Alcoholics Anonymous does not produce "*prodigious results*" — not unless you consider
 - a [high death rate](#),
 - a [high dropout rate](#),
 - a [high relapse rate](#),
 - and a [high rate of binge drinking](#)to be "*prodigious results*".
- And it is A.A.'s attitude that is extremely anti-scientific — A.A. claims that its program works in [some mystical, magical way](#) that [cannot be scientifically tested](#) or logically explained.
- When Bill Wilson wrote that paragraph of "[12X12](#)" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*), he was just lying again. [Bill Wilson habitually lied](#) about the A.A. failure rate, and routinely covered it up and declared that his program was immensely successful in saving alcoholics. And A.A. is still doing that today.

That's the *Big Lie* technique.

And they have been doing that for a very long time, too. This phony "review" of the "Big Book" *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published in *The New York Times* in 1939. It was actually written by a hidden A.A. true believer — Percy Hutchison, the *New York Times poetry editor* — who was scheming with

Bill Wilson and the other early A.A. members to help sell the new A.A. book, not by any neutral observer or dispassionate critic, or by anybody who knew anything about treating alcoholism:

Lest this title should arouse the risibles in any reader let me state that the general thesis of "Alcoholics Anonymous" is more soundly based psychologically than any other treatment of the subject I have ever come upon.

...

"Alcoholics Anonymous" is unlike any other book ever before published. No reviewer can say how many have contributed to its pages. But the list of writers should include addicts and doctors, psychiatrists and clergymen.

...

Here, then, is the key to "Alcoholics Anonymous," the great and indisputable lesson this extraordinary book would convey. The alcoholic addict ... cannot, by any effort of what he calls his "will," insure himself against taking his "first dose." We saw how the chap with his whiskey in milk missed out. There is one way for our authors, and but one way. The utter suffusion of the mind by an idea which shall exclude any idea of alcohol or of drugs.

...

The thesis of the book is, if we read it aright, that this all-embracing and all-commanding idea must be religious. ... There is no suggestion advanced in the book that an addict should embrace one faith rather than another. He may fall back upon an "absolute," or "A Power which makes for righteousness" if he chooses. The point of the book is that he is unlikely to win through unless he floods his mind with the idea of a force outside himself. So doing, his individual problem resolves into thin air. In last analysis, it is the resigning word: Not my will, but Thine, be done, said in the full knowledge of the fact that the decision will be against further addiction.

...

The argument, as we have said, has a deep psychological foundation.

BOOK REVIEW, NEW YORK TIMES, June 25, 1939. ALCOHOLIC EXPERIENCE, By Percy Hutchison

Percy Hutchison was actually prescribing *religiomania* — maniacal obsession with religion — and faith healing as the best cure for alcoholism. Religiomania and faith healing are not "soundly based psychologically", and they do not have "a deep psychological foundation". Nevertheless, the A.A. true believers persistently claim that A.A. does, even while they simultaneously [brag that A.A. is not based on science](#). And they have been doing that for 76 years now.

That's the *Big Lie* technique. Just never stop telling the lie, no matter how absurd and contradictory it is..

Percy Hutchison was the *poetry editor* of *The New York Times*.

- What does a poetry editor know about medicine, alcoholism, or human psychology?
- How could he claim that A.A. was the best cure for alcoholism that he had ever seen? How many others had he seen?
- How could Hutchison claim to know that the problem of alcoholism would just "resolve into thin air" if an alcoholic followed Bill Wilson's instructions?
- What was Hutchison doing reviewing a book about a new cure for alcoholism, and recommending one treatment program over another?
- When did Percy Hutchison become qualified to advise the public about critical life-or-death medical conditions like alcohol addiction? Isn't that the job of the medical editor or the science editor or an actual doctor?

Let me guess — Hutchison suggested the book to the newspaper's editors, and volunteered to review it, because he really wanted people to hear about a "wonderful new fellowship that had a magical new treatment program for alcoholism..."

[The June 1940 financial report of "Works Publishing"](#) says that the original New York A.A. group used the New York Times Book Review and several other media outlets to publicize and tout the newly-printed *Big Book* for free. Obviously, that so-called "book review" was a fraud — a very biased piece of promotional propaganda, a commercial for the book, not a fair objective analysis of the Alcoholics Anonymous program.

That's the *Big Lie* technique — just keep saying it, over and over and over again, as often as you can, and in as many places as you can, no matter what, until people believe it.

And here another long-time true believer parrots the lie:

It is probable that more contemporary alcoholics have found sobriety through the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous than through all other agencies combined.

Alcoholics Anonymous, an interpretation, by Milton A. Maxwell, Ph.D., contained in Chapter 33 of *Society, Culture, and Drinking Patterns*, David J. Pittman and Charles R. Snyder, editors, page 577.

(Note that Milton A. Maxwell was a member of the Board of Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc..)

Actually, it isn't "probable" at all. The truth is that [the Harvard Medical School says](#) that 80% of those alcoholics who successfully quit drinking for a year or more do it alone, on their own. That only leaves 20% who could possibly have recovered through Alcoholics Anonymous, and lots of those 20% did it in other ways too, like in Christian brotherhoods or monasteries, the Veterans' Administration program, the Salvation Army, the Catholic DePaul program, Rational Recovery, SMART, SOS, WFS, etc...

Considering [the immense A.A. dropout rate](#) and [high A.A. failure rate](#), it is "**probable**" that very few of the successful sober alcoholics actually recovered through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Today, the A.A. campaign of misinformation continues even in the halls of Congress:

As the fabulously successful twelve-step program pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous has conclusively demonstrated, one cannot tackle a crisis until acknowledging the reality of a genuine problem.

Statement of John C. Hulsman, Ph.D. Research Fellow for European Affairs, the Davis Institute for International Studies, The Heritage Foundation. **Committee on House International Relations Europe Subcommittee** June 11, 2003.

I sincerely hope Mr. Hulsman knows more about foreign affairs than he knows about alcoholism treatment programs, or else we are liable to find ourselves trapped in a quagmire of unwinnable foreign wars...

[P.S.: A year later: *Let's see now, how did that premonition work out? Afghanistan? Iraq? The so-called "War on Terrorism"? "Fabulously successful" easy victories, or quagmires?*]

[P.S.: Two years later: *Let's see now, how did that premonition work out? "Fabulously successful" easy victories, or quagmires?*]

[P.S.: Three years later... Four years later... Ten years later? **Need I continue?**]

- **Reversal Of Reality, and Counter-attack by Reversal of Reality**

Have the nerve to completely reverse reality, and say the exact opposite of the truth.

A young woman wrote: "My roommate 'borrows' my clothes without my permission and she leaves them sweat-stained and stretched out. They are ruined. When I complain about it, she says that I am selfish."

When white women comprise the majority of the women receiving welfare, say that Black women comprise the majority of the women on welfare.

As evidence accumulated that the Bush administration had lied, fabricated evidence, distorted other evidence, and hidden contradictory facts about the Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq in order to manufacture an excuse to go to war, Vice President Dick Cheney declared:

"The President and I cannot prevent certain politicians from losing their memory or their backbone, but we're not going to sit by and let them rewrite history."

([TIME, Nov 21-27, 2005](#))

Likewise, when CIA agent Valerie Plame's cover was blown, Bush declared: "We are going to find those leakers and take care of them."

Of course, George Bush and Dick Cheney and their White House Chiefs of Staff turned out to be the leakers, but that's okay, Scott McClellan said, because George had already declassified the secret information and approved of the leaks before they leaked it — so George knew who the leakers were even as he swore on TV that he would catch the leakers.

2011.01.10: In the past few years, political rhetoric has become increasingly hostile and vicious. Sarah Palin's web site showed pictures of Democrats' districts with rifle cross-hairs on them, and Palin repeatedly instructed followers to "lock and load" and "reload". And the Tea Party language was even worse, with barely-veiled death threats, and appeals for "Second-Amendment (gun) solutions" to problems.

In the debate following the attempted assassination of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, the local sheriff in Tucson, Arizona, denounced the language of violence, and said that he felt that it had contributed to the shooting. Republican talking heads immediately responded by saying that his criticism of Right-wing inflammatory speech was "over the top" and "rhetoric", and "inappropriate for an elected official". That is reversal of reality.

2011.01.12: Sarah Palin released a video where she complained about how she had suffered from attacks ever since the shooting, and that she was the victim of a "blood libel". As if she suffered from a bullet through the head, or had lost a daughter or husband in the shooting. That is reversal of reality. That is also a good example of the Prima Donna Ploy, making it all about [The Drama Queen](#).

Another reversal of reality: A company that wants to set up a non-Indian casino (a new precedent for Oregon) advertises on TV that they will create millions of dollars — declaring that they will give the community millions of dollars in new taxes, and create thousands of new jobs with health care, and raise millions of dollars for education. The truth is, casinos never create money. They take money from people. Casinos do not manufacture anything of value; they just take money from the mathematically challenged customers. Ultimately, in the long run, casinos make states poorer, not richer. The end product of casinos is more impoverished citizens.

Worse yet, the market for casinos is saturated. Now almost every state has legalized gambling in some form or another, and gamblers no longer need to drive to Las Vegas or Atlantic City to gamble. There is another casino just down the road, or just across the state line. Now the casinos are just fighting over market share, with one casino stealing customers from another. The casino business has become a zero-sum game, where one casino's gain is another's loss. Another casino doesn't make more money for the community; it just makes some for the occasional lucky casino owner while reducing the profits of a neighboring casino.

In another reversal of reality, a political commercial declares that the Democrats are hurting America by raising the debt ceiling and spending money on welfare programs, and that we should "put families first" instead. That is a reversal of reality. Not raising the debt ceiling has resulted in cutting funding for food stamps, which is just the opposite of "putting families first." That is putting families last by taking food out of the mouths of children, and putting billionaires who don't want to pay taxes first.

- **Projection**

Projection is a psychological technique where someone accuses other people of the sins and crimes of which he himself is guilty. Projection is also a kind of reversal of reality.

For example, Adolf Hitler cited the forged document called [*The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*](#) as proving that the Jews had a secret program to take over the world by using deceit, lies, murder, planned wars, and all sorts of evil conspiracies, but it was actually Adolf Hitler himself who was carrying out such a plan for world domination. Hitler was doing all of the things for which he denounced the Jews.

Similarly, cult leaders routinely accuse their followers and also outsiders of greed and lust while they steal all of the money and pretty women for themselves. And politicians are notorious for loudly denouncing the decline in national morals while they take bribes, drink like fish, and use their secretarial staff as a stable of mistresses. Some of the most vocal anti-homosexual Congressmen turned out to be closetted homosexuals who were screwing boys in the Congressional gymnasium.

- **Make a Virtue out of a Fault**

Advertise and promote a shortcoming or a fault as a virtue.

For example, ultra-cheap single-use film cameras are advertised as "No Focusing Required." The truth is, no focusing is possible, because those cameras have cheap plastic fixed-focus lenses that won't move and can't be focused. What is a serious shortcoming for a camera — the inability to properly focus on the subject — is sold as a convenience: "You don't have to bother with focusing."

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this technique too. When the founder Bill Wilson is shown to have been a fraud, a liar, a [felonious thief](#), a [certified nutcase](#), a [philandering sexual predator](#), and a con artist who sold cult religion as a quack cure for alcoholism, the true believers proclaim,

"Isn't it wonderful? It just goes to show that Bill Wilson was human. And if he could get sober, then so can we. God wanted Bill to be less than perfect so that he could be a good example for us all."

- **Unsupported Claims**

Make any grand claims you wish, supported by no facts at all.

The Red-baiter Senator Joseph McCarthy did it in his speeches in the 1950s like this:

"I have in my hand a list of 205 Communists working in the State Department",

as he waved a piece of paper that had no names on it. (He never, ever, revealed that list of names, or any other list of names of Communists, either. McCarthy just went on to make more and more outrageous claims, also supported by no evidence, until the U.S. Senate got fed up with the routine, and censured him.¹⁴)

On June 1, 2004, while talking about the high prices of gasoline, acting President G. W. Bush declared, "Had we had drilled in Anwar [National Wildlife Refuge], back in the mid nineties, we would be producing an additional million barrels a day by now."

He doesn't know that. They might have drilled a bunch of dry holes while destroying the wildlife refuge. They might have had technical difficulties. Things might have frozen up. Eco-terrorists or foreign terrorists might have bombed the pipeline. A lot of things could have happened. Predicting alternative futures is always guesswork.

Besides, that is all a smoke screen — [a diversion of attention from the truth](#). The real bottleneck in producing more gasoline now is refineries — there have been almost no new refineries built in the USA in the last 30 years. Even worse, the oil companies are actually shutting down refineries to force gasoline prices even higher — so of course the supply of gasoline is tight.

And the Republicans are notorious for killing alternative energy projects. President Carter started a lot of them, and then President Reagan shut them all down. Why don't we talk about what kind of a world we would have today if Reagan had not killed alternative energy?

Bill Wilson did it like this:

The alcoholic, realizing what his wife has endured, and now fully understanding how much he himself did to damage her and his children, nearly always takes up his marriage responsibilities with a willingness to repair what he can and to accept what he can't. He persistently tries all of A.A.'s Twelve Steps in his home, often with fine results. At this point he firmly but lovingly commences to behave like a partner instead of a bad boy. And above all he is finally convinced that reckless romancing is not a way of life for him.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, Page 119.

- Where is the evidence that some unnamed stereotypical alcoholic reformed himself in that manner?
- Where is the evidence that he got "fine results" from working the Twelve Steps?
(And it says that he "often" got "fine results". So did he get miserable results the rest of the time?)
- Where is the evidence that the unnamed alcoholic stopped philandering and hurting his wife? [Bill Wilson never did](#).

• Imaginary Evidence

Notice the lack of hard evidence in this article:

Two recent studies support the potential effectiveness of this [12-Step] treatment when carried out by mental health professionals. The first studied alcohol-dependent outpatients. The group of subjects that received 12-step treatment improved substantially. The second study focused on VA inpatients with alcohol and/or other substance use disorders. At the one-year follow up, the group of subjects that had received 12-step treatment improved significantly in many life areas.

...

A recent award-winning study conducted at SUNY-Albany lends support to this notion.

Better Treatment for the MICA (Mentally Ill Chemically Addicted) Patient, Mark Lazarus, Coordinator, Partial Hospitalization Program, The Holliswood Hospital, NEW YORK CITYVOICES: April/May 2002

Just try to figure out what studies the author is citing. It is impossible. (There was no bibliography.) You have no way of knowing whether the studies were valid or faked or improperly conducted, or whether the author interpreted the results correctly. While such grand statements sound good, they are actually meaningless because they are completely unverifiable, and hence, unreliable.

Also notice the strange contradiction where 12-Step treatment programs are supposedly effective **IF** they are "carried out by mental health professionals." But an often-repeated Alcoholics Anonymous boast is that they don't use professional healers, because the non-professional A.A. sponsors are supposedly much better than professional therapists:

Here was a book that said that I could do something that all these doctors and priests and ministers and psychiatrists that I'd been going to for years couldn't do!

- **Use Association**

Association is just linking together two unrelated things. Often, it creates an emotional reaction in the intended audience. It can be anything like Guilt by Association, Honor by Association, or Desirability by Association, depending on what somebody or something is associated with.

Advertisers routinely associate beautiful women in skimpy clothes with new cars, cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, clothes, and diamond jewelry. TV commercials teach us that we can get laid if we use the right toothpaste and the right under-arm deodorant. So we have been programmed to consciously or unconsciously associate sex with all kinds of strange things.

Likewise, many commercials teach us to associate sugar consumption with happiness. Children are taught by TV commercials that eating gobs of sugar is really a lot of fun, and parents are taught that giving sugar to children is how they show the children love.

Politicians also routinely kiss babies, hug children, and hobnob with other, more popular and powerful politicians, to look good by association. They also love to rub elbows with the the rich, the famous, and the beautiful people, like movie stars and sports heroes, for the same reason. And of course they want to be photographed with a good selection of wise men like university professors, Nobel prize winners, and high-ranking religious leaders, to look good by association.

Politicians will also, occasionally, associate their opponents with some villainous characters, perhaps Adolf Hitler, Mao Tse Tung, Joseph Stalin, or Ghengis Khan, to make their opponents look dangerous and evil. (Sometimes the comparison is unfair, and sometimes it isn't. It all depends.)

The Scientology propaganda book "*What Is Scientology*:" devotes 16 pages (xiv to xxix) to showing you pictures of beautiful, palatial buildings that the organization owns around the world, and the last "building" is really a large ship, the *Freewinds*. What do those beautiful buildings and that beautiful ship have to do with whether Scientology is a good organization, or whether it can help you with your mental problems, or with whether you should give all of your money to Scientology? Absolutely nothing. They are just trying to impress you, to make you think that Scientology is really a big, high-class outfit, not the sleazy, low, money-grubbing con that it actually is.

A powerful association that I find in my own mind is that, ever since September 11, every time I see a photograph of an American Airlines jet, I see it crashing into a skyscraper, or blowing up as it comes out through the wall of a skyscraper. There is no skyscraper in the picture; my mind just fills it in because of those televised images that were burned into my mind on September 11. That is totally unfair to American Airlines, of course. It wasn't their fault that some terrorists chose to hijack some of their flights. Nevertheless, American Airlines has a real problem with that association that has been planted in so many people's minds.

Similarly, before September 11, the public perception of firemen was something like "a bunch of adventurous young guys and overgrown boy scouts with too much testosterone, who are living out a childhood fantasy of being firemen and getting their kicks by driving big red trucks real fast." After September 11, the image is "a bunch of heroic guys who rush into burning towers to save people, and die when the building comes down on their heads."

That's the power of association.

A corollary to association is something that I like to call "reverse association" — basking in reflected glory by honoring others (who may be totally out of your league). An easy way to accomplish that is to hand out "awards", honoring others for something or other. An interesting example of "reverse association" is: Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan received the *Enron Prize for Distinguished Public Service* from Ken Lay

in November, 2001, less than three weeks before Enron filed for bankruptcy. Now I'll guess that Greenspan wishes he had never accepted the award.¹³

Guilt By Association is of course a negative association. It is like, "Senator Blowhard had lunch with Ken Lay, Andy Fastow, and Jeffrey Skilling of Enron. Therefore Senator Blowhard is just as corrupt as them." We do not really know anything about Blowhard's integrity, just from that. He is not automatically guilty just because he associated with those guys one time.

(But if he often associated with them, and took lots of money from them, and rode around in their jet while campaigning for office, like George W. Bush did, then that is another matter.... And if his Vice President then arranged the energy regulations so that Enron could massively rob the State of California with artificially inflated electricity prices, then that is very suspicious.)

- **The Glittering Generality**

The Glittering Generality is a kind of *Association* technique.

American politicians routinely wave the American flag and praise God, country, Democracy, Freedom, Mom, and apple pie, trying to create links in people's minds (associations) between themselves and those other positive images.

So salt and pepper your speeches with zillions of flowery phrases and wonderful-sounding words and vague glittering generalities:

- "God, country, Mom and apple pie"
- "Patriotism, Freedom, Democracy, and the good old USA"
- "safety and national security"
- "[those simple home truths that some of us learned at our mother's knee](#), and which many of us have forgotten and neglected — honesty, purity, unselfishness and love."
- "inspiration and liberty for all"
- "the great creative sources in the Mind of God"
- "the combined moral and spiritual forces of the nation"
- "Christian values"
- "The Love of Jesus"
- "The Glory of God"
- "The Power of the Almighty"
- "The Will of God"
- "family values"
- "Freedom is on the march."
- "Our wonderful patriotic troops who are fighting for Freedom in Iraq"
- "The wonderful men and women who serve in our volunteer army"

It is really tragic how many innocent people have been murdered in the name of Freedom, Democracy, and Christian family values... (Just recently, 30,000 children in Iraq, and before that, zillions of Nicaraguans, [Guatemalans](#) and Vietnamese.)

A common variation on *The Glittering Generality* is invoking images of "*The Golden Age*". Imply that there was a better time way in the past — "The Good Old Days" — when everything was wonderful — "everybody was happy, everybody was kind and decent, everybody obeyed the law, everybody believed in God, the rulers were wise, just and honest, and children obeyed their parents".

Sometimes this Golden Age is embodied in a popular myth, like *The Tales of King Arthur and Camelot*, where noble knights believed in *Might For Right* (not "Might Makes Right"), and the brave knights spent their time rescuing fair damsels in distress. And of course, the wizards of *The Olden Times*, like Merlin, were much wiser and much more powerful than today's wizards, and their magic was so much better than today's

magic... And the maidens in those days were beautiful and pure and chaste, and the knights were all honorable and chivalrous. And the king was the wisest and most noble of kings.

Then the speaker invokes an appeal to return to the Good Old Days — *"We must get Back to the Basics, and Back to Traditional Values"*.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazis actually used those terms — *"Back to the Basics"* and *"Traditional Values"* — in their propaganda, while campaigning for seats in the Reichstag, and they declared that Hitler could take Germany back to "The Golden Age" if elected. (We all know how that worked out.)

And today, Alcoholics Anonymous leaders also run *"Back to the Basics"* meetings that supposedly have the good magic of the olden days.

- **Exaggerate**

You don't blatantly lie; you just stretch the truth a good bit. This also has the advantage that even if you get caught at it, you can always argue that you were telling the truth, and it's all a matter of degree, and people just got the wrong impression, or took it the wrong way... Mark Twain explained that expanding a story wasn't really a lie, just a "stretcher".

For an example of exaggeration, this is one of the faithful followers of [the cult leader Frank Buchman](#) singing his praises, trying to make him sound like a citizen of the world:

...he knows China like the Chinese; he is thoroughly at home in Germany, the Netherlands, India, America, Africa, and Australia.

A. J. Russel, *For Sinners Only*, page 82, quoted in
Experiment With God; Frank Buchman Reconsidered, Gösta Ekman, page 57.

Frank Buchman probably did feel at home in Germany, because he was a native German speaker, the son of German-speaking Swiss emigrants to Pennsylvania. But it is questionable whether he was equally at home in all of those other countries that he visited for short periods of time, unless they just happened to have [five-star hotels](#), which was really Buchman's favorite environment. And it is absurd to say that Buchman knew China like the Chinese. Frank Buchman only spent a couple of years in China as a missionary, where his behavior was [so obnoxious and offensive](#) that the Bishop of Hankow finally ordered him to stop working in China.

For another example of exaggeration:

Japanese business and industry is such an incredible gargantuan efficient powerhouse that it will devour American industry, like Godzilla stomping his way through Tokyo. We'll all end up speaking Japanese and driving Hondas. The only hope of survival that we have is to adopt Japanese styles of management, so that we can become more like them. And American workers need to learn how to be more like Japanese workers, too. They need to learn to be more loyal to their companies, and they need to accept wage cuts and roll-backs in benefits to help save their employers.

That was actually a real argument heard *very often* during the seventies and eighties, when Japan was having a few good years and taking major chunks of the American consumer-electronics and automobile markets. But after that, the Japanese economy crashed badly, and stayed crashed, and it's still a dead dog. Nobody but nobody now says that we should copy Japanese business, industry, banking, or management styles. In fact, the current pundits proclaim that the Japanese must abandon their traditional ways, dump the good-old-boy system, abandon protectionism and open up their markets, and copy American business and banking styles if they are to *ever* have any hope of economic recovery.

The error was in exaggerating the degree of Japanese success in the business world, and in exaggerating the effectiveness of Japanese management and business styles. The speakers extrapolated a world-shaking

economic juggernaut from a few spectacular Japanese successes in making TVs, stereos, and cars — successes that used unfair anti-competitive practices that were sponsored by the Japanese government — "*Japan, Incorporated*". The speakers exaggerated those Japanese successes to the point of assuming that those successes were an unstoppable wave of the future that would go on forever, and conquer the whole planet. (And then they told the American workers that was why they must take pay cuts...)

In Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson made heavy use of exaggeration, especially when discussing the success rate of the Twelve-Step program.

- If a few alcoholics sobered up for a few months, Bill claimed that the A.A. program was a great success, and that *everybody had benefited* from the program.
- When Bill and Dr. Bob figured that *their success rate was five percent*, Bill advertised a *fifty percent success rate*.
- When Bill and Dr. Bob had collected 40 ex-drinkers for their little club (after two years of intense recruiting efforts, including *cherry-picking*, *deceptive recruiting*, and *coercive recruiting*), Bill grandly announced that "*The First 100*" proved that Bill and Dr. Bob had *invented a new 'spiritual' cure for alcoholism* that would sweep the world.
- When a few newly-sober people felt their cravings for alcohol gradually weaken and fade away, Bill wrote that *God miraculously removed the desire for drink* from all of the alcoholics.

- **Confusion of Correlation and Causation**

This is simple and straight-forward: just because two things tend to happen together does not prove that one thing causes the other. The rooster's crowing doesn't really make the sun rise.

Variations on this logical fallacy include:

1. Confusion of coincidence and causation
2. Confusion of association and causation
3. Confusion of correlation and causation
4. Assuming a cause-and-effect relationship between unrelated things

Young women going to church and getting married does not really cause them to get pregnant and have babies, even though there does seem to be a strong correlation there. The real cause of the young women getting pregnant is something other than the priest or minister reciting some words...

On Saturday morning, May 17th, 2014, National Public Radio did an interview about confusion of causation and correlation that revealed:

- Between the years 1999 and 2009, the more movies that Nicholas Cage acted in, the more people died by falling into swimming pools.
- The more people ate cheese, the more they died by getting tangled in their bed sheets.
- 100% of the people who eat mashed potatoes die.

But then the interviewee also remarked that sometimes correlations are valid, like the correlation between people smoking and getting lung cancer. That correlation got doctors busy investigating the link between smoking and cancer.

Assuming a cause-and-effect relationship between unrelated things includes the "**But it worked for me,**" logical fallacy. The speaker just assumes that something worked because he got the desired result. The speaker ignores all of the other efforts that he put into making it happen. The classic example of that is an Alcoholics Anonymous member declaring that the 12 Steps worked for him because he isn't drinking alcohol. The speaker just assumes that the Steps made him quit drinking, and he forgets that he actually quit drinking in detox before he ever went to an A.A. meeting. He also ignores the fact that what the 12 Steps really are is

brainwashing and indoctrination techniques for religious conversion. The 12 Steps do not even say that you should quit drinking.

Another false correlation: Some people who tout "spiritual healing" [routinely cite studies](#) that show that people who have positive, cheerful attitudes recover from illnesses and surgeries faster than people who have glum, dour attitudes. They then assume that this is proof of the efficacy of "spiritual healing".

- They overlook the obvious fact that those cheerful attitudes may well be caused by the the patients' rapid recovery. People who are rapidly recovering are almost always *much* more cheerful than patients who are sick unto death and dying.
- And they overlook the fact that those two factors may correlate — they may happen together: Rapid recovery causes cheerful moods, which cause more rapid healing, which causes more cheerfulness, and so on... Just the act of relaxing and being cheerful increases blood flow through the body, which promotes healing and improves the functioning of the immune system. That is simple medicine, not "the power of spiritual healing".
- They also ignore the fact that any apparent link between recovery and something else, anything else, may be pure coincidence. In any large group of sick people, some will recover and some won't. There isn't necessarily any link between "spiritual attitudes" and people recovering, but the people who wish to believe there is will concentrate their attention on just the recovering "spiritual" people, and ignore everything else. That, in turn, becomes an example of "[observational selection](#)", seeing what you want to see, and ignoring the rest.
- And when the investigator has an agenda — a desired outcome — he can be also be fooled by observational bias as well — just tending to see what he wishes to see. The measure of which patients are cheerful, and how cheerful, is a *subjective* measurement — it relies entirely on the judgement of the investigator. It is all too easy to rate the recovering patients as very cheerful and the non-recovering patients as very glum when that is what the investigator wishes to see.

Alcoholics Anonymous has plenty of examples of confusion of causation and correlation, or confusion of coincidence with causation. The most obvious ones are:

- Assuming that attending A.A. meetings makes people quit drinking.
- Assuming that attending A.A. meetings makes people stay sober.
- Assuming that doing the Twelve Steps makes people quit drinking and stay sober.
- Assuming that many years of membership in A.A. causes people to stay sober.
- Assuming that praying makes people quit drinking and stay sober.
- Assuming that doing the Twelve Steps makes people more "spiritual", or more moral.

(And of course, that last item will be loaded with observational bias. Who judges? How do you impartially judge just how much more "spiritual" somebody is after doing the Twelve Steps for three or six months? And how do you impartially distinguish between "spirituality" and superstition? How do you distinguish between real spirituality and crazy self-delusion like, "[Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.](#)")

Just because some people sit in an A.A. meeting room and talk about God and not drinking does not prove that A.A. made them quit drinking, even if they believe it. Nor does it prove that A.A. is keeping them sober.

Using the goofy A.A. "cause and effect" illogic, we can happily declare that A.A. is totally unnecessary because mothers are the real cause of sobriety. How can we know that? Simple. Show me an alcoholic whose mother didn't tell him to quit drinking so much. Momma tells him to quit drinking, and then he finally does, so mothers are the real cause of sobriety. A.A. is irrelevant and unneeded.

What really happens is: A lot of people quit drinking in order to stop being sick, and a lot of them get pressured or coerced into attending some A.A. meetings, and then a few of them become obsessed with cult religions like the Moonies or Scientology or Alcoholics Anonymous, and their favorite cult convinces them that they are sober *because of* the cult — that the cult saved their lives — that involvement with the cult is keeping them sober — so they become committed to the cult and make it their new lifestyle for a while. They confuse coincidence with causation. But, eventually, most of those people wise up and realize that it's all a pack of lies, and quit the cult. In Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, 95% of the newcomers drop out in the first year alone, and, nevertheless, a bit more than half of all alcoholics find lasting sobriety anyway.

And it's easy to see causation where there is simply no evidence to support such an assumption. Often, just wishful thinking is enough to make people see cause-and-effect relationships:

"And... I believe addictions are also caused by a sense of spiritual separation from God, or one's Higher Power, or union with the All-That-Is."

Addiction: A Spiritual Crisis, Judith Wagner, *Tampa Bay New Times*, Winter 1991, page 18.

And that belief was based on what facts or observations? Did the authoress actually do even just one good survey of a few hundred addicts, asking them what they believed and how separated from "Higher Power" they felt?

A common use of this propaganda technique of confusion of causation and correlation is to do polls or surveys of A.A. members, asking them about their drinking habits, and then "discover" that they drink less than some other group of people, perhaps a group of guys at the local bar, or the winos under the bridge. Then the "researcher" declares that there is "*an association between AA attendance and abstinence from alcohol/drug use*", and he concludes that

"Weekly or more frequent attendance at 12-Step programs may be effective in maintaining long-term drug and alcohol abstinence. Treatment providers should encourage and assist their clients in 12-Step participation."

"12-Step programs help maintain abstinence", R Fiorentine, *The Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application*, Sept 1999, v18 i9 p1

What the "researcher" won't tell you is that if you repeat that kind of study, comparing the people found at the local Baskin Robbins ice cream parlor to the guys at the local bar, you can, in just the same way, "prove" that eating ice cream reduces alcohol consumption.

The logical conclusion is, of course:

"Weekly or more frequent attendance at Baskin Robbins may be effective in maintaining long-term drug and alcohol abstinence. Treatment providers should encourage and assist their clients in Baskin Robbins ice cream socials participation."

Also note the use of the propaganda technique called "[Sly Suggestions](#)" in that quote. In the first sentence, the author Robert Fiorentine *suggested* that A.A. *may be effective*. He could only suggest the idea, because he knew full well that the data did not show any cause-and-effect relationship. But in the next sentence, the author suddenly assumed that his suggestion was true, and he stated that treatment providers *should* shove patients into Alcoholics Anonymous groups.

And lastly, note how the author completely ignored the fact that the people at the A.A. meeting were a self-selected group ([a biased sample](#)). That is:

The people who wanted to stay sober went to the A.A. meetings.

The people who wanted to get drunk went to the bar.

So of course the people at the A.A. meetings drank less than the people at the bar. That comes as no surprise. But that *does not* prove that A.A. is somehow *causing* the "meeting makers" to abstain from drinking. It doesn't even "suggest" it. The author did a [reversal of a cause-and-effect relationship](#), because the truth is just the opposite:

People's desire to stay sober makes them go to A.A. meetings.

They go because they have been miseducated and fooled into believing that A.A. is somehow necessary or "helpful for maintaining sobriety".

To be fair, what the author of that "study" really did was conduct interviews with the patients and ex-patients of 26 Los Angeles area "treatment programs" (almost all of which were based on "Twelve Step Facilitation" — "TSF"¹¹), and compare those who were still attending A.A. meetings with those who were not. He found that those who attended the meetings drank less and took fewer drugs. That should come as no surprise, because, by and large, **only those people who had not relapsed were still attending A.A. meetings.** Many of the relapsers really were to be found at the local bars. **People stopped going to A.A. meetings when they resumed their former alcohol or drug habits.** Hence Fiorentine used a very biased sample. His claimed results were just another example of [Lying With Statistics](#), as well as [Observational Selection](#) — i.e.: 'Cherry-Picking'.

And, alas, we were never told what the success rate of those 26 Los Angeles area treatment programs really was. (They almost never tell the truth about that.) Those so-called "treatment programs" usually have about a 90% failure rate, so the remaining 10% of the patients who were still moderately clean and sober (clean and sober enough to "graduate") were the people who *really wanted* to stay clean and sober.

The so-called "treatment programs" are really just a system for filtering out those few alcoholics and addicts who are ready and willing to quit drinking and doping now — and then the treatment center and A.A./N.A. will take the credit for the successes when they quit, but will refuse to take any of the blame for the other 90% of the "clients" who don't "graduate".

That stunt is pure [Observational Selection](#) — counting the hits and forgetting the misses.

And it's backwards logic to try to conclude that the A.A. meetings **make** the few abstainers stay clean and sober. Fiorentine [reversed the cause-and-effect relationship](#). The truth is:

People's sobriety causes a few of the clean and sober people to go to A.A. meetings.

People's choice to consume drugs and alcohol causes them to not go to A.A. meetings. They go to the meetings at the local dope dealer's house instead.

That is not a joke or an idle suggestion. In her 1988 book that promoted Alcoholics Anonymous, Nan Robertson reported that [most of the newcomers to A.A. had already quit drinking](#), so it really is sobriety that causes people to go to A.A. meetings:

About 60 percent of all newcomers — some still drinking at first, most not — who go to A.A. meetings for up to a year remain in A.A.

Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous, Nan Robertson, 1988, page 94.

(You can ignore the funny word game where Nan Robertson declares that most of the people who stay in A.A. "for up to a year" stay in A.A. for a while longer. Actually, only five percent of the newcomers stay in A.A. for a year.)

Another way to say it is:

People's desire to stay clean and sober causes some of them to go to 12-Step meetings.

People's desire to get stoned causes them to go to the dope dealer or the liquor store.

So of course the people whom you find at the 12-Step meetings will be a bit less drunk and stoned than those whom you find at the bar or at the dope dealer's house. (Even though 22% of the treatment programs' ex-clients who were going to the A.A. and N.A. meetings were actually still using drugs or alcohol. See the 2nd quote down.)

In another write-up of Fiorentine's Los Angeles study, we also got this misinformation:

Looking at 262 patients in 26 Los Angeles addiction treatment programs, the researchers found that clients who attended at least one 12 Step meeting per week after completing treatment had much lower levels of drug use at six-month follow-up (22% were using), than those who participated less frequently or not at all (44% were using). Statistical analysis led Fiorentine to conclude that the better rates of abstinence "could not be attributed to differences in motivation or to other post-treatment activities". Regular 12 Step attendance made the difference, prompting the conclusion that 12 Step meetings work well as "a useful and inexpensive aftercare resource that can help many patients to maintain abstinence".

"12 STEP POWER SHOWN BY SCIENTIFIC METHOD", By: Voyles, Claudia, *Guideposts: Acupuncture in Recovery*, 10708200, March 2000, page 5, which cites: R Fiorentine, in *NIDA Notes*, v. 14, No 5, December 1999.

Fiorentine's conclusions are totally unwarranted and are based solely on his assumption of a desired cause and effect relationship between going to meetings and sobriety, not the facts.

That is, he just wishes that A.A. or N.A. meetings really worked. His "statistical analysis" is worthless because he assumes that the numbers show that 12-Step meetings cause abstinence, rather than that the desire to be sober and unaddicted causes meeting attendance. Fiorentine confuses correlation with cause and effect.

And it was really outrageous to claim that "the scientific method" had proved the effectiveness of 12-Step meetings. Claudia Voyles titled her article:

"12 STEP POWER SHOWN BY SCIENTIFIC METHOD".

There is no truth to that statement. None whatsoever. That was not a valid scientific test. There was no "scientific method" in any of Fiorentine's deceptive propaganda. There was no control group with which to compare the Twelve-Step Facilitation groups, to see what effect the so-called "treatment" and the 12-Step meetings actually had — to see whether the "treatment" really improved on Mother Nature.

The proper way to do such a medical study or scientific experiment is a "Longitudinal Controlled Study". How you do that is get, say, 200 or 2000 convicted drunk drivers or other alcoholics from a traffic court or a hospital, all of whom have been determined to be alcohol abusers by a doctor or competent therapist, and then divide them, randomly, into two equal groups. Send the first group to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and do nothing with the second group. Let them go home. Let them drink all they want. They are "the control group". Give them no "treatment" or punishment of any kind.

(It's fair. Getting *no treatment* — being a guinea pig in a scientific experiment — *IS* their punishment.)

In order for any "treatment" or program to claim success, it must do significantly better than the control group.

At the end of the test, at 6 months or a year or two later, count and measure all of them, to see how many are still drinking destructively. Compare the A.A. group to the no-treatment group, to see what the effect of A.A. really was.

Every time *that* experiment has been done, the results were that A.A. didn't work at all, and had no good long-term effects. In fact, the A.A.-treated group *did worse* than the no-treatment group, and A.A. had an appalling death rate, too.

Likewise, the statement that

"Regular 12 Step attendance made the difference, prompting the conclusion that 12 Step meetings work well..."

is groundless and untrue. Fiorentine merely assumed that 12-Step meetings made a difference. The evidence does not support that conclusion.

Nevertheless, the citation for Fiorentine's article says:

"A recent study confirms that weekly participation in 12-Step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA), help people in recovery to maintain their abstinence for up to two years after completing substance abuse treatment."

"12-Step programs help maintain abstinence", R Fiorentine, **The Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application**, Sept 1999, v18 i9 p1

Note the word game where it says that 12-Step meetings "help" people maintain abstinence. They imply cause-and-effect, but don't say it outright, because they can't. There is simply no evidence of any cause-and-effect relationship between going to 12-Step meetings and abstaining from alcohol and drugs.

We also got a demonstration of the propaganda technique called "Lying With Qualifiers" there. It said that A.A. meetings "helped" people to "maintain their abstinence for up to two years". *Up to two years?* So does that mean that lots of the "meeting makers" relapsed at the one month point, and more at two months, and more at three, and more at six, etc.? And the very last clean and sober hold-out relapsed at the two-year point? Yes, unfortunately, that must be what it really means, because that's what really happens.

- **The Fallacy of a Single Cause.**

Claim that a result came from a single cause, when it was really caused by a whole lot of different things.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this fallacy often. If someone quits drinking for half a dozen different reasons, like to save his life, career, job, marriage, money and health, A.A. claims that he quit drinking because he attended some A.A. meetings. Or because of the 12 Steps (which he may not have even done).

- **Reverse a Cause-and-Effect Relationship**

Declare that 'B' caused 'A', when in fact 'A' caused 'B'.

[A recent article](#) in the British newspaper [Telegraph](#) gave us an illustration of this logical error:

**Intelligent humans evolved because of big-hipped ancestors
Intelligent humans developed because our female ancestors had
wide hips which allowed them to give birth to babies with big
brains, according to new research.**

By Nick Allen

Last Updated: 9:13PM GMT 13 Nov 2008

The hips of females from the species *Homo erectus*, a primitive relative of modern humans, have been found to be wider than was previously thought.

That means they were well equipped for delivering babies with a larger cranial capacity which ultimately allowed intelligent human beings to evolve.

...

Scientists came to their conclusion after reconstructing a 1.2 million-year-old fossil pelvis discovered in Gona, Ethiopia.

...

A narrow pelvis for females would have caused infants to be born with relatively small brains.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/scienceandtechnology/science/3453980/Intelligent-humans-evolved-because-of-big-hipped-ancestors.html>

That is the exact opposite of the truth. The reality is:

1. Pre-human ape-men evolved larger brains and higher intelligence in order to survive. The stupid ones either starved or got eaten by lions and tigers, leaving the smarter ones, with bigger brains, to reproduce. (Hint: the ones who were intelligent enough to use clubs, tomahawks, and spears to defend themselves from the predators lived a lot longer. And having the brains to build a fire was a life-saver in cold winters.) So gradually, human intelligence and human brains both increased in size.
2. Then, the females with wider hips were able to deliver such larger-headed babies without complications, while the narrowest-hipped females died in childbirth.
3. The wider-hipped females gave birth to more wider-hipped daughters, and the process repeated itself, with the narrowest-hipped females continuing to die in childbirth, and the wider-hipped ones surviving.
4. Carry that process forwards a million years, and you will get a population where all of the females have wide hips.

Later in the article, the author finally got his logic straightened out:

The need to give birth to large brained infants was probably the primary driver behind the shape of the pelvis.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this logical error constantly:

1. They routinely infer that A.A. meeting attendance causes sobriety, rather than that the desire for sobriety causes some people to attend some A.A. meetings. (The same desire for sobriety also causes people to quit drinking alcohol.)

2. A.A. infers that doing the 12 Steps causes people to quit drinking, rather than that quitting drinking causes some people to do the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Most of the A.A. members who are actually continuously sober really quit drinking before they did the 12 Steps — and often, [they quit drinking before they even attended very many A.A. meetings](#). (Many alcoholics quit drinking in a detox center, which then sends them to A.A. meetings, and then A.A. takes the credit for the sobriety.)
3. Again, the desire for sobriety causes some people to waste their time practicing some useless "steps" of an old cult religion. The 12 Steps do not cause people to desire sobriety.

- **Straw Man**

The *Straw Man* technique is a stunt where you prop up an easy-to-defeat opponent, like a Straw Man, and then attack him and knock him down, to make yourself look big, strong, and victorious.

For example, politicians and District Attorney candidates running for election brag that they will "prosecute sexual predators to the full extent of the law." But that is what all of the politicians do. Nobody likes sexual predators. They don't get any easy treatment. It isn't like the other candidate is "soft on sexual predators".

Similarly, you can attack a caricature of what the other person said, rather than arguing against what he actually said.

A popular variation of the Straw Man technique is the "*What if?*" argument. Just prop up [absurd hypothetical situations](#) that never really happened and then demolish them.

During the March 23, 2006 press conference, Washington Post reporter Jim VandeHei asked, "A growing number of Americans are questioning the trustworthiness of you and this White House. Does that concern you?"

Bush just wouldn't say. "I believe that my job is to go out and explain to people what's on my mind," he replied, launching himself on a rambling discourse on war followed by a straw-man attack on unnamed people who don't take al Qaeda seriously.

By Dan Froomkin

Special to washingtonpost.com

White House Briefing, News Between the Lines

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Nan Robertson used a flavor of the Straw Man trick in her book [Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous](#). While arguing for the disease theory of alcoholism, she propped up a few reasons why alcoholism should not be called a disease and then knocked them down, and then felt that she had made her point:

- Moral and social objections: "How can the habit of opening ones mouth and pouring alcohol down one's throat be called a disease?"
- Objections that the disease concept interferes with recovery — it provides patients with a ready-made excuse: "Don't blame me, I'm sick".
- Political and social objections — If alcoholism is a disease, it should be treated by doctors, not amateurs.

(See [Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous](#), Nan Robertson, pages 196-197.)

Nan Robertson dismissed all of those arguments with a paragraph each, and then concluded that alcoholism was a disease.

- All that Nan Robertson did was dispute *some other people's objections to calling alcoholism a disease*.
- She did not prove that alcoholism was a disease, or even produce any good evidence that there is any such disease as alcoholism.
- What Nan Robertson missed in her broken logic is the simple fact that, even if it was okay, in Nan Robertson's mind, for alcoholism to be called a disease, that still did not make it an actual disease. It's just like: *Even if it is okay, in the minds of some superstitious people, for the world to be called "flat", that still does not make the world really flat.*

Another example: From the "Big Book" *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we learn that Bill Wilson was only able to convert brain-damaged morons and pathetic cry-babies to the new Alcoholics Anonymous religion. Wilson used the straw-man tactic constantly, portraying non-believers and the unconverted as the most pathetic self-pitying stupid [prejudiced fools](#) who were unable to see the truth until the brilliant, wonderful Bill Wilson came along and saved them from their stupidity. This quote is from the "Man On The Bed" story in the *Big Book*, where Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob were allegedly recruiting for A.A. in the hospital:

Actually, they were really recruiting for Frank Buchman's pro-Nazi Oxford Group cult at that time. There was no such thing as Alcoholics Anonymous in the spring of 1935, only Frank's fascist Oxford Group cult religion, and that is what Bill and Dr. Bob were recruiting new alcoholic members for.

Two days later, a future fellow of Alcoholics Anonymous stared glassily at the strangers beside his bed. "Who are you fellows, and why this private room? I was always in a ward before."

Said one of the visitors, "We're giving you a treatment for alcoholism."

Hopelessness was written large on the man's face as he replied, "Oh, but that's no use.

Nothing would fix me. I'm a goner. The last three times, I got drunk on the way home from here. I'm afraid to go out the door. I can't understand it."

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd Edition, Chapter 11, "A Vision For You", page 157.

(The answer, [you blithering idiot](#), is that you are getting drunk because you are stopping off at the bar on the way home from the hospital, and drinking more alcohol. It's very easy to understand.)



"Bill Wilson, converting a fawning moron."

Bill Wilson posing for a staged "Man On The Bed" publicity photograph, where [Bill allegedly performed miraculous faith healings](#), making the drunks "pick up their beds and walk", just like in the story of Jesus healing

the cripple by the pool.

Notice the cross on the wall. This photograph was very carefully staged for best effect.

For another good example of the straw man tactic, consider this quote:

A Peek Into Twenty-First-Century Medicine

The healing power of the spirit, exemplified by the success of the Twelve Steps program in helping overcome a variety of addictions, will be harnessed more fully to treat a wider range of medical problems.

Lawyers boast that when their professional forebears were writing the Constitution and organizing the Supreme Court, doctors were still bleeding patients to remove ill humors and using leeches as medical apparatus.

As medicine moved out of its primitive beginnings and joined the revolution in science, it is easy to understand why the spiritual dimension of healing was absent from serious discussion. Spirituality, with its nebulous connotation, sounded too much like the folk traditions of another era and did not have the clarity of the surgeon's knife or the pharmacist's pill. Today, however, it is only because medicine is on a firm scientific basis that the spiritual dimension of healing can be fairly evaluated. Although modern medicine has been slow to take up the challenge, this healing factor is now too obvious to ignore.

...

The field of medicine is still in its infancy in understanding the spiritual dimension of healing. But it is clear that the power of the mind and the spirit to overcome both chronic and acute medical problems is real. In the twenty-first century, this healing force can be harnessed more fully and effectively through scientific persistence and spiritual growth within the discipline of medicine.

[The Spiritual Dimension of Healing](#), Jeff Jay, *The World & I*, 05-01-2000, Size: 8K.

Available on the Internet through your public library's Electronic Library of periodicals.

The author has a bone to pick with modern doctors. He is angry with them because they won't agree with his ideas of "spiritual healing." So he declares, essentially:

The reason that modern medicine refuses to approve of "spiritual medicine", faith healing, and magical "Twelve-Step therapy" is because contemporary doctors are still just as blind, stupid, and slow to learn as they were 200 years ago, and they have still hardly gotten beyond using leeches and blood-letting.

That is quite untrue, of course. Modern medicine is very good, and is far beyond stupidly using voodoo medicine, which is what the author of that quote wants to shove on us.

The author recites the faults of ancient medical practice in order to make current medical practice look bad, because he can't fault contemporary doctors. *If you can't attack today's doctors as stupid, then attack the ones who lived 225 years ago. They are easy to criticize and ridicule and knock down.* That's the Straw Man tactic.

And the author lies and grossly distorts the facts as well: People studied and tried faith healing and spiritual medicine for thousands of years. It was all they had, so they really wished that it would work. It took us a very long time before we finally learned some things that actually work properly, and what actually works is penicillin, streptomycin, and tetracycline, not occult incantations, prayers, chants,

charms, voodoo dolls, magic spells, or sacrificing your first-born son on the alter to appease an angry God.

And the author also misuses the word "spiritual". **Bill Wilson constantly confused psychological, emotional, and spiritual things**, and so does this faithful follower of his. (Bill made grand, sweeping proclamations like that all forms of "[spiritual diseases](#)" were caused by "resentments" — the *Big Book*, page 64.) What isn't obvious from the quote above ([see the larger review](#)) is that the author would talk about things like how people having a positive mental attitude towards their recovery from illness coincided with people rapidly healing what ailed them, and then the author would call that "spiritual healing." That isn't spiritual healing; that's just psychology. That's just having a good mind-set — a positive and cheerful attitude. And that positive attitude was often caused by the patient's rapid recovery, rather than the rapid recovery being caused by the positive attitude... That is "*Confusion of Correlation and Causation*" again.

And last but not least, the author also gave a good demonstration of the [Big Lie technique](#). That quote is just loaded with Big Lies:

1. "'The healing power of the spirit' is an established fact."
 2. "[Everybody knows](#) that spiritual healing works."
 3. "The spiritual dimension of healing is an established fact."
 4. "The power of the mind and the spirit to overcome both chronic and acute medical problems is real."
 5. "[The success of 'the Twelve Steps program'](#) in helping people to overcome a variety of addictions is an established fact."
 6. "Alcoholics Anonymous successfully practices spiritual healing."
 7. "Modern medicine is an infant, just barely out of the realm of blood-letting and leeches."
 8. "Modern medicine was slow to move out of its primitive beginnings and join the revolution in science." (Not, that [it was the revolution](#).)
 9. "'Spiritual healing' has never been properly studied."
 10. "The spiritual dimension of healing was absent from serious discussion."
 11. "Modern medicine has been slow to take up the challenge of studying faith healing and 'spiritual healing'."
 12. "The spiritual dimension of healing is a healing factor that is now too obvious to ignore."
 13. "The field of medicine is still in its infancy in understanding the spiritual dimension of healing."
 14. — And, by implication, "Sometime in the future, modern medicine will finally get smart enough to discover spiritual medicine and learn how to use it."
- All of which are lies.

For just one example of modern medicine embracing "spiritual healing," consider that 'Native American' or Original American people can and do have their own spiritual healing ceremonies performed for them in hospitals. They get both the medicine man and Western-medicine doctor working on them, simultaneously. (I was tempted to write "white-man doctor", but these days, the 'Western-medicine' doctor is likely to be Jordanian, Pakistani, or Indian — India Indian.)

Another, much less positive, example of so-called "spiritual healing" is this: Here in Portland Oregon there is a fundamentalist sect of people who call themselves "The Church of the Followers of Christ". They do not believe in doctors or medicine. They only believe in prayer and "spiritual healing". When one of their children gets sick, they pray over the child, and they absolutely will not take the sick child to a doctor or a hospital. If the child dies, he

dies. They declare that it must be the Will of God. Every few years, they kill another child that way.

Just recently, in May 2010, the parents of one of their dead children were tried for manslaughter, and convicted. The father got two years in prison. The mother got off with probation so that she could care for the surviving children. And then, just a few months later, that crazy congregation killed another child the same way. So now *those* parents are being charged with manslaughter. This has been going on for many years.

The big flaw in their logic is that they are actually so arrogant and delusional that they think they are powerful magicians. They imagine that their prayers are working magical ceremonies. They think that they can summon spiritual powers and magical forces just by incanting some holy names like "God" and "Jesus Christ". That is actually no different from a sorcerer who imagines that he can get magical powers by summoning up demons by name.

Obviously, their magic is not working very well. (Although they believe that it is: most of the time, the children do recover while being prayed for. Their children's recovery rate from childhood diseases and the common cold is especially good.)

- **Hypnotic Bait and Switch**

Observe the broken flow of logic between these two paragraphs:

This world of ours has made more material progress in the last century than in all the millenniums which went before. Almost everyone knows the reason. Students of ancient history tell us that the intellect of men in those days was equal to the best of today. Yet in ancient times material progress was painfully slow. The spirit of modern scientific inquiry, research and invention was almost unknown. In the realm of the material, men's minds were fettered by superstition, tradition, and all sorts of fixed ideas. Some of the contemporaries of Columbus thought a round earth preposterous. Others came near putting Galileo to death for his astronomical heresies.

We asked ourselves this: Are not some of us just as biased and unreasonable about the realm of the spirit as were the ancients about the realm of the material?

(The *Big Book*, William G. Wilson, page 51.)

All of the statements before the last one are true and unchallengeable. [The listener will be lulled](#) into uncritically accepting more statements, expecting them to also be unquestionably true. That is when the speaker (Bill Wilson) suddenly slips a lie into the speech. The last sentence is an irrational appeal to embrace the very evils, the narrow-minded blind faith, the superstitious "spirituality" and "the realm of the spirit" that the previous sentences had so properly criticized.

Bait and switch.

And it's also a gross distortion of the facts — a [False Analysis Of History](#) — to say that "the ancients" were "biased and unreasonable" about the "realm of the material." They weren't. The medieval Roman Catholic Church authorities were far more "biased and unreasonable" about the "realm of the spirit." They would not tolerate any "spiritual", religious, or philosophical ideas that were different from their own. They asserted that they and the Bible had all of the true answers about everything in the world, and anyone who disagreed with them the least little bit was evil and doing the work of the Devil and trying to lead people to Hell. Their inquisitions ran for centuries, and killed a lot of people. One of the commonest reasons for a death sentence

and burning at the stake was "heresy".¹ The Church burned Bruno at the stake for declaring that the Earth revolved around the Sun.

- **The *Either/Or* Technique — Bifurcation — the Excluded Middle**

Present the audience with only extreme either/or, black-or-white choices, while admitting to no gray areas inbetween. Consider only the two extremes in a range of possibilities, to make the "other side" look worse than it really is. Carl Sagan called this the "excluded middle" technique.

The Excluded Middle technique also includes:

- Short-term versus long-term comparison — a subset of the excluded middle —
 - "why pursue fundamental science when we have so huge a budget deficit?"
 - "Why should we believe predictions of global warming when they can't predict the weather two weeks in advance?"
- Slippery slope — another subset of the excluded middle — make unwarranted extrapolations of the effects of a course of action, like: "give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile."

For example:

- "If you're not one of *us*, you're one of *them*."
[This is called "the sheep and goat distinction"](#).
- "If you aren't a dirty, lying Communist, then of course you agree with us, and you will be happy to join our John Birch Society (or the KKK, or the Nazi party, etc.)..."
- "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters." [Matthew 12:30]
- "Those who are not with us are against us." [Comrade Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Russia, 1917]
- "You are either part of the solution, or part of the problem."
- "Either you are Serving the Lord (as our church defines it) or you are serving the Forces of Evil."
- "Either you are a fanatical true believer like us, or you are an evil hard-boiled atheist."
- "Either you are saved by Christ or you are doomed to suffer the pains of Hell."
- "You guys must either you act like stupid brutish Neanderthals, or else you will look like you are gay and effeminate."
- "Either you are willing to commit your entire life to our great cause or else you are a wimp, a weak hand, and a real loser."
- "Look. You're on board, or you're not on board. Okay. But just, if you're on board, then you're on board just like the rest of us. Period." — Tom Cruise, talking about membership in Scientology.

◦





This Nazi propaganda poster from World War II used the Either/Or technique along with a lot of *Glittering Generalities*. It says:

In the Red War,
Mother or [Communist] "Comrade"?
People or Machines?
God or Devil?
Blood or Gold?
Race [Racial Purity] or Crossbreed [Mixed-race
children]?
Folk Songs or Jazz?
National Socialism [Naziism] or Bolshevism?

- The Oxford Group/Moral Re-Armament cult leader Frank Buchman said:

"an extreme of evil must be met with an extreme of good. A fanatical following of evil by a passionate pursuit of good. Only a passion can cure a passion. And only a superior world-arching ideology can cure a world divided by warring ideologies." ...

"Whenever men give man the place in their lives that God should have, slavery has begun. 'Men must choose to be governed by God, or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants.' There can be no neutrality in the battle between good and evil."

[Dr. Frank N.D. Buchman](#), the leader of the Oxford Groups—Moral Re-Armament cult, in a speech, "*Brave Men Choose*", given June 4, 1961, at Caux, Switzerland, quoted in *Frank Buchman's Secret*, by Peter Howard, page 141.

What Frank Buchman didn't bother to say there is that those who "chose to be governed by God" were really supposed to be governed by Frank and his lieutenants. The Buchmanites claimed that they, and only they, knew what God really wanted people to do. They, and only they, were "sane" and "Guided by God", Frank said, and everybody else was "insane". So, if you were "Guided by God", then you would do what Frank told you to do... ([Frank Buchman was really a fascist.](#))

- o Buchman also said,

"There are only two fronts in the world — the positive front and the negative front, those who obey God and those who refuse to obey Him."

Dynamic Out Of Silence: Frank Buchman's relevance today, Theophil Spoerri, page 117.

But "obeying God" really ended up meaning that you were supposed to obey Frank and his followers. That's the logical fallacy of [Conflation, False Equality](#).

- o In 1943, Frank Buchman declared:

"Unless America recovers her rightful ideology nothing but chaos awaits us. Our destiny is to obey the guidance of God.

The true battle-line in the world today is not between class and class, not between race and race. The battle is between Christ and anti-Christ.

'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.'

Frank Buchman As I Knew Him, H. W. 'Bunny' Austin, page 110.

Nevertheless, America somehow managed to win World War II without choosing to join Frank Buchman's cult.

- o Peter Howard, [the fascist](#) who succeeded Frank Buchman as the leader of Moral Re-Armament, wrote:

The choice is moral re-armament or national decay. ...

It is a choice that all of us must make. Christ or anti-Christ, spirit or beast, renaissance or decadence, moral re-armament or a godless, hopeless, purposeless age.

Britain and the Beast, Peter Howard, pages 110 and 118-119.

"Christ or anti-Christ"... That doesn't leave much room in the middle, does it?

- o "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."

Acting President G. W. Bush has repeatedly declared that the world was either "with us or against us" in his war on terrorism that he launched after the September 11 attacks.

Note that George Bush didn't give the rest of the world any choice in the means, strategies, or tactics that they may choose to use in *their* wars against terrorism (which some of them have been fighting for many years). Everybody was supposed to just follow Bush's orders and attack Iraq or else they weren't "with us".

- o Likewise, our *Fearless Leader* said of his war against Iraq:

This will not be a campaign of half measures.

G. W. Bush, 21 March 2003.

- o And Bush creates a false choice with this statement:

"When it comes to a choice between defending America or believing the words of a madman, I will always defend America."

G. W. Bush, July 2004.

Who was the madman?

- Hans Blick (the United Nations weapons inspector) when he said that there were no Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq?
 - The 9-11 Commission when it declared that there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and the 9-11 terrorist attack?
- Enron came up with a great choice for its some of its employees:
"Either help us to cook the books so that the CEO Jeffrey Skilling gets the numbers that he wants, or else you are a coward who doesn't have the guts to play with the Big Boys, and you aren't a team player."

Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous give us many more examples of the either/or technique:

- "Either you will totally abstain from drinking alcohol for the rest of your life, or else you will drink maniacally, consuming such huge amounts that you will die drunk in a gutter."
- "Either totally abstain from all drugs, even the ones the doctor gives you, or else you will be shoving a needle in your arm next week."
- "Either totally abstain from all medications, even the ones the doctor gives you, or your recovery isn't complete — you aren't really sober. Meds still the small quiet voice of God."
- *'Either you are a true believer or else you are an atheist'*: According to Bill Wilson, if you won't completely accept all of his dogmatic religious beliefs, then you must be [a disgusting agnostic or an atheist](#). No middle ground or independent thinking is allowed — it's literally all or nothing:

"When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that **either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't.** What was our choice to be?"

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *We Agnostics*, Page 53.

- "It's Alcoholics Anonymous — or else!" (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, page 378.)
- "God has either removed your husband's liquor problem or He has not." (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Edition, page 120.)
- Bill Wilson says that alcoholics must practice the A.A. religion or else they will die:

"To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face."

The Big Book, William G. Wilson, page 44.

Actually, they are not alternatives at all. There is a third choice: just quit drinking, and live a healthy, happy, and sane life without a cult religion.

- "Either you are dealing with a man who can and will get well or you are not. If not, why waste time with him?"
The Big Book, 3rd Edition, Henry Parkhurst, Chapter 10, *To Employers*, page 142.
- "None of us in Alcoholics Anonymous is normal. Our abnormality compels us to go to AA... We all go because we need to. Because the alternative is drastic, either A.A. or death."
Delirium Tremens, Stories of Suffering and Transcendence, Ignacio Solares, **Hazelden**, 2000, page 27.
- "Either *work a strong program* or else your fate will be *jails, institutions, or death.*" (Popular A.A. slogan.)
- "Work the Steps or Die!" — (Popular A.A. slogan.)

- "Even if you abstain from drinking alcohol, you must still practice Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps all of the time, or else you will turn into a *dry drunk*, a person who acts just like an obnoxious drunkard even when sober."
- "You must be willing to go to *any lengths* to recover from alcoholism", or else "you aren't *really trying*."
(A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, pages 58 and XX.)
- Bill Wilson said of alcoholics:
"Either we insist upon dominating the people we know, or we depend on them for far too much."
"Either we ... tried to play God and dominate those about us, or we ... insisted on being overdependent on them."
(*Not-God*, Ernest Kurtz, page 125.)
- A.A. defenders say, "You can't criticize our program unless you have a perfect, fool-proof, never-fails program of your own to offer as an alternative."
Translation: "Either show us a perfect program of your own design, or else accept our goofy program."
- A.A. promoters ask,

"Which would you rather get treatment and advice from — your old drinking buddies, or AA members?"
(For me, the answer is, "Neither." Try finding someone who is sane and reasonable and who knows what he is talking about, like a doctor who is good at treating addictions.)
- And even people who are trying to be objective can get caught in traps:

"Either addiction is a disease and addicts are powerless over their addictions, or else addiction is a choice and addicts can stop any time they want to."

Such an argument ignores the middle possibility: that physical addiction to a chemical really messes with the addict's mind and makes quitting extremely difficult (but not impossible). Sometimes, it is true that an addict can quit any time he wants to — he just cannot "want to" intensely enough to overcome the urges, the cravings, the crazyness, and the pain that inevitably accompanies withdrawal. (That is, he can't "want to enough" until something extreme happens to motivate him, like getting sick unto death, nearly dying, or seeing a friend die. Then that can be the stimulus that provides the motivation to finally quit and stay quit.)

• False Dichotomy

The *False Dichotomy* technique is very similar to the *Either/Or* technique. A dichotomy is the division of something into two pieces. A false dichotomy is an attempt to divide something with a false dividing line, like:

1. You can have either quantity, or quality, but not both.
2. Some people vote for God, and some people vote Democratic.
3. Some people support the troops, while others want to end the war.
4. Some people support President Bush, while others are not so patriotic.
5. Unwanted fertilized human eggs should be adopted, not used for stem cell research.
{That statement implies that it is an either/or choice, and ignores the fact that there are 400,000 unwanted embryos in freezers around the U.S.A., extras left over from in vitro fertilization procedures, and very, very, very few of them will ever get adopted and become "Snowflake Babies". So far, only 81 of them have ever been adopted. There really are not a lot of women around who are begging the doctors to shove somebody else's fertilized egg into their wombs. There are more than

enough unwanted frozen embryos to go around, and the sad truth is that almost all of those embryos will end up getting flushed down the drain after they have sat in the freezer for too long. They get freezer burn too, you know.}

Variations on False Dichotomy include:

- False Dilemma: The choice presented is only A or B. Rejecting A is selecting B.
- Bifurcation
- Either/Or: Reduce reality to, "Either this is true, or that is true."
- The Enemy Of My Enemy Is My Friend
- Hobson's Choice
- Alternative Advance

Another very common false dichotomy is: **"Do you believe in God or evolution?"**

But if you believe that evolution was God's method of creating us, then there is no conflict between science and religion. Yes there is a God, and yes, evolution is true.

The only conflict is between modern observations of reality and the superstitions of some ill-educated Israeli goat-herders who happened to live in the Sinai Desert 4000 years ago. But what did they know? They thought that the Earth was flat, and that the Firmament was a black dome over the Earth, to which all of the stars were glued. (Read the beginning of *Genesis*, and the part of *Revelations* where the Lord rolls up the Firmament like a Venetian blind and takes it away. There goes the night sky and all of the stars that are glued to it.)

Al Shebab is a terrorist gang in Somalia that is linked to Al Qaeda. They recently carried out a terrorist attack on a shopping mall in Kenya that killed 70 people. OPB Newshour, 2014.01.07, did an article on Al Shebab. In it, an Al Shebab leader Sheik Ali Dehere lectured new suicide mission recruits: "When we fight and are martyred, we are hoping to be with God in Paradise. We are hoping for beautiful women. What do the infidels hope for? Nothing."

That is a false dichotomy. People who are not murdering terrorists hope for many things, generally good things. They might even hope to go to Heaven. And people who choose to not be murdering terrorists are not necessarily "infidels". That is a *Sheep and Goats* distinction.

George Bush uses the false dichotomy technique constantly, framing an argument as a choice between two irrelevant things. While talking about the armed insurgents in Iraq, he said that they had to "choose between freedom or a return to darkness." (23 Aug 2005). The insurgents are not opposed to freedom. They are opposed to the occupation of their country by the United States Army. In fact, those insurgents want to be even freer than they are now, so that they can do whatever they want to do without interference from Americans.

Recently, Tom Cruise appeared on television to promote the movie *War of the Worlds*. Somehow, the interview morphed into a tirade against modern psychiatry, and criticism of psychiatrists for giving tranquilizers to adults and psychotropic drugs to children. He voiced many bitter denunciations of modern psychiatry. Cruise claimed that "You don't know the history of psychiatry like I do." Cruise also said that he believes that Scientology offers a valid alternative to current psychiatric practices.

But Tom Cruise is making the whole issue into a false *Either/Or* choice — a false dichotomy. Is isn't **EITHER** modern psychiatry is right, **OR** Scientology is right. Cruise ignores the obvious possibility that both could be wrong:

- Some psychiatrists are very much at fault for prescribing entirely too many medications — especially Ritalin — to children just because they are high-energy little live-wires (which a lot of healthy children are). Sitting still in a classroom all day long, year after year, is downright unnatural and unhealthy, and drugging children to make them be quiet is despicable.

- **AND** Scientology is at fault for being a complete fraud and cruel rip-off — just organized crime masquerading as a healing group.

Bill Wilson's favorite false dichotomy was to divide people into those "faithful" people who believed the crazy dogmatic things that he was preaching, and the "[atheists and agnostics](#)" who didn't.

And, some alcoholics accepted all of Bill's bull, while others were "[unreasonably prejudiced](#)".

And then A.A. teaches us that there are:

- 1) those good A.A. members who *Keep Coming Back* to more A.A. meetings and *Work The Steps* in all of their affairs; and
- 2) those unfortunates who will die drunk in a gutter.

And,

- 1) Good A.A. members are able to grasp a lifestyle that requires "[rigorous honesty](#)" (like *Fake It Till You Make It* and *Act As If*), while
- 2) Non-members are "constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. ... They seem to have been born that way."

- **The Enemy Of My Enemy Is My Friend**

This is another kind of false dichotomy — an attempt to divide people into just two camps or sides or causes.

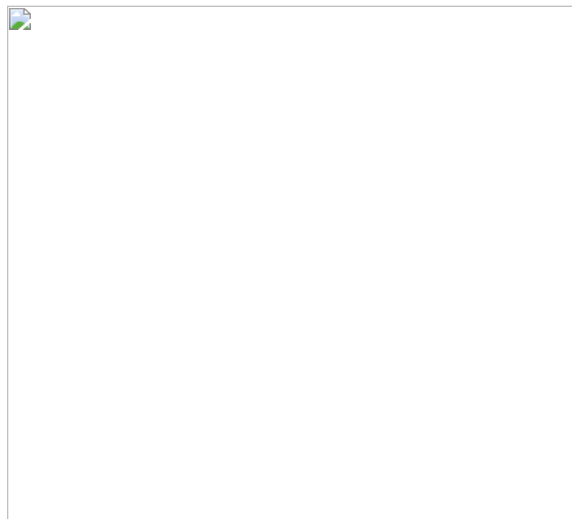
Variations:

- *"The enemy of bad must be good."*
- *"Those who are opposed to bad must be good."*
- *"If a bad man hates me, then that proves that I am good."*
- *"If a very bad man is opposed to what Joe is doing, then Joe must good, and Joe must be doing good things."*
- *"The friend of my enemy is also my enemy."*
- *"If I am opposed to something bad, then I must be good."*

Those are obviously false assumptions, fraught with dangers. Nobody is absolutely bad, or absolutely good, so their enemy cannot be absolutely the opposite, either. Even Heinrich Himmler, the man who personally managed the holocaust that murdered 6 million Jews, had a soft spot in his heart for pretty little girls, and he doted on them and would pick wild flowers for them. But that didn't make those little girls bad, or our enemies.

Adolf Hitler hated Joe Stalin, and was totally opposed to what Joe was doing, but that didn't make Stalin a good guy. Both Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin were world-class murdering monsters.

Peter Howard used this technique to try to claim that the Oxford Group / Moral Re-Armament organization was good. He claimed that he had a



Heinrich Himmler and two other S.S. officers collecting wildflowers for a little girl that he is going to visit.

secret Gestapo report on the Oxford Groups that the Gestapo had printed during World War II, which condemned the Oxford Groups as a dangerous influence, and ordered Gestapo agents to watch them closely. Thus, Howard concluded, the Oxford Groups must be virtuous, and the allegations that the Oxford Groups were essentially a fascist cult religion must be false. That is bad logic. The leader of the Gestapo, Heinrich Himmler, was against *all* Christian churches, because they encouraged people to be loyal to something other than Adolf Hitler. Also, Himmler dismissed all of Christianity as a "Jewish" religion, and wanted to stamp it out and [return to ancient paganism](#). So Himmler was wary of the Oxford Groups just because they said that they were Christian ([which they were not, really, in the final analysis](#)).

Scientology routinely uses a variation on this tactic. Scientology opposes the use of all psychiatric drugs and medications, claiming that Scientology procedures are the only valid treatment for psychiatric problems. Scientologists especially like to complain about children being overmedicated with harmful drugs like Ritalin. Like most successful Big Lies, there is a grain of truth in such complaints. It is despicable to overmedicate children and dope them out just because they are energetic little live wires who don't want to sit still in classrooms when the sun is out and it's a beautiful day outside. But Scientology way overdoes it in opposing all psychiatric medications. And then they use the logical fallacy of "we oppose something bad so that proves that we are good."

And then they go on and on, denouncing drug after drug, finding fault with every tranquilizer and anti-psychotic around, picketing and warning against Zoloft, Paxil, Luvox, Celexa, Lexapro, Seroxat, Prozac, Effexor, etc., and all the while claiming that they great because they are saving people from the bad psychiatrists. And the more they can find wrong with medications or psychiatrists, the more convinced they are that they are right about everything.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this ploy constantly by declaring, "Alcoholism is very bad, so A.A., which opposes alcoholism, is very good."

The so-called "recovery industry" uses this ploy by declaring that they are very opposed to "addiction", implying that they are good people who are dedicated to helping others, rather than just charlatons with ineffective quack cures who are out to get your money. Their advertisements go on and on, ranting about how bad "addiction" is, without actually showing that they are doing anything good for the problem.

- **"Hobson's Choice"**

Give a free choice between something or nothing.

The classic example of Hobson's Choice is "Take it or leave it." Either take the one thing offered, or get nothing.

The A.A. program is often offered in this manner: Either accept the entire program and believe all of it, or else get no help: "If you aren't willing to accept this Program, then you should go out and do some more research on the subject."

- **Alternative Advance**

Provide two or more choices which do not cover the range of possibilities, but which only reflect essentially the same proposition.

A Jehovah's Witness recruiter may say,

"If you don't agree with me, let's study this book I've brought along. If you do agree, let's go to the Kingdom Hall this Sunday."

Both choices expose you to indoctrination in their religion.¹⁰ One obvious logical choice is missing:

"If we don't agree about religion, we can just drop the matter and part company amicably."

Here is another example:

In A.D. 640, when the Saracens captured Alexandria, seat of ancient culture, Greek scholars pleaded with them not to burn the scrolls of the great library. Their reply, as recorded by Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* remains a classic in theological logic. "If the writings support the Koran, they are superfluous," ruled the warrior tribesmen. "If they oppose it, they are pernicious; burn them."

Richard Mathison, *God is a Millionaire*, page 33.

- **"Somebody's got it worse"**

When people complain about something, tell them that they should be happy with the situation because somebody else has it worse.

- "You should be happy to have Mr. Smith as your slavedriver. He only beats you once a day. Those poor bastards under Mr. Jones get beaten three times a day."
- "You are lucky to have those shiny new chains and shackles. Look at those poor slobs over there, with rusty old chains. Do you know how those things chafe on wrists and ankles?"
- "You should be happy to be working for a dollar an hour. The boss is being generous. The guys in Bungeria only get 25 cents an hour."

- **Faulty Syllogism**

A *Faulty Syllogism* is bad logic, pure and simple — a bad chain of logical deduction.

Technically, a proper syllogism is an argument, the conclusion of which is supported by two premises, of which one (major premise) contains the term (major term) that is the predicate of the conclusion, and the other (minor premise) contains the term (minor term) that is the subject of the conclusion; common to both premises is a term (middle term) that is excluded from the conclusion. A typical form is: "All A is B; all B is C; therefore all A is C."²³

Whew! A simpler and clearer example of a good syllogism is like this:

All Pekinese ducks are white.
Mister Lee is a Pekinese duck.
Therefore Mister Lee is white."

A faulty syllogism might be something like this:

"You think as much as college professors, and college professors don't make any money, so if you keep on thinking we won't have any money!"

Another rather popular faulty syllogism is this:

1. A young, aspiring poet has his poems panned, trashed, or ignored by the critics.
2. That young poet recalls that many of the greatest poets were also panned, trashed, or ignored by the critics when they were young.
3. "Therefore," the young poet concludes, "I must also be one of the great poets."

Obviously, the flaw in the logic is to overlook the simple truth that for every young genius artist who gets panned by the critics, there are a hundred incompetents who *really should be* trashed by the critics.

A variation on that faulty syllogism is:

"Jimi Hendrix, Janice Joplin, John Bellushi and James Dean all died young, and they were all great artists. So if I die young — go out in a blaze of glory like a shooting star — then I will also be remembered as a great

artist."

NOT!

You have to be a great artist to be remembered as one. Dying young does not make one a great artist.

And memory is selective. What you don't remember is all of the non-greats who died young. What were their names?

And conversely, what about all of the great old artists? What about the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead, and B. B. King and Chuck Berry, and Robin Williams and Dustin Hoffman and Frank Sinatra, and George Burns and Bob Newhart and W. C. Fields? They didn't have to die young to achieve greatness, did they?

(And that was a demonstration of the debating technique called "Refute by Example"...)

- **Non Sequitur**

Non sequitur means "it does not follow" — the logic is broken. If there is a chain of argument, every link in the chain must work.

A *non sequitur* can be something like this:

"I supported terrorists today. I did just a little bit of dope. I thought I was just having fun, but I gave money to terrorists when I did that."

That is totally bogus logic. Colombian drug lords did not bring down the World Trade Center on September 11; some crazy oil-rich Saudi Arabians did. A good chain of logic is like this:

"I supported terrorists today. I thought I was just having fun, but I gave money to terrorists. I drove my car down to the gas station and filled up the tank, and went cruising. But the gas station sent the money to Bush's and Cheney's friends' oil companies, who sent the money to Saudi Arabia, which gave the money to the bin Laden family, who gave some of the money to Osama, who gave it to his terrorist guys. So I supported terrorists when I bought gasoline today."¹²

Likewise, this old argument is completely illogical: At the dinner table, a mother tells her child, "Finish your peas. There are children starving in China."

A precocious child will answer, "So send my peas to China."

A commercial on PBS for a big financial company tells the story of a couple of university professors who put their children through college. The wife stops the narrator and says:

"You don't build up a big nest egg on a couple of teachers' salaries. You need a plan and a financial consultant who isn't afraid to roll up his sleeves."

That is nonsense, another *non sequitur*. Obviously, unless that couple robbed a bank or inherited a fortune or took bribes from their students for good grades, they *really did* build up their big nest egg on a couple of teachers' salaries.

Advertisements for some cigarettes brag that the tobacco is completely natural and free from additives and chemicals, so it is somehow less harmful. That is completely non-sensical logic. Tobacco in any form is poisonous, and tobacco kills 430,000 Americans per year, regardless of what chemicals it may or may not have added to it.

Frank Buchman's *Oxford Group* cult came up with this jewel:

'I most hate self, because "I" is the middle letter of SIN.'

(By that brain-damaged *Oxford Group* logic — "'I' is the middle letter of SIN' — they should have also hated *Saints* and *Salvation*, because "S" is the first letter of SIN. And perhaps they should also hate Nuts and Noodles, because "N" is the third letter of SIN.)

Another *Non Sequitur*, or piece of broken logic, is Carl Sagan's old favorite:

"There aren't any aliens out there. We have been looking for them for 50 years, and we haven't seen any. We would have seen them or made contact or something by now, if they existed."

Carl Sagan's answer is: "*Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.*"

In particular, we have explored only the most minuscule part of our Universe, maybe something like only a quintillionth of one percent or less. Even our best telescopes cannot even see the planets orbiting the nearest neighboring stars, so how could we see their spaceships? (Really. We compute the existence of distant planets by watching how the stars wobble a tiny bit as the invisible planets orbit them.) It's outrageously premature to declare that there is nobody out there, just because we haven't seen them yet.

It's kind of like going down to the seashore, and sucking up a drop of water in an eye-dropper, and then looking very closely at the drop, and announcing, "I don't see any whales in there. Obviously, whales don't really exist."

Another popular one is: "Drafting people and forcing them to serve in the army isn't slavery because everybody is subjected to it."

Of course it's slavery. Whether something is slavery or not has nothing to do with how many people are enslaved.

(By the way, not everybody was subjected to it. Rich men's sons got college deferments and ended up avoiding the draft. Dick Cheney got five deferments because he said he "had other priorities.")

In a TV commercial for the Turbo-Tax® computer program (2004.01.20), the husband asks, "What if we made a mistake?"

His wife confidently answers, "The calculations are guaranteed accurate."

That is brain-damaged logic, a real *non-sequitur*. The husband asked "What if we made a mistake?", not "What if the computer program made a mistake?"...

Sure, the computer's basic calculations like addition and multiplication will be accurate, but that doesn't guarantee that the humans haven't messed everything up. You know the old saying, "*Garbage In, Garbage Out*".

The Turbo-Tax guys cannot guarantee against human error. The reason that it is so hard to make things fool-proof is because fools are so damned clever at thinking of new ways to screw things up.

American Express has a commercial on TV that is similarly illogical. A man who declares that he works as a waiter in a restaurant and also coaches childrens' basketball explains that,

"I want my players to develop as athletes.

"I want my players to develop as students.

"My life isn't just about playing games.

"That's why my card is American Express."

What?! There is no logic to that. He has not established any basis for choosing an American Express card over a VISA or Mastercharge. He has not introduced a single fact to support his sentiments. He might as well be saying,

"My life isn't just about playing games.

"That's why I drink only expensive imported single-malt scotch."

Crazy anti-environment people who are also religious fundamentalists declare that warning messages about destruction of the environment are untrue because...

"We cannot destroy the world any more than we were capable of creating it."

That's a *non-sequitur* — completely illogical nonsense. Of course we can destroy things that we did not create. Anybody who picks up a gun and kills someone who isn't one of his own children is destroying something that he didn't create. Anybody who is stupid enough to start a forest fire and burn down a forest is destroying something that he didn't create.

Those fundamentalists are trying to imply that only God can destroy this world (so we are safe from such

danger), but that is obviously not true at all. That is just so much wishful thinking. Just ask the survivors of Hiroshima.

Curiously, that goofy *non-sequitur* is almost a word-for-word repetition of [the illogical argument](#) that was parroted by the true believers in Frank Buchman's Nazi-sympathizing *Moral Re-Armament* cult back in the 1930s and '40s and '50s. They declared that without hearing "The Voice" that Frank Buchman heard (which they claimed was the Voice of God) —

Without it we are no more capable of saving the world than we were capable of creating it in the first place."

Experiment With God; Frank Buchman Reconsidered, Gösta Ekman, 1971, page 84.

In another brain-damaged *non sequitur*, G. W. Bush tells the troops: *"It is wonderful to bravely, patriotically, serve your country and fight terrorism. I am committed to fighting terrorism. Some of you may die in this war, but that is a sacrifice that I am willing to make. Bring 'em on!"*

The supporters of George W. Bush insist that having investigations to discover the truth behind Bush's many, many mistakes, deceptions, and false statements regarding the war in Iraq would not be good for America: *"We can't discover the truth right now; we are in a war against terrorism."* That is a *non sequitur*.

Recently (Nov. 22, 2006) the elder George Bush was in Dubai, [where he was harshly criticized](#) for the foreign policy of the United States and the military adventurism of his son. Papa Bush responded, *"How come everybody wants to come to the United States if the United States is so bad?"* That is a *non sequitur*. There are many good reasons for wanting to come to the United States which do not imply approval of George W.'s bombing and invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, or his policy of unquestioning support of Israel. One good reason for coming to the USA is to get away from American bombing in Afghanistan or Iraq. Another good reason is to get away from American-trained death squads in military dictatorships around the world.

Another *non sequitur*: a cult old-timer declares, *"I dedicated my life to the cult. I worked hard for 20 years to promote it and recruit new members. Therefore I am noble and selfless and the cult is wonderful, and we all live lives of self-sacrifice to help others."*

This *non sequitur* might be called "proof by delusion": *"I saw lights, so it was a spiritual experience."*

Paul Krugman reported a crazy non-sequitur recently:

Consider one of Mr. Romney's most famous remarks: "Corporations are people, my friend." When the audience jeered, he elaborated: "Everything corporations earn ultimately goes to people. Where do you think it goes? Whose pockets? Whose pockets? People's pockets." This is undoubtedly true, once you take into account the pockets of, say, partners at Bain Capital (who, I hasten to add, are, indeed, people).

Paul Krugman, *Off and Out With Mitt Romney*, **The New York Times**, 2012.07.05

The fact that people get money from corporations does not mean that corporations *are* people, entitled to human rights, like freedom of speech or the right to vote. Corporations cannot be imprisoned for their crimes, can they? Or be given the death sentence for polluting children to death. Or die of old age. Or get cancer. Or bleed and suffer. Corporations are actually just legal fictions that allow some people to do business without being liable for the consequences of their actions. If the same people do business as a partnership, they can be put in prison for their crimes.

Today, commercials on the radio tell you that you need to join Al-Anon or Ala-Teen "to get help" because Daddy drinks too much alcohol —

"I don't know who he is any more. I don't know who I'll meet — my husband or somebody else..."

"We are the family and friends of alcoholics. We may be different, but we have one thing in common: We want our lives back."

The broken logic there is: "Daddy drinks too much alcohol, and living with him is a nightmare, so you need to [go join the 12-Step cult religion](#) where you will be told to confess all of *your* sins and find your part in it and [quit being so selfish and quit being such a domineering bitch](#)."

That's a real *non sequitur* — there is no logic to it.

For another example of bad logic:

Both of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, William G. Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith, were very heavy smokers. So were most of the other early A.A. members. Bill Wilson often said that [members did not need to quit smoking](#); that smoking was okay, and could even help (in spite of the fact that it was killing him). A coffee pot and lots of ash trays were considered the standard essential equipment for any A.A. meeting. Therefore, smoking lots and lots of tobacco, and drinking lots and lots of coffee, just like Bill W. and Dr. Bob did, is perfectly okay, and it may even help you to quit drinking alcohol, just like they did.

(It may also help you to quit breathing, [just like they did](#), but that's another story...)

Another brain-dead non-sequitur:

"When I went to an A.A. meeting, I was amazed to see that they were all just like me. They really understood. For the first time, I felt like I belonged. Therefore, Bill Wilson was a total genius and right about everything, and the Twelve Steps are the One And Only True Path to Sobriety, Serenity, and God."

A very common argument that one often hears around the "recovery community" is descriptions of the horrors of alcoholism and drug addiction being used to glorify Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. The logic is: "Alcoholism is bad, so A.A., which is intended to save alcoholics, is good."

But that is just another *non-sequitur*. That is no more logical than saying, "Alcoholism is bad, so Scientology is good."

Scientology also claims to have a never-fails cure for alcoholism and drug addiction — an allegedly-independent organization called [Narconon](#). And their magic answer is: "Give *all* of your money to Scientology for more 'auditing', and they will fix your mind."

Just because something claims to have good intentions does not make it good. As one wit declared,

"The opposite of 'good' is good intentions."

- **Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc** — "It happened after 'X', so it was caused by 'X'." *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc* means "it happened after..., so it was caused by...". That implies a cause-and-effect relationship where none may exist.

The classic example of this is, "The rooster's crowing makes the sun rise: First the rooster crows, and then the sun comes up over the horizon, so the rooster's crowing makes the sun rise."

A few more examples of false logic:

- A bunch of teenage girls took sex education classes in high school, and then got pregnant. Therefore, sex education classes make teenage girls get pregnant. The classes give the girls ideas.
The fact that young females have been managing to get pregnant for hundreds of millions of years without any formal education — using only on-the-job training — is considered irrelevant.
- Tommy says, "I was sick. I drank a whole bottle of Dr. Philo T. Farnsworth's Magic Rejuvenation Elixir, and immediately got better. So that Elixir really works good."
Tommy ignores the simple fact that most people routinely spontaneously recover from all of their illnesses (except perhaps the last one) without any Magic Elixir, so he has no way of knowing whether the Magic Elixir was responsible for his recovery.
- Sam won the lottery, and immediately went on a huge outrageous binge of celebration that ended in him dying drunk. He had all of the free time and money he needed to drink himself to death, and he did. Therefore, winning the lottery is a terrible thing that will make you die drunk.
(Likewise, success is also a dangerous thing that will probably ruin you, so don't succeed in life.)
- Joe went to A.A. meetings, and quit drinking. So, going to the meetings caused Joe to quit drinking.
- Henry did the Twelve Steps, and quit drinking. He stopped drinking after he did his Fifth Step. That proves it: doing the Fifth Step makes people quit drinking.
- Jackie relapsed after he did his Twelfth Step. So did Paddy and Lillian and Ebby and Johnny. That proves it: doing the Twelfth Step makes people relapse and die drunk.

- **The Norm of Reciprocity**

The norm of reciprocity is a technique that exploits people's natural tendency to want to repay debts. I know that sounds unbelievably Pollyannaish, because you might think that most people want to avoid paying debts, but no matter how cynical you may feel about the human race, people do have a basically cooperative nature, *especially in face-to-face relationships*. It dates from our days as primitive members of tribes, just cavemen, who helped each other to survive. When one person does a favor for another, the other feels indebted, and wants to return the favor to even out the score. Even today, there are still a few remaining tribes who have an economic system that is just a complex web of traded favors and debts, and they all manage to remember who owes what to whom...

The Hari Krishnas discovered that they could increase their haul of money from airports by giving away flowers. That is, if they just tried to shake travelers down for donations, they got rejected a lot. But when they gave travelers a flower, "...because we love you, and you are so beautiful...", and then hit up the traveler for a donation, they got a lot more money. The act of giving the flower made the traveler feel indebted and embarrassed, and vulnerable to the request for money.

Then they used the same technique for selling their Krishna books in airports: "Give" the book to the traveler "because he looks so enlightened, like someone intelligent enough to appreciate that material", and then hit him up for a big donation to finance the printing and distribution of that cosmic wisdom...

The one time they pulled that stunt on me, I had just spent my last dollar on the airplane ticket. When I finally managed to convince the woman who was working on me that I really didn't have even just a twenty left in my pockets, she gave me a look of disgust, angrily grabbed the book back out of my hands, and stomped off in frustration... So much for how intelligent and enlightened I look... Oh well.

- **Guilt Induction**

Guilt is an especially powerful tool for manipulating people's minds.

A late-night TV infomercial says:

"Don't you think it's time you gave your family all of the things that they deserve? Buy this get-rich-quick scheme right now."

Another commercial that sells a panic button service has a woman saying,

"What if something happened to my mother? I don't think I could forgive myself. I'll buy her a medical alert service."

They imply that you are neglecting your mother if you don't buy their service, and they make you afraid of what might go wrong. That commercial cleverly combines guilt induction with fear-mongering, so they are using two propaganda techniques on your mind at once.

People who feel guilty are far more likely to comply with a request than they would be if they didn't feel guilty. Thus, making people believe that they have hurt you, and then pressing a request for them to do something (which offers them a feeling that they can make amends by doing something for you) is an effective way to get people to do what you want.

Guilt induction and self-criticism (confession) sessions formed the core of the [Red Chinese brainwashing program](#), and they are still used by many cults. Edward Hunter wrote a beautiful book about the Red Chinese brainwashing that was done to the American, British, and other United Nations prisoners of war in North Korea during the Korean War. He explained the mechanics of "brainwashing" this way:

The Reds had found that the easiest way to subdue any group of people was to give its members a guilt complex and then to lead them on from self-denunciation to self-betrayal. All that was required to put this across was a sufficiently heartless exploitation of the essential goodness in people, so that they would seek self-sacrifice to compensate for their feelings of guilt. The self-sacrifice obviously made available to them in this inside-out environment is some form of treason.

Brainwashing, From Pavlov to Powers, Edward Hunter, page 169.

So, first, the Communist guards would do something like make the prisoners feel guilty for being part of "a rich racist society where they never cared about the fate of the poor Negroes", and then the prisoners had to confess that in self-criticism sessions, and then the only way to atone for such sins was to love and praise the wonderful Chinese Communist society where everyone was equal (but some people were more equal than others).

Prof. Margaret Thaler Singer also considered inducing *"a sense of powerlessness, covert fear, guilt, and dependency"* to be one of [the five essential conditions](#) for an effective mind-control or "brainwashing" program. The Red Chinese guards were able to accomplish that easily, because all of the prisoners were at the mercy of the guards, who could punish or kill them on a whim, or for no reason at all.

Likewise, many religions and religious cults use guilt to manipulate their members. [Frank Buchman's Oxford Group](#) cult refined guilt induction to an art and a science — **"The Five C's"** — and used it as a standard part of their recruiting scheme. The Oxford Groups also induced a sense of powerlessness in their victims with the doctrine that *"Everyone has been defeated by sin, and is powerless over it. Everyone is insane (except Frank Buchman and his lieutenants). Only 'Surrender to God'[Read: surrender to Frank Buchman's cult] can restore one to sanity."*

All of Prof. Margaret Thaler Singer's [five essential conditions](#) for an effective mind-control or "brainwashing" program were present in the Oxford Groups.

[Guilt induction is also a big part of the Alcoholics Anonymous program](#). The A.A. founders Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith learned it from the Oxford Groups when they were members of that cult. Seven of the Twelve Steps, Steps Four through Ten, dwell on sins, *"defects of character"*, *"moral shortcomings"*, offenses,

people we have harmed, and wrongs — *"the exact nature of our wrongs."* Good A.A. newcomers are supposed to do a "moral inventory" and list every sin they ever committed in their whole lives, and then confess it all to another A.A. member and God. Then they are supposed to make another list of everybody they ever hurt, offended, or pissed off, and they have to go apologize or somehow "make amends." And then they are supposed to repeat that whole rigamarole for the rest of their lives. Such constant guilt induction can be very harmful and psychologically damaging. It even sometimes drives people to suicide.

(And Alcoholics Anonymous also induces a sense of powerlessness with Steps One and Two:

"1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable."

"2. [We] Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Implying that you are insane and you cannot heal yourself. Somebody else has to manage your life for you and restore you to sanity.

With the guilt induction and inducing a sense of powerlessness, we have two of the most important ingredients for a working brainwashing program.)

Bill Wilson's mania for inducing guilt in others was so intense that he even tried to make people feel guilty for *not* being sinners. On page 66 of Bill's second book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill described all of the disgusting ways that sinners will sin and then deny it and try to avoid confessing their sins. Then Bill wrote:

We who have escaped these extremes are apt to congratulate ourselves. Yet can we? After all, hasn't it been self-interest, pure and simple, that has enabled most of us to escape? Not much spiritual effort is involved in avoiding excesses which will bring us punishment anyway.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 66.

So if you don't commit a lot of sins and crimes, then you should feel guilty for being selfish and pursuing "self-interest, pure and simple":

— You aren't really a good person, and you aren't really spiritual.

— You are just selfishly avoiding punishment.

Poor insane old Bill Wilson really did [hate human nature](#). No wonder he was a chronic depressive.

That's also a good example of a [double-bind](#) — You are damned if you do, and damned if you don't:

◦ If you commit a bunch of sins and crimes, it's because you are selfish and unspiritual.

◦ If you *don't* commit a bunch of sins and crimes, it's because you are selfish and unspiritual and just selfishly avoiding punishment.

Either way, you are too selfish to be "spiritual." So you should start doing Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps, listing and confessing all of your sins and feeling guilty about everything.

But the best example of Bill Wilson's crazy mania for guilt induction has to be this jewel where Mr. Wilson declared that we were [guilty of all of the Seven Deadly Sins, including Sloth](#), because we work hard:

And how often we work hard with no better motive than to be secure and slothful later on — only we call it "retiring."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 67.

So, working hard now, so that we can retire later, in our old age, with some financial security, is contemptible "[slothful](#)" behavior, is it?

Is there anything more ridiculous that Deacon Wilson could possibly try to make us feel guilty about?

- **Play On Emotions, Appeal To Emotions**

We have lots of emotions that can be manipulated by a clever propagandist. We've already mentioned guilt, which is in a category of its own. But there are plenty more to exploit, like: Fear, lust for power, hope, pride,

vanity, egotism, insecurity, ambition, machismo, "patriotism", greed, love, loneliness, nostalgia, religiosity, sentimentality, and lust for sex.

- **Fear**, especially fear of death, is a particularly powerful emotion, one that can be manipulated to good advantage:
 - A preacher who wants to increase attendance at his church advertises: "Don't wait for the hearse to take you to church."
 - A cult recruiting leaflet asks, "If you died this very moment, do you know where you would spend eternity? If you do not, there is an answer for you. It is _____." (Fill in the blank with the name of your favorite panacea...)
 - Believers who confuse religion and politics declare: "If we don't line up politically, we Christians shall lose this country. The forces of evil are trying to take America away from us. Winning means that we will protect all that is good and sacred."
 - When San Francisco residents suggested getting their own municipal power company so that they could stop paying for enormously over-priced electricity from PG&E and Enron, they were told, "It's too risky, too costly."
(How could it possibly be more risky and more expensive than handing your wallet to Enron?)
 - Someone who wishes to stop a public debate declares, "The debate must be cancelled, both because it might offend people and because it could stir up racial hatred. There is a potential threat to public order." ([BBC News, Monday, 26 November 2007, "The limits to freedom of speech"](#))
 - **Spread Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt (FUD).**
Microsoft is a past master of this stunt:

"If you use some software that was written by someone besides Microsoft, it might not work right with your MicroSuck operating system. It might mess up your machine. You might lose files... We might even have deliberately built in some secret bugs and booby-traps and bombs that will get triggered if we see you using a competitor's software in 'our system'... You don't get any guarantees that it will all work together correctly if you don't buy all of your software from us."
 - Promote **Conspiracy Theories**. "They" are all out to get you. (And a paranoid book of disorganized 'facts' proves it.) After September 11, 2001, our Commander-in-Empty-Flight-Suit Bush declared, "Oceans no longer protect us" as if the oceans protected us from the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, or from the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993...
 - Alcoholics Anonymous often uses fear mongering and death threats to manipulate people:
 - A.A. teaches that failure to follow the A.A. program precisely will result in [relapses and drinking yourself to death](#).
 - A.A. also teaches that you will either turn into a "[dry drunk](#)" and act crazy, or relapse and die, if you don't "*work a strong program*" by practicing Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps "in all of your affairs."
 - Bill Wilson constantly threatened people with death unless they [followed his instructions exactly](#):

Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested [[my required](#)] Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William Wilson, page 174.

- They say that if you won't make A.A. or N.A. your new life, that your fate is "Jails, Institutions, or Death."
- Failure to "*Work A Strong Program*" in A.A. will end in "*Jails, Institutions, or Death*".
- Step Eleven teaches us to practice meditation and prayer until we hear God talking to us, but then Bill Wilson tells us not to trust our own minds when we hear God talking — that it is "dangerous" to "go it alone" and could result in "tragic" results — so we should take our received "Guidance from God" to our sponsors for their approval, and let them rewrite God's messages:

If all our lives we had more or less fooled ourselves, how could we now be so sure that we weren't still self-deceived? ... **Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous.** ... Surely then, a novice ought not lay himself open to the chance of making **foolish, perhaps tragic, blunders** in this fashion. While the comment or advice of others may be by no means infallible, it is likely to be far more specific than any direct guidance we may receive while we are still so inexperienced in establishing contact with a Power greater than ourselves.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, pages 59-60.

But there are also plenty of other emotions, besides fear, to exploit:

- **Arouse Resentments.**

Adolf Hitler found a great way to get the German people on his side: *Claim that Germany had been attacked by the Jews, and that the Jews had caused World War One, and that the Jews were exploiting the German economy after the war, which was supposedly why all of the German people were poor and unemployed*, which aroused feelings of paranoia, resentment, and anger. And then it didn't matter whether it was the British and French, or the Jews or Communists, or Czechoslovakia or Poland, they had all supposedly attacked Germany or German people in one way or another, at some time or other, so it was supposedly okay for Hitler to strike back in revenge, which he did with a vengeance. That made Hitler look like a great leader, someone who was very strong on national defense while he invaded foreign countries.

Fat old Nazi Reichmarshall Hermann Goering said,

"Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

Oddly enough, that is the same technique that George W. Bush and Carl Rove have been using on the American people to promote the war in Iraq. Did Rove study the Nazi propaganda techniques?

Alcoholics Anonymous often arouses feelings of self-pity and resentment by complaining about how unfairly alcoholics have been treated for so long:

Psychiatrist Leo Hennigan, a former alcoholic and author of the book *A Conspiracy of Silence: Alcoholism*, says that the battles he fought in the South Pacific during World War II were nothing compared to the personal war that he fought with alcohol for 15 years. Hennigan blames this long siege on the medical community's disinterest. It wasn't until 1956 that the American Medical Association labeled the condition a disease rather than immoral behavior, and even now, after four years of training at most medical schools, doctors receive only two hours of instruction about alcoholism. He also blames societal attitudes that reflect people's misunderstanding about the disease. Most don't realize that the nature of alcoholism causes the alcoholic to drink because he must, not because he

wants to. Society is also largely unaware of alcoholism's genetic predisposition. In Hennigan's family, for example, three maternal uncles died before 50 of the affliction.

When Hennigan takes issue with Alcoholics Anonymous, it has nothing to do with its tremendous 75% rate of rehabilitation. Instead, he argues that AA relies too much on the "anonymous" part of its title. When the organization began in the 1930s, the group was small and needed the shield of anonymity, but not so today. "If AA's anonymity is scrapped, the group's ranks will swell by many millions and greatly assuage the effects of alcoholism in America." The most therapeutic role that AA can deliver is to allow struggling members to be encouraged by others who have "been there, done that." In fact, it was the testimony of a recovered alcoholic that influenced the AA founders to begin the organization.

When alcoholics are no longer anonymous, Hennigan contends, the organization will finally fulfill the 12th step of the program which says: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics."

"Alcoholism's nemesis", by Robert Selle. **World & I** magazine, Jun 2000 (Vol 15, No 6). Pages 62-65.

- Oh those poor, hard-done-by long-suffering alcoholics. The doctors are stupid and don't know anything and don't care, and nobody understands alcoholism, and society's attitudes are all wrong. The only answer is to cry in your beer and go join a cult religion.
 - And that declared 75% success rate of Alcoholics Anonymous is a lie, so the author was [assuming facts not in evidence](#). Bill Wilson was actually [lying with qualifiers](#) when made that claim — he only counted those people "[who came to A.A. and really tried](#)". (If they didn't quit drinking, then, in Bill Wilson's opinion, they didn't "really try".) Wilson wrote that lie in [the forward to the second edition of the Big Book](#), and the A.A. true believers have been repeating it ever since, but it's still a lie. The truth is that even the two founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, [Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith](#), [calculated that their success rate was a mere five percent](#) — which is just the same as the success rate of people who do it alone, without Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - In this sentence, the author used the tricks of [Assume Facts Not In Evidence](#) and [Assume The Major Premise](#):
"Most don't realize that the nature of alcoholism causes the alcoholic to drink because he must, not because he wants to."
No matter how many people "realize it" or don't realize it, the assumed "fact" is flat-out wrong, period. Alcoholics drink because they want to. Alcoholics have a choice. If alcoholics didn't have any control over their drinking, then they couldn't quit drinking. But they do quit, by the millions, and they do it without any cult "support group".
 - [Oh, by the way, the **World & I** magazine is [a front for the Moonies](#). It is part of Rev. Sun Myung Moon's empire. That's why they publish goofy articles like that.]
- **Arouse 'Patriotism'**.
In the nineteen-sixties through the 'eighties, there was a Moral Re-Armament song-and-dance show called "[Up With People](#)", which featured squeaky-clean, well-shorn beautiful young people singing and dancing and waving the American flag in patriotic skits. Although the show never explicitly said that we should go over to the other side of the world and drop bombs on skinny, starving rice farmers in Viet Nam and kill about two million innocent civilians, that was the effective message, and that's what happened. All of that, just from appealing to "love of country", and "love of people" and "the American Way".
 - **Arouse 'Love' and exploit peoples' loneliness.**
 - The Moonies (members of Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church) use "love bombing" to exploit the loneliness and horniness of new prospects:

Basically I felt a great love and warmth from all sides and I couldn't understand why they were so loving and warm. Why were they so serving? At times I found it a bit oppressive, it was too much for me at some times. I couldn't understand why they were doing it because I'd never met Christians like that before. They were talking about changing the world. Other Christians always talk about the Bible and believing in Jesus Christ and believing faith would do it — and I believed that that wasn't going to do it at all.

The Making Of A Moonie: Brainwashing Or Choice?, Eileen Barker, page 185.

"Again, there is a strict segregation between the sisters' and brothers' sleeping and bathroom arrangements, but physical contact in the form of (albeit strictly platonic) hugging and hand-squeezing occurs frequently between the sexes. The guests may have their backs and shoulders rubbed during lectures (presumably to keep them awake) or at night (presumably to help them sleep). I received an expert massage from one young woman while she told me about her experiences when her mother, one of the most active anti-Unification campaigners in America, had attempted to have her deprogrammed."

The Making Of A Moonie: Brainwashing Or Choice?, Eileen Barker, page 112.

A further 'spontaneous' response, towards the end of the weekend, was to break into song:

*We love you, Eileen (or Johnathan, or Dave, or Jane),
We love you more than anyone,
We don't want you to leave us —
And we don't mean maybe!*

The Making Of A Moonie: Brainwashing Or Choice?, Eileen Barker, page 113.

- Alcoholics Anonymous also exploits people's feelings of loneliness or isolation:
 - "We offer you [unconditional love](#) and acceptance."
 - "Let us love you until you can love yourself."
 - "When we reached A.A., and for the first time in our lives stood among people who seemed to understand, the sense of belonging was [tremendously exciting](#)."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 57.

○ **Appeal to Sentimentality and Nostalgia.**

Many successful politicians have a collection of mawkish sentimental stories to tell, real tear-jerkers, to appeal to the voters' emotions. They brag about their retarded kid that they didn't let go of, or their sick kid, or the child that died, or their wife with cancer, or good old Mom, or their grandparents who were such wonderful "God-fearing" people before they died, or the father who mined coal until he died putting his children through college.

There are also the glowing stories of the "good old days", and how wonderful life was in a small town way back when. Andy Griffith built a whole sentimental world, *Mayberry*, on such fond remembrances, a small town where life was simple and everybody knew everybody else and the biggest crimes were parking tickets, and the bumbling Deputy Sheriff Barney Fife (Don Knotts) was not allowed to carry a loaded gun. Politicians love to invoke such images as "the Real America", and "the forgotten America".

Of course those nostalgic stories don't really have anything to do with what this politician might do if he gets his hands on some power and taxpayers' money, or whether he will devote his career to collecting bribes, but his stories sure sound sentimental.

Alcoholics Anonymous also uses sentimentality and stories of the "good old days" to talk about how wonderful A.A. was way back when... In fact, there is a whole ["Back To The Basics" fundamentalist school of A.A.](#) that insists that A.A. worked great in the early days, and that A.A. is having difficulties

now only because "the message" has become "watered down". But if we just get back to the basics and practice that old-timey religion properly, then it will work correctly and everything will be wonderful.

Alas, it isn't so. [A.A. was a failure in the beginning too, and Bill Wilson just lied about it and faked the numbers.](#)

- **Are You Afraid?**

This is a mind game that tricks people into doing whatever you wish by implying that they are afraid to do it, and that's the only reason why they won't do it. This trick arouses several emotions: macho pride, fear of cowardice, fear of being shamed or embarrassed, and it urges people to do something just to prove that they aren't afraid.

Steve Hassan, in his book, *"Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves"*, described how, as a 19-year-old student at Queens College in New York City, he was approached by three attractive women who said they were also students, and invited him to dinner. He had just broken up with his girlfriend, so he was lonely, and didn't mind having some female companionship. He wound up accompanying his new friends to a few weekend workshops — all in the spirit of being "open minded."

"It dawned on me when I was driving with them to an estate in upstate New York owned by the Unification Church. I'd ask them, 'Why are we going there?' They would turn it around on me and say, 'Why, are you afraid?'" Hassan recounted. And [that deception was the beginning of several years](#) of "service" to the cult.

- **Induce and Exploit Apophenia**

Apophenia is also known as "seeing through tinted lenses".

People's brains have an unfortunate tendency to see what they expect to see, and only notice what they want to see. Once somebody buys into a peculiar model of reality, a perceptual filter kicks in where they notice more and more "facts" that appear to reinforce their chosen beliefs, and they ignore any conflicting information that comes along, so they become more and more convinced of the correctness of their beliefs: "It's all so obvious to anyone who learns the real truth!"

"All of us show bias when it comes to what information we take in. We typically focus on anything that agrees with the outcome we want."

"We need to acknowledge our tendency to incorrectly process challenging news and actively push ourselves to hear the bad as well as the good."

"Why We Make Bad Decisions", New York Times, 19 October 2013

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/opinion/sunday/why-we-make-bad-decisions.html%29>

1. Fundamentalist Christians see Satan as the cause of all of our problems, and every bad event on the evening news is seen as further evidence of the truth of that belief.
2. "End-timers" see that the end of the world is coming very soon now. They see all of the end-of-the-world prophesies in the Bible as already coming true, and the end is near.
3. Communists see those rich capitalists waging class warfare as the cause of all of our problems, and the news 'proves' their viewpoint right.
4. Other people see it all as conspiracies of the Trilateral Commission and the Illuminati and the New World Order...
5. The X-Files crowd sees everything in terms of Roswell crashes and government cover-ups and alien abductions and secret organizations and interplanetary plots...

6. Neo-Nazis see everything as the Jewish Conspiracy to take over the world...
7. Other rather depressed people see society as degenerating and becoming increasingly immoral, and it's all going to fall apart soon. The evening news tells them that crime is increasing, and everything is just getting worse and worse.

This is nothing new. Thousands of years ago, an unhappy Assyrian enscribed:

The Earth is degenerating today. Bribery and corruption abound. Children no longer obey their parents, every man wants to write a book, and it is evident that the end of the world is fast approaching.

== Assyrian tablet, c. 2800 BC

A skillful propagandist can use this human logical failing to his advantage. Apophenia helps to create really blinded, convinced, true believers. Radical politicians, extremist preachers, and cult leaders all encourage and exploit *apophenia* in their followers. Start off by teaching the followers and believers merely biased and questionable "facts", and then use those non-facts as the basis for believing more unrealistic ideas, which form the basis for more radical views, which lead to unquestioning belief in even more radical ideas.

- Many years ago, I went to a Pentecostal church service where the preacher read a newspaper article about the Satanic funeral of a Satan-worshipper. The Satanic preacher consigned the dead man's soul to Hell and the care of Satan. Rather than dismissing this story as an example of the stupidity and foolishness of some people, the preacher declared that this was proof that they were locked in mortal combat with Satan and that they must become even more devoted, unshakeable, true believer Pentecostals.
- I was recently watching an episode of the TV program *Uncovered: Alien Files*, where, in just a few minutes, I got statements that assumed the truth of the Bermuda Triangle, Flight 19, Atlantis, alien spacecraft, the Roswell flying saucer crash, and the government coverup. That show is apophenia to the max.

(Flight 19 was an incident where a squadron of fighter aircraft took off from a base in Florida and flew out over the Atlantic ocean and became disoriented and ran out of fuel and crashed into the sea and were lost. Then a flying boat that went to rescue them also crashed into the ocean and was lost. No traces of the lost aircraft or the flight crews were ever found. The UFO true believers insist that aliens kidnapped them. You can get more details from the Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flight_19)
- Extremist right-wing politicians declare that the sad state of affairs in America is caused by "Liberals" and welfare queens sucking the money out of America. They never mention oil companies getting billions of dollars in tax breaks and ultra-cheap leases of government-owned offshore oil fields. And those politicians argue that workers demanding decent wages is driving American companies overseas where cheap Chinese labor will work for less. (There is some truth to that, but making American workers live in poverty is not the answer. If all of the workers are broke, who will buy the products in the stores and make the economy go?) And of course "Big Government" is just messing everything up. (But don't expect those angry right-wingers to give up their lucrative farm subsidies or their fat defense contracts from Washington.)
- Extremist left-wing politicians see every billionaire in America (except George Soros and Warren Buffet) as monstrously selfish and evil criminals who are practically the spawn of Satan — heartless creeps who deliberately steal food out of the mouths of babies, and take away their medical care, and destroy America by outsourcing American jobs and giving them to cheap Chinese wage-slaves. (There is a shred of truth in this, but only a tiny shred. Sufferers from apophenia way over-blow it. There are actually good rich people who really want to do the right thing.)

Also see the Wikipedia page on apophenia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apophenia>.

- ***Ad Hominem*, Launch Personal Attacks On Opponents**

When you can't refute factual arguments, kill the messenger. Have fun with character assassination. Attack the arguer and not the argument. *Ad Hominem* includes slurs, slander, libel, innuendo, baseless accusations, irrelevant criticism, groundless denunciations, and [name-calling](#).

For example,

- "Maybe that book you quoted makes a good case, but I heard that the author is a drunk."
- "The author is obviously biased. He is just a pill-pusher."
- "I can't believe what you say because you're just an imperfect human being."
- "You don't get it."
- "You're just arguing to prove to your colleagues that you can change my mind."
- "That came from a guy who has a bathtub in his basement."
- "He still lives in his mother's house."
- "You should learn to be more civil in your criticisms."
- "You are just prejudiced. Who did you vote for in the last election?"
- "You are just partisan."
- "You are on a crusade against [whatever], aren't you?"
- "You are an outsider."
- "You are immoral, unspiritual, and against God."
- "You are just trying to make us look bad."
- "You are just an immature complainer."
- "You are just feeling sorry for yourself."
- "You are just up tight. Don't be so up tight."
- "Don't take yourself so seriously."
- "You are ugly, and your wife is even uglier."
- "You are stupid."
- "You are crazy."
- "You don't know what you are talking about."
- "You have funny hair."
- "You have bad taste in music."
- "You have a bad attitude."
- "You are against religion."
- "You are just in a bad mood."
- "You are just on the rag."
- "You are carrying on like an old woman."
- "You should be on the '10 Worst-Dressed People' list."
- "It seems very unlikely that you wished that the Olympus E-3 camera was a better camera. You are only too happy to criticize the E-3." And [dismiss criticism as invalid and "nit-picking"](#): "Isn't all that excessive comparison and pixel-peeping going much too far for this forum?"
- And, when you refuse to believe the lies of a thieving con artist, he says, "You have some trust issues that you need to work on."
- When a black person or a long-haired old hippie argues that there is something wrong with a society that spends more money on jails and prisons than on schools, the neo-conservatives answer, "Oh, you're just worried about getting sent to prison yourself."

When people objected to major credit card companies paternalistically declaring that you could not pay for certain purchases with their credit cards, like medical marijuana, gambling chips, online pornography, or donations to Wikileaks, a defender of the credit card companies declared:

Paul, you sound like one of those who believe you have the right to do what you want when you want and no matter who it hurts as long as it feels good to you. You probably voted for Obama as well wanting to redistribute the wealth so you can buy more porn, cigs and alcohol then cry foul and leave the card company and the paying world with your problem and be proud of yourself. What a jerk!!

== Petem

<http://mtf.news.yahoo.com/mailto/?prop=finance&locale=us&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffinance.yahoo.com%2Fbanking-budgeting%2Farticle%2F112832%2Fcredit-card-wont-let-you-buy-smartmoney&title=credit-card-wont-let-you-buy-smartmoney%3A%20Personal%20Finance%20News%20from%20Yahoo%21%20Finance>

A blogger described the behavior of Pentecostal recruiters who use the *ad hominem* technique on people who disagree with them:

...when a Pentecostal cannot get you to agree with his memorized slogans or his procedure to manipulate you into doing and thinking in his way, he will dispense with you as a corrupt, or even as an evil person. Furthermore, if his mind is working even at a deficient level of efficiency, and part of his mind can see that you have a valid point, he will immediately recognize your "logic" as a threat and he is likely to attack you personally, and accuse you of ulterior motives for holding such "logic." However, he cannot see that his response is not a rational response to a respectable argument, but a change in the context — he changes the subject from the topic at hand to you personally, and proceeds with this attack.

This, I assert, is the basis of FRAUD.

It is based upon a faulty system whereby the person is not bound by the ground rules of a logical system. They are not engaging in a debate or discussion with you; they are trying to manipulate you. They might try to deceive you into thinking that they are open to discussion or a respectable debate, but they are not; they are being deceitful, crafty, irrational, and devious. Again, go back and read what I described above. If they talk to you and then proceed to attack you personally instead of focusing upon the subject at hand, they are playing a manipulation game and not entering into a serious discussion. When they accuse you of bitterness without listening to your arguments, they are hustling you; the same goes for any other number of epithets they use to dismiss you and attack you personally, like backslider, reprobate, rebellious, etc.

<http://ex-pentecostal.blogspot.com/>

When Jesse Prince, a former leader of Scientology in Denmark, criticized the dishonest financial practices that he had seen in Scientology, a spokesman for Scientology answered,

To make allegations about the church's finances now, Mr. Prince, who has not been a position of responsibility in the church for nearly 15 years, and who hasn't even worked for the church for more than 7 years, is, uh, very specious. He's not in any position to know.

ARON MASON, in an interview, reprinted on the Rick Ross website

<http://www.rickross.com/reference/scientology/personal1.htm> [Dead Link]

Note that Mason did not actually deny or even answer Prince's statements about Scientology's history of financial dishonesty — Mason just implied that Prince didn't know what he was talking about because Prince couldn't know what the *current* facts were. That's a type of *Ad Hominem* attack.

(It's also bad logic: "If you can't prove that I stole money this week, then what I might have stolen last year doesn't count." It's also the propaganda trick of [Creating A Diversion](#) — divert attention to a different time.)

Sometimes *ad hominem* attacks can be quite subtle. When the Alaska oil pipeline was pierced by a bullet, 275,000 gallons of oil spilled out because the operators of the pipeline took several days to stop the leak. As you can imagine, some Alaskan citizens complained. Aleyesca, the pipeline operator, claimed that it had handled the accident in a competent manner, and that "The criticism came from a small group of critics who

always criticize everything that we do."²²

That is a kind of *ad hominem* attack on critics.

The oil company did not actually respond to the charges and accusations of incompetence. They did not explain why it took them several days to plug a single bullet hole. They merely attacked their critics, trying to assert that the criticism was invalid because it came from a small group of vocal critics.

But the truth is: It does not matter whether the criticism comes from a small group of diligent watch-dog citizens or a large environmental protection agency — valid criticism is valid criticism, and incompetence is incompetence.

You can use the *Ad Hominem* technique to defend Alcoholics Anonymous like this:

If a critic says something like,

"We have a lot of good, valid, scientific and medical studies that show that the Twelve Steps do not cause people to quit drinking or stay sober,"

then you should respond with:

- o "Oh yeh? Well I hear that you are just an atheist and a liar, and crazy."
- o "You are just in it for the money."
- o "You are insane."
- o "You are in denial."
- o "You aren't an alcoholic, so you can't possibly know what you are talking about."
- o "And if you are an alcoholic, then you are just a dry drunk."
- o "You haven't been a member long enough to know anything."
- o "You just don't want to get sober."
- o "You are just unspiritual and don't want to *Work The Steps* yourself."
- o "You are against spiritual principles."
- o "You are against God."
- o "You hate God."
- o "You criticizing A.A. because you just want to drink."
- o "That's just your selfishness talking."
- o "You don't know what you are talking about because you don't *Work The Steps*."
- o "You have a grudge against A.A., that's all..."
- o "Right now your mind is insane, and you can't tell the truth from the falsehood."
- o "You are just looking for an excuse to drink."
- o "You are angry."
- o "You have a 'resentment'."
- o "You don't understand A.A.."
- o "You don't understand A.A. spirituality because you are an atheist."
- o "You don't understand A.A. spirituality because you are a Christian."
- o "You don't understand A.A. spirituality because you aren't a member of A.A.."
- o "You are too dishonest to understand A.A. spirituality."
- o "You just don't get it."
- o "You think you know everything."
- o "We don't have to listen to you because you don't have any credentials — you aren't a doctor or a professor. You don't know what you are talking about."
- o "We don't have to listen to you — you are just a doctor. A.A. knows much more than all of the doctors and priests and ministers and psychiatrists that we went to for so many years." (See the *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, [page 473](#).)
- o "You just want to sell pills."
- o "You think you are smarter than other alcoholics."
- o "You are diseased and *in denial* if you criticize Alcoholics Anonymous."
- o "You just don't want to quit drinking."
- o "Screw you! What do you know about sobriety?"
- o "You aren't qualified to have an opinion of A.A. yet, because you don't have enough years of sobriety." (And if you do have enough years, then "You are just a *Bleeding Deacon*.")

- "your obviously not equipped to give any advice." (*sic., sp.*)
- "Those critics are often pushing inaccurate information or unintentionally pushing misinformation."
- "You are angry, so we don't have to listen to you."
- "Somebody injured you; that's why you spend so much time criticizing Alcoholics Anonymous."
- "Your posts and your website lead me to wonder why you spend so much energy on this. Don't you have anything better to do than run down a group that has helped many, many people?." (*Hint: That line was not about me; it was aimed at Rebecca Fransway in the newsgroup alt.recovery.from-12-steps, Feb. 8, 2001.*)
- "You are just obsessed with proving Alcoholics Anonymous wrong."
- "You are a chronic slipper who could not grasp AA at all."
- "You will relapse soon."
- "You will fall off of the wagon soon."
- "Nobody can have as many resentments as you have and not drink again."
- "Are you still drunk? Anybody with such a chip on their shoulder will go back out again."
- "You are one of the people who couldn't work the program."
- "You are not really committed to sobriety."
- "Your arguments are more and more like rants. Increasingly technical ones."
- "You just like to hear yourself talk."
- "You don't care how many alcoholics you kill by saying that A.A. doesn't work."
- "You are doing a great disservice to those seeking sobriety."
- "You are doing great harm to alcoholics."
- "You are causing alcoholics to relapse."
- "You are hurting alcoholics by driving them away from Alcoholics Anonymous."
- "Have you saved any lives lately, or do you just sit here and bitch about AA?"
- "That orange guy is getting really REALLY boring."
- "Your anger towards A.A. can't be doing you any good."
- "You spent a lot of time trying to figure out why AA didn't work for you. Which is really just a way of justifying your drinking."
- "You've only paused your drinking, and never genuinely stopped."
- "You must be an agnostic or an atheist if you object to the wonderful spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous."
- "And I'll bet that you molest little girls when the moon gets full, too."
- "Somebody must have hurt you. That's why you criticize A.A."

Here is another example of an *ad hominem*. When somebody using the name "King EZ" posted criticism of A.A. to a blog, an A.A. defender counter-attacked with:

King ez can't spell worth a damn, and places punctuation at random between words so his writing will look like — books he sees; at barnes&noble. Though this % makes his posts hard to read, make no (mistake), he is a genius, both his Son and {Mother} think — so.

<http://kingez.com/blog/2008/11/11/aa-become-the-addiction/>

That attack uses both *ad hominem* and sarcasm. But there was not a word of defense of A.A., or any facts relating to the subject of "addiction to A.A.". Just complaints about imaginary errors. And the funny thing is, I couldn't find any incorrect punctuation, and only a few misspellings, in the original post. But who needs facts when you are defending a cult?

And a cute variation on that theme is:

"Oh you poor thing. I'm so sorry to hear that the 12-Steppers hurt you so bad. You are obviously in need of some counselling. Just call 1-234-567-8901 and we'll fix you right up."

In other words,

"Yep, you're insane, so us counselors who push 12-Step meetings on every patient we get can happily disregard everything that you have said about the inefficacy of 12-Step 'treatment'."

- **Engage in Name Calling**

Name calling is a kind of *ad hominem* attack, but it has a special power and flavor all its own.

"If you can't answer a man's argument, all is not lost; you can still call him vile names."
— Elbert Hubbard

This technique is simple and obvious: you just call your opponents names, preferably really derogatory and slanderous names, like this:

- *"You are an atheist, a liar, a dummy, a drunkard, etc..."*
- *"You are a sexist, a racist, a fascist... not politically correct..."*
- *"You are an elitist, effete, intellectual..."*
- *"You are a Communist, or a socialist, or a Jew, or a Nazi..."*
- *"You are a terrorist..."*
- If someone wants to leave a few old trees standing in the forest, call him a "tree-hugger".
- If someone talks about the inequality of the justice system, where poor blacks get the death sentences, but rich people who can afford a dream team of expensive lawyers get off, call him "a bleeding-heart Liberal."
- When France and Germany declare that they do not wish to participate in unprovoked "pre-emptive warfare", dismiss them as "the old Europe".
- [A blogger who insists](#) that people are not going to wastefully use up the world's remaining oil supply declared on 10 October 2005, when the price of oil declined temporarily:
"I don't know how low it [the price of oil] will go, but I do know that the frikkin' lunatics over at [clusterfucknation](#) are foamin' at the mouth about this. 'Its just temporary. We're still all gonna die.' Kuntsler says it is a 'Make-believe nation'. They just can't take it that the apocalypse is not nigh."
- If someone criticizes Alcoholics Anonymous, answer:
"People who attack A.A. are just stupid A.A.-bashers. You don't have to pay any attention to what A.A.-bashers say because they are just stupid A.A.-bashers."
"You're just a dry drunk with a resentment..."

And when sober old-timers complain about A.A. misbehavior, say *"You're just a bleeding deacon..."*

Notice that name-calling allows you to actually define your opponent, based on just a few facts, or even on no facts whatsoever.

Also notice the implication that it is okay to kill people if you call them the right name, like "Communist", or "terrorist".

- **Apply Labels**

Apply labels to things or people — especially derogatory labels. This is very similar to *name-calling*.

- If someone talks about universal health care, scream "That's Socialism!"
- If someone talks about peace and freedom and justice, complain, "That's a Liberal agenda."

- **Delegitimize One's Opponent**

Delegitimize one's opponent so as to avoid addressing the substance of his argument. This is another kind of *ad hominem* attack. The goal is to make it impossible for opponents to be heard respectfully in the debate.

- *"Those protesters are just a bunch of unruly kids."*
- *"Those protesters are just a bunch of unemployed people."*
- *"Those protesters are just a bunch of old people."*
- *"Those protesters are just a vocal minority."*
- *"They are just on a crusade against [whatever]."*
- *"They are all just Socialists."*
- *"They are all just Communists."*
- *"Those people are just religious fanatics."*
- *"They are all cult members."*
- *"They are skinheads."*
- *"They are Tea Party members."*

Sen. Joe McCarthy (R-WI, 1947-1957) accused Gen. George C. Marshall and Secretary of State Dean Acheson of being part of "a [Communist] conspiracy so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so bleak that, when it is finally exposed, its principles shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all liberal men." If a politician can convince the audience that his opponent is a sleazy Commie lying traitor, then it won't matter what the other guy says after that...

When ABC News wrote [an article about the Democrat's targets for investigation](#) (Nov. 8, 2006), one Republican apologist responded:

"It causes me concern that Nancy Pelosi has stated that Halliburton, CIA, and tobacco companies are early targets for them. They need to get on with real business. Voters wanted change. Not adults acting like children."

So, Republicans investigating President Clinton's sex life for two years was okay, but Democrats investigating major crimes like immense corruption and war profiteering, secret CIA kidnappings and "renditioning" to foreign torture prisons, and tobacco companies addicting our children to a killer drug is "adults acting like children."

When the Olympic torch was being carried through London (4 April 2008), protestors denounced China's occupation of Tibet and human rights abuses. Protestors repeatedly clashed with the Chinese security guards and British police. Then a Chinese official criticized the protestors:

A spokesman for the torch relay's passage around the world, Qu Yingpu, putting a brave face on the protests, said Chinese officials were grateful to the British police "for their efforts to keep order."

He added, "This is not the right time, the right platform, for any people to voice their political views". [New York Times, 6 April 2008](#)

As if we should suddenly stop caring about freedom and human rights abuses just because someone declares a sporting event?

And who says that sporting events cannot be the site of a protest about human rights violations?
(And what good did it do to let Adolf Hitler host the 1936 Berlin Olympics without protest?)

When a photography web site (DPreview.com) gave a well-deserved low rating to an Olympus E-510 digital SLR camera, one Olympus fan retaliated with, "DPreview can say what ever they want when classifying cameras. I believe they are just bowing to Canon's marketing strong arm."

- As if nobody could possibly criticize a defective, inferior, crippled Olympus camera unless he was paid to do it, and threatened with loss of advertising revenue.
- And notice that the speaker was also using [the propaganda technique of providing feelings or beliefs](#) instead of any actual evidence. The speaker said that he *believed* that the rating was unjust.
- Also notice the propaganda trick of "demonization of the enemy". Canon is allegedly a monster that causes people to tell lies, rather than just a company that makes better cameras.

When I complained about how inferior the Olympus E-510 was in so many ways, another Olympus fan-boy responded with the same "Delegitimize One's Opponent" propaganda trick, implying that I was stupid for expecting it to be a good camera: "What did you expect in that price bracket? [\$1000] You don't get all of the features that you want for that price." As if I'm not supposed to expect to get a good camera for \$1000.

A.A. members use this *Delegitimize One's Opponent* technique too. When people start discussing the failings and shortcomings of Alcoholics Anonymous and its 12-Step program, some true believer A.A. member often sanctimoniously declares, "I am not much of an AA gossip. I'm here to save my ass."

That of course also has nice touches of "spiritual one-upmanship": "People who tell the truth about the bad aspects of A.A. are just 'gossips', but I'm better than that."

• Deflect Criticism and Blame By Delegitimizing It

As in, "That's just campaign talk." (So ignore it.)

After the Wall Street melt-down, we heard.

- "I don't think that this is the time to be pointing fingers."
 - "We don't want to get into the blame game."
- which just means,
- "Let's not talk about who screwed up big time."
 - "Let's not prosecute the criminals."

You heard a lot of that kind of talk in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when nobody wanted to take the blame for the FEMA incompetence. You also hear it in relation to the quagmire in Iraq.

Recently, when someone [listed a dozen things that Apple iOS had copied from Android](#), someone else responded:

Oh for the love of God , can we please NOT turn this into another boring Android Vs iOS thread , it's getting so boring with the same people making the same comments over and over again.

Posted by DarkSeptember, June 18, 2012 1:46 PM (PDT)

Well, that's one way to stop criticism of Apple without actually answering the criticism.

[On May 18, 2007, former President Jimmy Carter criticized the Bush administration](#), saying that President George W. Bush's administration is "the worst in history" when it comes to international relations.

Carter, who won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, criticized Bush:

"We now have endorsed the concept of pre-emptive war where we go to war with another nation militarily, even though our own security is not directly threatened, if we want to change the regime there or if we fear that some time in the future our security might be endangered. But that's been a radical departure from all previous administration policies."

Carter's harshest assessment was of the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which helped religious charities receive \$2.15 billion in federal grants in fiscal year 2005 alone:

"The policy from the White House has been to allocate funds to religious institutions, even those that channel those funds exclusively to their own particular group of believers in a particular religion. Those things in my opinion are quite disturbing. As a traditional Baptist, I've always believed in separation of church and state and honored that premise when I was president, and so have all other presidents, I might say, except this one."

Republican National Committee spokeswoman Amber Wilkerson questioned why Carter, who teaches Sunday School in his hometown of Plains, Georgia, would attack Bush:

"Apparently, Sunday mornings in Plains for former President Carter includes hurling reckless accusations at your fellow man. It's hard to take a lecture on foreign policy seriously from President Carter considering he's the same person who challenged Ronald Reagan's strategy for the Cold War."

Notice that she did not actually answer any of President Carter's criticisms of Bush's policies and actions. She just attacked the source of the criticism, and tried to imply that Carter had no legitimate grounds for criticizing Bush, and therefore the criticism was invalid.

And of course Ms. Wilkerson also used [the *ad hominem* technique](#), personally attacking President Carter, as well as completely [reversing reality](#). She accused Carter of "hurling reckless accusations at your fellow man" when she was actually the one who was doing that. Carter did not "hurl reckless accusations"; Carter spoke about the American tradition of never attacking first and never deliberately starting wars and never being the aggressor, and the American tradition of separation of church and state. And Carter spoke about how the current Bush administration had violated those policies. But she didn't want to talk about that, so she attacked President Carter personally, and said that it's hard to take him seriously.

- **Delegitimize Criticism and Rebuttal in Advance**

Devalue, delegitimize, and reject responses in advance of them happening.

For instance:

1. "Oh, don't mention Prof. Falken's study. Everybody knows he's nuts." (Slander.)
2. "I don't want to start an argument, but..." (So don't contradict the nonsense that I'm saying.)

Bill Wilson used this technique too:

Some will become quite annoyed if there is talk about immorality, let alone sin. But all who are in the least reasonable will agree upon one point: that there is plenty wrong with us alcoholics...

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William Wilson, pages 48, 49.

So if you don't want to go along with [Bill Wilson's hatred](#) of those disgusting sinful alcoholics, then you are being "unreasonable".

[Bill Wilson did it again here](#), in a different way, as he taught people how to conduct séances and channel God and get messages and work orders and power from God:

... Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. ... We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. **We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas.** Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration.

The Big Book, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, pages 86 to 87.

Bill Wilson declared that if somebody started acting crazy from doing Step 11 because he was convinced that God was telling him to do insane things, that wasn't the fault of Bill's occult practices, or of "God" — that was just a beginner who had not learned how to be a good psychic yet. So don't criticize Bill's superstitious practices; there is nothing wrong with them. It's just the beginners' fault.

- **Spurious Delegitimization of Evidence or Criticism**

Attempt to delegitimize annoying and inconvenient little facts and evidence by a variety of techniques like bad logic, slurs, and innuendo. Similarly, dismiss criticism as invalid without actually answering it.

For instance:

1. "That report has been discredited." ([Passive voice](#). Discredited by whom? When? Where?)
2. "That report is old." ([Dismiss by Antiquity](#), reject by age.)
3. "That information is considered invalid." ([Passive voice](#), nobody there. Considered invalid by whom?)
4. "That's the tenth time you've mentioned that. Will you get off it?" ([Repetition doesn't make information become untrue.](#))
5. "Everybody considers that book worthless." ([Appeal to "everybody knows".](#))
6. "You are criticising the Church's coverups of child-molesting priests because you are bigoted and prejudiced and just against the Church." ([Use of *ad hominem*.](#))
7. "You are criticizing Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinian people because you are anti-Semitic and racist." ([Use of *ad hominem*.](#))
8. "Your criticism is hurting the feelings of a billion believers." ([Use of *ad hominem*.](#))
9. "You criticise Catholics but you wouldn't do the same to religion X..." ([Use of *ad hominem*.](#))
10. "You criticise Islam but you wouldn't do the same to Christians or Jews..." ([Use of *ad hominem*.](#))
11. "I'm offended by your accusations." ([Use of the *Drama Queen Ploy*.](#))
12. "Quit trying to stir up trouble." ([Use of *Spurious Delegitimization of Opponent*.](#))

- **Spurious Rejection of a Question**

Use invalid or spurious reasons for rejecting a question that you don't wish to answer.

For example:

- "That question was a trap!"
- "That question is unfair!"
- "That's none of your business!"

- "You can't ask about the A.A. success rate because A.A. is not a treatment program and A.A. doesn't keep records."

- **Demonize the Enemy**

Make one's enemy into the Devil incarnate. Tell endless stories how evil and monstrous the enemy is.

For example, as the Bush administration lied us into the War in Iraq, we were told that Saddam Hussein was "the Hitler of the Middle East", and that he used chemical weapons on his enemies (which the USA actually gave him to use on the Iranians), and that his troops were so heartless and brutal that they threw Kuwaiti babies out of incubators and onto the floor as they stole the incubators. The latter story was actually a lie told by the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to incite Americans to go to war on behalf of Kuwait.

In A.A. circles, those people who criticize Alcoholics Anonymous are demonized with accusations that they don't care [how many alcoholics they kill](#) (by telling the truth and discouraging people from believing in A.A.).

- **Stroking Ploys**

This is just the opposite of name-calling — call somebody good things, like: "a patriot, a real American, a great Christian, a real credit to his race, an example to us all, an inspiration."

A late-night TV infomercial that advertizes an exercise machine introduces the machine's designer as: "[Here is Joe Blow, one of the hottest men in Hollywood because he gives people what they want — crisp, lean, healthy bodies.](#)"

A radio advertisement for vitamins says, "Dr. Sawbones, a recognized authority on blah-blah..." Recognized by whom? We got no actual evidence that Dr. Sawbones knows anything.

The true-believer Buchmanite Theophil Spoerri gave us examples of both denigration and stroking ploys in his biased biography of Frank Buchman: Dr. John Hibben, President of Princeton University, was called "[a well-meaning but weak man](#)", and Spoerri said, "[fearing for the good name of the university, \[he\] allowed himself to be stampeded](#)", when President Hibben banished Frank Buchman and his cult from Princeton. On the other hand, Spoerri called the lady Anneliese von Cramon-Prittowitz, who converted to Buchmanism, "[a distinguished and intelligent woman.](#)" (*Dynamic Out Of Silence: Frank Buchman's Relevance Today*, Theophil Spoerri, pages 77 and 114, respectively.)

Bill Wilson gave us an example of this technique in [his pro-smoking story](#) on page 135 of the *Big Book*. The chain-smoking A.A. member who threw a drunken screaming temper tantrum to avoid quitting smoking was called "[our friend](#)" and "[a most effective member of Alcoholics Anonymous](#)", while his clean and sober wife who was pleading with him to quit killing himself with cigarettes was called "[one of those persons](#)" — you know, one of those [intolerant](#) puritanical [killjoy nagging wives](#) who are always trying to keep us good old boys from having fun.

- **Offloading Blame**

The propagandist never accepts blame for his mistakes or crimes. Somebody or something else is always to blame. This is especially true of politicians and cult leaders who have [Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#).

"Now look at what you made me do."

"He started it."

"He did it first."

"It's all because of them."

The following tricks are various ways to offload blame.

1. **Blame A Scapegoat**

This is a well-known trick: find a scapegoat to blame for all of your group's problems.

Hitler was of course infamous for blaming the Jews for all of Germany's economic problems after World War One. He even claimed that [a Jewish conspiracy](#) had caused World War One. And Hitler insisted that the Germans would be very happy after the Jews were eliminated.

2. **Blame The Victim**

If a crime is committed against someone, blame the victim instead of the perpetrator. When something goes wrong, blame the victim rather than the cause of the problem.

Trial lawyers love to use this one: "That bastard deserved to get murdered. He had it coming. His killer did the world a favor."

Or, "She deserved to get raped. She was asking for it. Look at the sexy way she dressed. [Everybody knew](#) that she was a loose woman."

That is part of the classic "Nuts and Sluts" defense — claim that the woman who got raped is crazy and a whore (so presumably, it doesn't matter that she claims that she was raped).

"You were just gullible and asking for it..."

After somebody gets robbed, tell him, "You shouldn't tempt people."

Another example from politics: "John Kerry deserves to get attacked with lies and smears committed by the *'Swift Boat Veterans for Truth'*. He brought it on himself by daring to mention his good war record."

Sometimes this technique is used very subtly. Get a load of what a merchant says when his company goofs and ships the wrong part to a customer:

"RMA #: 106260 - Wrong Item Received"

Note — wrong item received by customer, not wrong part shipped by merchant. That stupid customer went and received the wrong part.

Bill Wilson and A.A. are masters of this stunt. Bill Wilson wrote these lies in the *Big Book*, and they are read out loud at the start of every A.A. meeting:

RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

...

At some of these [steps] we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But

we could not.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, William G. Wilson, Chapter 5, "How It Works", page 58.

If the hocus-pocus voodoo-medicine cult religion [program of Alcoholics Anonymous doesn't work](#), and doesn't really help you to quit drinking, then it's all your own fault because you are so bad, so dishonest and lazy, and selfish and manipulative, always seeking an easier, softer way, and you were born that way:

"The program doesn't fail people; people fail the program."

3. Blame Somebody Else (Anybody Else)

This is the more general version of *Blaming A Scapegoat*.

- You can blame other people for your problems — "They are all against me. They have been sabotaging me at every turn."
- You can blame subordinates for your poor job performance: "No one in the Intelligence Community urged me to step back from my tough talk about a nuclear Iran posing a danger of World War Three."

A popular variation on this technique is, "*Do Whatever You Wish To Do, And Blame Somebody Else For It*".

- "The reason why I must create and enforce such draconian rules and regulations is because some people cause problems."
- "We wouldn't need to bug your telephone and spy on you if it wasn't for the terrorists..."
- "Now look at what you made me do."

4. Blame A Non-Factor

Blame something that isn't really the cause of the problem. (It's a kind of diversion tactic, diverting attention from what is really wrong.)

Homer Simpson, refusing a beer: "Can I just have a glass of water?"

Moe the Bartender: "Water?! That stuff killed my Grandmother."

George W. Bush recently gave us a good example of this technique. While touring in Biloxi, Mississippi, in early May 2006, Bush declared that he would like Congress to "give me a capacity to raise CAFE standards." (CAFE is "corporate average fuel economy" — the miles-per-gallon standards for new cars.) Well gee, it seems like Bush would have raised the fuel efficiency standards long ago, if it weren't for that nasty Republican-controlled Congress tying his hands and keeping him from doing the right thing.

But [Bush always had the power to change the fuel standards](#). Ronald Reagan didn't need the approval of Congress to change the standards (downward). Certainly Congress was under the impression that the President could require cars to get better mileage in the 1990s, since it went out of its way, using annual spending legislation, to prevent President Clinton from doing so. But now that the public is noticing that Bush has done nothing to make the car manufacturers build in better fuel efficiency, Bush claims that he needs Congress to allow him to do his job.

Likewise, A.A. boosters try to explain away the immense A.A. failure rate by saying, "Well, you can't consider those people who drop out of A.A. without working the Twelve Steps to be failures of Alcoholics Anonymous. They don't count. You can't blame A.A. if they won't work the Steps. And you can't blame A.A. for those drunks who didn't *"work a strong program"*. They don't count."

Actually, they do count. No matter why people quit A.A. without quitting drinking, A.A. still failed to get those alcoholics sober. They are still a part of the A.A. failure rate. Either the A.A. program works to

make alcoholics quit drinking, or it doesn't.

Something that is so repulsive that it causes 95% of the newcomers drop out within a year cannot claim that it is a great success, or would be a great success, if only people would follow orders.

And what about all of the people who spent years in A.A., working the Steps and "working a strong program", and who regularly relapsed anyway? The speaker doesn't mention them. He tries to pretend that they don't exist — he tries to claim that all of the A.A. failures and dropouts are solely due to people not working the program correctly.

(And then they use a self-referential definition of "correctly". Someone who is "working the program correctly" is abstaining from drinking. So by definition, the program "always works if people work it correctly".)

- **Claim That There Is A Panacea**

Claim that there is, or that you have, a magical cure for all of your listeners' problems.

Adolf Hitler told the German people that he had a simple sure-fire cure for Germany's economic woes: National Socialism, which really meant fascism, which included getting rid of the Jews and Leftists, and having Germany run by "one strong leader", and getting revenge on Britain and France.... We all know how well that worked out.

Bill Wilson declared that the relabeled Oxford Group cult religion (which he called "the Alcoholics Anonymous program") was [the answer to all of an alcoholic's problems](#):

"Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems."

The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 3, *More About Alcoholism*, page 42.

- **Claim That There Is A Panmalefic**

A *panmalefic* is just the opposite of a panacea. A panmalefic is supposedly the one big bad cause of all of your problems.

I just made that word up. A panmalefic is the exact opposite of a panacea. Where a panacea is one simple cure for all of your problems, a panmalefic is the one simple cause of all of your problems.

The prefix "pan" means "over all" or "entirely covers" or "everywhere", as in pan-American, pandemic, and panacea.

The word "malefic" is in the dictionary, and means "causes evil, bad things, ills, harm, or diseases".

Put them together, and you have a word that means the cause of all of the world's problems.

Simple-minded people like simple answers, so they love to hear that everything can be explained in terms of panmalefics and panaceas.

Historically, plenty of rabble-rousers have used the panmalefic idea to blame one scapegoat or another for everything:

- "Jews are the cause of all of our problems and are a great threat to our children and our nation and we must find all of the hidden Jews and destroy them before they do great harm to us." [Paraphrasing the Nazis in 1932.]
- "Communists are the cause of all of our problems and are a great threat to our children and our nation and we must find all of the hidden communists and destroy them before they do great harm to

us." [Paraphrasing Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-MN) in 1952.]

- "Alcoholics are the cause of all of our problems and are a great threat to our children and our nation and we must find all of the hidden alcoholics and destroy them before they do great harm to us." [Paraphrasing *The Secret History of Alcoholism: The Story of Famous Alcoholics and Their Destructive Behavior*, by James Graham, and also [Doug Thorburn's books](#).]

- **Flattery**

Get someone to accept the bulls**t that you are shovelling by flattering and praising them. This is an unabashed appeal to egotism.

For example, a television commercial tells housewives that "You are so wonderful — you juggle six jobs at once, take care of three kids, and still manage to look good — so that's why you should buy our junk. A sophisticated person like yourself would settle for nothing less..."

Another commercial declares, "Your life has more than one dimension. That's why you wouldn't consider playing [golf] with anything but..."

And another commercial says, "There is no mass-produced human being. We know that you are unique, with special tastes." (That's why you should buy the same mass-produced junk that we sell to everybody else.)

The advertising on a box of clove cigarettes says, "Their brown wrapping is uniquely created to suit your distinct personality."

- My distinct personality? What is so distinct about being stupid enough to get addicted to nicotine and burn out your lungs?
- And that brown wrapping isn't unique. They crank out those clove cigarettes by the millions, and every last one of them has the same brown wrapping, no matter whether they are being made for me or for the teenage kids down the street.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this stunt too. If you believe A.A. propaganda, you will "*Come To Believe*" that [only unto you has the Lord given the gift](#) of being able to heal other alcoholics — you are that special in the eyes of the Lord — you have been chosen by God:

God in His wisdom has selected a group of men to be the purveyors of His goodness. In selecting them through whom to bring about this phenomenon He went not to the proud, the mighty, the famous or the brilliant. He went to the humble, to the sick, to the unfortunate — he went to the drunkard, the so-called weakling of the world. Well might He have said to us:

Into your weak and feeble hands I have entrusted a Power beyond estimate. To you has been given that which has been denied the most learned of your fellows. Not to scientists or statesmen, not to wives or mothers, not even to my priests and ministers have I given this gift of healing other alcoholics, which I entrust to you.

Judge John T., speaking at the 4th Anniversary of the Chicago Group October 5, 1943.

Well, God might have said that to them, but God didn't really say that to them, now did He? Nowhere in the Bible, The Talmud, the Koran, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Sutras, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Dead Sea Scrolls, or any other major religion's scriptures does it say that the alcoholics are God's Chosen People, entrusted with "a Power beyond estimate" — "the only cure" to alcoholism.

- **Proof by Anecdote**

Proof by Anecdote is a stunt where you make some grand generalization, and then you tell one or more stories that appear to support your generalization, and then you conclude that the point is proven. (You can ignore all of the other stories that disprove your point.)

For example, President Ronald Reagan gave a speech on TV where he told of Sandinista soldiers tying a priest to a tree and beating him. Reagan concluded that this story was proof enough of the evils of the Sandinistas to justify the USA waging an undeclared, illegal, war against Nicaragua for several years, the war that ended with the treasonous Iran-Contra *Arms-for-Hostages* and the Oliver-North-Contra *Cocaine-for-Guns* fiascoes.

(President Reagan didn't bother to give any TV speeches complaining about how many Nicaraguan civilians were killed by the Contras, or how many American inner-city black kids were killed by the Contras' cocaine. Just a few anecdotal stories of Sandinista soldiers' misbehavior was all of the evidence that Reagan needed or wanted...)

This *Proof-by-Anecdote* technique is heavily used in advertising:

- "Diets never worked for Susan, but then she discovered the ShriveL-Up Program® and lost 50 pounds."
- "My wife and I needed a new dishwasher. Thanks to you we received a \$1900 Viking dishwasher for free!"
- "I made \$8000 in my first week of trading."
- "He made more money on that trade than he made in a week on his job. And what computer program did he use to trade stocks? The XYZ program from the stock market genius Joe Blow."
- A radio commercial that advertises a service that will deal with the IRS for you says, "I owed the IRS \$125,000, and they settled for \$22,000." But of course there is no evidence that you will get that lucky.

The plural of "anecdote" is not "evidence".

Lots of organizations like to use poster children to "prove" their point. The homophobic fundamentalist Christians show off one guy who says that he got "converted" from homosexuality or bi-sexuality to straight heterosexuality, and then they claim that their poster-child example proves that all gays are merely "choosing a gay lifestyle", and that they can change if they want to.

Likewise, the entire back two thirds of the Alcoholics Anonymous *Big Book*, with all of its autobiographical stories, is just one long demonstration of the *Proof by Anecdote* propaganda technique. Bill Wilson just printed a collection of people's stories, all of which claimed that A.A. had helped them in some great way, and then Bill concluded that the stories proved all kinds of things like:

- that the A.A. program and the Twelve Steps really work for quitting drinking,
- that the A.A. program is the *only* thing that works.
- that prayer really works, and that God could, and would, if they asked Him to, answer their prayers, and remove all of their "defects of character", and make them quit drinking.
- that people must *completely* surrender and *completely* give themselves to the "simple" A.A. program,
- that if you pray and meditate enough, you can hear God or some other Higher Power talking to you in your head,
- that you can get wonderful results, and recover from alcoholism, by praying to just any old God or "Higher Power", and your "Higher Power" can be anything you wish it to be, including the A.A. group itself.
- that God is actually eager to start doing favors for you and granting all of your wishes, just as soon as you start doing Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps.

— None of which were actually proven, or even demonstrated by a fair sampling of cases. It is obvious that the stories are just another example of cherry-picking — Bill printed only those stories that said what he wanted people to believe, and rejected everything else. A.A. members who didn't get sober did not get to put

their stories in the *Big Book*. (And "cherry-picking" is actually just another name for *Observational Selection*.)

This is another example of *Proof by Anecdote*, used in a slightly different way:

Step Nine has reclaimed many broken friendships; it has brought peace and happiness to the lives of those who suffered because of our alcoholism. Its great rehabilitative power has also affected the lives of thousands of alcoholics through the spiritual awakening they have experienced. Because of this Step, these alcoholics have recovered their self-respect, they have taken on courage and confidence, and they have assumed responsibility. They sense God's presence, and with His presence comes the realization that their lives are again becoming manageable.

The Little Red Book, Hazelden, page 89.

Gee, that sounds pretty fantastic. I guess we should all start doing the Twelve Steps immediately, so that we can get the *Big Experience* too, right?

Well, it sounds great, but only until we remember that A.A. claims to be keeping millions of alcoholics sober. If only "thousands" out of millions get the wonderful "spiritual awakening" and "sense God's presence", then the odds of getting "*The Big Spiritual Experience*" are really only one in a thousand.

Now that doesn't sound so awe-inspiring, does it?

Note just how carefully that deceptive, double-talking Hazelden propaganda was constructed. If we read it critically, we will see that *maybe* a few thousand people — out of millions of claimed A.A. members — have benefited in some way from the Twelve Steps that Bill Wilson wrote. But, without hesitation or qualifications, Hazelden says that the guilt-inducing Twelve Steps will give people:

- self-respect
- courage
- confidence
- responsibility
- awareness of the presence of God
- and manageable lives

without offering us any actual evidence or proof of their unfounded grandiose claims that the 12-Step program has "great rehabilitative power."

Which brings up the next item: **Double-talk**.

- **Double-talk**

Confuse your listeners with contradictory, illogical, or incomprehensible jabber:

- The pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* wrote: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others."
- An Oxford Group leader bragged about the accomplishments of the Groups as,

"Men are becoming freed from acquisitive greed into stewardship of property; they are becoming freed from the stagnation of the instinct of curiosity into a new enlightened stewardship of the mind."

Oxford and the Groups, Rev. G. F. Allen, et al., page 40.

- So, apparently, the greedy men get to keep their property, but not their curiosity.
- Since when does curiosity cause stagnation of the mind? It is usually the lack of curiosity that signals a stagnant, dull mind. Curiosity is a common characteristic of most intelligent species,

from the cat to the human. — But it is not an "instinct" like sex; it is just a characteristic.

- And what is "*a new enlightened stewardship of the mind*"? In the Oxford Groups, it really meant discarding the rational, thinking, mind, and just "having faith" and obeying the orders of the leaders. (It's called fascism.) — So that phrase, "*a new enlightened stewardship of the mind*" was also really a euphemism for "abject, obedient, unthinking slavery". That's another propaganda trick.

- More double-talk: In a TV commercial, a merchant promises:

"We guarantee that we will either have it in stock, or order more."

But that is no big promise or guarantee. That's what all merchants do: Sell what they have in stock, and then order more.

- Speaking of merchants, the immortal all-time classic car salesman's double-talk is:

We lose money on every car that we sell, but we make up for it in volume.

- A radio commercial for a large commemorative silver coin says:

"It's historical worth far exceeds its massive size in pure silver worth."

Translation: It's over-priced. The cost of the coin far exceeds the value of the silver.

- The Alcoholics Anonymous so-called "First Tradition" declares that the A.A. group is more important than the lives of the individual people:

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

That double-talk is just like George Orwell's great line, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Also notice the standard cult statement that you cannot live without the cult.

- A.A. promoters tell us things like:

Contrary to the belief of many, it [Alcoholics Anonymous] is not a program of conversion to religion, although a religious conversion is probably unavoidable as one becomes positively spiritual.

Spirituality: The key to recovery from alcoholism, Warfield, Robert D. and Goldstein, Marc B., *Counseling & Values*, April 1996, Vol. 40, Issue 3, page 196.

The A.A. Twelve-Step program just sort of accidentally on purpose "unavoidably" converts people to belief in Bill Wilson's favorite cult religion.

- This is quintessential double-talk:

"AA is a spiritual rather than a religious program of living; and living this program, for many of us, is our religion."

Getting right with God (Recovery Life), Father Joseph C. Martin, *Alcoholism & Addiction Magazine*, April 1988 v8 n4 p35(1)

Huh? It's not a religion, but it is your religion?

(And notice that a Catholic priest is writing that. What happened to practicing the Christian religion of the Church in Rome? Strange, very strange...)

- Essentially, spirituality involves attitudes that are based on beliefs about our relationships with our self, with other human beings, with our world (including our physical and social

environments), with life (as to its meaning and purpose), and ultimately, with God, a Higher Power, or 'Universal Consciousness'.

(ibid.)

Apparently, spirituality helps you to cop an attitude.

- About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type [atheists or agnostics]. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true alcoholics. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life — or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up. Something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *We Agnostics*, page 44.

- Question: Why, if we are true alcoholics, do we suddenly have to find Bill Wilson's "spiritual basis of life"?

Answer: Because Bill Wilson believed that only Bill Wilson's cult religion could cure alcoholism. So there goes our freedom of religion; we shall have to give it up.

- 'But cheer up. "You need not be disconcerted." Our experience shows that converting to Wilsonism won't hurt you too much.'
 - 'Besides, we *only thought* that we were atheists or agnostics, but we were wrong. After Bill's brainwashers fixed our thinking for a while, we discovered that we really did believe in Bill Wilson and his wonderful spirituality after all.'
- Try to figure out the logic in this statement:

Introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous through court ordered intervention is common. The legal system, heavily burdened with drunk drivers, often refers offenders to AA in an attempt to help individuals who may have an alcohol problem. Studies of court ordered participation have indicated that AA is not particularly effective and sometimes markedly less effective than other treatments in dealing with this particular group ([Ditman et al. 1967](#), [Brandtsma et al. 1980](#)), but there is significant, active participation in AA membership among those referred by the criminal justice system.

Alcoholic Thinking: Language, Culture, and Belief in Alcoholics Anonymous, Danny M. Wilcox, page 32.

First the author said that A.A. does not help alcoholics — those studies found that A.A. was often *the least effective* treatment program for alcoholics, and A.A. made alcoholics binge drink more, and die more — and then the author said that many of the alcoholics who were coerced into A.A. by the criminal justice system became active members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Huh? So what's the point of that? The author already clearly declared that A.A. doesn't work and doesn't help alcoholics.

• Unprovable Statements

Just make up grandiose, completely unprovable statements that say whatever you want people to believe:

- "You don't have to worry about overpopulation. Overpopulation of the Earth is impossible, because each person is a ray of light from God, and God will only send out so many rays." (That came from some new-age nut or other.)
- "I lived on Betelgeuse in my last incarnation. I came here to help mankind through the current crisis." (Another phony guru.)
- "Body thetans are the spirits of people from another planet who were murdered 60 million years ago in a big purge of excess population. Today, they will cling to your body, and try to get into your body, and cause you all kinds of troubles." (*But, for only \$350,000, we can fix your Interplanetary Cooties problem for you.* — Scientology)
- "We were friends in a previous lifetime."

- "God appeared to me in a vision and told me that he had a special message that I was to carry to the world." (Many goofy cult religions)
- "The Purpose of Life is Self-Realization." (ISKCON, the "Hari Krishnas")
- "The purpose of life is to transform energy from one plane to another."
- "[God guided Bill Wilson](#) to write the Twelve Steps." (A.A., of course.)
- "Doing these Twelve Steps will please God."
- "Doing these Twelve Steps causes an increase in spirituality."
- "God wants you to do this stuff."
- "The Twelve Steps work in a magical mystical way [that cannot be scientifically tested](#) or logically explained."

- **Undisprovable Statements**

This is simply the converse of *unprovable statements*. This technique uses statements that cannot be proven false.

[Peter Howard, the fascist disciple](#) who took over the leadership of Moral Re-Armament after Frank Buchman died, gave us many examples of *undisprovable* statements in his little book of praise for the cult leader [Frank Buchman](#):

Frank Buchman liked to recall the story of the time he introduced Joe to a French Cardinal at tea. ...

It was the same Cardinal who said, "MRA is a crack of the whip for Christians who have forgotten their mission, and offers a positive alternative to sincere Marxists."

Frank Buchman's Secret, Peter Howard, pages 89-90.

Which French Cardinal? When, where? Did he really say that? We only have Frank Buchman's word for it, saying that some unnamed Cardinal praised his organization.

Senior military men in America have realized the necessity that a nation have an ideology to match the demands of the twentieth century. One of them is an Admiral. He came many times to meet Frank Buchman and to be trained in Moral Re-Armament. ...

Frank Buchman's Secret, Peter Howard, page 81.

Who? Which "senior military men"? Which Admiral? When? Where?

An American General told Frank Buchman two years ago, "Our country is like a dead knight in armor. We have the weapons, but need the spirit and will to prevail."

Frank Buchman's Secret, Peter Howard, pub. 1961, page 82.

Which general said that? "Two years ago" would have made the year 1959, at the height of the Cold War. The U.S.A. was definitely not like a "dead knight without a will" then. (More like a paranoid psychotic, busy building enough H-bombs to blow up the entire world 19 times over.)

A British Colonel once came to see him. ...

A few days later the Colonel came back. He was smiling. He said, "It's a miracle. ...

Frank Buchman's Secret, Peter Howard, pages 99-100.

Once again, which Colonel? When, where?

At a time when Africa is calling on the white man to leave, leaders of seventeen countries of Africa urged Frank Buchman to come, and bring with him the men and women of Moral Re-Armament.

An African leader summed up Buchman's work in these words, "Moral Re-Armament is doing for Africa what Abraham Lincoln did for America. It is binding up the nations' wounds and

setting the people free."

Frank Buchman's Secret, Peter Howard, page 68.

So, the [Hitler-loving](#) Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman was the "Abraham Lincoln of Africa", was he? Says who?

And once again, which leaders? And how did the author, Peter Howard, define "an African leader"? Those "leaders of 17 nations" who supposedly invited Frank Buchman to come to Africa could have been anything from popularly-elected Presidents to murdering territorial warlords to the chiefs of hungry tribes of cannibals. Just try to prove that 17 of them *didn't* invite the stout, well-fed Frank Buchman to dinner...

You know, Peter Howard's book reads a lot like Hollywood gossip sheets or supermarket tabloids, which are always loaded with unverifiable sources like:

- "Close friends say..."
- "Inside sources say..."
- "Knowledgeable persons said..."
- "An unnamed official said..."
- "It is rumored that..."
- "Some people believe that..."
- "Confidential informants say..."

And not to be left out, Bill Wilson used the same stunt in the *Big Book*:

Many doctors and psychiatrists agree with our conclusions. One of these men, staff member of a world-renowned hospital, recently made this statement to some of us: "What you say about the general hopelessness of the average alcoholic's plight is, in my opinion, correct."

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *More About Alcoholism*, page 43.

What unnamed doctors and psychiatrists agreed with Bill Wilson? How many doctors really agreed with Bill Wilson? It wasn't any sizeable percentage of the American Medical Association — what they said about the *Big Book* and Bill Wilson's religious cure for alcoholism was: "[*the book has no scientific merit or interest.*](#)"

• **The Language Trap**

Use a word in different ways, but logically treat it as the same concept:

"You say you're looking for truth. Well, we refer to our religion as 'The Truth'. Why do you think we do that?"

The Language Trap is not just a rhetorical device, but a major problem in communication. It is a "trap" because people on both sides of an argument can inadvertently stumble into it if they are not aware that the same word can be used with different senses and connotations.²

When a believer and a rational person talk about the truth, they are using the same word but they are talking about very different things. When a rational person says, "Two plus two equals four. That is the truth.", he means that we can clearly demonstrate the truth of that statement by adding things together. We can group objects together and see with our own eyes the truth of two plus two adding up to four. When a believer says that his beliefs are the truth — for example, insisting that everything in the Bible is The Truth, and the unquestionable Word Of God — he means something else. He means that he won't tolerate anyone refuting the validity of his statements or questioning the truth of those stories. He fervently believes that if he fervently believes that some things are true, that they will become true. (And if you don't believe, then you break the spell and ruin the magic.) Alas,

all of those beliefs are false. Simply believing that something is true will not make it true. Two plus two will not add up to three or five if you believe it strongly enough.

One of the more humorous examples of the Language Trap was a classic episode of the TV show called *The Twilight Zone*. A race of space-traveling aliens came to Earth, and quickly solved all of Earth's problems. There was no more war, or disease, or famine. It was like "the Millenium".

Some people were very suspicious of the aliens and asked what their ulterior motive was. The aliens answered that their only desire was "to serve man". Aliens even took lie detector tests, which showed that they were telling the truth. People began leaving Earth and traveling to the aliens' homeworld in great numbers, to enjoy the marvels of a very advanced civilization.

Meanwhile, a crew of hard-working translators were striving to translate the alien's "holy book", which was simply titled "To Serve Man". At the end of the program, the Earthlings discovered that the book was a cookbook. The aliens wanted to "serve man" alright: baked, broiled, or fried.

Churches and religions stumble into this trap all of the time. They all talk about having "The Truth", and the indisputable "Word of God", but their truths differ from church to church. Nevertheless, the true believers insist that they have The Truth and everybody else is wrong.

A television evangelist constantly declares that you must "plant a seed" by giving him money. He refers to the sentence in the Bible that says, "As you sow, so shall you also reap." The line in the Bible says simply that what you put out is what you get back. If you sow seeds of anger and hatred, that is what you will get back. If you treat other people in an unfriendly manner, that is how they will treat you. But the TV evangelist twisted the meaning of the words and declared that you were "planting a seed with the Lord" by giving him money, and he goes on and on about "What are you going to harvest? If you have planted nothing, then you will harvest nothing." That is really twisting the meaning of that line by changing the meanings of the words "sow" and "reap".

Also, the TV evangelist merely assumes that the viewers will get something back if they "plant a seed" by giving him money. Then he assumes that any good things that happen later in the donors' lives were caused by the "seeds" that they planted. ([Assuming a cause-and-effect relationship where none exists.](#)) Then the preacher can [use testimonials](#), reading letters that say things like, "Mrs. Mary B. had cancer, but she planted a seed with the Lord (by giving me lots of money), so the Lord removed her cancer, and now she is healthy and happy and cancer-free. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!"

In Alcoholics Anonymous, the word "alcoholic" has four distinctly different definitions that are used interchangeably, all too loosely. (Bill Wilson started doing that in the *Big Book*", and his followers have been doing it ever since.)

1. An alcoholic is someone who habitually drinks far too much alcohol.
2. An alcoholic is someone who is hyper-sensitive to alcohol — something like allergic to it — perhaps because he inherited a gene — and he is someone who will become readdicted to alcohol and go on a binge and drink for years if he drinks even just one beer.
3. An alcoholic is somebody who cannot quit drinking — he is "powerless" over alcohol.
4. An alcoholic is [an immoral person who is resentful, angry, manipulative, self-seeking, dishonest, selfish, and a prime example of instincts run wild, self-will run riot, and the Seven Deadly Sins...](#) and on and on and on....

Those are four very different definitions of "an alcoholic", and they are not the same thing at all. And they are not equally applicable to all people who have a drinking problem.

Personally,

1. By the first definition, I stopped being an alcoholic thirteen years ago when I quit drinking alcohol.
2. By the second definition, I will always be an alcoholic — I am and always will be hypersensitive to alcohol, and easily readdicted if I drink any more alcohol.
3. By the third definition, I wasn't an alcoholic, because I could quit drinking, and I did. I even quit drinking without any help from A.A., because I quit drinking two weeks before I was ever [sent to an A.A. meeting](#).
4. By the fourth definition, I was never an alcoholic. I was, in fact, a nice, happy, drunk, and people liked having me at their parties because I was fun to have around when I got high. (But, as one friend pointed out, even nice drunks die of cirrhosis of the liver.)

- **Vague, Undefined, Grandiose Language**

Make up all kinds of impressive-sounding grandiose phrases and expressions that are vague and not very precisely defined, so that no one can quite accuse you of being wrong. They can't even really argue with you because everything is so nebulous and intangible. It's like trying to bite fog.

Politicians are past masters of this art:

- The Great Society (*Johnson*: the country nearly explodes in civil war.)
- Law and Order (*Nixon*: the most criminal administration in history: the President and Vice-President resign to avoid impeachment, and half of the administration goes to prison.)
- Peace with Honor (*Nixon*: when defeat is inevitable, be someplace else.)
- A Kinder, Gentler Nation (*Bush the first*: start another war, while running up staggering deficits.)
- Compassionate Conservatism (*Bush the second*: start another war, spend the Social Security and Medicare money on weapons systems, eliminate civil rights, rape the environment, and give the rich people a big tax cut, all while running up staggering deficits.)
- States' Rights ("*The state has rights only if I think the state is right.*") States can do whatever they want to do, if and only if the White House, the Supreme Court, and Congress happen to like it. Think: racism and segregation, Medical Marijuana, "Right to Choose" vs. "Right to Life", the year 2000 Florida Presidential elections, Physician Assisted Suicide, and Gay Marriage.)
- Selfless Patriotism (serving your political party)
- Public Service (30 years of taking bribes)
- Judicial Restraint (the Republicans on the Supreme Court rig the Y2K election.)
- "...marching to the field of glory" — what politicians say to young men to drum up support for another war.

A current commercial for a politician says, "He'll move us forwards."

[Huh? He'll move us where?](#)

That's actually so vague that it is meaningless. You have no idea what that scoundrel will do if he gets elected.

Bill Wilson's [delusional disorder](#) gave us a bunch of classic examples of vague, grandiose, bombastic raving:

- "We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our fellow travelers are, and that is where our work must be done."
(*The Big Book*, 3rd edition, Chapter 9, page 130.)
- "We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."
(*The Big Book*, 3rd edition, Chapter 6, page 75.)

- "... you can join us on the Broad Highway."
(The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, Chapter 4, *We Agnostics*, page 55.)
- "This is the Great Fact for us."
(The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, Chapter 11, *A Vision For You*, page 164.)
- "Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God's ever advancing Creation, we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word..."
(The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, Chapter 4, *We Agnostics*, page 49.)
(So just what is "God's ever advancing Creation"? It sounds like "The Blob that Ate Hollywood". And where is it advancing to?)
- "He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love."
(The *Big Book*, Bill Wilson, 3rd edition, Chapter 4, *We Agnostics*, page 56.)
(How did Bill Wilson know that it was 'infinite'? Did Bill measure it?)
- "We are not cured of alcoholism. What we have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our daily activities."
(The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, page 85.)
(Just where did that "vision" come from? Prayer, meditation, belladonna, delirium tremens, LSD, or delusions of grandeur?)

So just what does all of that grandiose nonsense have to do with not drinking any more alcohol?

And Bill wasn't alone. We get this kind of double-talk from other A.A. boosters:

- As the human personality develops from a preoccupation with the survival, passion, and power needs of its "lower self," toward the understanding, compassion, and unity strivings of its higher self, it also grows spiritually.
(*Spirituality: The key to recovery from alcoholism*, Warfield, Robert D. and Goldstein, Marc B., *Counseling & Values*, April 1996, Vol. 40, Issue 3, page 196.)
Say what?
- Anyone who comes to ten meetings has begun an irreversible process of recovery. Everything in that person's life becomes part of the recovery process, regardless of how chaotic it looks or feels.
(An ACOA recruiting pamphlet)
Anyone? Irreversible process? Everything?
- You can go anywhere you want and take risks, because with sobriety and the Twelve Steps of AA you can always correct what has gone wrong and make amends. Your compass will always point you back, even if it feels like you're spinning in circles and have lost your direction.
(*The Way Home*, **Hazelden**, page 245.)
Which means just what?
 - That the magic of Bill Wilson's Buchmanite Twelve Steps will *always* protect you? You can go *anywhere* and take risks?
 - That you can *always* undo mistakes? "*You can always correct what has gone wrong*"? (I wish...)
 - That your moral compass will *always* point in the right direction?
 - Even while you are practicing deceptive recruiting on "the pigeons" and "the babies"?
 - Even while you are playing bait-and-switch mind games on the newcomers?
 - Even while you are lying about the A.A. failure rate?

Note the repeated use of the word "always". That reveals cultish irrational absolute black-and-white thinking. The authors won't say something moderate like that the 12 Steps will often help you, or that

they help most of the time, because that would be admitting that the Steps fail some of the time. No, the Hazelden religious fanatics insist that the 12 Steps will *always* work, *anywhere*. (That is, of course, absurd. Not even penicillin works all of the time, anywhere. And the real A.A. failure rate is staggeringly high.)

- Another A.A. true believer exhorts people to read the A.A. *Big Book* with this grandiose declaration: "Want a new life? Read it! Read the black bits, don't put anything into the white bits and find a freedom you never imagined you could have."

- **Loaded Language, Euphemisms, and Redefined Words**

This item is related to the previous two, but they aren't the same thing. Loaded language is more generic because any words can be redefined for any reason, to support any agenda, and to mask any activity.

Carl Sagan called such terminology "weasel words."

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

[*Alice in Wonderland, and Alice Through the Looking Glass*](#), Lewis Carroll

"You can always tell when someone isn't telling the truth, because he doesn't speak clearly. Euphemism is a cover for either ignorance or dishonesty. In other words, if you can't state it in a clear simple declarative sentence, then either you don't know what you are talking about, or you are trying to prevent me from understanding what you are talking about, and both bug me."

Tucker Carlson, in an advertisement for his TV program "*Unfiltered*" on Public Television, August 6 to 27, 2004.

- Adolf Hitler and the Nazis routinely invented euphemistic phrases to disguise what they were doing, like the "Special Handling" that they gave the Jews, sending them to the "Final Solution." "Guest workers" were really foreigners who had been kidnapped at gunpoint and forced into slave labor brigades. Zyklon B, the poison gas used to kill millions of Jews, was called "material for the resettlement of Jews".

Sometimes, the euphemisms became comical. By the end of World War Two, the Germans had 30 euphemisms for "**retreat**", including "planned withdrawal, successful disengagement, elastic defense, mobile defense, retrocessive maneuver, withdrawing maneuver, unencircling maneuver, according to plan, shortening of the front, systematic evacuation, without enemy pressure, undisturbed by the enemy, and withdrawal to the enemy's surprise."

- Likewise, Mao Tse Tung sent his enemies to slave labor on remote farms for "re-education" so that they would learn to "blossom properly." And all of the Communists were notorious for "liberating" people, like the Tibetans, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, who did not wish to be "liberated" by the Chinese People's Army or the Soviet Army. And now, of course, George W. Bush is "liberating" Iraq in the same manner.
- Throughout the entire second half of the twentieth century, various United States Presidents used the term "police action", rather than "war", to get around limitations on Presidential powers, and to avoid

having to tell the public that we actually were in yet another war.

- In the Oxford Groups and Moral Re-Armament cults, Frank Buchman's "inspired democracy" really meant slavery:

An increasing number of citizens in democratic states are now unwilling to acknowledge in speech and action those inner authorities on which the life of democracy depends. Each man has his own plan. It's so wonderful each to have his own plan. It's such freedom, such liberty! Everyone does as he pleases. But not in the Oxford Group. There you have true democracy. You don't do as you please, you do as God guides. You do God's plan.

Frank Buchman, speaking at Visby, Sweden in 1938, quoted in *Experiment With God; Frank Buchman Reconsidered*, Gösta Ekman, pages 44-45.

Ah, but who gets to say just what God's plan is? The Oxford Group sure didn't hold elections. The answer is, Frank Buchman declared that he heard The Voice of God better than other men, so everybody should just obey his orders without question. That was "inspired democracy".

- Likewise, Frank Buchman's convert Herbert Grevenius praised Frank Buchman with this bit of Orwellian double-think:

His enormously active life is built on one thing only — guidance. He openly admits it. He is a sail always waiting to be filled by the wind, a man with a great and warm and humble heart, a democrat who wants to set men free under God's dictatorship.

Experiment With God; Frank Buchman Reconsidered, Gösta Ekman, page 21.

- The most outrageous one I've heard recently is "**aggressive accounting practices**". That's what **Enron** used to do things like turn \$3 billion of very real losses into \$1 billion of phony paper profits, which made the stock price rise, which was very convenient for the executives who were happily dumping their worthless shares of Enron stock on an unsuspecting public in the world's biggest [Pump and Dump stock swindle](#)... "**Aggressive accounting practices**" indeed.
- Another good one is: George W. Bush's scare stories about how we were all going to be killed by Saddam's Weapons of Mass Destruction which he built with all of that yellow-cake uranium that he was supposedly buying from Niger — "**The next warning may come in the form of a mushroom cloud**" — were not really exaggerations, fear-mongering, deceptions, and bare-faced lies; they were merely "**less-than-fully-verified**" facts; (A conservative talking head, defending Bush on National Public Radio, Jan. 20, 2004.)
- Another recent goody from the Bush administration: The poor people are not suffering from hunger any more; they just have "nutritional insecurity".

Alcoholics Anonymous makes extensive use of loaded language and redefined words:

- In Alcoholics Anonymous terminology, the word "sobriety" doesn't mean "not drinking" or "an unintoxicated state"; it has this bombastic redefinition: "**A special state of Grace gained by working the Steps and maintaining absolute abstinence. It is characterized by feelings of Serenity and Gratitude. It is a state of living according to God's will, not one's own. It is sanity.**"
- Likewise, "**Sanity is living according to God's Will, rather than one's own.**"
- "Recovery" does not mean rebuilding your health, mind, body, and life while not drinking; it means going to A.A. meetings, doing The Twelve Steps, and abstaining from alcohol. According to A.A. dogma, someone can't be recovering from alcohol if he isn't going to A.A. meetings and doing The Twelve Steps; he's "only abstaining".
- By the same broken logic, he's "only dry" but not "sober". According to A.A., you can't enjoy a period of "sobriety" without going to A.A. meetings. Thus, a cultish A.A. member can ask someone, "**Do you**

really have a year of sobriety, or are you only abstaining from drinking?"

- Likewise, a "[dry drunk](#)" is someone who does not drink alcohol, but who refuses to join A.A. and do the Twelve Steps. He is supposedly still acting like a drunk man, exhibiting all of the objectionable behavior of a drunkard, even though he does not drink alcohol, simply because he won't conform to the A.A. program.
- "Emotional security" means "getting our own way." ([12X12](#), page 115.)
- "Humility" is "a desire to seek and do God's will." ([12X12](#), page 72.)

See the Cult Test item [Cult-Speak](#) for many more examples.

A variation on euphemisms is the use of lots of acronyms, which can reduce speech to near total incomprehensibility. This is Scientology jargon:

...the New OT VIII C/S was RPFed (Laura Wolfe, wife of Milton Wolfe who was jailed on behalf of the GO and later ended up as CO FSSO (FSSO: Flag Ship Service Org, The service org on board the Freewinds.) The replacement C/S, Sue Walker, wife of Jeff Walker, one of the original Class XII who was Snr C/S Int at the time...

http://www.whyairetheydead.net/krasel/aff_96.html

What that means is, somebody with the highest rank, OT VIII — Operating Thetan Level 8 — also a C/S — Case Supervisor — was punished — RPFed — Rehabilitation Project Force — and I'm not sure what a GO or CO are...

- **Deception by Renaming**

If something sounds really bad, or *is really bad*, just give it a new name.

"An important art of politicians is to find new names for institutions which under old names have become odious to the public."

— Talleyrand.

In March of 2013, the small island nation of Cyprus went into a financial crisis. The banks of Cyprus had been acting as low-tax bankers for organized crime in Russia and Mideastern drug traffickers. Hence they had a lot of cash to invest. The Cypriot banks made the giant mistake of investing heavily in high-yield Greek bonds, which suddenly became nearly worthless when the Greek economy crashed. So the banks were bankrupt and deeply in debt.

The EU and Cypriot leaders proposed seizing roughly 8 or 10% of everybody's money in the Cypriot banks to repay the mobsters. The people of Cyprus rebelled, and the Cypriot parliament voted the idea down.

So, on March 25th, the powers that were came up with a new answer, which involved a "haircut" on bank accounts that held more than 100,000 Euros that would confiscate up to 40% of the money in those accounts. The New York Times reported that, "the deal would scrap the highly controversial idea of a tax on bank deposits, although it would still require forced losses for depositors and bondholders." Say, what? In fact, there is no material difference between the so-called "tax" and the "forced losses." That was just semantics.

No matter what you call it, the banks were still violating a sacred trust and stealing depositors' money with the excuse of "We need your money, so we are taking it," (and that caused a panic where people quickly withdrew their money from banks all over Europe). Never before had the "masters of finance" in Europe declared that they could just take money from people because they wanted it.

- **Fluffy Phrases**

Fluffy phrases are like euphemisms, but have a flavor of their own, sort of like Pollyanna's babble.

For example, the Allstate insurance company is advertising a "good claim experience", which, when you think about it, is kind of ridiculous. You just suffered a big loss, and it's a happy experience?

"Yes, it was a terrible car accident. My daughter went to the hospital with a smashed face, and she will never look the same again, but I had a happy claim experience with Allstate."

- **It's Free!**

The human mind is really funny when it comes to the word "free". People often cannot resist the temptation of something that is free.

- Salesmen routinely fool people into buying things that they don't need because they will get a "free gift" with it.
- People will pay more for a car that includes "free" accessories.
- An alcoholic who is abstaining from drinking may accept the offer of a free drink when he would not buy a drink for himself. "It's free. How can you resist? Just this one. This one's for free."

- **Use Self-Referential Definitions — Define Something In Terms Of Itself**

These are also called *circular definitions*.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses a self-referential definition of "working the program correctly", and "*Working A Strong Program*".

- Someone who is "working the program correctly" abstains from drinking alcohol, as well as gets a sponsor, reads the *Big Book*, does the Twelve Steps, and attends a lot of A.A. meetings.
- Then the A.A. promoters claim that the A.A. program **"always works if people work it correctly"**.
- Works to do what? Well, it supposedly works to make people quit drinking. But quitting drinking was the first requirement for starting to "work the program correctly".

- **Pigeon-holing and Labeling**

This error in thought comes from stuffing people and things into simplistic categories — "pigeon-holes" — and assigning inaccurate names to them. This can be done without malice, and yet, it still results in erroneous thoughts and wrong conclusions.

Many simple-minded people want to stuff everything that they don't understand into some simple pigeon-hole, and then they believe that they know what it is.

People have a natural tendency to want to name things. Once they learn the name of something, they assume that they know what it is. Wrong. They simply have a word, a label. They still do not know what it is. And they don't know whether the name is an accurate description of the thing.

Alcoholics Anonymous does an outrageous job of pigeon-holing and labeling people:

- You are an alcoholic.
- You are an addict.
- You are a dry drunk.
- You are a bleeding deacon.

- You are just a bitter, angry old ingrate.
- You are unspiritual.
- You are spiritual.
- You are *Working A Strong Program*.
- You are a respected oldtimer.
- You are a trusted servant.
- You are in constant conscious contact with God.
- You are a Friend of Bill.
- You are not a Friend of Bill.
- You are sitting on the pity pot.
- You are in denial.
- You are a baby.
- You are a normie.
- You are selfish.
- You are just a mess of unconfessed sins and wrongs and defects of character and moral shortcomings.
- You are angry, and you have a resentment.

- **Deception Via Mislabeling or Misnaming Things**

A commercial for a get-rich-quick scheme says that the cost of the scheme is inconsequential because: "**You can take it out of your cash flow.**"

Wrong. You do not deduct expenses from "cash flow". Expenses come straight out of your *profits*, and if you don't have any profits, then you are suffering a financial loss, no matter how large your cash flow is, and the cost of that get-rich-quick scheme will be part of your loss. In fact, if you don't have profits, then "cash flow" becomes your enemy — it turns into "burn rate" — the rate at which you are burning up your cash reserves and heading for bankruptcy.

A TV evangelist's commercial declares that you can get his "free" book or DVD "For a gift of \$40." If you have to pay \$40, then that is a sale of merchandise, not an exchange of gifts.

Similarly, George W. Bush calls his attack on Iraq "a war for freedom". Every time Rumsfeld attacks another city like Fallujah or Najaf or Kut or Sadr City and kills several hundred more people, including women and children, Bush says that it's a victory for "freedom".

Bush also calls the rebels against American hegemony "the enemies of freedom". No, they really want to be free — especially free from our army in their country.

Bush says that they hate us because of our "freedom". No, they hate us because our military forces are destroying their country and killing their children with our "Shock and Awe" bombing.

- **Misuse Words**

Blithely give words a completely different meaning than their usual or commonly-accepted ones.

For example, Bill Wilson wrote this deceptive propaganda while trying to convert people to his religious beliefs (and while pretending to be a converted agnostic):

Logic is great stuff. We liked it. We still like it. It is not by chance we were given the power to reason, to examine the evidence of our senses, and to draw conclusions. That is one of man's magnificent attributes. We agnostically inclined would not feel satisfied with a proposal which does not lend itself to reasonable approach and interpretation. Hence we are at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe,

why we say our former thinking was soft and mushy when we threw up our hands in doubt and said, "We don't know."

The *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Page 53.

There, Bill Wilson misused the word "logical". There is nothing "logical" about blind faith in a cult religion. Logic is a thought process where one examines facts and then draws conclusions from them, using inductive or deductive reasoning. It is not "more sane and logical" to stop thinking critically, and just blindly believe in Bill Wilson's religion.

Bill was also using the [hypnotic bait-and-switch trick](#). He started the paragraph by praising logic and saying that he liked it. But then he switched sides and attacked logic, and praised blind faith *in his beliefs* as being more "logical" than logic itself.

And it's almost funny how Bill admitted that he was "at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe..." The reason that it is so hard to defend that point of view is because it is completely irrational and illogical. It is based on no facts at all. It is just so much wishful thinking.

Likewise, George W. Bush misuses words like "freedom" and "civil liberties" while he claims that he has the right to spy on people without a judge signing off on the surveillance. Bush says that he is careful of people's "civil liberties" while he spies on American citizens without a court warrant.

Wrong.

The Constitutional protection of the American people from the searches of an intrusive dishonest politician is not "freedom" or "liberty"; it is a Constitutional protection. "Civil liberties" are things like the rights of the citizens to gather together and speak in protest against Bush's actions — something that George W. Bush does not allow anywhere around him. The protesters are confined to "free speech zones" that are far away from Bush.

(By the way, the whole of the United States of America is a Free Speech Zone. George W. Bush should learn that while he is pretending to protect and uphold the Constitution of the United States.)

- **Moving The Goalposts**

This trick is like:

1. Demand that your opponent prove Fact A.
2. When he does, answer, "But you didn't prove Fact B."
3. When he does that, answer ""But you didn't prove Fact C."
4. etc...

This trick is also known as "changing the parameters of the question afterwards", so as to invalidate a true answer. And it's also called "moving the bar".

For example, "BLAH-BLAH is a harm-reduction model rather than an abstinence model. From my observations of those around me, and my own experience, I have the opinion that the harm reduction model doesn't work for most people."

Answer: "Every addict who injects heroin with a clean syringe has zero chance of contracting HIV or Hep C, so how can that be 'not working for most people?'"

The mental diversion was, of course, to assert that harm reduction programs fail because they do not enforce absolute abstinence from drugs or alcohol. But that was never the goal of harm-reduction programs.

[Dr. and Prof. George E. Vaillant used the same technique](#) in his analysis of Alcoholics Anonymous-based treatment in *The Natural History of Alcoholism Revisited*. Alcoholics Anonymous insists that members must *totally* abstain from drinking alcohol, and if a member drinks even one single drink, then he loses all of his sober time and immediately starts over at zero. But when Dr. Vaillant tested Alcoholics Anonymous, he found that [the results were "appalling"](#), so Dr. Vaillant changed his definition of "sobriety" to "sober for 51 weeks out of the year", so that some people could be scored as "in stable remission for 3 years". That's moving the goalposts to make the results look better.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses the *Moving the Goalposts* trick very often. The whole A.A. program is a Move-the-Goalposts routine:

- In the beginning, the advertised goal of the A.A. program is to quit drinking and save your life.
- But if someone quits drinking without embracing Bill Wilson's version of Dr. Frank Buchman's cult religion, then the A.A. true believers complain that the newly-sober alcoholic has not "found God", and he isn't "working a strong program".
- Then they will complain that the beginner has not "Worked The Steps" properly, and he hasn't listed and confessed all of his sins in Steps 4 and 5, "holding nothing back."
- And he has not "surrendered to God".
- And he has not rid himself of all "resentments" and anger.
- And he isn't correctly hearing God in Step 11.

That is a lot more to do than just quit drinking.

- **Set Low Expectations**

Prepare the audience for poor results by setting expectations very low, so that whatever happens, it seems better than they expected.

Corporate executives use this stunt on Wall Street financial analysts all of the time. They cry to the analysts that business conditions are really tough right now, the economy is bad this quarter, and the results won't be very good, so that the analysts predict a low profit-per-share for the current quarter. Then, when the company produces results that are better than expected, the stock price soars.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses the same stunt to explain away the bad behavior of A.A. members. An often-repeated slogan is "We are not saints." Thus, anything from dealing drugs to other A.A. members, to helping oneself to the collection basket, to sexually exploiting the attractive young women who come to A.A. seeking help with a drug or alcohol problem is okay, and easily explained, because "We are not saints."

[One A.A. apologist actually argued](#) that it was wrong to demand moral behavior from rapist A.A. members — to demand that the sexual predators in A.A. stop raping the young female newcomers — because that would be setting expectations too high:

The problem with what you are doing is that A.A. is a place for sick people to get well. For alcoholics to come recover. It is not a place for nice kind folk to become saints.

If you start making behavior rules, which is in essence exactly what you are trying to do, where does it end? Do you really think people are trying to condone illicit behavior?

No, that is not what people are saying. What they are saying is that "no matter how far down the scale" you have gone, you are welcome in A.A. If you don't change, well, you won't stick around. You are welcome to come, but why would you? A.A. is for the sick trying to get well, and if you aren't interested in getting well, you won't be around long. That is why the traditions state 'there is no A.A. police'. Get it? That is why A.A. members — and I live in PA — have a hard time listening to you.

If you start trying to make a list of unacceptable behavior, you are essentially making a list of rules for membership, of which there aren't any and hopefully never will be. I fail to see how you can not comprehend this. Our fellowship can not deny even the most unsavory of individuals. Even in the midst of their lowest points, they are welcome.

Posted by: "inventory" — September 13, 2007 07:12 AM, to a *Washington Post* readers' comments section, in response to a story about the sexual exploitation going on in the Washington DC "Midtown Group of A.A."

The writer argues that "If you don't change, you won't be around long." That isn't true at all. The thieves and rapists in [the Midtown Group](#) have been around for more than 20 years, and they show no signs of going away. Why would they quit A.A. when they get money, power, and sex from running a cult?

This A.A. apologist is actually trying to argue that there are no rules in Alcoholics Anonymous, and that it is against "The Traditions" to demand that people behave in a moral manner. Well, the A.A. "Third Tradition" says,

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

That is the only requirement for A.A. membership, not the only law. The "A.A. 12 Traditions" *do not* say that the only RULE that A.A. members must obey in life is "a desire to quit drinking". There are still other rules that are expected of all people: don't rape, don't rob, don't murder... A.A. does not get to suspend those rules because "We are not saints".

- **The Perfect Solution Fallacy, also known as The Nirvana Fallacy**

This is somewhat the opposite of Setting Low Expectations — this fallacy demands unrealistically good results, or else it isn't worth doing.

A sex addict might say, "So you need to be totally clean... But you just looked a little bit. Oh, OK, you're not clean anymore. You might as well get on a sex binge now!!"

For an alcoholic could it be something like: "So you need to be totally sober... But you just thought about drinking... or you accidentally drank a little bit of wine that was offered to you. Oh, OK, you're not clean anymore. You might as well get totally drunk now!"

(Thanks, [Mario](#).)

- **Sliding Adjectives**

Use a sequence of descriptors, usually adjectives, where the value, quality, and characteristics of what is being described slip and slide from one thing to another, often to the exact opposite.

For example:

- genuine pictures of a fake artifact
- genuine simulated leather
- high-quality plastic
- honest politicians
- really solid guesswork
- [anecdotal](#) medical study
- Compassionate Conservatism
- "executive vinyl" (That is actually real terminology. I found that label inside of a cheap appointment book with a plastic simulated leather cover.)

- **Vague Adjectives**

Use adjectives that sound good but don't really tell us what they mean. For example, advertisements for a store offered:

- "the top digital cameras"
- "top plasma and LCD TVs"
- "popular furniture"

In the first two examples, does the word "top" mean that the equipment is high-quality, or that they are best-sellers? Best-sellers are usually inexpensive and hence low quality.

The third example more clearly describes best-sellers, but that still does not show that the furniture is actually any good, or worth buying. Attempts to stampede you into buying something because everybody else is buying it is just another recycling of the old propaganda trick "*Everybody knows, everybody says, everybody is doing it!*", also known as "The Bandwagon".

A spam email advertised: "Strong Programs for Real Estate Risks". Excuse me? What the heck is a "strong program"? They continued, "HOW STRONG ARE YOUR LINKS?" Careful reading revealed that they were selling insurance. They continued: "Discover how our expanding line of comprehensive programs and products can protect your clients from a multitude of real estate exposures at the industry's most competitive rates. Become an Appointed Agency Today!" Ah, so they want me to sell insurance for them.

- **Undefined Terms**

Use words that sound good or bad but are not actually defined and have no concrete meaning.

For example, a TV commercial for a tooth whitener declares that your teeth will be "nine shades whiter in only ten days." So what is a shade of white? How much of a change in color is "a shade". How much whiter will your teeth actually be? You would think that maybe some artists' institute or the National Bureau of Standards would have a formal definition of "shade", or some color charts to show what is a "shade of white", but they don't. A shade of white could be anything. So no matter what happens from use of the tooth whitener, the advertiser can claim, "What? You can't see any difference? Your eyes just aren't sensitive enough. Believe me, your teeth are definitely nine shades whiter."

Bill Wilson used this technique in the *Big Book* constantly. His sermons and lectures were non-stop streams of grandiose, undefined terms. For example, Bill declared that atheists and agnostics would get "results" if they just started believing in his religion:

We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *We Agnostics*, Page 46.

We commenced to get what results? Was it quitting drinking? Was it longer periods of sobriety between relapses? Was it simply drinking less per day? Who knows what "results" they got? Bill doesn't say. We have to just take his word for it that some kind of benefits accrued because people believed something. (Heck, Bill didn't even really say that the results were good, did he? He just said that they "commenced to get results". The results could have been that they all got drunk and partied their brains out.)

Likewise, Bill Wilson declared:

As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *We Agnostics*, Page 47.

On his way where? What does that actually mean?

- **Pseudo-intellectual Bull**

Use lots of big or unusual words and tell your lies with stilted, complicated, incomprehensible sentences that sound very educated.

This item is similar to "Vague, Grandiose Language" and "Double-talk", but this one has a flavor all its own. It is particularly prevalent around universities, and lives in scholarly journals, and is a favorite tool of intellectual wanna-bees.

This example of pseudo-intellectual bull is [Dr. Carl G. Jung](#), telling us how to get a spiritual experience:

The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, or through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism.

C. G. Jung, in a [letter to Bill Wilson](#), quoted in *Bill W.*, by Robert Thomsen, pages 362-363.

Just try to figure out, from reading that, just what you are really supposed to do to get yourself a spiritual experience.

Adam Rafalovich wrote an exemplary piece of such pseudo-intellectual bull that attempted to posit that Narcotics Anonymous meetings actually work and have positive effects on ex-addicts:

Embedded within the interplay of these moments of recovering-addict identity is a technique of identity transformation I refer to as false working. False working denotes a mechanism by which NA members are given permission to "act as if" they truly believe in the NA message regardless of their real sentiments. This technique is exemplified by the aphorism *Fake it 'til you make it*. False working proves to be a crucial component for the NA organization to maintain long-term membership and recruit new, skeptical members.

Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity, Adam Rafalovich, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, Spring 1999, v26, i1, p131.

In other words, lie and fake it and pretend to be getting great results from "*working the program*", to fool the newcomers into believing that the voodoo medicine 12-Step routine really works. Such deceit is useful for what the author calls "[identity transformation](#)" — converting newcomers into good cult members. Note that the author says that such deceit and fakery is even "a crucial component" in keeping the old-timers coming back. So everybody is deceiving everybody else, all of the time. Everybody is re-enacting "*The Emperor's New Clothes*".

Note the stilted language and the euphemisms that disguise the real meaning of Rafalovich's statements. Instead of saying, "lie and deceive", the author uses the phrases, "*false working*" and "*permission to 'act as if' they truly believe in the NA message*".

The author, Adam Rafalovich, gave us many more examples of this pseudo-intellectual bull technique in that article. A few more of them:

- "Standing most significant in the literature today is the concept of narrative and its effect in creating group cohesion inside and outside 12-Step meetings. It is believed in the study of 12-Step recovery processes that the mutual disclosures of members fosters processes of belonging and commitment to the collective goal of drug and alcohol abstinence. ... In addition, the study of story presentation has been shown to be integral in developing moral attachments to a collectivity."

Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity, Adam Rafalovich, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, Spring 1999, v26, i1.

In other words, use the standard cult recruiting technique of *Personal Testimonies of Earlier Converts* to fool the newcomers and suck them into the cult. Much of the "sharing" is just sales pitches telling newcomers to join the group and *Keep Coming Back*.

And Rafalovich uses the passive voice technique to assert unsupported claims:

"It is believed ... that the mutual disclosures of members fosters processes..."

Who believes it? What do they know? Why should we care what some nameless, faceless people believe?

- "By examining the contents of common NA testimony, we can examine data that demonstrate that individual action is as much a result of the NA organization as it is a contributor to it. Therefore when positing a theory of the recovering-addict identity process, it is important to acknowledge the internalization of an organization as a result of becoming a contributor. Interestingly, NA members realize this theoretical notion. Contribution, for example, is a strong ethic within the organization; it is believed that to not participate in the narrative environment (i.e., not share during meetings) will harm one's chances of continued abstinence."

Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity, Adam Rafalovich, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, Spring 1999, v26, i1.

In other words, the way to become one of the group is to start talking the talk in meetings, and telling people that the program is working for you. "*Fake It Until You Make It*." The more you do it, the more it will warp your thinking and make you feel and act like one of the old-timers.

That is a use of the cognitive dissonance technique — Since you don't want to think of yourself as a lying fake, you will start to imagine that you *really are* getting some great results, just like you have been saying... Your subconscious mind will struggle to minimize the pain of the conflict between believing that it is wrong to lie, and the group requirement that you say that you are getting great results from the program — and *coming to believe* that the program *really IS working* for you, and that you are telling the truth, is the subconscious mind's answer to the problem.

It's really a very common brainwashing and mind-control technique:

"Makem' say it enough times, and they'll start to believe it."

"Makem' go through the motions enough times, and they'll start to think that such behavior is normal."

And, the author tells us, if you should choose to not engage in such cultish behavior, and do not "*Fake It Until You Make It*", then you just might leave the cult and not come back. (No surprise there.)

Also note the use of two other propaganda techniques in this one line: "it is believed that to not participate in the narrative environment (i.e., not share during meetings) will harm one's chances of continued abstinence."

There, we get

1. the use of the passive voice, yet again, citing the opinions of some more invisible, unnamed people, and
 2. fear mongering
1. It is believed by whom? Says who?
 2. Where is the evidence that anybody should believe such nonsense?
 3. What medical or scientific study, survey, or poll showed that telling lies in N.A. meetings — *faking it 'till you make it* — reduces drug consumption, or reduces relapses?
 4. Where is the evidence that refusing to lie and deceive increases drug addiction?

There is no evidence to support such illogical statements. The author tries to shove that cult dogma at us as established fact by declaring that some unnamed people believe it to be true.

- "Solidarity and collective identity in NA are constructed by narrative that depicts qualitative differences between addict and normie worlds. It has been argued that this process of creating difference is socially constructed and is ultimately aimed at fostering a stronger dependency upon the group."

Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity, Adam Rafalovich, Contemporary Drug Problems, Spring 1999, v26, i1.

Meaning: the testimonials of earlier converts emphasize the standard cult attitude of, "Our group is special. We are special people, and different from the 'normies'. Only another cult member understands."

And it's also the cult practice of: You must become dependent on the cult. They say, "*You really need this 'support group'. You can't make it alone. Nobody can do it alone. You'll die without us.*" and "*Addicts like us can't be happy in the normie world, so just stay here with us.*"

Rafalovich says that the program is "*ultimately aimed at fostering a stronger dependency upon the group.*" That is really insidious cult behavior. They want you to become dependent on the cult for everything. The cult will become your entire social circle, and your family, and your whole life. You will end up needing the cult to tell you who you are, and what you should think and what you should do. That produces mental cripples who cannot live outside of the cult. That is not 'recovery'.

- "**Leveling**: This initial phase of learning Narcotics Anonymous normativity and adopting a recovering-addict identity involves a homogenization where newcomers become convinced of a common thread between themselves and the rest of those involved with NA. ...

No one member ever stops becoming part of the leveling process. 'Oldtimers' still try hard to discover linkages between themselves and other members of the group. ...

The focus for seasoned members often involves the invocation of the disease concept, its manifestations at the psychic and behavioral levels."

Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity, Adam Rafalovich, Contemporary Drug Problems, Spring 1999, v26, i1.

Translation: Newcomers buy the group member stereotype and start to think that they are "just like everybody else" in the cult. Then, you can't ever leave the cult, and you can't ever stop using the Procrustean Bed on yourself, trying to force yourself to become the cult's stereotypical "good member". (What the author calls "Leveling".) Even the old-timers have to continue doing it. And you can't ever stop parroting the cult dogma, like the "spiritual disease" concept.

- "**Conclusion**: The presence of a technique like false working gives credence to the relative instability of the addict identity. It is not a technique reserved strictly for those who are new to the NA environment. It is a safety valve for all members, allowing those who have never encountered or are straying away from a sincere attitude of recovering-addict identity to be cynical or skeptical of NA, given, of course, that their actions state otherwise."

Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity, Adam Rafalovich, Contemporary Drug Problems, Spring 1999, v26, i1.

Translation: the presence of a technique like "false working" proves that it is a cult that plays mind games on people's heads, including deceiving the newcomers and dishonestly changing people's concepts of themselves (identity). The fact that even the old-timers are still supposed to be "*faking it until they make it*" means that the program doesn't ever start working right — they never make it — but the old-timers can't be honest and actually say that out loud. They too must continue to "*Act As If...*"

- "Twelve-step programs are increasingly recognized as important resources and treatment adjuncts for recovering alcohol and other drug abusers. ... This paper explores 12-Step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous in light of Margaret Mahler's conceptualization of the separation-individuation process that leads to object constancy and healthy object relations."

An analysis of 12-Step programs for substance abusers from a developmental perspective, Shulamith Lala Ashenberg Straussner; Betsy Robin Spiegel, Clinical Social Work Journal, Fall 1996 v24 n3 p299(11)

Meaning: *If it is totally incomprehensible even to someone with a degree in the hard sciences, then it just might be total bull.*

Also notice how the A.A. propagandists routinely proclaim that A.A. and the other 12-Step groups are "*just being discovered*" (*by whom?*), and are "*increasingly recognized as important*" (*by whom?*), as if those A.A. promoters haven't been pushing [the same irrational old 12-Step cult religion](#) and voodoo medicine [for the last 75 years](#) — and as if Alcoholics Anonymous were not actually an organization in decline. That is the propaganda technique of [Assume The Major Premise](#).

- **Slogans: Simplistic Slogans and Thought-Stopping Slogans**

There just isn't anything quite like a nice, short, snappy slogan. People don't like to have to memorize long pages of boring facts and figures, but they can remember slogans easily. Slogans can just cut through the fog and grab people's hearts and minds in ways that no other kind of speech can. Slogans can become battle cries, like "Remember the Alamo!" A good slogan can make or break a politician's campaign:

- "Where's The Beef?"
- "Make My Day!"
- "It's the Economy, Stupid!"
- "Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer!"

[Dr. Robert J. Lifton](#), who did much of the original research on Chinese Communist brainwashing techniques, called such slogans "*thought-stopping clichés*". He found that such slogans constrict human understanding, rather than expand it. They stop people from thinking.

Thought-stopping slogans can be used to jump to completely illogical conclusions: "*People are more important than things. So let's drill for oil in the Anwar National Wildlife Refuge.*"

"The answer is Jesus! The answer to everything is Jesus! The answer is always Jesus!"

Yeh, but what if the question was, "*What will your monthly payments be if you borrow \$100,000 at 7% interest and want to pay it back in 20 years?*"

A.A. has [far too many slogans](#) to list here. Here are just a few examples:

- "Keep Coming Back! It Works!"
- "It Works If You Work It!"
- "Work It, You're Worth It! You Die If You Don't!"
- "Turn It Over."
- "Let Go and Let God."
- "One Day At A Time."
- "Your best thinking got you here."
- "Think, Think, Think!"

- "Stop Your Stinkin' Thinkin'."
- "Keep It Simple, Stupid."
- "Utilize, Don't Analyze."

- **Oversimplify**

This one is simple: Just oversimplify the issue. Reduce the issue to a few simple sentences that any blithering idiot can understand. Leave out all the complicated facts and confounding factors. Reduce the debate to just a few simple-minded sentences and slogans. Reduce complex multi-faceted issues to simplistic statements that can be expressed in a short sound bite.

For every complicated problem there is a simple and wrong solution.
 == H. L. Mencken

"The problem with KISS — Keep It Simple Stupid — is that it often leads to
 LOVE — Leave Out Virtually Everything."
 == credited to "a smart musician"

Adolf Hitler instructed:

All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to. Consequently, the greater the mass it is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be. But if, as in propaganda for sticking out a war, the aim is to influence a whole people, we must avoid excessive intellectual demands on our public, and too much caution cannot be exerted in this direction.

The more modest its intellectual ballast, the more exclusively it takes into consideration the emotions of the masses, the more effective it will be. ...

It is a mistake to make propaganda many-sided, like scientific instruction, for instance.

The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. In consequence of these facts, all effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan.

Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler, pages 180-181.

Alcoholics Anonymous grossly over-simplifies the problems of alcohol abuse and alcohol addiction. (And Narcotics Anonymous also over-simplifies the issue of drug addiction.) A.A. tries to reduce those problems to just a matter of "resentments" and unconfessed sins causing "spiritual diseases", and "ego" and "self-will" causing "defects of character" and "moral shortcomings". And the cure is supposedly to "work a strong program", and "surrender to God", and do the 12 Steps and attend lots of meetings.

A.A. totally ignores the problem of mental illnesses like Bipolar Disorder and schizophrenia causing people to drink too much alcohol and take too many drugs. And A.A. rarely, if ever, sends people to real doctors and psychiatrists to get those problems fixed.

- **Wrap Yourself In A Higher Power**

The two most popular styles are "*Wrap Yourself in the Flag*" and "*Wrap Yourself in the Bible*." But wrapping yourself in a generic God without a Bible, and in a generic religiosity, like Alcoholics Anonymous does, also works.

People feel reluctant to attack someone who appears to be so patriotic or religious. They fear that [their criticism will be misunderstood](#) by others as an attack on God or Country. So you can get lots of cheap and easy advantages by wrapping yourself in the Bible or the Flag, or both.

The absurd lengths to which con artists will go to convince you that they are good, religious people are sometimes mind-boggling. A web page that is supposedly about "Christian" drug and alcohol treatment programs, <http://www.christiandtc.com/christiandrugrehabprogram/>, actually features a lot of garbage that is just failed quack programs with the label "Christian" added on, to make them sound good:

1. The link for "drug rehabs" actually goes to a web page that advertises schemes to beat drug tests: <http://www.christiandtc.com/drugrehabs/> actually links to <http://www.asmarketsourcedrugtestkit.com/prodblood.htm>.
2. The link for "drug rehab program", <http://www.christiandtc.com/drugrehabprogram/>, advertises, among other things, "*Alex knows what it takes for you to get a Pharmaceutical / Medical sales position!*", and *CELEBRITY CRUISE LINE* — Drug store, Payday Loan, video poker, and — best of all — "Jeb Bush: Daughter improving in drug rehab".
3. And the most amusing feature of that web page is the second paid link, "Christian Pastor Converts To Paganism" — <http://www.christiandtc.com/trendee.html> — which actually links to a web page that sells a software package for submitting articles intended to drive traffic to your web site to that you can make money by selling more stuff — <http://article-submitter.solidbytes.com/?hop=seishin>. (Now a broken link.)

Please don't ask me what that has to do with Christianity or recovery from drug and alcohol problems.

Similarly, a web page that sells colloidal metals as cures or treatments for various ailments decorates its web pages with the American flag, and the quack doctor (a veterinarian and N.D., not an M.D.) is even dressed in a red-and-white striped shirt (with a cowboy hat, just to mix the images). See <http://www.healthy-ways.com/selenium.html> and <http://www.healthy-ways.com/quest.html>.

• Repeat Old Memes

There are some old ideas that are so pervasive that they might be called the memes of the society. They may be inaccurate or even quite false, or give a very distorted picture of reality, but people often accept them without thought because they are so old and well-established that they slip into your mind without triggering a critical reaction.

For instance, old Conservatives often love to describe one of their own as a "self-made man", who rose up from poverty in another Horatio-Alger-like rags-to-riches story. The problem is, there is no such thing as "a self-made man".

- The guy's mother would probably have a strong opinion on the subject — pointing out that she distinctly remembers a lot of discomfort and pain that was involved with making him and getting him into this world.
- And then his mama had to work for many years to feed him and clothe him and teach him and give him a good set of values...
- And then this "self-made" boy went to a public school where his education was paid for by the taxpayers...
- And then the guy probably got a lot of other opportunities and lucky breaks, and help from a mentor, and then, yes, I'm sure he worked hard for success, and he was lucky enough (or corrupt enough) to end up

rich.

And then the ideologues who have a Wild-West mentality — "every man for himself; survival of the fittest; you can build an empire if you are strong and brave and smart and work hard" — like to declare that he is a good example of a "self-made man" who did it without any "handouts".

For more on memes, see these links which were suggested by Mary C. Hogan, Ph.D.:

1. http://jom-emit.cfpm.org/1998/vol2/wilkins_js.html
2. <http://www.memecentral.com/>
3. <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/MEMIN.HTML> (Dead Link.)

- **Claim Causation By A Higher Power**

Claim that your favorite thing was deliberately put here or created by a "Higher Power" (which is often called "God" or "the Lord", but is also called a lot of different names).

Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's fawning Minister of Propaganda, declared:

Destiny has sent us this man [Adolf Hitler] so that we, in this time of great external and internal stress, shall testify to the miracle.

The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich, William L. Shirer, page 1109.

So who is "Destiny", and how can I meet her? Is she related to that other popular cause, "Fate"?

Likewise, when he heard that President Roosevelt had died, another of Hitler's boot-lickers declared:

This was the Angel of History! We felt its wings flutter through the room. Was that not the turn of fortune we awaited so anxiously?
== Count Schwerin von Krosigk

The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich, William L. Shirer, page 1110.

The Angel of History? I recall Michael, and Gabriel, and Lucifer, and The Angel of Death, and several others, but can't seem to remember any "Angel of History"...

That sounds a lot like Karl Marx's mystical "Force of History" that was supposed to spontaneously bring us a Worker's Paradise. (In spite of his declarations of atheism, Karl Marx was actually a muddled-headed mystic who believed in Higher Powers or Higher Forces that just magically made things happen, and determined the course of history.)

- **Everybody's Doing It, Everybody Knows, and Everybody Says, and The Bandwagon**

Imply that what you want people to do or believe is what everybody else is doing or believing.

- "Everybody knows that the world is flat. All of the leading university professors and Church authorities agree that Christopher Columbus is a crazy fool for thinking that the world is round, and that he can get to the East by sailing west. Everybody knows that he will fall off of the edge of the world."
- "Everybody knows that diseases are caused by evil spirits, and witches putting hexes on people. So if your children get sick, the only cure is to burn the old lady who lives next door, and then your children will get better."
- "Everybody knows that blood-letting is the best cure for a fever. It worked on George Washington, didn't it?"

This is also known as "The Bandwagon" — appeal to people to "get on the bandwagon", or "get with the program", or "catch the wave", or "get with it", or "keep up the momentum".

- "This product is the hottest thing — it has sold out repeatedly."
- "It's the most popular thing we have."
- "It's the fastest-growing form of music."
- "It's definitely the fashion hit of the season."
- "These beliefs are increasingly being accepted."
- "A mighty army of the Lord."

The individual who clings tenaciously to unverified beliefs confuses his beliefs with fact, and often inflicts this confusion on others in his struggle to resolve it in his favor. When many people are persuaded to subscribe to the same pretense, of course, it can gain the aura of objectivity; as British psychoanalyst Ron Britton has observed, "we can substitute concurrence for reality testing, and so shared phantasy can gain the same or even greater status than knowledge." The belief doesn't become a fact, but the fact of shared belief lends it the valuable appearance of credibility. The belief is codified, takes hold, and rises above the level where it might be questioned.

Bush on the Couch, Justin A. Frank, M.D., page 61.

A variation on this technique is rationalizing one's own behavior by claiming that:

- It's what everybody does.
- That's just how it's done.
- It's normal.
- It's standard operating procedure.
- It's customary.
- It's standard practice in the industry.
- It's accepted practice.

You can stampede large masses of people into following a certain course of action if they think it's what everybody else is doing, or will do. We see an amusing example of this most every Christmas, when one particular toy, like a *Furby* or a *Cabbage Patch Doll*, becomes the fad toy of the season, and all of the children *simply must* get one because everybody else (all of the other children) is getting one. The parents go nuts trying to find one as the supply sells out and a bidding war sets in, and the parents often have little real idea of what it is they are trying to get. All they know is that it's what the kids want. All that the kids know is that it's what everybody else wants.

The human and social pressures to conform to the group are very strong. People often conform to the group even without realizing it, or admitting it. Some people fancy themselves non-conformists, but they almost always simply adopt an alternate fashion of dress, hair style, speech, and behavior. You can tell who the "non-conformists" are by which uniform they wear.

In fact, to be a "real non-conformist", you have to conform and wear the uniform. If you simply dress and act any way you want to, people will just regard you as a weirdo.

- For more than 20 years that I can remember, McDonald's has been advertising that it is simply *The* place where everybody eats burgers. The commercials tell our children, "It's just the regular American Way. Everybody is doing it." Not to be left behind, Dairy Queen has launched a series of commercials that tries to convince us that we should just refer to Dairy Queen as "D.Q.", as if eating at Dairy Queen is so commonplace that everybody will immediately know what you mean when you just say "D.Q.". So far, that phony chummy familiarity does not seem to have caught on, probably because people know that it's

phony and resent the attempt at manipulation of their feelings. Oh well, better luck with the next advertising campaign.

- In a wicked twist on this psychology, organizations like Microsoft or political special interest groups have been caught sponsoring phony "grass roots campaigns" where long tables of tired, frowzy grandmothers were paid to hand write a river of "spontaneous" letters that supported some particular position that their employer liked... The numerous letters were supposed to show that *everybody* favors the sponsor's position.
- On television, advertisements for two TV shows declare that "Everybody is talking about..." and "All of America is talking about..." (Oddly, I had never watched either stupid show and none of my friends said anything about them either.)
- The "Moonies" — the members of the Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon — use the "Everybody's Doing It" technique in their recruiting and indoctrination routines. Newcomers are invited to lectures or workshops, where they are exposed to Unification Church doctrines like *The Divine Principle*. The Moonies always [pack the audience](#) with committed true-believer members, making sure that the audience is always more than 50% enthusiastic members, and then they arrange the seating so that each newcomer has an old member on both sides of him. To the newcomer, it seems like the doctrines of the Unification Church must be brilliant, because everybody else is really wowed and amazed at how clear and logical it all is...⁶
- Politicians love to use that stunt too. Richard Nixon and gang packed the gallery at the 1972 Republican National Convention with clean-cut photogenic Young Republican college kids who had been specially bussed in just for the occasion, just so that they could be seen on TV cheering for Nixon — just showing the American people that it wasn't only the old fascists who loved Nixon...
- In 2004, George W. Bush is using a variation on this stunt: He appears before crowds that are "mostly friendly, invited guests".¹⁶ Well that gets rid of the hecklers and the critics, doesn't it?
- Another recent example was on *Meet The Press* (NBC TV). Steven Hadley, President G. W. Bush's National Security Advisor, declared on 3 December 2006 that "I think the American people understand the cost of failure..." (So let's all do what George wants.)
No matter how many Americans understand the cost of failure, there is no evidence that the American people want to see more of their sons' lives wasted in a disastrous misadventure. There is no evidence that the American people agree with George. The results of the last election declare that the American people really do understand the cost of failure, and they are tired of George Bush's failures.

Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous and Al-Anon use this *Everybody's Doing It* and *Everybody Knows* technique often:

- Everybody recovers through x.A..
- Everybody knows that x.A. works, and has saved millions of lives.
- Everybody who ever overcame an alcohol or drug addiction did it by doing the Twelve Steps.
- Everybody goes to meetings.
- Everybody *needs to go* to meetings.
- Everybody knows that the answer to every crisis in life is "*Get to a meeting, as fast as possible.*"
- Everybody knows that x.A. members are the experts on addiction.
- Everybody is just taking it "One Day At A Time."
- Everybody is in recovery.
- Everybody knows that the Twelve Steps work, and that all of the x.A. religious dogma is true.
- Everybody knows that x.A. is "[spiritual](#)", [not religious](#).
- Everybody knows that x.A. is the only way.
- Everybody knows that newcomer alcoholics and addicts are all "*in denial*", and if they object to anything about the "spiritual" 12-Step program, it is just their addiction talking.

- o Everybody knows that the best thing you can do with an alcoholic or drug addict is force him to go to x.A..

- o "Twelve-step programs are increasingly recognized as important resources and treatment adjuncts for recovering alcohol and other drug abusers."

An analysis of 12-Step programs for substance abusers from a developmental perspective, Shulamith Lala Ashenberg Straussner; Betsy Robin Spiegel, *Clinical Social Work Journal*, Fall 1996 v24 n3 p299(11)

- o "The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action."

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 2, "There Is A Solution", page 17.

(What does "brotherly and harmonious action" really mean? That is yet another one of Bill's many euphemisms. And it usually it means is, "go recruiting" and then "attend A.A. meetings and help to indoctrinate the new recruits by not quite telling them the truth".)

Alcoholics Anonymous also makes good use of the social pressures to conform to the group. If A.A. can just make people *Keep Coming Back*, then those people will eventually get worn down and converted to believing what everybody else is believing. They will end up saying and doing what everybody else is saying and doing. It's just human nature.

The flip side of the "*Everybody's Doing It*" coin is "*Nobody Is Doing It*." If you don't see it on TV, then it isn't real. If you don't hear an idea espoused on TV, then that idea must be radical or extremist, and can't be true.

For instance, the CIA didn't really perform experiments in mind control and brainwashing on innocent, unaware American and Canadian civilians, including giving them LSD without their knowledge. That can't possibly be true, because we never saw it on TV.⁵

Likewise, television and the movies always portray Alcoholics Anonymous in a positive light, with movies like "*My Name Is Bill W.*", "*Clean and Sober*", "*The Days of Wine and Roses*", and "*28 Days*", and positive portrayals in TV programs like "*Cagney and Lacy*" and "*ER*" and "*The West Wing*". Nobody on TV ever says that A.A. is actually a stupid superstitious cult religion that is completely ineffective for treating alcoholism, so that can't possibly be true.

- **Pomp, Ceremony, and Ritual**

Pomp, ceremony, and ritual are effective techniques for manipulation of the emotions of crowds. Everybody uses it, from the President of the United States, to the Queen of England, to the Pope. The Moonies like to have mass weddings where thousands of couples are married at a time. Adolf Hitler raised pomp, ceremony, and ritual to an art form at [the Nuremberg rallies](#).



Nazi Party Day, Nuremberg, 1934

Adolf Hitler is the center guy of the three who are facing us and giving the straight-armed salute.
[Heinrich Himmler](#) is Hitler's right-hand man there.

[\(click on image for larger version\)](#)

Speaking of large, powerful armies of disciplined, unthinking, obedient followers, Alcoholics Anonymous seems to have its own too. These quotes are from books of daily meditations for A.A. members published by the A.A. headquarters and Hazelden:

"I will center my thoughts on a Higher Power. I will surrender all to his power within me. I will become a soldier for this power, feeling the might of the spiritual army as it exists in my life today. I will allow a wave of spiritual union to connect me through my gratitude, obedience, and discipline to this Higher Power. Let me allow this power to lead me through the orders of the day."

Daily Reflections; A Book of Reflections by A.A. members for A.A. members, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1990, August 27, page 248.

I will lock arms today and move forward in the company of those who need me. I need them also.

The Promise of a New Day: A Book of Daily Meditations, Karen Casey and Martha Vanceburg, Hazelden, November 4.

The interesting thing about pomp, ceremony, and ritual is that it has an irrational appeal. You are asked to accept an organization and its whole package of beliefs and dogma based on beautiful costumes, magnificent surroundings, rituals, ceremonies, and dramatic productions — things that have absolutely nothing to do with whether it is a good or bad organization, has a good or a bad agenda, or has a good or a bad leader.

You shouldn't choose your religion or your politics on the basis of who has the most colorful costumes or the most entertaining ceremonies, but a lot of people do.

A variation on this technique is lots of hoopla, fun, parties, spiritual jet-setting, get-togethers, conventions, and conferences.



[Moonies Mass Marriage Ceremony, 13 Feb 2000](#)

(click on image for larger version)

Alcoholics Anonymous has lots of ceremonies and rituals — every meeting is a ceremony where people practice rituals like incanting the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and praying out loud, as well as reciting several other pieces of standard church dogma at the start of every meeting. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately), the ceremonies of A.A. are not nearly as dramatic or colorful as those of the Nazis or the Moonies.

- **Humor and Ridicule**

Satire is a time-honored political weapon, and a devastating one. Few pompous, stuffed-shirt politicians or other phony leaders can stand much of it. A good joke can be deadlier than a gun when it comes to killing off bad politicians.

Unfortunately, Alcoholics Anonymous doesn't have any good jokes about itself. A.A. pretends to have a lot of humor by laughing and joking about everything and anything except the stuff that really matters — like the faults and shortcomings of A.A. itself. A.A. claims to have rules like, "Rule #62: Don't take yourself too damn seriously." ([12X12](#), page 149.)

But what that really means is, "You can and should put yourself down, and tell jokes about yourself, and laugh at how stupid you are, but don't you dare ridicule A.A. or its doctrines, or its founders." (I hear that the A.A. true believers go non-linear when you tell them my jokes about A.A.... Too bad; they are missing out on some fun.)

- **Assume The Major Premise**

People's minds have this peculiarity: Only the most thoughtful of listeners examine major premises — the premises upon which an argument is based. When a doubtful assertion is made, most people will plunge into arguing about the assertion without further thought about the underlying assumptions.

For example: in the early part of World War Two, before the U.S.A. had gotten into the war, the Nazis desired to convince the American people that Germany would defeat Britain and win the war. But if they had stated

such an idea directly, it would have aroused the suspicions of the American people, who would have argued the point.

So, what the Nazis did was spread many stories and arguments about how the U.S.A. should go ahead and trade with a victorious Germany after the war was over:

- "Whether we like Hitler or not, we will have to deal with him."
- "If the Nazis win, let's not be sentimental — business is business. It is all an imperialist war anyway."
- "Europe is just too big for us to ignore, and not trade with, even if Germany is running the whole thing."

The listeners may have immediately launched into arguments over whether we should trade with Germany, but few challenged the underlying assumption, the major premise, that Germany would defeat Great Britain.

Another example: *"Why does America have the best government in the world?"*

No evidence has been supplied to support the idea that the United States (not "America") has the best government. Many European democracies from Denmark and Sweden to Switzerland would challenge that arrogant assumption.

In March of 2005, we are seeing the use of this technique of assuming the major premise in the tragic case of Terri Schiavo, a woman who 14 years earlier suffered a heart attack that stopped the flow of blood to her brain that caused most of her brain to die. Her husband favors stopping life support and letting her go, but Terri's parents and brother (the Schindler family) constantly talk about "saving her" and "keeping her alive" by re-inserting the feeding tube. That is assuming a fact that has not been established — that her brain is still alive — that she can be saved.

Her brother has even gone so far in his sadly deluded wishful thinking as to interpret some of her moans as speech declaring that she "wants to live". That is *really* assuming a lot. Her moans of "Aaaah waaaaah" could just as easily mean "I want you to leave me alone and let me die" (although in truth they don't really mean anything at all).

Those who favor keeping Terri on life support call it "judicial murder" for the courts to order the feeding tube to be removed in compliance with her husband's wishes. And out in the streets, protesters campaign for the governor or congressmen or judges or the President to "save the life of Terri".

What all of those activists erroneously assume is the major premise — that Terri Schiavo can in fact "be saved" and be "kept alive" and that she actually is alive and has a functioning brain — that there is something or somebody left in that body to save. But 14 years of debates and court cases and doctors' examinations and medical tests, as well as the failure of Terri's medical condition to improve in 14 years, have shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that the higher parts of her brain died and liquefied a long time ago, and that she isn't in there any more. There is nobody left to save. The real Terri Schiavo died 14 years ago.

[Update: June 2005: The autopsy of Terri Schiavo revealed that her brain had been hopelessly destroyed, and she was brain-dead for 14 years.]

(Also note that somebody is using the propaganda technique of *Observational Selection* on you when they choose what you will see on television. Out of the many, many hours of videotapes that the Schindler family has made, you get to see only a few seconds of images that appear to show Terry Schiavo reacting to her environment or responding to people stroking her face. But a judge who watched 14 hours of the videotapes concluded that she was not aware of her surroundings, and that she was not reacting to stimuli in any conscious manner.)

Also see [The Effectiveness of the Twelve-Step Treatment](#) for an example of A.A.-Trustee Professor George Vaillant's use of this technique.

For another example of "assuming the major premise", at Narcotics Anonymous meetings, the group secretary always asks:

"Can we see a show of hands of those who have a year or more of clean time to show that this program works?"

They never ask,

"Can we see a show of hands of those who have a year or more of clean time without doing Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps, to show that his bombastic cult religion nonsense is completely unnecessary?"

FYI: I am one of those hands. :-) And I'm not the only one...

- ***Petitio Principii* — Assume Facts Not In Evidence**

Petitio Principii is similar to "Assume the major premise".

Petitio Principii is "a logical fallacy in which a premise is assumed to be true without warrant, or in which what is to be proved is implicitly taken for granted." In court, lawyers will scream, "Objection, Your Honor! The counsel is assuming facts not in evidence!"

"I don't believe in astrology. But then again, I'm a Capricorn, and Capricorns don't believe in astrology."

Another facet of "*Petitio Principii*" is asking questions that are really veiled statements. One of the most famous examples of that is the question, "Have you stopped beating your wife yet?" It doesn't matter whether you answer yes or no, you are confessing to having beaten your wife.

One of the most annoying things about religious recruiters and proselytizers is how they assume that you are a hopeless sinner, before even bothering to ask about your actual spiritual condition. Their tracts advertise "How To Get On Target", without asking where you are currently aimed. They just assume that you are a disgusting sinner, headed for perdition, going to Hell in a bucket. (And they rationalize their behavior by declaring "All are sinners" — which they conveniently interpret to mean that they are entitled to lecture you about religious matters.)

Alcoholics Anonymous [uses this technique](#) in many ways. For instance:

- First, Bill Wilson tried to get prospective recruits to sign blank checks, and promise to go to "any length" to quit drinking:

Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval. Then let his family or a friend ask him if he wants to quit for good and if he would go to any extreme to do so. If he says yes, then his attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 90.

What if he says "No, I won't go to *any extreme*. There are all kinds of things that I won't do to get sober, including lie, cheat, steal, and rape little girls when the Moon gets full. I won't join a crazy cult religion, either."?

"If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps."

Alcoholics Anonymous, William G. Wilson, "How It Works", 3rd & 4th Edition, page 58.

But then, some pages later, Bill Wilson suddenly assumed a big fact not in evidence:

Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol*.

Nowhere does it say that all of the alcoholics agreed in the beginning to go to "any length" to quit drinking. Bill Wilson just asked a question in one place, and then, in another place, he assumed the answer that he wanted.

- "When they choose a sponsor, beginners should usually choose someone with four to eight years of *Time*. Someone with less time may not be experienced enough, while someone with much more time may be too spiritual to relate well to a beginner's problems."

If you want to argue with that statement, the usual human thing to do is to start arguing about how many years the ideal sponsor will have, rather than whether one should get a sponsor at all, or whether having many years of *Time* makes someone more spiritual.

That "advice" has many underlying assumptions — premises — none of which are supported by any evidence (and none of which are even true):

- Beginners should get sponsors.
- Beginners will benefit from having sponsors.
- Suitable sponsors will be able to relate to the beginners' problems and help them with those problems.
- People grow increasingly spiritual from more years of practicing the Twelve Steps and going to A.A. meetings.
- People with lots of *Time* are so spiritual and holy that they have moved up to another plane of existence, one that is just too lofty for a beginner to handle, and one from which the terribly holy old-timers may have difficulties relating to the common rabble.

None of those assertions have been proven or even clearly stated and supported by evidence and facts. The speaker just shoves it all at us, "under the table", so to speak, as assumed facts that are just incidental to the question of how many years of sobriety a good sponsor should have.

In fact, [recent research has shown](#) that newcomers do not benefit at all from getting sponsors. In a recent controlled study, a group of new Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous members who got sponsors did no better than another group who didn't get sponsors. But strangely enough, the elder members *who chose to become sponsors* did better than the other members who did not choose to act as sponsors. (The sponsors were a self-selecting group; not randomly chosen.) It seems that getting their egos stroked, acting as puffed-up, all-wise, all-knowing sponsors, ordering the wimpy newcomers around, helps the sponsors to stay clean and sober, even if it doesn't help the newcomers any.

- In his second book, Bill Wilson wrote about confessing all of one's sins (Step Five) by saying:

The real tests of the situation are your own willingness to confide and your full confidence in the one with whom you share your first accurate self-survey.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 61.

First accurate self-survey? Says who? Bill Wilson was assuming a lot in declaring that newcomers to A.A. had *never* done an accurate self-assessment before. How would he know? But then, Bill always assumed that alcoholics were just [immoral bums](#) who needed to be reformed with [his version of spirituality](#). Bill Wilson assumed that all A.A. newcomers were strangers to real religion, people without any real morals or spirituality — they were even atheists or agnostics — who knew nothing about God and who had never done any introspection before. Bill also wrongly assumed that [wallowing in guilt and only listing negative things](#) — all of one's "defects of character", "moral shortcomings", and "wrongs" — constituted "an accurate self-survey".

Also see the *Bait And Switch Con Game* web page for [an example of Bill Wilson using *Petitio Principii*](#) to convince people that they must believe in his beliefs.

- **Hidden Assumptions**

Hidden assumptions are much like the previous two kinds of assumptions, [Assume The Major Premise](#), and [Assume Facts Not In Evidence \(*Petitio Principii*\)](#), but in this technique the assumption is so subtle that it isn't even mentioned.

Television infomercials that sell stock market trading computer programs, or options or FOREX trading programs, all try to foist numerous hidden assumptions on the viewers:

- They assume that stocks, contracts, or other pieces of paper will routinely go up and down in price in neat cycles, and that you will be able to choose a stock, option, or futures contract that will conveniently do so for you.
- They assume that you or their computer program will be able to pick the correct stock or option and buy it at the lowest price, and then sell it at the highest price. In other words, they assume that you or their program will be able to "time the market".
- They assume that there is something called a "cash flow" that you can just dip into, as if it were a river of money, and you can just scoop out buckets for yourself. There is no such thing in the financial markets. The reality is that there are a lot of sharp, experienced, professional traders who are buying and selling pieces of paper while haggling over every penny.
- They often tell you that you can place stop losses on every order. That is true, but you still lose money before the stop loss takes effect. *It stops the loss from getting even worse; it doesn't stop you from losing money.* And stop loss orders don't always take effect as soon as you wish. In big stock market crashes (like 1929 and 1987), people had to wait a long time, a seeming eternity, while they watched their stock sink like the Titanic, before their sell order was finally filled by a willing buyer — filled at a very low price. (Often, there just aren't a lot of willing buyers around in a stock market crash. Everybody is trying to sell. And you can't sell something until someone else wants to buy it from you.) That infomercial implies that you will only lose a little bit on bad trades because of stop loss orders, while making big profits on lucky trades. ("*Stop your losses; let your winnings run.*") But that isn't necessarily true or always even possible. And they assume that if you lose a little on one trade, that you will make it up on the next trade. That isn't necessarily true, either. If your luck is bad, you can stumble from one losing trade to another until you run out of money.
- The infomercial makers assume or imply that the computer program is looking at the same things as the market. It isn't. Computer programs track current trends in prices — in other words, by analyzing the past, up to just a few seconds ago — but the big institutional investors and traders are always buying and selling things based on *their vision of the future*, as determined by such arcane factors as the prime interest rate, the price of oil, housing starts, unemployment figures, retail sales, and various other economic measurements like business profit predictions and the Consumer Confidence Index, and even rumors and whispered tips and insider trading information. The big boys are always looking at the future and trading on the basis of what is going to happen in the future, while the computer program in your dinky little computer is reacting to the present and past prices.
- The infomercial makers assume or imply that their computer program can predict the future. Oh really? If it can, why isn't everybody using it?
- They assume that your trades won't ever influence the market — that your buy and sell orders won't drive prices up or down, no matter how large your orders are. They even assume that *ALL* of the buy and sell orders of all of the other people who also bought the same computer program won't drive the prices

up or down, and that you won't end up in a race with them to see who can get their orders executed first. The infomercials don't mention the fact that if the computer program tells every program user to buy the same stock or option at the same time, the price of the stock or option will jump sharply, and then it won't be a bargain any more.

- The talking heads in infomercials assume that leverage is good, and that you will profit from it. They happily declare that you can buy stocks, options, and futures contracts on margin — meaning, putting up, in cash, only a small fraction of their actual cost, and borrow the rest. That allows you to profit by several times as much money if your gamble pays off big. But it also allows you to lose several times as much money if the trade goes sour. In highly-leveraged deals, you can easily lose more than your total investment, and end up owing the broker large sums of money. (Remember Long Term Capital Management.) The salesmen don't mention that ugly fact.
- The infomercials assume that you can win at the financial markets trading game, even if you are a beginner, just because you bought an easy-to-use computer program. Those TV commercials imply that the big boys in the financial markets are too stupid to buy the same computer program and use it (if only to see what the dumb thing says), and that the big boys are too stupid to hire lots of smart young computer programmers to write even better programs for them (which they have already done).
- The infomercials assume that it is easy to be right.
Many billions of dollars worth of stocks, bonds, options, and futures contracts are bought and sold every day, and every trade is between two people or companies, one of whom buys and one of whom sells. Curiously, both parties in every trade believe that what they are doing is the best thing to do. Every time you buy, the guy who is selling is convinced that you are making a mistake. Every time you sell, the buyer is convinced that you are making a mistake.
If you are a beginner who is trading against experienced professionals at big market-making brokerages, who is more likely to be right?

- **Assume Futures or Future Results**

Stack the deck in an argument by assuming that certain future events or future results will occur.

For example, a political candidate can be dismissed with this argument: "Sure, Joe Blow is a great guy and he has some good issues and he says some good stuff. But he can't win, so there is no point in seriously considering him as a candidate."

Obviously, if nobody will seriously consider Joe as a candidate, he can't win.

(And now, in 2009, do you remember how many people said that the young, black, Junior Senator from Illinois couldn't possibly really win the Presidency, so his campaign was just a joke, and shouldn't be taken seriously?)

- **Fallacy of Presupposition**

Ask for an explanation of something not yet established:

"If evolution is true, then..."

Since the study of evolution is a work in progress, one can always find a point of controversy, and challenge the other person to demonstrate that it is true, while assuming that failure to do so proves the entire matter false.

- **Affirmation of the Consequent**

Improperly validate the key element of an implication:

"The Bible says God's people will be happy; we are happy; therefore the Bible speaks truthfully."

A.A. does it like this:

"RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. To thoroughly follow our path requires absolute abstinence from drinking alcohol. If somebody drinks, then he isn't thoroughly following our path.

"But this one guy didn't drink, so he did thoroughly follow our path, and he stayed sober, so that proves that the program works to keep people from drinking."

- **Irrelevant Conclusion (*Ignoratio Elenchi*)**

It's a conclusion that does not follow from the argument:

"Jehovah's Witnesses have the true religion because only we do so much door-to-door preaching."

If you point out that Mormons also preach in this way, you'll be told that they don't do as much of it, or that their religion is *obviously* false.⁹

Likewise, *"Alcoholism is bad, really bad, so A.A., which is intended to save alcoholics, is good."*

That is bad logic. There is no evidence that the A.A. cult religion actually saves anyone.

That bogus logic is no different than,

- *"Drug addiction is bad, really bad, so Scientology is good."*
(Scientology has a front group called "Narconon" that claims to save drug addicts by using Scientology "principles" on them.)
- *"Cancer is bad, really bad, so the Nazi Party is good."*
(The Nazis really did want to wipe out cancer. See [The Nazi War on Cancer](#) by Robert N. Proctor.)

A.A. missionaries like to brag about the scientific studies that have found that there is a genetic factor in alcoholism. They then claim that those studies support the A.A. disease theory of alcoholism. That is another *irrelevant conclusion*.

The fact that some genes affect a person's susceptibility to alcohol addiction does not make alcoholism a disease any more than my genes for blue-green eyes prove that Blue-Eye-ism is a disease. And I also have the genes for premature graying of the hair, and that isn't a disease either.

Just because someone is more prone to alcohol addiction does not make him powerless over alcohol or unable to control his actions, and it does not make habitual alcohol consumption a disease.

- **Confusion of Beliefs with Facts**

This includes

- *Substitution of Beliefs for Facts*,
- *Insistance that "Beliefs Trump Facts"*, as if *"It's what I believe"* is the final answer to an argument,
- and *"Belief Equals Truth"*, as if something is true because somebody believes it.

Dogmatic religious sects with bizarre beliefs are notorious for using this logical fallacy. When you present a true believer member of such a church with facts that contradict his beliefs, he answers, "Well, what we believe is...", and that is supposed to be the end of the argument — the final answer on the subject. The fact that they believe something supposedly makes contradictory facts irrelevant and invalid — contradictory facts are just minor irritants to be ignored and discarded.

An aspirin commercial portrayed a man declaring, *"Last year I had a heart attack, right there where she is standing. If it hadn't been for Bayer aspirin, who knows? I believe that Bayer aspirin saved my life."*

No actual medical evidence is supplied to show that aspirin really saved him from death by heart attack, and the commercial doesn't actually say that Bayer aspirin saved the guy's life. In fact, the commercial does not

even say that the man took any aspirin. We just get his uninformed "belief". Besides, is that guy for real, or is he just an actor reading a script?

Note that this is also an example of *Sly Suggestions* and *Proof By Anecdote*.

A woman who was campaigning for John McCain in Florida declared, "You've got to understand how bad it will be if we get Obama, and I firmly believe that."

NPR (National Public Radio), Morning News, 3 November 2008.

That woman's firm belief is not evidence of anything — other than evidence of what her strongly-held opinions happen to be.

When a person who is skeptical of Alcoholics Anonymous declares, "The Bible does not say that God will make you quit drinking and restore you to sanity and take care of your will and your life for you and remove all of your defects of character just because you 'turned your life over' and confessed all of your sins to your sponsor," a 12-Step believer answers, "What, don't you believe that God cares about you and wants you to be healthy and happy?"

The answer is, "It doesn't matter what I believe about God's feelings and desires, the fact remains that the Bible still does not say that God will do the 12 Steps for you."

(In fact, the Bible actually specifically bans several of the practices that are embodied in the 12 Steps.)

Another A.A. advocate declared:

"I am a firm believer that if someone is ready and is truly an alcoholic of the desperate sort that I was, within this program there is a solution that works."

<http://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/alcoholism-12-step-support/149124-aa-cult.html>

There, the writer uses both *Lying with Qualifiers* and *Confusion of Beliefs with Facts* to declare that the 12-Step program works, he believes, if...

A variation on this logical fallacy is, "I'm sure that...", as in,

"I'm sure that President Bush had the legal authority to spy on thousands of Americans and tap their phones without a warrant."

One political hack's convinced opinion, no matter how sure he is, doesn't change the facts of the matter, or change what is actually in the laws of the USA.

- **Substitute Feelings For Facts**

Declare that you *feel* that something is true, and act like that is supporting evidence.

- "I feel that he is a good man. He has a good heart."
- "I feel that it was the right thing to do. I don't have any qualms about it."

The "good heart" argument is one that George W. Bush uses often. When one of Bush's political appointees proves himself to be totally incompetent and unqualified for his job, Bush answers, "He has a good heart."

Likewise, President Ronald Reagan used this technique when he declared, "My heart tells me that we did not trade arms for hostages, although my head tells me that we did."

And G. W. Bush did the same thing again: After the Intelligence Community released a National Intelligence Estimate that clearly stated that Iran was not building nuclear weapons, and had abandoned their nuclear weapons program many years ago, Bush declared, "I still feel that Iran is a threat."

- **Confusion of Abstractions with Reality**

This includes *Confusing the Map with the Territory*. (The territory is the real land; the map is an abstraction drawn on a piece of paper.)

We humans are very good at making abstractions to reduce big complex things to small manageable simple ideas. Unfortunately, we are prone to making the error of confusing our abstractions with the actual thing that they represent. Then,

- "Fighting for the Flag" equals defending one's country from an enemy. (They are not the same thing at all.) Likewise, burning a flag is not burning down America.
- An ardent young Nazi wrote a letter to his girlfriend, explaining that he did not wish to die in the coming war (WWII), but if he did, it didn't matter, because "What is my death compared to the Greatness of Destiny?" Obviously, with 20-20 hindsight we can see that Adolf Hitler offered no "Greatness of Destiny" that was worth dying for. (It is an immense human tragedy that for thousands of years, young people have been conned into fighting and dying for such meaningless grandiose language.)
- A funny colored area on a paper map (an abstraction) is suddenly worth fighting for, even if "we" do not own it (like Vietnam and Iraq).
- In a stock market television program, a pundit declared that the current condition of the stock market was, "**Liquidity seeking things of value.**"
"Liquidity" is an abstraction, a relative measure of how much money is easily available for loans or purchases of stocks and bonds. *Liquidity* is not a hairy animal like a bear or a bull that prowls Wall Street seeking something to eat.

Now there may have been a few people or institutional investors who were seeking something of value to buy — there are usually at least a few bargain-hunters around — but "Liquidity" was definitely not roaming "The Street", searching for something to buy. In fact, the sub-prime mortgage debacle soon shattered the confidence of "The Market", and left it very illiquid. (In other words, those people who had some money decided that they would rather keep it than give it to some fast-talking con-artists.)

- **Circular Reasoning (*Circulus in Demonstrando*)**

Support a chain of arguments by the arguments it contains, as in:

"The Bible is true because it is written by God. The Bible tells us how God wrote the Bible. God doesn't lie, as the Bible tells us, so He wouldn't write a book that is false, would he?"

Likewise,

"If reading were not supposed to be illegal, then it wouldn't be against the law, would it?"

Or,

*"Smoking marijuana is bad because it is against the law.
Smoking marijuana is against the law because it is bad."*

Or,

"You can get rid of the excessive noise from the Olympus E-510 camera's small Four-Thirds sensor by running a noise-reduction program that will unfortunately also erase all of the fine picture details along with the noise. After all, noise reduction programs are really just blurring programs."

"But you can get the fine detail back at the expense of increased noise by sharpening or turning off the noise reduction."

"Besides, the noise isn't that important."

Or,

"The Alcoholics Anonymous program works great for the rare few people for whom it works great."

Or,

"It is okay to lie and exaggerate how many lives A.A. really saves, in order to promote A.A. and get people to join A.A. — the end justifies the means — because A.A. is a wonderful organization that has saved so many lives...."

Variations on Circular Reasoning include:

- Begging The Question
- The Chicken and Egg Argument
- Circular Definition
- Circulus in Demonstrando
- Petitio Principii
- Reasoning in a circle

- **Appeal to Evil**

Appeal to and arouse the worst parts of people's character. Hate-mongering, demagoguery, rabble-rousing, and similar methods of crowd manipulation can best be accomplished by appealing to the low, base, worst side of people's character — to the faults, vices, fears, and weaknesses of the audience. Various crowds can be wooed by appealing to their greed, anger, jealousy, vanity, fears, racism, sexism, hatred, or lusts.

- In his classic book on mass religious movements, *The True Believer*, Eric Hoffer wrote:

Hatred is the most accessible and comprehensive of all unifying agents. It pulls and whirls the individual away from his own self, makes him oblivious of his weal and future, frees him of jealousies and self-seeking. He becomes an anonymous particle quivering with a craving to fuse and coalesce with his like into one flaming mass. Heine suggests that what Christian love cannot do is effected by a common hatred.¹

Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a God, but never without belief in a devil. Usually the strength of a mass movement is proportionate to the vividness and tangibility of its devil. When Hitler was asked whether he thought the Jew must be destroyed, he answered: "No.... We should have then to invent him. It is essential to have a tangible enemy, not merely an abstract one."² F.A. Voigt tells of a Japanese mission that arrived in Berlin in 1932 to study the National Socialist movement. Voigt asked a member of the mission what he thought of the movement. He replied: "It is magnificent. I wish we could have something like it in Japan, only we can't, because we haven't got any Jews."³

1. Heinrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (London: Trubner & Company, 1882), p. 89.

2. Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 234.

3. Fritz August Voigt, *Unto Caesar* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), p. 301.

The True Believer, Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements, Eric Hoffer, pages 89 to 90.

- Senator Joseph McCarthy and his lawyer Roy Cohn used fear of Communists to terrorize the nation and build their careers. They became such vicious demagogues with their "black lists" of names and their accusations of people being Communists, or "Communist sympathizers", or "fellow travelers" that fear of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his staff of mad-dog anti-Communists replaced fear of Communism in many people's minds...
- Racists inflame their audiences by complaining about all of the "special privileges" that the blacks get through government programs, and complaining that the blacks are "taking over."
- White Supremacists and Neo-Nazis routinely preach hatred of blacks and Jews, and arouse fear of them by accusing them of giant conspiracies and horrible crimes.

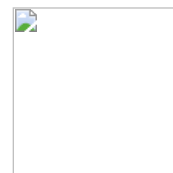
- Some other politician might appeal to a crowd by arousing their laziness and greed, by promising pork-barrel projects that will put them on easy street. This tactic is routinely used on millionaire industrialists who are promised more lucrative government contracts and lower taxes.
- Preachers routinely use fear of death and fear of Hell to manipulate their audiences.
- Some preachers seek to induce disgust and homophobia in their audiences, to make them hate and fear homosexual people. Note that there is always a veiled game of one-upmanship going on in those tirades: "We are special. We are more holy than those other people because we don't do the disgusting things that homosexuals do..."
- Other evangelists preach hatred of abortionists and women who get abortions, and incite followers to shoot doctors and bomb clinics, in the name of "Preserving Life."

A.A. appeals to some bad characteristics, too:

- Arouse fear of death:
 - "You must either *work a strong program* or else you will die drunk in a gutter."
 - Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant.
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 174.
 - To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.
The Big Book, William G. Wilson, page 44.
 - "None of us in Alcoholics Anonymous is normal. Our abnormality compels us to go to AA... We all go because we need to. Because the alternative is drastic, either A.A. or death."
Delirium Tremens, Stories of Suffering and Transcendence, Ignacio Solares, **Hazelden**, 2000, page 27.
- Appeal to vanity, egotism, and lust for power:
 - "We Alcoholics Anonymous people are special, very special. We are so special that we are God's Chosen People. Only unto us has God given the magic gift of healing alcoholics."
 - "I'm so holy that I spend all day, every day, '**Seeking and Doing the Will of God**' and practicing these principles in all my affairs (including all of my affairs with my mistresses, just like Bill Wilson did)."
 - "After you have 10 or 20 years of *Time*, you are like unto a saint, respected, obeyed, and admired by the young. You can have an entire stable of young sponsees doing your bidding."
 - "We really are Chosen. Our years of getting beaten down by alcoholism have prepared us for leadership roles. Now that we number in the millions — not just us, but all of the Twelve-Step groups — we can become a force for change."
— One of the A.A. faithful, "sharing" at a meeting.

(Presumably, after the peaceful, non-violent *coup d'etat*, we can have a wonderful alcohol-free country run by a fundamentalist theocracy, just like Iran. Our new Fearless Leader will be the Ayatollah Anonymous, who will enforce the teachings of the Prophet, Bill Wilson.)

By the way, did anyone else notice the conflict between "becoming a force for change" and the ban on getting involved in outside issues — Tradition Ten?



That "*we number in the millions*" phrase means just one thing: enough registered voters to swing an election. That's politics, not recovery.

Did anyone else notice the embedded egotism and arrogance? Only the alcoholic 12-Steppers are qualified for leadership roles, because of their years of bottle-training. Only they can be "a force for change".

And why do we need such big changes now? Apparently, it's because the normal people who were running the world, and keeping things together, for all of those years while we were busy drinking ourselves to death weren't "*The Chosen People*", and they weren't religious enough, and they haven't been doing a good enough job of running the country in a moral fashion. But just watch the changes after us brain-damaged alcoholics and drug addicts and religious fanatics seize power.

"Boy, will the ordinary people have to kiss our asses now. The shoe's going to be on the other foot now... We're really gonna be a force for change now..."

The part that I still haven't been able to figure out is: "[Exactly how does excessive alcohol consumption prepare us for leadership roles?](#)"

And which is better for future leadership, whiskey, wine, or beer? What did Dubya drink?

Oh, and do you get bonus points for 20 years of snorting cocaine?



- Indulge the *true believers'* love of absolutes:
 - "Bill Wilson was inspired by God when he wrote the Twelve Steps and the *Big Book* — Bill asked for, and received, [Guidance from God](#), so every word in the *Big Book* is unquestionably true."
 - "A.A. practices [the Oxford Groups' Four Absolutes](#) — '*Absolute Honesty, Absolute Love, Absolute Unselfishness, and Absolute Purity*'."
 - "Alcoholics Anonymous is the only possible way to overcome a drinking problem."
 - "You must totally abstain from drinking, or you will be a drunkard — 'One drink, One drunk.'"
 - Alcoholics Anonymous is [The Only Way](#).
- Indulge lust for sex:
 - "Newcomers are easy marks. They are just freshly detoxed, their heads are still cloudy, and they are very shaky and confused and insecure, so they are easy to fast-talk and pick up."
 - "Every meeting is a cattle call. It's a good place to pick up women even if you aren't an alcoholic or an addict."
 - "Once you have (or can claim to have) enough years of sobriety, you can start sponsoring all of the delicious young things that you want in your bed. Just walk up to them after their first meeting, and ask them if they want [the help of a sponsor](#). And if anyone objects to your behavior, just point out that you have more *Time* than they do."
 - "Heck, [in Mike Q's Midtown Group](#), the old-timers get their pick of the new underage girls. The girls are even assigned to their new sponsors by the group's elders."

With all of those great selling points, do you think we can attract some new members to our "little fellowship"?

- **Appeal to Higher Principles**

You must do something, or we must support a certain course of action, because some Higher Principle requires it:

- Social Darwinism teaches us that the big and strong people should eat the small and weak people, because it will improve the species. It's Mother Nature's sacred law, *The Survival of the Fittest*. There is no sense in helping the small, weak, sickly people, because it will only let them reproduce and pollute the gene pool.
- The Pope declared that Spain and Portugal should seize all of the native American people's lands because they were heathens and "in rebellion against The One True God", and Spain and Portugal had the moral duty to Christendom and God to convert the natives to Christianity.
- Manifest Destiny teaches us that white men in the U.S.A. should kill Indians and steal their land because it is the white man's God-given destiny to dominate the continent and build a great nation (— a great white Christian nation, that is).
- Likewise, Israel currently argues that they have God-given right to steal the Palestinian people's land and water because God gave that land to some Jewish ancestors 4000 years ago — and they didn't lose the deed to the Romans 2000 years ago, like Moses and Jeremiah predicted that the Lord would make happen, if the Israelites weren't good enough:

"If you ever make idols, the LORD will be angry, and you won't have long to live, because the LORD will let you be wiped out. Only a few of you will survive, and the LORD will force you to leave the land and will scatter you among the nations." (Deuteronomy 4:26-27)

"Israel, today I am giving you the laws and teachings of the LORD your God. And if you don't obey them all, He will put many curses on you. ...
The LORD will let you be defeated by your enemies, and you will scatter in all directions." (Deuteronomy 28:15,25)

They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His presence ...
2 Kings 17:17,18

The LORD said,

People of Judah, I am the LORD your God, but you have refused to obey me, and you didn't change when I punished you. And now, you no longer even pretend to be faithful to me. ...

You have disobeyed me by putting your disgusting idols in my temple, and now the temple itself is disgusting to me. At Topheth in Hinnom Valley you have built alters where you kill your children and burn them as sacrifices to other gods. I would never think of telling you to do this. So watch out!

Jeremiah 7:28 and 7:30-32

The LORD said,

I destroyed the land because people disobeyed me and rejected my laws and teachings. They were stubborn and worshiped Baal, just as their ancestors did. So I, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, promise them poison to eat and drink. I'll scatter them in foreign countries that they and their ancestors have never heard of. Finally, I will send enemy soldiers to kill every last one of them.

Jeremiah 9:12-16



Speaking of which, in chapters 2, 3, 7, 13, 17, 20, and 25 of the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses says that the Lord our God commands us faithful followers to practice religious bigotry, racism, mass murder, genocide, and ethnic cleansing, in order to keep people from worshipping the wrong God (which meant, "any God besides the blood-thirsty monster that Moses liked").

- "We met Sihon and his army in battle at Jahaz, and the LORD our God helped us defeat them. We killed Sihon, his sons, and everyone else in his army. Then we captured and destroyed every town in Sihon's kingdom, killing everyone, but keeping the livestock and everything else of value." (Deuteronomy 2:32-35)
- "The LORD our God helped us destroy Og and his army and conquer his entire kingdom of Bashan, including the Argob region. His kingdom had lots of villages and sixty towns... We completely destroyed them all, killing everyone, but keeping the livestock and everything else of value." (Deuteronomy 3:3-7)
- "... you must destroy them without mercy." (Deuteronomy 7:3)
- "... you must stone them to death. ... Don't show any pity." (Deuteronomy 13:8-10)
- "You may hear that some worthless people there have talked everyone there into worshipping other gods... you must take your swords and kill every one of them..." (Deuteronomy 13:13-15)
- "... kill all the men. Take the women and children as slaves..." (Deuteronomy 20:14-15)
- And then the book of *Numbers* gives us helpful instructions at this point — it tells us to kill everyone in a neighboring city, even the baby boys, except for the virgin girls, whom we shall keep and turn into our sex slaves: "Moses became angry with the army commanders and said, "I can't believe you let the women live! They are the ones who followed Balaam's advice and invited our people to worship the god Baal-Peor. ... You must put to death every boy and all of the women who have ever had sex. But do not kill the young women who have never had sex. You may keep them for yourselves. ... Moses and Eleazar followed the LORD's instructions, and listed everything that had been taken from the Midianites. The list included ... 32,000 young women who had never had sex. (Numbers 31:14-35)

If Moses' army kept 32,000 young virgins for themselves, then they must have slaughtered at least three or four hundred thousand other people — older married women, widows, younger girls, men, boys, and infants, because virgin young women were pretty rare, because the girls married very young, soon after puberty. There wasn't much of a time window during which girls were virgin young women. If Moses were alive today, he would be taken to the Hague in chains and put on trial for war crimes, right beside Slobodan Milosevic and Robert Mugabe. "*Genocide*" is the only name for such racist immoral conduct.

- "Whenever you capture towns in the land the LORD your God is giving you, be sure to kill all the people and animals. ... If you allow them to live, they will persuade you to worship their disgusting gods, and you will be unfaithful to the LORD." (Deuteronomy 20:16-18)
Now that is downright wacky. The livestock will persuade you to worship false gods? Somebody is insane.
- "The LORD your God will help you capture the land, and He will give you peace. But when that day comes, you must wipe out Amalek so completely that no one remembers they ever lived." (Deuteronomy 25:19)

And then chapter 21 of Deuteronomy, verses 11 to 14, handily teaches us how to make sex slaves out of the surviving enemy women: If she is beautiful enough to make you want her, then cut her hair and fingernails, dress her in Israelite clothes, and give her a month to mourn for her dead husband or father (whom you killed). Then you can drag her into your bed and keep her as your sex slave for as long as you wish (they call it, "marry her"). If you grow tired of her, you can get rid of her at any time you wish (they call it "divorce her"). But if you have had sex with her — "if you have slept with her as your wife" — then you have destroyed her cash value — you have "dishonored her", and you cannot sell her into slavery any more. You will have to give her her freedom — just boot her out into the streets when you are done with her.

Oh well, I guess that's just the price of getting laid while keeping people from worshipping the wrong god.

- Old Nazis tell us that the S.S. had [a noble spiritual mission](#) to elevate the human race by protecting and enhancing the purity of the white, blue-eyed, Aryan race. Eliminating the Jews, Blacks, Gays, and Gypsies, and preventing them from further contaminating the gene pool, was only a part of that great program.

*"And then did the heroic S.S. soldiers smite the disgusting Jewish villages in the land of the Ukraine, completely destroying them all, killing everyone, but keeping the livestock and everything else of value, for the LORD was with them: **Gott Sei Mit Uns.**"*

- Communism teaches us that we must overthrow the rich people and seize all of their property and kill them all and spread Communism everywhere because Dialectical Materialism teaches us that the Revolution of the Proletariat is inevitable — the "Force of History" cannot be stopped.

- For the sake of "Welfare Reform" and "Compassionate Conservatism", we should kick all of the single mothers off of welfare. It will "teach them to be responsible."
- In Alcoholics Anonymous, you must quit drinking because God wants you to, so that you can then spend the rest of your life "seeking and doing the Will of God." (Which, [according to the Old Testament](#), might be "Kill all of your neighbors who are not Jewish, except for the virgin girls, whom you may keep as your sex slaves.")

- **Appeal to Authorities (*Argumentum ad Verecundiam*)**

Cite and quote all kinds of authorities to support your statements. Also seem to obtain support from famous people who are not present to state their actual opinions.

- In Herman Melville's classic novel *Moby Dick*, the crew begged Captain Ahab to stop his suicidal monomaniacal pursuit of the white whale. Captain Ahab dismissed the crew's sane advice with the statement:

"There is one God who is Lord over all the seas, and there is one Captain who is lord over all the Pequod. Now get back to your post."
- Religious proselytizers argue, "Einstein believed in God. Do you think you are smarter than Einstein?"
- "The Bible says that there were giants in the Earth in those days, so of course dinosaurs lived at the same time as people."
- Another appeal to an authority: "Professor I.M.A. Bore of the Philadelphia Institute of Phrenology states that Green Eggs and Ham is the most beneficial breakfast there is. Who are you to claim that you know more than Professor Bore?"
- A radio advertisement for vitamins says, "Dr. Sawbones, a recognized authority on blah-blah..."
 Recognized by whom? What medical school or university or council of doctors recognized Dr. Sawbones as an authority on anything? We got no actual evidence that Dr. Sawbones knows anything, just a passive-voice declaration that Dr. Sawbones has been "recognized".
- "It's the World Of God."

I want to conclude with a word about "You gotta believe it 'cause it's in the Bible." You can bet your bottom dollar that the person saying it is not referring to the Sermon on the Mount. Rather he has in mind a passage you have no business believing in — one, for instance, supporting homophobia or gender inequality.

No one says, "You gotta believe it 'cause it's in Shakespeare" or Dante or Goethe or Pushkin. Although not as much as the Bible, these writings still have a lot of authority for a lot of people. The difference is they have no *doctrine* of authority.

Why, for Christians, should the Bible alone have a doctrine of authority, especially when such doctrines demand either a literalist approach which is unacceptable or something which waffles hopelessly?

Why does the Bible need a doctrine of authority? To compel our allegiance? To make us believe something our reason, experience and conscience reject? How can anything outwardly command us that has not first inwardly claimed us? Besides, nobody thinks all biblical passages are of equal worth, that each represents an axis on which our whole faith pivots.

William Sloan Coffin, *The Heart Is A Little To The Left: essays on public morality*, page 50.

William Sloan Coffin served for eighteen years as Chaplain of Yale University, was Senior Minister of Riverside Church, and is President Emeritus of SANE/FREEZE: Campaign for Global Security.

And yes, I know, that is another appeal to authorities.

A variation on the *Appeal To Authorities* trick is a bogus appeal to authorities — city phony or questionable or non-existent authorities. For example, a sensational TV show about UFOs described an unknown object as, "...but many experts considered it a UFO." Excuse me? What "experts"? They were never named. And how does someone become an expert on UFOs? Can you get a Ph.D. in Ufology? Will the U.S. Air Force or NASA or the CIA or NSA certify you as an expert on UFOs? For the purposes of that TV show, it seemed that an expert was anyone that they wished to call an expert.

Another kind of appeal to authorities is *Name Dropping*, where the speaker liberally salts and peppers his speech with the names of the famous, rich or powerful people, as if movie stars and millionaires have all of the wisdom of the world.

In A.A. history, Dr. Frank Buchman was of course the champion name dropper. He spent his whole life [in pursuit of the rich and famous](#), and dropped their names all over the place.

In A.A., the rap is:

- "Well, Bill Wilson wrote in his second book that if you don't do the Twelve Steps, you are [signing your own death warrant](#), so you had better do all of the Steps all of the time if you want to live.
- "Joe Blow has twenty years of sobriety, so when he says that six times seven is 48, you'd better believe he's speaking from a wealth of experience."
- "Bill Wilson wrote in the *Big Book* that alcoholism is a spiritual disease, so it's a proven fact.
- "Dr. William D. Silkworth" said that alcoholism is a disease coupled with an allergy, so there is no question about it."
- "Professor George E. Vaillant of Harvard University says that [all alcoholics should join A.A., even though it doesn't work](#), so they should, of course, for their own spiritual well-being."

A variation on *Appeal to Authorities* is to get a fake expert to say what you want people to hear. Use some bozo who got his Ph.D. from a diploma mill, and call him the greatest expert on the subject in the country, and have him spout your party line. That's what the current anti-abortion movement is doing with their pseudo-scientific claims that abortions harm women's health and drive them to suicide. Their "expert", the "greatest authority on the subject", got his degree from a "non-accredited institution", and his "research" is little more than a collection of anecdotes. (See Bill Moyers, PBS, 20 June 2007.)

Another variation on the *Appeal to Authorities* technique is to use the passive voice to award bogus honors to bogus authorities, as in, "Mr. Ima Bore has been recognized as the greatest authority on Chinese vitamins." Has been recognized by whom? (Half a dozen ignorant sycophants?)

Another variation on the *Appeal to Authorities* technique is to falsely quote things that were never said or written, as in "[Professor Bore declared in his encyclopedic *History of Western Thinkers* that unthinking obedience to the Powers That Be was the easiest path to happiness](#)", when Prof. Bore never said any such thing.

Bill Wilson used this stunt when he declared that William James wrote in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* that spiritual experiences came from "[compression at depth](#)". James never said anything like that. (Bill Wilson was just [stoned out of his gourd](#) when he read the *Varieties of Religious Experience*.)

Bill Wilson also declared that the famous psychiatrist Carl Jung said that the only cure for alcohol addiction (dipsomania) was religiomania — religious fanaticism. [Jung never said any such thing either](#).

- **Cite Credentials**

This trick uses real credentials, titles, ranks, certificates, diplomas, or positions to create the appearance that someone is an authority of some kind, and is right.

"Professor Ima Bore has 17 degrees from the Philadelphia Institute of Phrenology, including a Masters in Egg-Juggling."

Degrees and credentials are all well and good, but do not necessarily make someone right. Our history is full of disasters brought on by people with degrees. Degrees are not wisdom. Most of the people in government have some kind of credentials, and they still make horrible mistakes and get us into unnecessary wars and economic crises.

- **Use Fake Credentials**

This trick uses false or faked credentials, titles, ranks, certificates, diplomas, or positions to create the appearance that someone is an authority of some kind when he is not.

- The use of fake diplomas from a diploma mill immediately comes to mind. Then the charlatan assumes the title of "Doctor", and pretends to be a recognized authority on some subject.
- Speaking of "getting recognized", that leads to setting up phony "councils" or "committees" or other organizations to issue fake credentials. For example, [a child-abusing fake teen rehabilitation center, the "Pacific Coast Academy" in American Samoa](#), is not licensed or registered in the United States. The academy's only accreditation, the academy's owners say, is with the "Samoan Youth Rehabilitation Agency". But the "Youth Rehabilitation Administration Agency of Western Samoa" is a fake organization that the child-abusers set up to give themselves credentials. That fake agency basically does not exist, and it is not even listed in the telephone directory.
- A vitamin salesman says that his product is approved by "The Vitamin Council". What the heck is "The Vitamin Council"?

- **Appeal to Force (*Argumentum ad Baculum*)**

It is an exploitation of fear: *"If you don't believe what we're saying, you will be destroyed by God!"*

"You must have faith. It's very important that you believe. Little Susie didn't believe in Santa Claus, so God got mad at Susie and turned Susie's father into an alcoholic who got drunk and beat her. So you'd better believe in Santa if you don't want that to happen to you."

(And yes, that example also uses the [Proof by Anecdote](#) propaganda technique, and [Argue from Adverse Consequences](#) as well. See how easy it is to combine several techniques into just a few lines?)

Similarly, if you won't join Alcoholics Anonymous, then the Big Bad Booze Bogeyman will get you:

- *"Alcohol is cunning, baffling, and powerful" and wants to kill you.*
- *Your addiction wants to kill you.*
- *Your disease wants to kill you.*
- *You are powerless over alcohol, so you will relapse and die drunk in a gutter.*
- *Alcohol will destroy you.*
- *Your inevitable fate outside of Alcoholics Anonymous is "Jails, Institutions, or Death".*

- **Appeal to Popularity — Appeal to the People (*Argumentum ad Populum*)**

Claim that something is obviously true because many people are convinced that it is true.

"Can you deny that the Bible is the most widely distributed book of all time? Can you deny that most people in this country are Christian? That proves that what we are saying is true."

And:

"A.A. is considered to be the most successful sobriety program of all time. Most people believe that A.A. is the best solution for alcoholism."

Ignore the facts that there was a time when most people believed that the snake pit was the best treatment program for mental illness, and that there was a time when most people believed that the Earth was flat.

- **Appeal to Numbers (*Argumentum ad Numerum*)**

Argumentum ad Numerum maintains that the more people who are convinced about something, the more likely it is to be true, and the more people who do something, the more right it is. This trick is close to the trick of "[*Everybody knows*](#)" — "Everybody knows that we are right."

- "He is admired by thousands of loyal followers."
- "Millions of bottles sold."
- "As seen by millions on TV."
- "More than 1,000,000 sold."
- "Over six million people just like you have already called." (This one also uses "[*Appeal to Common Folk*](#)".)
- "Billions of burgers served."
- "They sold over 20,000,000 bottles. That proves Lipozene really works."
- "When a diet pill sells over 20 million bottles, it's time to try it."
- "With over 15 million tablets sold, you owe it to yourself to give xxx a try."

Frank Buchman and his Oxford Groups / Moral Re-Armament organization used this propaganda technique constantly — they invariably bragged about how many [*thousands of people had attended*](#) their latest *house party* or convention, and about [*how many people had been converted*](#) by their latest mission.

I am speaking today to the millions across the world who in these anxious days are increasingly looking to Moral Re-Armament as the one hope for the future.

Frank Buchman, 29 October 1939, *Remaking the World: The Speeches of Frank Buchman*, Frank Buchman, pages 151-154.

But there was a flaw in their logic:

"In their recent American tour, the Groups on at least three occasions — Detroit, Louisville, and Phoenix — found the work of conversion far harder in *towns where they had previously worked: still more significant, at Louisville, where two years previously hundreds had made their surrender, they found only eleven who had remained in any sense active members.*"

The Groups Movement, The Most Rev. John A. Richardson, pages 26-28.

Morehouse Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis., 1935.

Likewise, A.A. supporters claim that Alcoholics Anonymous has more than [*2 million members in more than 153 countries world-wide*](#), and they say that more than 13 million copies of the *Big Book* have been printed, and then they say that those numbers prove that A.A. is a really good organization, and that all of Bill Wilson's religious beliefs must be true and correct, and that the Twelve-Step program must really work great.

Such an illogical argument ignores the fact that Hitler had far more than 2 million Nazis, and Stalin had far more than 2 million Communists, but those weren't good organizations, out to save the world. They also sold lots of copies of their books, *Mein Kampf* and *The Communist Manifesto*, but neither Communism nor Nazism was a good philosophy for the betterment of the world, in spite of their many fanatical true believers. And neither of their systems worked, either, in spite of their large numbers of members.

Likewise, Scientology and the Moonies also have large numbers of members, and they also sell lots and lots of books, but that doesn't make them good cult religions, either.

The large numbers proved nothing except that it is possible to hoodwink a lot of people.

And A.A. is a complete failure as a treatment program for alcoholism. It has [a very low success rate and a very high death rate](#). All of the bragging about how many people attend the A.A. meetings is pretty meaningless in the face of the A.A. failure rate and death rate.

- **Dismiss by Numbers**

This is just the opposite of *Appeal To Numbers*: Dismiss facts or arguments that you don't like by claiming that they represent very small numbers of people or things.

For example, when I complain that a certain computer program or feature or piece of hardware does not work correctly with the Linux operating system, the manufacturer invariably answers that not very many people run Linux, so he doesn't need to bother making his product work right with Linux.

Likewise, when I ask for other things to work correctly, and have all of the features that I need to make them useful, the maker often answers that not very many people care about that feature.

The same thing applies to politics. Politicians say (in so many words):

"Not very many people really care about that issue, so we won't bother to do anything about it."
(Never mind what is actually right or wrong...)

- **Appeal to Averages**

The speaker appeals to an average that is false or irrelevant.

For example, a serial killer might declare, "I may have kidnapped, raped, and murdered half a dozen pretty girls, but there are 150 million American women whom I did not harm in any way, so I really have a very good record, on average."

A Congressman or Senator might declare, "Okay, so I got caught taking 100 bribes. But there were 10,000 bribes that I did not accept. (The other Congressmen got them.) So I'm really 99% honest. Really. Honestly."

A.A. members use the same technique often: "Oh, yeh, there may be a few cases where [sponsors rape their sponsees](#), and there may be a few thirteenth-steppers preying on the newcomers, and there may have been a few cases where the sponsors told their sponsees not to take their medications, and then the sponsees died, but on average most people get through A.A. without getting raped or killed."

- **Appeal to Fame**

Claim that something is good because it is famous. This is a kind of *Appeal to Numbers*.

- This is the famous Joe Blow, well-known for...
- Featured in newspapers and magazines...
- As seen on TV...
- Recognized by millions...
- Miss Blondie Starlette, the famous actress, says you should buy these cosmetics.

- **Dismiss by Lack of Fame**

Claim that something is bad or inferior because it is not famous or well-known.

- I never heard of you before.
- Never heard of it...
- Nobody's ever heard of that one.
- ...Completely unknown outside of his own village...

- **Appeal to Antiquity (*Argumentum ad Antiquitatem*)**

Validate a proposition by its age.

- "Give me that Old Time Religion."
- "People have been worshipping this way for thousands of years."
- "*The Bible has survived for so long that it **must** be true!*"
Compare the Bible to the Illiad, Gilgamesh, or the Vedas. They are all older.

By the logic of *Argumentum ad Antiquitatem*, we should all be worshipping the ancient Egyptian gods like **Ra** — He's far older than Jesus Christ.

- **Dismiss by Antiquity**

This is the opposite of the previous technique. Dismiss, discount, invalidate, or reject something because it is old. This technique falsely assumes that things are bad or untrue or invalid just because they are old.

- "I can't believe that you are still using that old stuff."
- "Man, that's really old. You don't still believe that stuff, do you?"
- "That's really out of date. Why don't you get some recent studies?"

- **Appeal to Novelty — Newness (*Argumentum ad Novitatem*)**

Claim that the newness of a statement proves its validity. This is just the opposite of Appeal to Antiquity. This stunt assumes that the newest thing is the truest thing.

Jehovah's Witnesses say: "*Yes, there have been errors in the past, but we receive 'New Light' from Brooklyn, and so 'the light keeps growing brighter'. You see how this brings us closer to truth?*"

Bill Wilson and other A.A. boosters often used this trick to argue that Alcoholics Anonymous was wonderful because it was a *great new method* of treating alcoholism; not that it was just a recycled old cult religion that had nothing new or original.

In all, about two hundred cases of hopeless alcoholism have been dealt with. As will be seen, about fifty percent of these have recovered. This, of course, is unprecedented — never has such a thing happened before.

THE ONE HUNDRED MEN CORPORATION Prospectus

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, *Into Action*, pages 83-84.

... the A.A. group is to be understood as an unusually intimate primary group which sponsors, in a potent learning situation, a new way of life — a new subculture.

Alcoholics Anonymous: An Interpretation, Milton A. Maxwell, Ph.D., writing in

Society, Culture, and Drinking Patterns, David J. Pittman and Charles R. Snyder, editors, page 582.

Milton A. Maxwell was a member of the Board of Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc..

Cult religion is not a new subculture. It's [a very, very old thing](#).

What is really funny is that today A.A. boosters also like to [call A.A. treatment of alcoholism "traditional treatment"](#), and declare that it is the dependable, old, tried-and-true method, so they are trying to use both *Appeal to Novelty* and *Appeal to Antiquity* on us at the same time. They are simultaneously trying to claim that Alcoholics Anonymous is the latest, greatest, and best new invention and also the dependable traditional safe old thing.

- **Dismiss by Novelty**

This technique is just the opposite of the previous one. Invalidate a proposition by its newness. This technique falsely assumes that things are bad or untrue or invalid just because they are new.

- "Oh no, I'm not going for any of that new nonsense. If it hasn't been tested and proven true for a very long time, then it can't be trusted."
- "People haven't been using that new method for very long, have they?"
- "And that was invented, when, last year?"
- "And how many millions of people has that medicine cured so far?"

- **Appeal to the Exotic**

Try to make people believe that something is good because it came from distant lands or secret traditions or foreign cultures. Like it was hidden in the Cave of the Ancients in the Himalayan Mountains by celibate monks for ages, but now we have the secret.

For example: "[American tourist discovers an Ancient Herbal treatment for hair loss on a chance trip to India](#)". Funny that India has even more bald old men than the USA does.

Similarly, women are bombarded with ads that proclaim that the French women have secret skin treatments that make them look forever young. I wish it were true...

And a cream for cracked, dry, skin advertizes: "a skin-softening formula known to ancient Mid-Eastern civilizations." So haven't we made *any* improvements in skin softeners since ancient times?

- **Appeal to Tradition**

Argue that people should do something or believe something because that's the way it has been done for a very long time — it's traditional.

- *"It's the way we've always done it."*
- *"It's our culture."*
- *"It's customary."*
- *"It's traditional."*
- *"It's an ancient belief among our people."*
- *"You can't upset everybody by breaking with tradition."*
- *"It's a process that's been going on for a long time."*
- *"If it was good enough for grandpa, it's good enough for us."*

- *"It's the stuff that made America great."*
- *"The Founding Fathers believed it."*
- *"Give me that old-time religion, it's good enough for me."*

The saying, "It's our culture," is often synonymous with, "Yes, we are doing stupid things. we do stupid things because we have always done stupid things." Even the Nazis noticed that logical fallacy: "When I hear people speak of culture, I reach for my pistol." — Heinrich Himmler.

Treatment centers that use 12-Step quackery on alcoholics and drug addicts like to call 12-Step-based treatment "traditional treatment", even though Alcoholics Anonymous is really only 70 years old, which makes it far from traditional. Burning girls at the stake for witchcraft, and putting the town drunkard in stocks and pillory, now that's traditional treatment.

- **Appeal to Normality**

Argue that:

- "It's normal."
- "It's policy."
- "It's standard operating procedure."

A close relative to the argument that "It's Traditional" is the declaration that *"It's Policy"*, or *"It's Corporate Policy"*. The speaker gives no good reason for his behavior; he just says that "We do it this way because we do it this way."

National Public Radio recently (2013.05.15) came up with a good example of this: A tourist rip-off ice cream shop in Rome charges 18 Euros (\$21) for a large ice cream cone. When the owner of the business was asked about the price, he rationalized, "I don't understand what the big deal is. It's normal." Of course the local Italians declared that there was nothing normal about paying \$21 for an ice cream cone, and they would never do it.

- **Appeal to Poverty (*Argumentum ad Lazarum*)**

Exploit the misconception that money corrupts.

(The real proverb is, *"The Love of Money is the root of all evil."*)

"A.A. is just a poor non-profit organization, so it must be a good organization."

(Actually, A.A. has a lot of money, and is [committing serious crimes to get more.](#))

- **Appeal to Wealth (*Argumentum ad Crumenam*)**

This item is just the opposite of the last one — argue that something is right because it is so rich and powerful and successful:

"Well, MicroSuck software must be great stuff — just look at how rich Bill Gates is."

The converse is:

"If you're so smart, then why aren't you rich?"

- **Appeal to Common Folk**

A politician argues that he is just a regular guy, and what he says is just common folk wisdom.

"There ain't nobody here but us good old boys."

George W. Bush uses this technique often, in claiming that he is not "an elitist" and not "one of the elite" (in spite of the fact that he was born into a very rich family, attended Yale University, and joined *Skull And Bones*, one of the most elite, exclusive and powerful fraternities in the world), and was molly-coddled and protected all of the way to the White House.

Bill Wilson used this stunt often:

We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 17.

Then Bill tried to pass off [his crazy cult religion](#) that he got from [the fascist Hitler-praising Dr. Frank Buchman](#) as "regular American":

We represent no particular faith or denomination. We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 17.

- **Appeal To Stupidity**

Flaunt an anti-intellectual attitude, and belittle knowledge, wisdom, intelligence and education.

This technique is closely related to "[Common Folks](#)" — *"There ain't nobody here but us stupid common folks. I'm just a regular ignorant Joe, just another man of the people."*

Radio and TV commercials say,

- "I'm no brain surgeon."
- "I'm not a rocket scientist."
- "I don't know how it works, but I know that it works."
- "I'm no computer whiz but..." (But I'm smart enough to figure out how to give my money to a fast-talking salesman.)
- "I'm so stupid that I can't tell the difference between margarine and butter."
- "I'm so stupid that I can't tell the difference between real wood siding and plastic, or between real leather and plastic."
- "I'm so stupid that I can't tell the difference between real orange juice and chemical soup."
- "My dog is so stupid that he can't tell the difference between soy beans and bacon."

A corollary to this technique is contempt for people who have some intelligence or education. Preachers have been known to declare, "Those elitist people have fancy talk and big words and clever arguments, and they try to make us feel like fools — but they are the real fools — simple faith is better."

Unfortunately, lots of politicians win elections with this one:

"Ah'm no intellectual. Ah'm just a hard-workin' man of the people. Mah voters don't know nuthin', and neither do Ah. Ah wouldn't be caught dayed with any fancy book-larnin' in me. Back home in Muckshoe, Tayexus, we don't need nuthin' but that good Old-Time Religion..."

Acting President George W. Bush was born an instant millionaire and went to Yale University and the Harvard Business School, but now he cleverly pretends to be just a "common folk" dumb hick from Texas, just one of the down-home common people, not one of those disgusting "effete" Democrats who know how to read books. Bush says, "I don't read newspapers" and "I don't do nuance."

And Alcoholics Anonymous says,

- *"Nobody is too stupid to get the Program, but some people are too intelligent."*
- *"Stop Your Stinkin' Thinkin'."*

- *"Your best thinking got you here."*
- *"Utilize, Don't Analyze."*
- ... we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word... Rather vain of us, wasn't it?

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *We Agnostics*, page 49.

- **Antirationalism**

Antirationalism is another propaganda trick that is similar to anti-intellectualism, but it's different in an important way. Antirationalism promotes the idea that there are no such things as valid, reliable facts or hard evidence, just various conflicting opinions. Speakers who are pushing antirationalism argue that *"It's just my opinion versus your opinion, and it's all so controversial that we can't really know anything for sure."*

A variation on this technique is the old line,

"Oh heck, you can never really know for sure what caused it... Maybe it was this, or maybe it was that...",

or

"Who knows? Maybe it's true. You can never know anything absolutely for sure."

That is just a dodge to avoid admitting the truth. Yes, we can know some things for sure:

- The earth is round, not flat.
- The Moon is not made of green cheese.
- Bacteria, not evil spirits, cause strep throat and tuberculosis.
- Sour milk is not caused by witches casting nasty spells.
- Penicillin works better than faith healing for curing streptococcal infections.
- Alcoholism is not a "[spiritual disease](#)" [which can only be cured by a "Higher Power"](#) (or not even cured, but just postponed).

Life isn't all just a vague mystery where maybe one thing is true, or maybe a different thing is true, and everybody has their own opinion, and nobody knows anything for sure.

See [Tim Minchin's Storm video](#). The girl "Storm" was the personification of antirationalism: *"Life is a mystery. We never know anything for sure."*

- **Fake Philosophy: "It's all just an illusion."**

Obfuscate the issue with fake philosophy, claiming that *"It's all just an image. It's all just an illusion. We don't actually see reality. You never really know anything for sure."*

For example, a scheming defense lawyer might tell a witness to a murder, "Isn't it true that we don't actually see reality? In fact, our two eyes don't even see the same image. Light plays on our retinas, causing electrical impulses to flow through the optic nerves into the brain, where the impulses are amplified, inverted, filtered, disassembled, reassembled, and formed into what we interpret as three-dimensional images of something. But what we think we see bears little resemblance to what actually happened in front of our eyes, out there in the objective world. In fact, it's all nothing but a play of vibrating atoms. Even interpreting those atoms as being divided into separate, individual, objects is an illusion. In truth, it's all just a single unified Universe of vibrating atoms. So you didn't really see my client murder someone, did you? You only thought you saw it. You experienced an illusion."

The obvious answer to that is, "Since it's all just an illusion, you shouldn't have any objection to the jury finding your client guilty, and the state executing him for murder. He isn't really being executed. It's all just an illusion. You only think you are watching him get executed."

- **Appeal to Desperation and Argument from Impotence**

Argue that we *must do something*, that we cannot just do nothing, and since we don't know what to do, let's do what I want.

Or, since we can't do what is really the right thing, let's do what I suggest as an alternative.

Twelve-Step-oriented recovery counselors use this strategem a lot. They argue that *"Perhaps the Twelve-Step programs aren't giving us as high a success rate as we would like, but they are the only game in town. We can't just stop treating the alcoholics and drug addicts — **we have to do something** — so let's continue to push all of our patients into 12-Step meetings, because it's the only thing we've got."*

Actually, the 12-Step meetings are not the only thing available. There are [SMART](#), [SOS](#), and [WFS](#) meetings, just for starters. And the most successful program of all is people [simply quitting alone](#), on their own, saving their own lives by themselves. But the 12-Step true believers stubbornly ignore that. And of course the counselors ignore that — their jobs are threatened by the successful do-it-yourselfers.

- **Argue from Ignorance (*Argumentum ad Ignorantiam*)**

Claim that an idea should be considered valid because there is nothing to prove otherwise:

*"Nobody ever proved that the miracles in the Bible **didn't** occur, did they?"*

And A.A. members argue, *"Well, nobody has ever proven that the Twelve Steps cause people to commit suicide, have they? So the Twelve Steps can't be harmful to people's mental health."*

Actually, Dr. and Harvard Prof. George E. Vaillant, Class A Trustee of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, came pretty close to proving it. He showed that A.A.-based treatment of alcoholics produced a [higher death rate](#) than any other method of treating alcoholics.

And [the list of A.A. suicides](#) just keeps on growing.

- **Appeal to Pity (*Ad Misericordiam*)**

A clever defense lawyer will argue, "Look at the poor defendant. He has already suffered so much, there is no point in convicting him of his crimes, in spite of the evidence against him."

- **Exploit Wishful Thinking, and Tell Them What They Want To Hear**

Tell the audience whatever they wish to hear, rather than some unpleasant truths. Many a politician has won an election by using this technique.

- A weight-loss commercial says: "You don't have to diet. You don't have to exercise. Just take these pills and lose weight. Best of all, 75% of the weight that you lose is fat, not water."
- Other people who are *in denial* say: "Oh heck, the oil isn't going to run out. There is an unlimited supply of oil down there, just waiting for us to find it. You don't need to start planning for a future without cheap oil."
- "Globalism will bring us a worker's paradise where everybody is happy and rich. It doesn't matter if all of the factories in America get shut down and sold to China. We don't need those old "smoke-stack industries". We can all make a good living by shuffling around pieces of information on computer screens in the wonderful new 'Information Age'."

(Except for all of the "service workers", like the janitors and burger-flippers, who will get minimum wage...)

- "Global warming? What global warming? We don't need to worry about our enormous rate of burning fossil fuels. It's wonderful, how much we get to use. Our standard of living is defined by how much energy we use up. The more, the better."
- "If we fight the terrorists and other Moslems over there, it will keep them from attacking us over here. We are safe."
- "Jesus is on our side. He isn't even disturbed by the 30,000 children we have killed in Iraq, because we are in a holy war against Islam and a little collateral damage is unavoidable."
(Jesus didn't really say, "*Whatever you do unto the least of these, you do unto me.*")
- "*Calerpa taxifolia* isn't going to destroy the entire ecology of the Mediterranean Ocean. Don't worry. There is nothing to get excited about."
- Many a guy has gotten laid by using this technique too:
"Oh yeh, baby. Of course I'll love you forever. No doubt about it. Let's do it."

Konrad Heiden explained how Adolf Hitler used this technique:

Sometimes Hitler could not decide whether to heap the blame for everything on France or on the Jews.

[Then Heiden gave examples of Hitler giving speeches where he contradicted himself.]

Thus the prophet falsifies his own words. With the deepest conviction he contradicts his deepest convictions. It is as though the various heads of a many-headed beast were biting one another.

The truth is irremediably buried beneath these deceptions and contradictions. How, then, can the speaker expect to put through a single incisive, suitable lie, when from speech to speech, from sentence to sentence, he changes even the lies? Whom does he expect to persuade that he himself believes a single one of these mutually contradictory lies? And to what purpose does he try to spread an opinion among the people, when on the very next day he is going to sacrifice that opinion?

Such questions are asked by those who do not understand propaganda, who regard propaganda as the art of instilling an opinion in the masses. Actually it is the art of receiving an opinion from the masses.

The usual conception of the great propagandist is the commanding, purposive mind, who by magic suggestion subjects an empty animal mass to his will; Marc Anthony, who in a single speech makes a thousand friends out of a thousand enemies. It is in this light that most of our contemporaries view the greatest propagandist of our day, Adolf Hitler, and this is Adolf Hitler's own idea of himself. With the authority of success, he has put over a false theory of the world; the theory that he dominates the minds of millions by tirelessly hammering the same simple statement into them. But this only shows that he never listened to himself very closely, and was never too eager to illuminate his own success. He does not hammer the same simple statement into the minds of millions; on the contrary, he played with the masses and titillated them with the most contradictory assertions. It is this art of contradiction which makes him the greatest and most successful propagandist of his time. He does not dominate the minds of millions, his mind belongs to them. Like a piece of wood floating on the waves, he follows the shifting currents of public opinion. This is his true strength.

The true aim of political propaganda is not to influence, but to study, the masses. The speaker is in constant communication with the masses; he hears an echo, and senses the inner vibration. In forever setting new and contradictory assertions before his audience, Hitler is tapping the outwardly shapeless substance of public opinion with instruments of varying metals and varying weights. When a resonance issues from the depths of the substance, the masses

have given him the pitch; he knows in what terms he must finally address them.

Rather than a means of directing the mass mind, propaganda is a technique for riding with the masses. It is not a machine to make wind, but a sail to catch the wind. The mass, however, is a phenomenon of deepest world importance — this leveled conglomeration of fools and wise men, heroes and cowards, proud and humble, the unusual and the average. This mass, with its anonymous intellectual pressure, its unexpected moods and unconscious desires, mirrors and echoes the commanding force of prevailing conditions; it embodies and personifies the necessities and resistances of the objective world; it expresses the silent command of Fate in a mysterious murmur. It is the art of the great propagandist to detect this murmur and translate it into intelligible utterance and convincing action. If he can do this, his utterances and actions may be full of contradictions — because the contradictions lie in the things themselves; they may be deceptive and misleading. The lies of the propagandist reveal the deeper truth of the whole world's cynicism and dishonesty. By his lies the great propagandist involuntarily shows himself to be an honest, self-revealing prophet of the Devil.

Der Fuehrer, Konrad Heiden, pages 139-141.

- **It Ought To Be True, So It Is.**

This logical fallacy is a form of wishful thinking, where people are willing to believe that things are true just because it seems like they *ought to be* true.

People routinely believe in a wide variety of screwy things just because they like the sounds of them, and think that they ought to be true:

- Higher beings who ride around in flying saucers are here to save us (from our own stupidity).
- Ghosts of dead saints come and help some people, and save some children from disasters (while letting many others die).
- Ghosts of dead pets come back and save their former owners from various accidents.
- The ghost of the Virgin Mary routinely goes around the world making statues bleed, just to increase the faith of the wavering doubters.
- God has nothing better to do with his time than save alcoholics from themselves by punishing them and "beating them with the whip of alcoholism" and forcing them to join the 12-Step religion.

Clever politicians and propagandists will exploit peoples' willingness to believe such things by repeating such stories, which makes the gullible members of the public think that the politician must be really good, and really spiritual.

- **It's Too Terrible To Tell**

The essence of this technique is:

"We know a truth, but it is too terrible to tell, and to do so would harm too many innocent people, so we can't say it, and you shouldn't say it either."

This argument was used by the Church in Rome during the Middle Ages to declare that you couldn't tell the truth about all of the crimes and sins of the Church — burning millions of women and girls as witches, molesting the altar boys, selling everything from indulgences to Bishop's offices, and using the Grand Inquisition and heresy trials to silence the critics — *"You can't criticize the Church, because if you do, it will destroy the faith of the weak people, and then they won't be able to get into Heaven."*

Politicians routinely use this technique, too. They believe that we can't hear the truth about things like global warming or peak oil, because if the people really knew the whole truth about what is going on, the people would panic and society would fall apart. The powers that be think that the truth about those things is too terrible to tell, so the politicians don't tell us the truth.

Contemporary politicians also use this trick to avoid telling the truth about what the U.S. Government has been doing in a variety of areas: "It's too terrible to tell, and if it was publicly known, it would help the terrorists. So don't ask what we have been doing."

Today, with A.A., the rap is:

"You can't tell the truth about Alcoholics Anonymous. You shouldn't expose:

- [the deceptive recruiting](#),
- [the bait-and-switch stunts](#),
- [the perjury](#),
- [Bill Wilson's insanity and dishonesty](#),
- [the goofy, unscientific, grossly wrong ideas about alcoholism](#),
- [the grossly inflated 'success rate'](#),
- [the complete failure of A.A. as treatment for alcoholism](#), or
- [the cult religion nonsense](#),

— because if you do, it will make a bunch of the weaker alcoholics relapse and die drunk, and it will all be your fault. If you tell the truth, you will be 'doing an immense disservice to those who are trying to achieve sobriety'."

- **Argue from Adverse Consequences**

Put pressure on the decision maker by pointing out the dire consequences of an "unfavorable" decision. This includes the *Slippery Slope* argument.

- "If we let Viet Nam go, then all of Southeast Asia will fall to Communism like a row of dominoes going down. Then we won't be able to stop Communism. We will lose the whole world."
- If we curb the power of corporations, we will destroy the American business environment. We can't tell corporations that they don't have God-given civil rights like freedom of speech and freedom to influence voters, or else all of the corporations will flee to foreign countries that treat them better. (Countries like China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvadore — the countries to which they have *already* moved their factories.)
- Likewise, we can't enforce environmental protection laws against those same corporations, or else they will move to foreign countries that have no such laws, and that will be the end of America.

Bill Wilson used this technique a lot, and Alcoholics Anonymous still does — constantly. Do what they say, or else you will die in agony:

- Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested [MY required] Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to [MY] spiritual principles [cult religion practices].

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 174.

- "You must go to meetings for your entire life, do the Twelve Steps, and get a sponsor, or else your fate will invariably be 'Jails, Institutions, or Death'."
- If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking.
The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 72.
- In the *Big Book*, Bill Wilson described a man (who looked *an awful lot* like Bill Wilson) who became an obsessed religious maniac, spending all of his time with A.A. busy-work, going to meetings and recruiting more members (and not getting a job):

Though the family does not fully agree with dad's spiritual activities, they should let him have his head. Even if he displays a certain amount of neglect and irresponsibility towards the family, it is well to let him go as far as he likes in [helping other alcoholics](#). During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to insure his sobriety than anything else. Though some of his manifestations are alarming and disagreeable, we think dad will be on a firmer foundation than the man who is placing business or professional success ahead of spiritual development. [He will be less likely to drink again](#), and anything is preferable to that.

The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 9, *The Family Afterwards*, pages 129-130.

In other words, the solution is to let him act crazy, even if his behavior is "alarming and disagreeable."

- Don't bother him with mere reality, or ask him to be sane and responsible.
 - Don't nag him to go get a job.
 - Just let him neglect his family and irresponsibly devote his entire life to Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Because if you don't, he might drink again, and *"anything is preferable to that."*

- The so-called "First Tradition" of Alcoholics Anonymous contains this veiled threat:

A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die.

== the A.A. "[First Tradition](#)" (long form)

- **Argue from Beneficial Consequences**

This is just the opposite of [Argue from Adverse Consequences](#). In this case, argue that people should do what you wish because they will benefit if they do so.

For example,

"You should believe in God because it will be beneficial to you to do so. You will get feelings of peace and serenity from knowing that you are on the right side of the question. You will get into Heaven after you die."

That is bad logic. The reason for believing in God is because one believes that there is such an entity. What benefits someone might get from such a belief is a very different issue.

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this technique too:

- "You should just accept and believe all of the A.A. teachings, and *Work A Strong Program*, no matter how strange, outlandish, illogical, or heretical the A.A. practices really are, because working the A.A. program will make you sober, happy, and spiritual."
- "It doesn't matter whether the Steps make sense to you. Just do them and you will get a new life."
- "Keep Coming Back! It Works!"

- **Apply Time Pressure**

Apply time pressure to get someone to do something.

Advertisements and commercials use this trick all of the time:

- "This offer is only good for 5 days."
- "Don't miss this unique opportunity."
- "This sale ends on Sunday."

- "This invitation will expire if we don't get a response before the end of the weekend."
- "We really need a response back before the end of Friday."
- "Only three days left."
- "Can you give before midnight?"
- "Supplies are limited."
- "There is talk of a national shortage."
- "Buy XYZ today. The price will go up tomorrow."
- "First come, first serve. The early birds will get the best items."
- "All of our mortgage experts are waiting to help you, but you must call right now."
- "If you call in the next ten minutes, you get a free gift."
- "If you call in the next fifteen minutes, you can get two for the price of one."
- "Hurry. When it's gone, it's gone."
- "Call now. Callers get priority."

Bill Wilson used this trick to tell prospective recruits that they had better join A.A. quickly, before they were killed by their "severe affliction" without even realizing what was happening — "many are doomed who never realize their predicament." (The *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, page 92.)

- **Argue For Delay**

This is just the opposite of applying time pressure: Argue that

- "We must not be hasty."
- "Let's reconsider,"
- "Let's think about it some more."
- "It's too early."
- "The time isn't right."
- "Let's form a committee and do a study."
- "We need more information before making a decision. We need to be sure."
- "We haven't gathered enough evidence."
- "That isn't in the current budget. Maybe next year."
- "We don't want to do anything right now."
- "The timing isn't good."
- "People aren't ready for that yet."
- "I'm sure that will happen sometime in the future, but not this year."

Alcoholics, drug addicts, and cigarette smokers use this propaganda technique to avoid actually quitting their bad habits:

- "Frankly, I'm not ready to quit just yet."
- "I'll think about it."
- "Let's not be hasty."
- "Let's think about it some more."
- "Let's reconsider."
- "This is a big step. I need to prepare myself."
- "Maybe next month."
- "I'm under too much stress to quit right now."
- "Let's not do anything right now."
- "I'm not ready just now."
- "I need time to get ready."
- "I'm not prepared to do anything."
- "Not today."
- "I've got too many other things going on right now."

- **Stall**

This is just the physical application of *Argue For Delay*. Really do delay. Use every possible excuse for not doing something.

A reputable study committee reported to TEPCO (the Tokyo Electric Power Company) that the tsunami protection at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant was inadequate. TEPCO responded by doing nothing. (Fixing the problem would have been expensive.) When asked why they had done nothing about the problem, TEPCO replied, "We are still reviewing the matter."

And TEPCO was still reviewing the matter two years later when the earthquake and tsunami struck, disabling the cooling systems in the reactors and causing the worst nuclear meltdown in the history of mankind.

- **The Real Scotsman Fallacy**

This logical fallacy discards facts that conflict with a sweeping generalization by using the word "REAL" as a qualifier. It is a kind of observational selection that uses twisting of the meanings of words to apparently change the facts.

The Real Scotsman Fallacy works like this:

Joe: "All Scotsmen play golf."

Fred: "But look at Brian MacGregor over there. He's a Scotsman, and he doesn't play golf."

Joe: "Ah, but if he were a *real* Scotsman, he would play golf."

Alcoholics Anonymous uses that fallacy like this:

- Stepper: "Alcoholics Anonymous is the only way for an alcoholic to overcome alcoholism. All alcoholics simply *must* join A.A. and work a strong program if they wish to live."
- Critic: "But look at Terry over there. He didn't join A.A., but he recovered from alcoholism anyway. He has more years of sobriety than lots of you steppers."
- Stepper: "Oh, but he isn't a *real* alcoholic. If he were a real alcoholic, then he wouldn't be able to quit drinking without Alcoholics Anonymous and doing the Twelve Steps. If you can get sober, and stay sober, without Alcoholics Anonymous, then you were never really an alcoholic, just a 'heavy drinker'."

Likewise:

1. All alcoholics must get a "higher power" and "surrender to it" in order to quit drinking and stay sober.
2. If someone quits drinking and stays sober without "surrendering to a higher power", then he wasn't a real alcoholic.

- **Inverse Real Scotsman Fallacy**

This is very much like the Real Scotsman Fallacy, but works "backwards".

"Steve B." explained it this way:

If I say I can spot homosexuals because they wear pink shirts, and it turns out they are homosexuals, then I'm right and that proves my system of identification is sound.

But if I'm wrong and they turn out not to be homosexuals, then I just say "Yes they are, because all people wearing pink shirts are homosexual, no matter whether they show any actual signs of homosexuality or not!" So I'm still right.

Similarly:

1. Declare that Joe Blow is an alcoholic because he acts like an alcoholic.
2. If someone responds, "No, he isn't an alcoholic. He doesn't drink alcohol at all. He never drank."
3. The answer is, "Yes, he is so an alcoholic, even if he isn't 'a practicing alcoholic', because he is displaying 'alcoholic thinking'."

[Some crazy A.A. parents have told their children](#) that the children are alcoholics because they are "acting alcoholically", even though the children have never drank alcohol.

- **Inconsistency**

The way that data is analyzed, or logic is applied, is inconsistent.

For example,

- Congress bases military budgets on worst-case scenarios, but it thriftily ignores scientific projections of environmental dangers because those dangers are not "adequately proven".
- Likewise, marijuana and LSD are outlawed, and dealers of those drugs receive very harsh prison sentences, because "they might be dangerous", or "they might lead to harder drugs."
But dealers of tobacco and alcohol, the two deadliest drugs in America, do not even get a traffic ticket, in spite of the fact that:
 - The annual death toll from tobacco is 420,000 Americans per year.
 - The annual death toll from alcohol is 100,000, plus about 17,000 in drunk-driving automobile accidents (40% of all fatal automobile accidents).
 - The annual death toll from LSD is zero.
 - The annual death toll from marijuana is zero.
- Rich people argue that we should not give money to poor people, because it acts as a disincentive for them to work hard and accomplish things for themselves. But those same rich people demand repeal of the inheritance tax so that their children can inherit hundreds of millions of dollars untaxed, and they don't see that as a disincentive for their own children to work hard and accomplish things for themselves.
- - The dogmatic fundamentalist true believers say that our scientists are all wrong — even evil — when they talk about evolution;
 - and the believers say that our scientists are immoral when they want to use stem cells to cure our diseases;
 - but then they expect our scientists to be a bunch of real geniuses whose ingenuity and technology is going to save our lives when the world's oil supply runs out. (*"Don't worry, they will come up with another great invention and another technological quick fix, just like always."*)
 - And, when those true believers get sick, they don't hesitate to run to the hospital and get medical care from those doctors who believe in science, evolution, and stem cell research.
- America is a land of freedom and inalienable rights that are listed in the Bill of Rights. But if the acting President or the Attorney General labels you an enemy of the people, then you don't have any rights. *That is not written in the Constitution, but that's how Bush and Ashcroft read it anyway.*
- Poor young black men who steal \$5000 worth of stuff are put in prison for several years because "they are a danger to the community", while rich white men in expensive business suits who steal \$50,000,000 get a year of hard time plus some community service because they were "non-violent" when they stole all of the little old ladies' retirement money.

Think: Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken.

Boesky, who was the bigger villain of the pair, got reduced time by snitching on Milken, and then both

only served about two years... (Ironically, Boesky is now retired to his yacht in the Caribbean, while Milken has been doing a lot of social work, apparently trying to make some amends.)

Watch the **Enron** investigations for some new villains who will be forced to retire to their winter palaces in Aspen, rich, now that their big [pump-and-dump stock swindle](#) is over,

- Ken Lay with at least \$37,683,887² (perhaps as much as a few hundred millions of dollars),
- Jeff Skilling with something between \$63,000,000 and \$70,000,000,²
- Andrew Fastow with \$60,600,000,²
- Michael Kopper with \$10,000,000,²
- Lou Pai with something between \$62,936,552 and \$250,000,000,²
- Rebecca Mark with \$79,000,000,²
- Tom White (acting Pres. G. W. Bush's Secretary of the Army) with \$14,000,000,²
- Ken Rice with \$70,000,000,²

while the employees of Enron and the subsidiaries like *Pacific Gas and Electric* (in Portland, Oregon) that Enron bought and sucked dry, now have no retirement funds at all left. Nothing. And many of those retirees are just too old to go back to work. So what do they do? Join the homeless people, I guess.

But those smiling, well-dressed, suit-and-tie, white-collar criminals weren't "violent" when they stole Grandma and Grandpa's retirement funds.

And the U.S. government isn't going to replace their retirement funds is it? — Not even the part that was given to the politicians, mostly Republicans, in "campaign contributions". The Republicans are talking about spending the wealth of the nation on a war with oil-rich Iraq, not on taking care of our own old people.

The Republicans were all for an extremely expensive bailout of the savings and loan institutions, which happened after, and was caused by, the Republicans deregulating banking, but they won't do a thing for the retirees who got burned by Enron after the Republicans deregulated the natural gas industry.

- I have [many more](#), far too many to put on this page. *Inconsistency* just seems to be *The Way of the American Politician*. Benjamin Franklin once quipped that consistency was the hum-drum of little minds. If that is so, then our politicians in Washington D.C. must be world-class geniuses.

A.A. dogma and literature are loaded with inconsistencies and contradictions. For example,

- We learn from the *Big Book* that if someone [abstains from drinking for thirteen years](#) without going to A.A. or doing the Twelve Steps, and then relapses, it proves that you can't do it without A.A.. But if someone quits drinking for only six months by going to meetings and doing the Twelve Steps, then that proves that A.A. and the Twelve Steps work. (Even though the vast majority of Bill Wilson's new A.A. members [either did not quit drinking or soon relapsed](#), and even though half of the authors of the original *Big Book* stories returned to drinking, Bill still insisted that his "spiritual" program for sobriety worked great. And Bill Wilson considered all of the non-members who didn't quit drinking as proof that you can't do it alone.)
- Likewise, according to A.A., if someone does the Twelve Steps and quits drinking, then that proves that the Twelve Steps work for making people quit drinking. But if someone does the Twelve Steps and then relapses, it doesn't prove that the Twelve Steps make people drink.
- If someone killed himself with alcohol, Bill Wilson considered him a failure and a real loser. But if someone killed himself with tobacco, Bill Wilson considered him "[a most effective member of A.A.](#)", someone whose "more serious ailments were being rapidly cured".
- When someone comes to A.A. meetings and then quits drinking and stays quit, A.A. gleefully claims the credit for the success. But when someone comes to A.A. meetings and then drinks himself to death, A.A.

says that it isn't responsible for the failure.

- And [I have plenty more...](#)

- **Compare Apples To Oranges**

This is similar to the previous item, inconsistency, but has special twists of its own.

In a radio commercial for a tax preparation service (Spring 2005), we heard:

"Jackson-Hewitt's average refund is \$400 more than the average IRS refund."

Well of course it is. They are comparing apples to oranges. The average refund from the IRS includes all of the poorest people in the country. You have to actually make some money before you need a professional tax accountant to prepare your tax forms for you, and can pay for it. The average Jackson-Hewitt customer is lots richer than the average minimum-wage janitor or burger-flipper, so of course they get larger refunds. The commercial tries to imply that the larger refund is due to the Jackson-Hewitt accountants' skill in finding deductions, but I suggest that it is due to their customer's higher incomes and higher withholdings, and hence, larger refunds due.

Over in "the recovery community", one A.A. defender announced:

I am appalled at such blatant misconstrual of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. AA is Spiritual, true, but not religious. An edition of Webster's defines the two as follows:

1. Religion - any system of faith or worship; the outward manifestation of belief in a Supreme or Superior Being; love and obedience toward God; piety; monastic vow or state; conformity to Biblical precepts; devotion; fidelity.
2. Spiritual - incorporeal; not material; possessing the nature of qualities of a spirit; mental or intellectual; pure; holy; heavenly-minded; not lay or temporal; ecclesiastical; relating to matters of a sacred nature; not worldly; the spiritual nature as opposed to physical.

Another edition of Websters (which leaves the Biblical concept out) says:

1. Religion - The worship of God or gods. A belief; a system of doctrines of faith and worship.
2. Spiritual - Not material; Relating to the moral feelings; Pure, holy, sacred.

But note that the writer was comparing a noun to an adjective. So of course the noun "religion" sounds much more solid and material than the adjective "spiritual".

If we compare the adjective "religious" to the adjective "spiritual", some of the important distinctions vanish. In fact, the words become synonyms:

religious: (The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, 1982.)

1. Of, pertaining to, or teaching religion.
2. Adhering to or manifesting religion, pious.
3. Extremely faithful, conscientious: *religious devotion to duty*.

spiritual: (The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, 1982.)

1. Of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material.
2. Of, concerned with, or affecting the soul.

3. Of, from, or pertaining to God.
4. **Of or belonging to a church or religion; sacred.**
5. Pertaining to or having the nature of spirits; supernatural.

And Random House says:

Spiritual (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Second Edition, 1993.)

7. of or pertaining to sacred things or matters; **religious**; devotional; sacred.

As the judge said in the case of *Grandberg v. Ashland County*, a 1984 Federal 7th Circuit Court ruling concerning judicially-mandated A.A. attendance:

The distinction between religion and spirituality is meaningless, and serves merely to confuse the issue.

The converse of comparing apples to oranges is equating them — declaring that they are the same thing — the logical fallacy of *Conflation, False Equality*.

- **Special Pleading**

Special pleading typically refers to the Will of God. There are other "special pleadings," like the Communist's "Force of History" or a misguided environmentalist's "Mother Nature", but *God's Will* is still the most popular excuse for doing some horrible things.

Don't do something because I tell you to do it, but rather, do it because it is the Will of God, and God will be happy if you do it for Him.

- "Quit drinking",
 - "Do The Twelve Steps",
 - "Shove the Twelve Step religion on every sick person you can get",
 - "Blow Up The World Trade Center and kill thousands of innocent people",
 - or "Launch a *Blitzkrieg 'Shock And Awe'* bombing campaign on Bhagdad and kill thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians with cluster bombs and the indiscriminate use of overwhelming American firepower"
- ... Heck, everybody's just doing the Will of God.

An Israeli newspaper even quoted George W. Bush as saying that God told him to attack Afghanistan and Iraq...

"God told me to strike at al Qaeda, so I struck them; then God told me to strike at Saddam, so I did."

Usually, if someone says that God told him to go kill somebody, and then he actually goes and does it, we lock that dangerous nut-case up in a mental hospital for a very long time...

- **Self-Sell**

This one is so simple and slick that it is brilliant: Instead of trying to cram a particular attitude or belief down the throats of some unwilling recipients, get them to convince themselves of the validity of your ideas. Do something like ask them for their help in promoting a good thing, so that they ask themselves,

- "How can we convince the general public of the virtues of this program?"
- "How can we get people to support this worthwhile cause?"

They will sell themselves on the idea as they try to sell it to others.

For a humorous example of this, see the movie "*Cold Turkey*" which starred Dick Van Dyke, who acted as a preacher who had to make his whole town quit smoking. The local Neo-Nazis were a particularly tough bunch to get to quit. Van Dyke won them over by enlisting them as *smoking-ban enforcers*. Their only request: "Can we wear arm-bands?"

Another twist on Self-Sell is that whenever a cult sends members out recruiting, those recruiters will end up selling themselves on the cult's dogma when they try to convince others of the truth of the cult's teachings. Smart cult leaders know this, and get new converts out recruiting, fast. It's called "Actionizing." A.A. calls it your "Twelfth Step."

The *Big Book* gives us a clear example of that in the autobiographical story *The Vicious Cycle*. The author, James Burwell, a former skeptic and unbeliever, described setting up a new A.A. group in Philadelphia, after having been a member in New York City:

When I started to tell the boys how we did it in New York and all about the spiritual part of the program, I found that they would not believe me unless I was practicing what I preached. Then I found that as I gave in to this spiritual or personality change I was getting a little more serenity. In telling newcomers how to change their lives and attitudes, all of a sudden I found I was doing a little changing myself.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, Jim Burwell, *The Vicious Cycle*, page 249.

(Yes, that brainwashing program is powerful and works well, doesn't it? It even works on you while you are using it on others...)

- **Repetition for Emphasis (*Argumentum ad Nauseam*)**

Drive home an unproven point by repeating it so often that it might become accepted by rote.

Adolf Hitler declared in *Mein Kampf* that effective propaganda must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over. Hitler wrote:

It [propaganda] must repeat those points over and over again until the public believes it. The principles behind propaganda are the same principles of mind control, hypnotic suggestion, and mental programming: distraction and repetition. With propaganda, distraction draws attention away from information that is true and directs attention to information that is false. Repetition of the false information imbeds it in your subconscious mind so that your acceptance of its truth becomes a conditioned response. You accept this information as true without thinking whenever it is presented to you again.

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State."

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda

"See, in my line of work you got to keep repeating things over and over and over again for the truth to sink in, to kind of catapult the propaganda."

George W. Bush

Alcoholics Anonymous has a standard list of unproven (and even *disproven*) assumptions that they constantly repeat:

- A.A. is the best, the time-tested, *the proven way* to recover from alcoholism.
- Keep Coming Back, It Works! (If you make it work...)
- Alcoholics need the Twelve Steps to teach them spirituality. They didn't know anything about God before they met the Alcoholics Anonymous recruiter.
- The Twelve Steps are a great program for quitting drinking.
- Nobody can do it alone. You need your support group.
- Alcohol is cunning, baffling, and powerful, and wants to kill you.
- The Twelve Steps are "simple spiritual principles" (rather than [cult practices](#)).
- God is pleased when you do Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps.
- "RARELY have we seen a person fail, who has thoroughly followed our path..."

- **Antimetabole**

An antimetabole is a rhetorical device where you reverse a phrase to get a simplistic slogan that sounds profound, but isn't, like:

- "Unless you learn to master your rage, your rage will become your master." ([from the movie *Mystery Men*](#))
- "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this device often, as in,

- "The program doesn't fail people, people fail the program."
- "The Steps don't work unless you work the Steps."
- "The Steps don't work to make you quit drinking; you must quit drinking to work the Steps."
- "Working the Steps won't make you quit drinking right; quitting drinking will make you work the Steps right."
- "You don't work the Steps to quit drinking; you quit drinking to work the Steps."
- "AA does not leave US — We leave AA."

- **Reification**

Treat something *abstract* as *real*.

"I know there's a God; I've felt him in my life."

This statement can be explained in several ways that do not require an actual god to exist.

By that faulty logic, it would be equally valid to say that if I feel nervous while walking in creepy dark alleys in bad parts of town at night, that proves that Satan and vampires are real:

"I know they are real; I've felt them breathing down the back of my neck at night."

What if someone said to you, "My Satan is real. I feel him with me in everything that I do. I can feel his presence right now."? Would you take that person's statements as valid information, and consider that person a reliable source of wisdom about God, Satan, religion, life, the universe, and everything?

Or would you conclude that he is a raving lunatic?

Now what if somebody says, "My Jesus is real. I feel him with me in everything that I do..."?

- **Take Undeserved Credit**

This is a favorite of politicians. If anything good happens while they are in office, they are quick to take credit for it. (They [rationalize](#) that they might as well, because if anything goes wrong, they get the blame for it.)

Using this technique, Republicans like to claim that Ronald Reagan somehow 'caused' the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Soviet Union, not internal weakness, corruption, and a crumbling infrastructure in the Soviet empire.

Frank Buchman's cult used this technique often. Even today, their web site says:

Buchman's story starts with a small-town American who sets out "to remake the world" and in the attempt affected the moral and spiritual condition of thousands of people at every level of society throughout the world. From war-torn Europe to civil war in China, from the rise of black nationalist independence movements in Africa to the civil rights hotbed in the U.S, in the lives of great leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Konrad Adenauer, and Harry Truman — Buchman's remarkable influence kept turning up.

Advertising for *Frank Buchman, A Life*, by Garth Lean

<https://secure.iofc.org/shop/en/resources/shop/?room=3&product=47>

Frank Buchman does not get the credit for every civil rights movement in the world just because one of his followers showed up there and parroted slogans. And Mahatma Gandhi, Konrad Adenauer, and Harry Truman were not followers of Frank Buchman. The truth is that the social-climbing Frank Buchman sought them out, and only talked to them for a few minutes. Buchman only met Gandhi once, in 1915, and Adenauer perhaps a couple of times. Harry Truman declared that he had never talked to Buchman. Truman had sometimes helped Buchman's organization with draft problems, but [Truman dropped Buchman like a hot potato](#) when he learned about Buchman's history and Nazi sympathies and draft dodging. Nevertheless, Buchman forever after tried to imply that Mahatma Gandhi, Konrad Adenauer, and Harry Truman were his followers, world leaders who had learned their "spirituality" from Frank Buchman. (See Ghandi [here](#) and [here](#), and [here](#), and Adenauer [here](#).)

Bill Wilson and A.A. use this technique constantly. If anybody quit drinking after having attended [even just a few A.A. meetings](#), Wilson and A.A. were quick to claim or imply that the recovery was caused by A.A. and the Twelve Steps. But when those people relapsed later, A.A. had nothing to do with that. "A.A. caused the sobriety, but it didn't cause the relapse." Bill Wilson even took the credit for the sobriety of people [who finally quit drinking several years after](#) Bill encouraged them to quit.

Likewise, another A.A. promoter, Nan Robertson, [wrote in her book](#), *"Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous"*, that most of the newcomers to Alcoholics Anonymous had already quit drinking, but she credited their sobriety to A.A. anyway.

- **Create A Granfalloon**

A granfalloon is some distinction or difference which sets members of a group apart from other people who are not part of the group. The purpose of creating a granfalloon is to engender a feeling of "Us versus Them."

"He's not one of us."

A granfalloon can be any distinguishing difference. Race, religion, and nationality have been used for thousands of years. It can be as simple as the jocks versus the nerds.

Sometimes a granfalloon can be a small, trivial difference, and still work. When Hitler was still just a minor fledgeling politician, just beginning to build up his Nazi party, he dressed his followers in brown shirts. Some critics laughed and pointed out that they looked ridiculous. But rather than discouraging Hitler's followers, the criticism made them cling to their group and made them feel more committed to Hitler. Hitler gained a loyal, hard-core cadre just for the price of a few brown shirts.

In the book *Soul of A New Machine* by Tracy Kidder, the author describes how a smart manager organized teams of young computer geniuses, and set them to competing against each other in the creation of a new computer. The hardware designers were called "The Hardy Boys", and the programmers of the machine's internal software, the microcode, were called "The Micro-Kidders." The competition between them was so intense that they worked day and night, seven days a week, to finish the design and make the machine work. All of them argued that they weren't going to let the other guys on their team down, and they weren't going to let the other team outdo them. But the only real difference between the two groups was which part of the design they were working on. But that one tiny difference was enough to cement their loyalty to their group.

Andrew Carnegie demonstrated the same cleverness in eliciting greater output from one of his steel mills. He asked the foreman how many units of steel the day shift had produced. Carnegie wrote the answer with chalk in large numbers on the sidewalk where the workers entered the plant, and then simply walked away without explanation. When the night crew came to work, they saw the number on the sidewalk, and asked what it was. Someone told them. The night crew beat that number by a little bit. Early in the morning, Carnegie erased the day crew's number, and chalked in the night crew's output. The day crew saw that number on the sidewalk when they came to work. They worked even harder, and beat the night crew's output. Carnegie chalked in that number. The following night, the night crew beat the day crew again, and Carnegie chalked in that number. That contest of playing off the day crew against the night crew continued for weeks, while output steadily rose. Carnegie never said a word about the workers having to increase their productivity — he just played one group off against another, using no distinction between the two groups except that one worked during the day, and one worked at night.

In a beautiful demonstration of creating a granfalloon, teachers who wanted to educate a class about racism created a new, artificial, racial distinction: they separated the class into blue-eyed and brown-eyed people, and declared that the brown-eyed people were superior to the blue-eyed people. "Everybody knows" that blue-eyed people are dishonest and lazy, and can't be trusted, and lie a lot, while "everybody knows" that brown-eyed people are hard-working, honest, and trustworthy... By the end of the day, the two groups almost hated each other, even though it was just a mild one-day demonstration of discrimination. (It's enough to make you wonder about our two-party system of Democrats and Republicans hating each other — how much of their hatred and partisan bickering and investigation of sexual affairs is based on nothing more than the political equivalent of eye color?)

A current television commercial for Prilosec® uses a variation of this trick: They ask, "So which day are you on?" and a bunch of people proudly hold up several fingers. The commercial creates a feeling of being "one of the club" among those people who take the medicine. The granfalloon is taking Prilosec.

Alcoholics Anonymous obviously uses alcoholism as a granfalloon, to separate their group from everybody else. Every member introduces himself like, "Hi, my name is Harry, and I'm an alcoholic." Then outsiders, non-alcoholics, are called "normal people", "regular people", "normies", or "earth people", and *everybody knows* that you can't trust them to be accepting or understanding...

Likewise, A.A. uses membership in A.A. itself as a granfalloon. Those who do The Twelve Steps are "one of us", the people who understand, the members of the right religion, "*The Friends of Bill*", while those who don't do The Steps are *the other people*, those "[dry drunks](#)" who aren't our friends and who cannot be trusted.

In the *Big Book*, an A.A. member says of a non-member:

"You poor guy. I feel so sorry for you. You're not an alcoholic. You can never know the pure joy of recovering within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous."

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, page 334.

- **Spin Doctoring**

Often, how people take the news depends on how you present it.

The TV series *The West Wing* recently gave us a beautiful illustration of that. The administration had a problem with some new, improved equations for computing the threshold of poverty. The problem was that the new equations said that there were two million more poor people than the old equations did. Nobody wanted to face the next election with two million more poor people than there were when the President took office. Everybody around the White House was stuck in a loop of, "We want to fix the equations, but we don't want there to be more poor people." Then they took the problem to Toby, the resident political hack spin doctor:

"Did I ever tell you about the guy who had a batch of pink salmon that turned white? He canned it up and printed on the label, '*Guaranteed not to turn pink in the can.*'"

"So the equations have been broken for fifty years? What was the matter with all of the previous administrations? Why didn't those lazy bums fix the problem? This is outrageous! Thank God we finally have a President who is doing his job!

"Remember: '*White Salmon, guaranteed not to turn pink!*' By God, I can sell anything!"

In March of 2006, Microsoft found that its new operating system, Vista, was so buggy that they wouldn't be able to bring it to market for the 2006 Christmas season. They publicly announced yet another postponement of the release date until after January of 2007, the umpteenth one in four years of slipping schedules. Putting the best spin-doctor's smiley-face on the situation, Microsoft spokesman and project manager James Allchin said that the Vista delay was the "right thing" to do. (NY Times, 2006.03.27)

As if they had any choice in the matter.

The most unintentionally hilarious quote, however, came from Microsoft marketing executive Brad Goldberg, who told Ziff Davis Media's Microsoft Watch blog that, since people won't be able to get new Windows computers for Christmas in December, there will be another Christmas in January: "January has emerged as almost a second Christmas, with gift cards, sales, etc. It's a new trend." (Washington Post "Personal Tech" 2006.03.27)

Oh yeh, right.

In 2006, the Washington Post hired an unqualified college flunk-out as a reporter for "the Right-wing viewpoint", because he was the son of a Bush administration White House official. He was fired, or "allowed to resign", when Internet bloggers discovered that he was plagiarizing his writings. A Washington Post editor declared, in a fine example of spin doctoring:

Ben Domenech Resigns

In the past 24 hours, we learned of allegations that Ben Domenech plagiarized material that appeared under his byline in various publications prior to washingtonpost.com contracting with him to write a blog that launched Tuesday.

An investigation into these allegations was ongoing, and in the interim, Domenech has resigned, effective immediately. When we hired Domenech, we were not aware of any allegations that he had plagiarized any of his past writings.

Jim Brady, Executive Editor, washingtonpost.com, in "post.blog", March 24, 2006, *Ben Domenech Resigns*.

One of the commenters just nailed it:

"When we hired Domenech, we were not aware of any allegations that he had plagiarized any of his past writings."

Is that the same as not being aware of any facts?

Posted by: Texas Ex | March 24, 2006 02:08 PM

- **The Semi-Attached Figure**

"If you can't prove what you want to prove, demonstrate something else and pretend that they are the same thing."

— Darrell Huff (*How to Lie with Statistics*, p. 74.)

For example, if you can't prove that your nostrum can cure the common cold, advertise that a well-known "independent testing laboratory" has proven that it can kill umpteen zillion germs in a test tube in just a few minutes. Advertise those results by showing a picture of a doctor in a white coat reporting the results. Don't bother to mention the bothersome little fact that killing germs in a test tube isn't the same thing as killing them inside of people. And don't bother to mention the fact that the germs that got zapped in the test tube were something other than cold germs... The real meaning of the one true fact — that the nostrum simply killed some unidentified germs in a test tube, gets lost in the hype. That's a semiattached figure.

(And, if you think about it for a minute, plain old Clorox bleach is great for killing germs in a test tube, but if you drink the stuff to get over a cold, you won't...)

Similarly, you can easily think of some popular household cleaners whose advertisements imply that your family will be much healthier and more disease-free because their product kills lots of germs on contact. Nobody asks whether those unfortunate germs were actually harmful to humans. The vast majority of bacteria and microbes are really totally harmless, which is why we are still alive. In fact, recent studies have shown that the constant, habitual use of germ-killers on everything, everywhere, is just breeding super-bugs who are immune to our antibiotics, which is a real medical disaster. But an ad that says, "Laboratory testing has shown that our kitchen cleaner kills 300% more germs on contact" sure sounds good, doesn't it?

Darrell Huff noted:

There are often many ways of expressing any figure. You can, for instance, express exactly the same fact by calling it a one per cent return on sales, a fifteen per cent return on investment, a ten-million-dollar profit, an increase in profits of forty per cent (compared with 1935-39 average), or a decrease of sixty per cent from last year. The method is to choose the one that sounds best for the purpose at hand and trust that few who read it will recognize how imperfectly it reflects the situation.

How to Lie with Statistics, Darrell Huff, page 82.

For example, if you run a store, and buy an item for 99 cents every morning, and sell it for \$1.00 every afternoon, you are only making a 1% profit on sales, which sounds terrible. But in a year of doing that, you make a 368% return on investment ($365 \times 100 / 99$), which sounds like you are making out like a bandit.

In another example of the semiattached figure, in a management-labor dispute, the management questioned the workers about their gripes against the union. They collected every trivial complaint that had ever been lodged against the union, added up the numbers, and announced that 78% of the workers were "against the union." Obviously, there is a huge difference between disagreeing with the union about something or other, at one time or other, and being against the union representing the workers.

"Flying in airplanes must be growing increasingly dangerous, because 500 times as many people were killed in airplane crashes last year (2001) as were killed in 1910."

That completely ignores, of course, the truth that the Wright Brothers and friends were the only people flying in 1910, and the September 11, 2001 terrorism that caused multiple airplane crashes was an exceptional situation.

My all-time favorite in this category is, "Eating carrots is very dangerous to your health, and will eventually kill you. 100% of the people who ate carrots between 1860 and 1900 are now all dead."

Recently, the NBC Evening News used this trick to sensationalize a story about teenagers buying alcohol over the Internet (9 August 2006). They declared that "One in 10 teenagers knows another teenager who has illegally ordered liquor online."

That sounds pretty impressive, and it hints that one in 10 teenagers is getting supplied alcohol by another teenager who gets it through the Internet. It sounds impressive, until we realize that if the average teenage knows 100 other teenagers, then only 1 in 1000 teenagers needs to have bought alcohol through the Internet just once in order for that NBC statement to be true. (And if the average teenager knows more than 100 other teenagers, then even fewer teenagers need to have bought alcohol through the Internet.) And just because a teenager knows someone who once bought alcohol through the Internet doesn't mean that he got any of it.

When Peter Howard defended the cult leader Frank Buchman and his Moral Re-Armament organization in the booklet *Fighters Ever* (November, 1941), Howard used the trick of the *Semi-Attached Figure* in his story about the [controversy over drafting Buchman's Moral Re-Armament followers](#) into the British army during World War II. The Buchmanites claimed that the MRA men were all "lay evangelists of an established religion", and as such, should not be drafted, and they got 174 Members of Parliament to sign a motion that asked that the MRA men be given special exemptions to the draft. Peter Howard wrote in his book that "**the elected representatives of more than 11,000,000 people**" opposed drafting MRA members. Peter Howard implied that all 11 million of those British people were unanimous in their support of draft exemptions for the MRA men, which was nowhere near the truth.¹⁵

Furthermore, those 174 Members of Parliament had been elected on the basis of other issues than drafting MRA members, so those 11 million represented British people had never really voted on that particular issue at all. And then, when the whole of the British Parliament voted, and decided not to give the MRA men any special exemptions, Peter Howard did not bother to write that "**the elected representatives of all 40 million Britons decided to draft the MRA men just like everybody else**".

- **Use Exact Numbers**

The human mind has the funny peculiarity that exact numbers sound so much more valid than round numbers, even if they aren't accurate, or can't really be applicable. So use exact numbers in arguments, when you wish to impress people.

Compare these two statements:

- 1.) The average American made about \$25,000 last year.
- 2.) The average American made \$24,979.37 last year.

Which sounds truer? Which sounds more like somebody who knows what he is talking about? (But who was that one "Average American" who made exactly that much, really?)

- **Avoid Specific Numbers**

This is just the converse of the previous item — Avoid giving specific numbers whenever it would be disadvantageous to do so.

Advertisements often do a fancy tap-dance around the prices, and never tell you what it actually costs:

- "...Installed for less than you would think."
- The price is "half of what you would expect to pay."

(Actually, things never seem to be only half of what I would expect to pay. I am always appalled by the high new price of everything — twice what I would expect to pay.)

- **Hide Behind Others**

You can mask your intentions and your egotism (or your stupidity) by hiding behind others. Use words like *we*, *us*, and *our*, instead of *I*, *me* and *my*. You can say "We want" instead of "I want," and "We think"

instead of "I think." You sound more important if you sound like you represent a group of people, rather than just being one person speaking for yourself. You also sound less selfish when you make demands.

Politicians routinely say, "The American people want...", rather than "I want..." when they win an election, but they don't say "The American people want..." when the vote goes against them. Then they just complain that somebody cheated and stole the election, or their opponents took a lot of improper campaign contributions, or the voters got fooled, or something.

Politicians make statements like, "[The American people don't want government controlling their health care options.](#)" (Never mind the fact that the FDA already does, in many ways.) You aren't supposed to notice that it's the politician who objects to government involvement in health care, not the American people who have little or no health care. They very much want the government giving them some health care options.

The cult leader Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman gave us an example of this propaganda technique [when he said](#), in 1936,

I thank Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front line of defense against the anti-Christ of Communism...

My barber in London told me Hitler saved all Europe from Communism. That's how he felt.

So what on earth does the opinion of Frank Buchman's barber have to do with anything? Well, Buchman could put forth the opinion that Hitler had saved all of Europe from Communism while pretending that it was someone else's opinion besides his own. It tended to add weight to his own statements:

"See, it isn't just my opinion. My English barber thinks so too."

Likewise, when Acting Vice President Dick Cheney cursed and used obscenity on the Senate floor, (19 June 2004), telling Senator Lahey to "Go f**k himself" (or "Go f**k off"), he later tried to [rationalize](#) his behavior by explaining that many other Republicans agreed that it was about time that he said that — that they felt that it was "long overdue" (in spite of the fact that using foul language on the Senate floor is against the Senate rules).

On Dec. 11, 2003, when Acting President George W. Bush announced that countries which had not participated in the coalition to blow up Iraq would not be able to bid on contracts to rebuild Iraq, he [rationalized](#) his actions by saying,

"That's what the U.S. taxpayers expect."

No, actually, it wasn't what they expected.

G. W. Bush didn't bother to mention the extremely dangerous, threatening, Weapons of Mass Destruction ("45 minutes to launch") which the U.S. taxpayers really *did expect* him to find.

Nor did he mention the claimed connections to the al Qaeda terrorists which he had claimed threatened Americans ("Sadam will give al Qaeda a nuke or something.")

And the U. S. taxpayers *really* didn't expect Dick Cheney's friends at the Halliburton corporation to get multi-billion-dollar contracts on a no-bid basis.

And the U. S. taxpayers didn't expect war profiteers to empty the national treasury while deceived young men in uniform died for a lie.

A variation on this trick of *Hiding Behind Others* is to imply that lots of people are with you, or lots of people agree with you:

"Thanks for proving to all of us what a fool you are."

That sounds far more impressive than,

"I think you are a fool."

Bill Wilson constantly used the stunt of hiding behind others:

- He had the habit of hiding behind others by saying things like "Miss Hock and I" or "Dr. Bob and I."
- He used to say "A.A. has saved these men and their families," instead of "I, Bill Wilson, saved these men and their families."
(Which led to, "So send money to the A.A. office", which really meant "So send money to me.")
- He used to say that the groups had to send money to the New York headquarters "to pay for our office" instead of "to pay for my living". (In the early days, supporting Bill Wilson in comfort was the major office expense of Alcoholics Anonymous.)
- When Bill and Lois Wilson were evicted from their house at 182 Clinton Street in New York for non-payment of the mortgage, Bill started a campaign that he called the "Lois W. Home Replacement Fund", and Bill went around trying to con all of the other A.A. members into signing pledges to donate. Bill didn't admit that he wanted the other A.A. members to supply *him* with a new house; no, it was just for poor old Lois.
- Bill Wilson would say "You should do *our suggested* Twelve Steps if you wish to recover" when he really meant, "You must do *my required* Twelve Steps, which I wrote, if you wish to live".

Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested [MY required] Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to [MY]spiritual principles [cult religion practices].

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 174.

- Bill Wilson wrote in the *Big Book* that the first ten alcoholic members of Bill's new temperance movement would meet each evening, "constantly thinking how they might present their discovery to some newcomer." (Page 159.)
"Their discovery" really meant "Bill Wilson's adaptation of Frank Buchman's cult religion."

• The Preacher's We

Veil accusations of others by saying "We" or "Us" when you really mean "You".

This is the flip side of hiding behind others — accusing others of things by accusing "us". A preacher will say "we" when he really means "you", as in

"We are all sinners; may God have mercy on us"

when he really means,

"**You** are sinners; may God have mercy on *your* miserable worthless asses."

It's just human nature for people to defend themselves from direct attacks, and to resent accusations, but they are much more open to what sounds like some sincere talk about "us" and "our shortcomings".

Bill Wilson used the preacher's "we" constantly. He wrote:

- "At some of these [steps] we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not."
The Big Book, William G. Wilson, page 58.
- "We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for all of A.A.'s [Bill's] Twelve Steps for us."
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 113.
- We "constructively criticized" someone who needed it, when our real motive was to win a useless argument. Or, the person concerned not being present, we thought we were helping

others to understand him, when in actuality our true motive was to feel superior by pulling him down. We sometimes hurt those we love because they need to be "taught a lesson," when we really wanted to punish. We were depressed and complained we felt bad, when in fact we were mainly asking for sympathy and attention. This odd trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one, permeates human affairs from top to bottom.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 94.

Such a negative, poisonous view of human life. When Bill Wilson wrote *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, he was in the middle of an 11-year case of chronic, deep, crippling, clinical depression. It's easy to see why.

- If our tempers are consistently bad, we arouse anger in others. If we lie or cheat, we deprive others not only of their worldly goods, but of their emotional security and peace of mind. We really issue them an invitation to become contemptuous and vengeful. If our sex conduct is selfish, we may excite jealousy, misery, and a strong desire to retaliate in kind.

Such gross misbehavior is not by any means a full catalogue of the harms we do.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 94.

This is just a never-ending assault on any shreds of self-respect or feelings of self-worth that members may have left. It's cultish guilt induction to the max.

- There is one more twist to the "we are guilty" accusation, the "I am guilty, but I mean YOU" accusation. Bill Wilson did not use that particular trick himself, but you will hear plenty of it in A.A. meetings:

"It took me years to learn to do all Twelve of the Steps, and really work a Strong Program. I just goofed off for my first few years in A.A.. I thought I was doing fine. I thought I knew everything. It took me a long time to wise up and realize that I had to work *all* of the Steps *all* of the time."

And by implication, you — you stupid beginner — are doing the same thing. You also need to learn that you **must** work *all of the Steps all of the time*.

But the speaker never offers us any explanation for how he was able to stay dry for so many years without bothering to "*Work The Steps*" properly. That would be good to know. We could save a lot of lives with that technique:

"Just abstain from both alcohol and Alcoholics Anonymous. It'll save both your life and your mind."

- **Put Words Into Other People's Mouths**

This is a form of hiding behind others, where you make other people appear to be saying what you are really saying.

Frank Buchman used this technique in his quote above — "*My barber in London told me Hitler saved Europe from Communism. That's how he felt.*" — and he used it again here:

A Swedish steelworker told me: "Only a spiritual revolution goes far enough to meet the needs of men and industry."

A Labor leader said: "I have seen the Labor Movement triumph and felt in the midst of triumph an emptiness. The Oxford Group gave my life new content. I see in its message the only key to the future of the Labor Movement and of industry the world over."

Frank Buchman, speaking at East Ham Town Hall, 29 May 1938, quoted in

Remaking the World, the speeches of Frank Buchman, Frank N. D. Buchman, 1949, pages 85-87.

Also quoted in:

Britain and the Beast, Peter Howard, 1963, pages 107-109.

Also see:

Drawing-Room Conversion; A Sociological Account of the Oxford Group Movement, Allan W. Eister, Duke University Press, 1950, page 47.

- **Tokenism**

This is a well-known stunt. A company that does not wish to be accused of racism or sexism hires one Token Negro, or one token woman, and prominently displays the token right out front. Some firms hire a black woman for the receptionist, thus killing two birds with one stone.

Bill Wilson published Doctor Silkworth's letter in the *Big Book*, and used it to imply that the medical establishment strongly approved of Bill's wonderful new plan to cure all of the alcoholics with cult religion. Dr. Silkworth was A.A.'s token doctor. Then Bill added an appendix to the second edition, "*The Medical View on A.A.*", which listed five more doctors who said something nice about Alcoholics Anonymous.

Bill Wilson didn't bother to mention the fact that the American Medical Association reviewed the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* when it was first published, and they found it to be a bunch of useless old garbage with no merit. That was the real "Medical View" on Alcoholics Anonymous.

On October 14, 1939, the Journal of the American Medical Association published the following review of "*Alcoholics Anonymous: How More Than One Hundred Men Have Recovered from Alcoholism*":

The seriousness of the psychiatric and social problem represented by addiction to alcohol is generally underestimated by those not intimately familiar with the tragedies in the families of victims or the resistance addicts offer to any effective treatment. Many psychiatrists regard addiction to alcohol as having a more pessimistic prognosis than schizophrenia.

For many years the public was beguiled into believing that short courses of enforced abstinence and catharsis in "institutes" and "rest homes" would do the trick, and now that the failure of such temporizing has become common knowledge, a considerable number of other forms of quack treatment have sprung up.

The book under review is a curious combination of organizing propaganda and religious exhortation. It is in no sense a scientific book, although it is introduced by a letter from a physician who claims to know some of the anonymous contributors who have been "cured" of addiction to alcohol and have joined together in an organization which would save other addicts by a kind of religious conversion.

The book contains instructions as to how to intrigue the alcoholic addict into the acceptance of divine guidance in place of alcohol in terms strongly reminiscent of Dale Carnegie and [the adherents of the Buchman \("Oxford"\) movement](#). The one valid thing in the book is the recognition of the seriousness of addiction to alcohol. Other than this, the book has no scientific merit or interest.

The doctors at the American Medical Association immediately saw that Bill Wilson's "new spiritual program" was just a clone of Frank Buchman's cult religion.

Bill never mentioned any of that. He just said,

This work has claimed the attention of prominent doctors and institutions who say without hesitation that in a few years time, as it gains impetus, thousands of hitherto incurable cases

may recover. Such people as the chief physician of Charles B. Towns Hospital and psychiatrists of the Johns Hopkins Hospital at Baltimore express such opinions.

[The One Hundred Men Corporation Prospectus](#), December 1938, page 4.

Note that "the chief physician of Charles B. Towns Hospital" was none other than Dr. William D. Silkworth, the doctor who gave Bill Wilson the quack medicine "[belladonna cure](#)" while Bill was detoxing from alcohol. So basically, Bill's grandiose claim of many endorsements from the medical community really boils down to just one from his own doctor and a couple from psychiatrists at Johns Hopkins. (Then Bill got a few more for the appendix added onto the second edition of the *Big Book* — including an endorsement from Dr. Harry Tiebout, Bill's psychiatrist, who also said that Bill Wilson was [immature, narcissistic, and grandiose](#).)

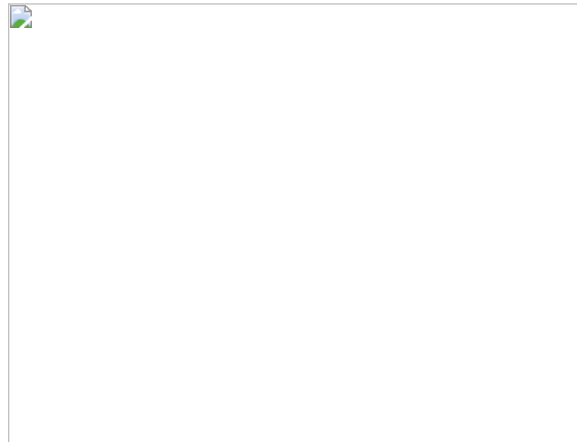
And, speaking of tokens, Rev. Sam Shoemaker was Bill's token Protestant minister, and Father Edward Dowling, S.J., was Bill's token Catholic priest. Bill used both of them to try to imply that the theology of A.A. was not [bizarre and heretical](#).

- **Testimonials and Stories**

This is well-known too. Everybody is doing it. Forest Gump was paid \$25,000 to tell everybody that he just loved to play ping-pong with his Flexo-Lite Ping-Pong Paddle, which wasn't true, but Momma said that just a little white lie wouldn't hurt...

Sports heroes and movie stars are constantly telling us that we can be so much happier if we just do like they do, and use a certain product...

It is an advertising truism that stories sell. A commercial that just tells the true facts about a product will often be a real failure, but a commercial that tells a story can be very convincing —



- "I just couldn't lose weight; none of the diets worked for me; I was miserable. I didn't dare to go to the beach and appear in public in a bathing suit. Then I discovered the ShrinkFit Diet Program® and now I can wear a size twelve..."
- I signed up with *Insta-match*® and in just one day they found me a girl who couldn't wait to jump in bed with me. I recommend that you give your money to *Insta-match*® too, and you'll be happy just like me...
- "This product is everything that I ever wanted. This product is just what I was looking for."

By the way, you can tell that you are getting a scripted testimonial when you hear the word "product". Real people don't buy "products". They may buy diet pills or other drugs or low-calorie drinks, or hair conditioner, or all kinds of stuff, but they don't go shopping for "product". I never bought "product" in my life. I never went to the store to get "product", and I never went online to buy "product". When people start talking to you about "product", you know that you are getting just another standard canned sales pitch.

Also notice how interchangeable the commercials are. When the women in infomercials sit around talking about how happy they are now that they got their husbands to use "this product" (which might be a weight-loss formula in this case), just a little retitling could make the same testimonial

into an advertisement for something entirely different, like a hair-restoration product or an erectile disfunction drug.

In an infomercial for a stock market trading program, a man declares, "I traded stocks for two hours and made \$7000." Wow. That sounds great. We should get in on that right away, shouldn't we, if it is that easy to make big money?

Ah, but they didn't tell us how many other times the guy traded stocks for two hours and lost \$7000, did they? They just imply that the guy is a very successful trader who is consistently making big profits. And they didn't tell us anything about how the average trader fares.

So that also makes it an example of "cherry picking" — just publicizing a few hand-picked spectacular success stories, while ignoring the many more stories of failures.

A study of such trading programs conducted by the SEC found that more than 90% of the people who trade stocks and options with such computer programs lose their money, but the advertisers don't tell us that. They just keep broadcasting exciting stories like, "My best trade was when I made \$10,000 in three trading days."

Cults are notorious for trotting out a chorus line of poster children who all give testimonials about how the cult is just the greatest thing since sliced bread, and it has done such wonderful things for them, and their leader is God's gift to mankind.

Alcoholics Anonymous is non-stop testimonials. The last two-thirds of the *Big Book* is all testimonials, [all people telling stories](#) about how they just love A.A. and the Twelve Steps, and how it made their lives so wonderful... But the book does not tell any stories about the millions of other people whom the faith-healing 12-Step religion did not help. The *Big Book* tells us nothing about [all of the people who relapsed and went back out and died drunk](#) — it doesn't even mention the *Big Book's* co-author [Henry Parkhurst](#), who died drunk. Such a "proof" with testimonials is very one-sided, and only tells half of the story.

In addition, there is no actual evidence that those people who did get sober actually got sober *because of* Alcoholics Anonymous. There is no demonstration of any cause-and-effect relationship between joining A.A. and getting sober. That critical factor is just assumed and glossed over.

And every A.A. meeting is more testimonials, people telling their stories, and claiming that A.A. saved their lives, not that they saved their own lives by quitting drinking...

And of course you will not hear from any of the other people who found the A.A. program to be of no help, and quit coming back.

- **The Fallacy of One Similarity**

Two different things are declared to be the same thing based on just one point of similarity (or just a few).

For instance,

"Your father is authoritarian. The cult leader is authoritarian. Therefore they are just the same, and you should trust the cult leader just like you trust your father."

Obviously, you could continue that through a number of other characteristics like,

- both are men
- both are balding
- both have fat bellies

but that would still overlook the single most important difference between the two men: The father probably has the best of intentions towards his child, while the cult leader is a psychopath who abuses and exploits people.

It's easy to see how this logical fallacy can get extended into stereotyping groups on the basis of just one characteristic:

"All of those tree-huggers are opposed to logging this stand of old-growth trees. Therefore, they are all eco-terrorists who will do anything to block progress."

Bill Wilson had a dramatic "religious" or "spiritual" or hallucinatory experience, and thought he saw God, when he was sick and detoxing from alcohol in Towns Hospital and getting Dr. Silkworth's "[Belladonna Cure](#)" (which was a hallucinogenic drug cocktail), and [while also being tormented and indoctrinated](#) by recruiters from Frank Buchman's Oxford Group cult. After reading in William James' book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, that some people have profound religious experiences when they are really down, in despair and great pain, Wilson decided that using the Oxford Groups techniques to put people down, crush their egos, and make them feel powerless and hopeless would recreate his "religious" experience in them. He was wrong. It doesn't work.

Bill Wilson made the big mistake of seizing upon a few points of similarity between what happened to him and what he read in James' book, while ignoring the many large differences:

- James' subjects weren't on hallucinogenic drugs,
- they weren't suffering from *Delirium Tremens* while detoxing from alcohol,
- and they weren't having their minds "changed" by [Oxford Group recruiters](#).

- **The Fallacy of One Dissimilarity**

This technique is simply the converse of *The Fallacy of One Similarity* — find one difference between two things, and then declare that they are completely different.

For example, "[Alcoholics Anonymous cannot be a cult because there isn't a strong leader who commands and controls everybody.](#)"

That illogic ignores the fact that there are [many dozens of different defining characteristics of a cult](#), and [A Charismatic Leader](#) is just one of them.

Besides, Alcoholics Anonymous *did have* a charismatic leader as its founder — Bill Wilson. The founder Bill Wilson is now dead, but A.A. is still ruled by the occult practices and customs that he established, and through [the crazy things that he wrote in his books](#).

And a cult does not stop being a cult just because the leader dies. Scientology, the Hari Krishnas (ISKCON), the Moonies (Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church), Jim Jones' People's Temple, The Branch Davidians of "David Koresh", and Alcoholics Anonymous are all cults that now worship dead founders. And yes, the People's Temple and the Branch Davidians churches still exist and they still have some followers and true believers, in spite of the fact that the majority of both cults died in spectacular mass suicide—mass murder blowouts.

- **If It Looks Like X, Then It Is X.**

When you find a snake that has red, yellow, and black bands all around it, it's obviously just a harmless King Snake, isn't it? So you pick it up to take it home as a pet. It turns around and bites you and you die. What was the logical error? A Coral Snake also has red, yellow, and black bands all around it, and it isn't harmless. The two snakes look very similar, but they are not the same thing at all.

The key thing to look at to distinguish King Snakes from Coral Snakes is which color is adjacent to the red bands on the snake:

Red and black, friend of jack.
Red and yellow, kill a fellow.

Similarly, if a politician looks like a respectable and honest man, he must really be one, right? I mean, he's dressed in a fine suit and tie, isn't he? And he gives rousing speeches, doesn't he? — Speeches full of fine words like God, country, patriotism, and freedom. So he must be a great statesman, right?

If a TV evangelist has a Bible in one hand, and a cross in the other, and dresses impeccably and speaks softly and piously and says all of the right slogans and prays a lot and looks just like a real holy man, then he must be one right? ...Even if he is preaching hatred and the advocating the assassination of somebody he doesn't like. All in the name of Jesus.

Conversely, if a young black man with a knit cap looks like a hoodlum gang member, then he must be one, right?

Many animals take advantage of this confusion of appearances by appearing to be a venomous animal. There are harmless flies that look just like bees or wasps. The predators leave them alone because they don't want to get stung.

- **A Distinction Without A Difference.**

As in, "He was just a heavy drinker, not a real alcoholic. Okay, he was drinking enough alcohol to wreck his health and his brain and eventually kill himself, but he wasn't a real alcoholic, because he managed to quit drinking without A.A. or the 12 Steps."

When Vice President Dick Cheney's former Chief of Staff I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby declared that Cheney and Bush had authorized and approved the surreptitious leaking of classified nuclear intelligence information to get back at Joseph C. Wilson IV for reporting that Saddam Hussein didn't get any yellow-cake uranium from Niger, "A senior administration official, speaking on background because White House policy prohibits comment on an active investigation, said Bush sees a distinction between leaks and what he is alleged to have done." ([Washington Post, 2006.04.06](#))

What distinction? Is it not treason if it is the President who subverts national security? Something that would get an ordinary citizen locked up for years in Leavenworth is okay if it is sneakily done by the President for political reasons?

- **Sly Suggestions**

Plant sly suggestions. Do not make solid statements which can be proven wrong; rather, just suggest that your ideas may be true. Then, often, perhaps a little while later, you might suddenly start assuming that all of your suggestions are really true.

This technique is basically the old strategy of first just getting your toe in the door, and then later gradually working your way in. With this technique, the speaker first gets his toe into the door of someone's mind by merely *suggesting* that an idea *may be true* (which isn't too hard to accept, because it's only a suggestion that might be true), and then the speaker gradually pushes further in by assuming that the suggestion really is true.

For instance:

- "You may be a winner..."
- "You may have already won \$10,000,000. Just subscribe to a bunch of magazines and see..."
- "You may be the next winner..."
- "Your opinion may be worth \$1000."
- "This diet plan may be the one that works for you..."
- "This cream may be a make-up artist's dream come true..."
- "This get-rich-quick scheme may be the answer to all of your problems..."
- "Science and astrology: Are they really at odds?"
- "Could a Chinese Herb Replace Life-Threatening RA Drugs?"

- Con artists who tout stocks on the stock market say of their latest "hot stock" that a "Big move could happen."
(Yes, but will the move be in the direction that you want? It might go down like the Titanic.)

- "I am predicting, that this web site may be part of a major corporate buyout by Microsoft, Google, or Yahoo in the next 18 months."
(First it's a prediction, and then it's just a maybe.)

- A commercial for a weight-loss pill says, "If your weight loss is too rapid, then cut down and only take one pill per day."
The sly suggestion is, of course, that those pills really work great. Too good, in fact. You will loose weight too fast.

- The back cover of Dr. Arthur Janov's ridiculous [book](#) "*The New Primal Scream: Primal Therapy After 20 Years*" advertises:
"Scientific Research World-Wide Proves Primal Therapy May Prolong Life by Reducing Stress".
Yes, and the discovery of the coelacanth *PROVES* that Nessie the Loch Ness sea monster *MAY* be real too, but it's extremely unlikely, for about a dozen [good scientific reasons](#).⁴ I'm not holding my breath.

Notice the broken logic:

Scientific blah-blah PROVES that Janov's garbage MAY work.

You get an absolute certainty — "proof" — followed by a vague, uncertain, possibility.

And note that the opposite logic is equally valid:

Scientific blah-blah PROVES that Janov's garbage MAY NOT work.

- On December 5, 2005, Condoleeza Rice used the same word game in her attempt to explain to the European countries the illegal American practice of "rendition" — kidnapping people and shipping them to other countries that permit torture, where they will be forcefully interrogated. Condoleeza said that we had always had a problem with "what to do with these individuals whom we *know* are believed to be terrorists."
We get an absolute certainty — she spoke the word "know" with strong emphasis — followed by a vague belief. Condoleeza used [the passive voice](#) to declare that some unnamed person *believes* that some guy is a terrorist.
"Yeh, we know with certainty that Joe Blow the village idiot thinks that Abdul is a terrorist."
That is Condoleeza's lame-brained justification for violating international law and besmirching the reputation of the United States of America.

By the way, I *know* that some people believe that George W. Bush is a terrorist. And so are Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and General Jerry Boykin. They murder innocent people.

- A commercial on TV says, "Two years ago, I had a heart attack. Right there where Tina is standing. If it weren't for Bayer aspirin, who knows?"
They did not say that Bayer aspirin actually did anything good for the guy. They didn't even say that the guy actually took any aspirin. They just want to strongly hint that aspirin saved the guy's life, because he presumably took some of it while having a heart attack.

Bill Wilson was a past master of this technique, and used it frequently:

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, **you are probably** alcoholic. **If that be the case, you may be** suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. **To be doomed to an alcoholic death** or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 44.

Bill neatly tap-danced and segued from a diagnosis of "you may be sick" and "you might need a spiritual experience" to "you are doomed to an alcoholic death if you don't join my 'spiritual' program", without a single new fact to support the sudden change in medical diagnosis. He just started assuming that all of his previous suggestions were unquestionably true. Then Bill Wilson used the *Either/Or propaganda trick* to present the reader with only two limited choices — join his cult or die: "To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face."

In his second book, Bill Wilson used a *Sly Suggestion* this way:

By now the newcomer **has probably** arrived at the following conclusions: that his character defects, representing instincts gone astray, have been the primary cause of his drinking and his failure at life...

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 50.

Actually, by now, the newcomer *has probably* come to the conclusion that Bill Wilson was a raving lunatic, and the newcomer has quit going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings altogether. (At least ninety-five percent of the *newcomers to A.A. drop out* in the first year.)

Oh, and Bill Wilson's "primary cause" of drinking is bogus and just so much delusional nonsense — "character defects, representing instincts gone astray". Bill Wilson had a zillion such goofy "primary causes" of drinking and alcoholism, and they were all wrong.

Notice how Bill Wilson used *Sly Suggestions* in this paragraph of instructions to the wives of alcoholics, where Bill did a clever tap-dance and slipped and slid from talking about how the husbands must quit drinking to declaring that the husbands must "discover" [Bill Wilson's Oxford Group version of God](#):

There is another paralyzing fear. You **may** be afraid your husband will lose his position; you are thinking of the disgrace and hard times which will befall you and the children. This experience **may** come to you. Or you **may** already have had it several times. Should it happen again, regard it in a different light. **Maybe** it will prove a blessing! It **may** convince your husband he wants to stop drinking forever. And now you know that he can stop if he will! Time after time, this apparent calamity has been a boon to us, for it opened up a path which led to the discovery of God.

The Big Book, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, *To Wives*, page 116.

- o Bill Wilson started off talking about how bad it *might* be if the husband lost his job.
- o Then Bill declared that it *might* be a blessing... — that such a calamity *might* provide the impetus for the husband to quit drinking.
- o Then Bill suddenly assumed that his suggestions were true, and totally changed the subject and declared that the husband could quit drinking if he wished to, which means that the husband is not "powerless over alcohol" like Step One says, and then Bill Wilson concluded that everything was wonderful because so many husbands had found Bill's Buchmanite version of God.
So that also makes it [a bait-and-switch trick](#): First the goal is to get the husbands to quit drinking, and then the goal is to get the husbands to "come to believe" in Bill Wilson's religion.

Even the commandment to "*Work The Steps!*" was delivered in this sly back-door manner. On the second page of chapter five of the *Big Book* (page 59), it says that the Twelve Steps are merely "*suggested as a program of recovery.*" Bill Wilson didn't want to write that. He wanted the Twelve Steps and all of the rest of his dogmatic cult religion to be requirements of membership in A.A., just like how, back in the early days, "[surrendering to God](#)" was required before an alcoholic could attend [Alcoholics Anonymous meetings](#). But more moderate A.A. members strongly objected to that because they clearly foresaw that Bill Wilson's extreme religiosity was going to drive away many of the very alcoholics whom the program was supposed to help.

So, after a loud and long screaming contest, Bill was forced to compromise and write that the Twelve Steps were just "suggested as a program of recovery" (*The Big Book*, page 59).

Bill Wilson did his best to put a smiley-face on the situation by later declaring that his critics "had opened the A.A. door wide to all, even the atheists and agnostics", but Bill was really secretly nursing a resentment. So, on the very first page of the next chapter that he wrote, chapter six, Bill planted a sly suggestion that also used [the fear-mongering propaganda technique](#):

"If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking."

(*The Big Book*, William G. Wilson, page 72.)

Then again, we might. Heck, I did. In fact, [the vast majority of successfully recovering alcoholics do](#).

Bill gave us lots more examples of this mind-bending *Sly Suggestions* technique. The *Big Book* is loaded with them. To list just a few more:

We asked ourselves this: Are not some of us just as biased and unreasonable about the realm of the spirit as were the ancients about the realm of the material?

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, Page 51.

If you won't swallow Bill's bull, then maybe you are [prejudiced](#), biased, and unreasonable as all get-out.

And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. ... But insist that if he is severely afflicted, **there may be** little chance he can recover by himself.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 92.

"Maybe you are gonna die. I'm not saying for sure, but maybe you are gonna die if you don't join my 'little fellowship' *real soon now*."

Maybe you have disturbed him about the question of alcoholism. This is all to the good. The more hopeless he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 94.

Maybe we are really messing with his mind now.

And **maybe** the whole family should go join [the Al-Anon branch of the cult](#):

One more suggestion: Whether the family has spiritual convictions or not, they **may** do well to examine the principles by which the alcoholic member is trying to live. **They can hardly fail to approve** these simple principles, though the head of the house still fails somewhat in practicing them. Nothing will help the man who is off on a spiritual tangent so much as the wife who adopts a sane spiritual program, making a better practical use of it.

The Big Book, 3rd edition, Chapter 9, *The Family Afterward*, page 130.

Bill Wilson says that the whole family **may do well** to join his religion, because Father is acting crazy again. *"Maybe they will really benefit from Bill's version of Buchmanism."* (The religious cult that just drove Daddy crazy.)

Bill imagines that **they can hardly fail** to agree with his program, once they see how wonderful his "simple principles" really are. (Actually, Bill Wilson's so-called "[simple principles](#)" were not really "principles", they were [Oxford Group cult recruiting and indoctrination practices](#).)

Then Bill Wilson [lectured the wives of alcoholics](#), telling them in several different ways not to nag their husbands to quit drinking, and [not to nag their husbands to quit smoking](#), *or else*, and Bill then made a few more *Sly Suggestions*:

Our next thought is that you should never tell him what he must do about his drinking. **If** he gets the idea that you are a nag or a killjoy, your chance of accomplishing anything useful **may** be zero. ... This **may** lead to lonely evenings for you. He **may** seek someone else to console him — **not always another man**.

Big Book, 3rd Edition, *To Wives*, page 111.

Bill was also using the propaganda trick of [Argue From Adverse Consequences](#) there, to put the little woman in her place — *"Don't nag your husband to quit drinking, or else he may go off with another woman."*

We know these suggestions are sometimes difficult to follow, but you will save many a heartbreak if you can succeed in observing them. Your husband **may** come to appreciate your reasonableness and patience.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 8, *To Wives*, page 111.

(Then again, **maybe he won't appreciate you at all. Maybe he'll just continue to take advantage of you, like Bill did to Lois.**)

If this kind of approach does not catch your husband's interest, it **may** be best to drop the subject, but after a friendly talk your husband will usually revive the topic himself. This **may** take patient waiting, but it will be worth it. Meanwhile you might try to help the wife of another serious drinker. If you act upon these principles, your husband **may** stop or moderate.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 8, *To Wives*, page 111.

So the husband may quit drinking if the wife stops being a shrill nag? Why, it must be her fault that he drinks.

And while you are out recruiting, here is how you handle a drinker who is perhaps not a disgusting atheist:

Your prospect **may** belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training **may** be far superior to yours. In that case he is going to wonder how you can add anything to what he already knows. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. **He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient.**

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 93.

That's a cute twist in the logic: "He **may be an example of one of Bill Wilson's unquestionably-true religious beliefs.**" Bill is subtly slipping in another propaganda technique there: [Assume the Major Premise](#). Just

assume that something is true, and talk like it is unquestionably true, because you wish to fool others into believing that it is true, and then divert attention away from that assumption by arguing about something else, like *why* it is true:

He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient.

Then again, he **may** be an example of the truth that religious beliefs really have very little to do with drinking beer...

Bill managed to pack more lies into that paragraph. This one sentence contains no less than two lies:

But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well.

- Who says that the other guy's own convictions have not worked?
Who says that the goal of all religious beliefs is to keep people from drinking alcohol?
I don't remember any of the Ten Commandments saying, "*Thou Shalt Not Drink Wine, Beer, Or Hard Liquor*".
 - In fact, Christ's first miracle was making wine out of water, wasn't it?
 - Didn't Jesus drink wine at the Last Supper?
 - And don't many Christians drink wine at Communion?
 - Don't Jews drink wine at Seder?So having religious beliefs or convictions does not always bar one from drinking alcohol. And drinking alcohol does not prove that someone's religious convictions have failed.
- And religious convictions don't "*work*". They are not supposed to "*work*". That is, religious convictions are *beliefs*. They are not machines like cars or computers that are *supposed* to do things, and *supposed* to function in a certain manner. And it is not really the job of religious convictions to control people's indulgence in food, sex, drugs, or alcohol.
- The recruiter's convictions "seem to have worked so well"? That **may** well be a slick deception. The recruiter **could** be doing the "*Fake It Until You Make It*" routine. He **may well** relapse and die drunk after doing a bunch of enthusiastic recruiting, just like Jackie did in the *Big Book*, and just like Paddy did, and just like Bill Wilson's own recruiter, Ebby Thacher, did.
- Lastly, note the underhanded suggestion that the religious beliefs of the A.A. members are better than the beliefs of other religions, because the other religions didn't keep their people from drinking.

You know, Bill Wilson **just might have been** one of the greatest, slickest, most consummate American con artists, when it comes to lies, deceit, and propaganda techniques.

The A.A. headquarters is still cranking out the same style of propaganda today:

Spirituality is an awakening — or is it all the loose ends woven together into a mellow fabric?

It's understanding — or is it all the knowledge one need ever know?

It's freedom — if you consider fear slavery.

It's confidence — or is it the belief that a higher power will see you through any storm or gale?

It's adhering to the dictates of your conscience — or is it a deep, genuine, living concern for the people and the planet?

Came to Believe, Page 5, A.A. World Services, Inc.

Does the A.A. headquarters teach real spirituality, or is it just a load of bombastic bull droppings?

- **Misleading Inference**

Somebody who is selling a get-rich-quick scheme on late-night TV shows you an accountant's statement that certifies that he is worth more than a million dollars. But there is no evidence that the guy actually made that much money **by using his get-rich-quick scheme**. He probably made the money by *selling* the scheme on late-night TV.

Likewise, in an infomercial for a stock market trading program, a woman says, "**I feel bad when I don't make \$1000 a trade.**"

Well okay, but how often does she feel bad? They didn't say anything about that. They imply that she is so successful, and making so much money, that it's an unusual and unhappy day when she doesn't make \$1000. But they actually presented us with no evidence to support that assumption. For all we know, that poor woman could be feeling 'really bad' every day.

- **Unsubstantiated Inference and Groundless Claims**

Peter Howard complained bitterly about the criticism that his favorite cult religion — Frank Buchman's Moral Re-Armament — was getting:

So many people are snobs of intellect. They write well, make money, gain titles or preach splendidly but are helpless and barren when they meet a man in need. They shine before men but change nobody.

Britain and the Beast, Peter Howard, 1963, page 112-113.

Peter Howard tried to imply that members of his religion really did do a good job of helping people and changing them for the better, while his critics did not. But Peter Howard provided no evidence to support that inference. Actually, Frank Buchman's cult was notorious for also *not* changing people. People would loudly proclaim that they had been "changed" or "saved" at a big emotional rally or revival meeting or house party, but they were very soon [back to their old bad habits](#), same as usual.

- **Introduce Irrelevant Information as Supporting Evidence**

Here is an example of using irrelevant information as supporting evidence. The cult leader Frank Buchman was working on converting a college student, and...

...finally the student said: "I'm not going to be a Christian." ...

Then Frank asked him what he believed.

"Confucius," came the unusual answer.

"Wonderful!" said Frank, deciding to humour him. "Tell me about Confucius."

Frank says his friend did not seem to know much on that subject. But Frank had been to China, and knew that Confucius said he could tell people how to be righteous, but he hadn't the power to make them righteous. Moreover, he had been to Confucius' grave, and been entertained at tea by the seventy-sixth descendant of the Chinese sage and seen the seventy-seventh descendant on the day when he had to wear four coats because of the cold.

Frank Buchman, quoted in *Experiment With God; Frank Buchman Reconsidered*, Gösta Ekman, page 90.

The information that Frank Buchman visited the grave of Confucius is totally irrelevant. It does not mean that Buchman knew anything more about Confucianism than the student or anybody else. Likewise, having had tea with a very distant descendant of Confucius is also completely irrelevant trivia, even though it sounds

good on the surface. And to talk about having seen an even more distant descendant on a very cold day is absurd.

The author also used the propaganda technique of making an *Unsubstantiated Inference*, implying that Frank Buchman, unlike Confucius, *did* have "the power to make people righteous". Alas, Frank Buchman had no such power, either. Frank Buchman was able to fool a few young college students and eccentric rich people and make them think that they had been changed for the better, but when it came to the people who really mattered the most and who *really* needed to get "changed", like Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Goering, Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler, [Frank Buchman totally failed](#) to make good Christians out of them. So much for Frank Buchman's "power to make people righteous".

(Besides, what happened to free will? If Frank Buchman really had "the power to make people righteous", then wasn't he over-riding other peoples' ability to chose good or evil for themselves?)

A variation on this propaganda trick of introducing irrelevant evidence is to state a bunch of irrelevant obvious platitudes, and then claim that they support your program. Yammer a few trite hackneyed irrelevant clichés and slogans like, "*People are more important than things*", and then conclude that your cult is right about everything. (That was what "[Up With People](#)" did.)

- **False Analogy**

They show you a fried egg and say, "*This is your brain. This is your brain on drugs...*"
No, that isn't my brain. But considering the stupidity of their arguments, that just might really be their brain...

Bill Wilson wrote:

Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly **like people in a sinking ship**.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, William G. Wilson, Chapter 11, "A Vision For You", page 152.

No, alcoholics are not like helpless people on a sinking ship. Alcoholics are not powerless over alcohol. They can quit drinking, with or without Alcoholics Anonymous. (Now whether they *will* quit drinking and save their own lives is another matter.)

One A.A. member reported:

"My sponsor used to liken the steppers to survivors of a shipwreck, who all had to row in the same direction, in order to survive. This related to a group conscience. 'What would it look like if everyone rowed in different directions?' was his analogy."

Again, that is a bad analogy. Recovering or recovered alcoholics are not trapped in a lifeboat together. They don't have to spend the rest of their lives in an A.A. meeting room, conforming to the group. They can all go in their own directions and get on with their lives.

Bill had a zillion false analogies:

We are **like men who have lost their legs**; they never grow new ones.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, William G. Wilson, Chapter 3, "More About Alcoholism", page 30.

So, Bill says, you can't ever recover from alcoholism, and you can't ever leave Alcoholics Anonymous.
Actually, if alcoholics suffer from an allergic reaction to alcohol, like Doctor Silkworth suggested in the *Big*

Book (page xxvi of 3rd edition; page xxviii of 4th edition), then we are not at all like men who have lost their legs. We are like people who are allergic to a poisonous chemical, so we are better off if we don't consume that poison.

Bill continued:

The Wright brothers' almost childish faith that they could build a machine which would fly was the mainspring of their accomplishment. Without that, nothing could have happened. We agnostics and atheists were sticking to the idea that self-sufficiency would solve our problems. When others showed us that "God-sufficiency worked with them, we began to feel **like those who had insisted** the Wrights would never fly.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, William G. Wilson, Chapter 4, "We Agnostics", pages 52-53.

No, I don't feel like a stodgy old fool when I hear some superstitious cult members proclaim that they have found a magical panacea — that the cult has [solved all of their problems](#). (Especially not when I read what their [real failure rate](#) is.)

The alcoholic is **like a tornado** roaring his way through the lives of others.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 82.

That was the behavior of Bill Wilson, not all alcoholics.

They suspect father is a bit balmy!

He is not so unbalanced as they might think. Many of us have experienced dad's elation. We have indulged in spiritual intoxication. **Like a gaunt prospector**, belt drawn in over the ounce of food, our pick struck gold. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. Father feels he has struck something better than gold. For a time he may try to hug the new treasure to himself. He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product.

The A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 9, "The Family Afterward", pages 128-129.

No, [a giddy manic-depressive who has become obsessed with a cult religion](#) is not like a prospector who has just found gold.

- **Conflation, False Equality**

Say or imply that two things are equal, and the same thing, when they are not.

"We pretend being religious makes us moral and charitable."

When You're Riding Alone, You're Riding With Osama, Bill Maher, page 117.

The serious issue is the conflation of the nation with one, and only one, political party. When Palin says "pro-American", she means pro-Republican. When McCain's banners pronounce "Country First", they mean Republican party first.

And this is serious because such conflation is a hallmark of dictatorial regimes — recall the Communist Party or the Nazis. In each case, the party logo (hammer & sickle or

swastika) became the national symbol.

== Ed Robertson, Bloomington IN

Adolf Hitler and the Nazis used this propaganda trick often. They conflated "patriotism" with all kinds of crimes:

- If you are patriotic, you will support killing the Jews.
- If you are patriotic, you will never criticize Adolf Hitler or his policies.
- If you are patriotic, you will support invading foreign countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland, and then Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, and the Ukraine.
- If you are patriotic, you will always vote for the Nazi Party.
- If you are patriotic, you will agree with Hitler about everything, and worship Hitler's words as the ultimate in wisdom. You will read *Mein Kampf* as your new bible.
- If you are patriotic, you will gladly join the Army and help Hitler to conquer and occupy all of Europe.

In modern times, American politicians have used the same tricks for the same things:

- If you are patriotic, you will support the War in Vietnam, and not criticize it.
- If you are patriotic, you will support invading Iraq.
- If you are patriotic, you will not complain about the fact that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.
- If you are patriotic, you will not notice that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq did not make America more secure.
- If you are really patriotic, you will support the troops (rather than criticizing the war).

It is possible to support the troops while objecting to an illegal war. Criticizing lying politicians is not the same thing as criticizing the troops, but the politicians don't want you to know that.

Politicians often use this trick to try to equate patriotism with not criticizing the President:

- If you are patriotic, you will never disagree with the President.
- If you are really patriotic, you will support the President.

Those things are not the same things at all, of course. Sometimes the highest patriotism requires criticizing the elected leaders, rather than just going along with their program, and letting them get away with anything. Today, we regard those "disloyal" Germans who fought against Adolf Hitler as the greatest of German patriots.

More conflation: We routinely hear that the economy is improving because a bunch of new jobs were created — as if all jobs are equal — "a job is a job, and just having one is wonderful." The people who are trying to fool you with faked statistics try to equate low-paying jobs with high-paying jobs. Someone who lost a high-paying manufacturing job and is now forced to take a low-paying janitorial or burger-flipping job won't agree.

We can easily find plenty of examples of this stunt in Bill Wilson's writings:

- Quitting drinking = joining Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Quitting Alcoholics Anonymous = returning to a life of drinking, and dying drunk in a gutter.
- A.A. activities = "recovery".
- A.A. activities = "[spiritual progress](#)". (*Big Book*, pages 100 and 127.)
- The A.A. program = "treatment" of alcoholism.
- And [Professor Vaillant](#) used the reverse equality: "[treatment](#)" of alcoholism = sending patients to Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Doing Bill's Twelve Steps = "spiritual development".
- Doing Bill's Twelve Steps = "[spiritual growth](#)".
- Believing in God = [agreeing with Bill Wilson's cult religion beliefs](#).

- "Having faith" = believing Bill's bull.
- Choosing sobriety = accepting Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps (and vice versa). (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age*, p. 28.)
- A.A. = sobriety. When they tell you "Don't let anything come before your sobriety", that really means "[You must put A.A. before everything else in your life.](#)"
- "Helping others selflessly" = going recruiting for A.A. (*Big Book*, page 97.)
- "Putting other people's welfare ahead of your own" = going recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (*Big Book*, page 94.)
- "Keeping spiritually active" = going recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (*Big Book*, page 156.)
- Behavior of which 12-Steppers disapprove = "[spiritual disease](#)".
- Surrendering your mind and your will to the cult = "[transcendence of ego](#)".
- Slavish dependence on A.A. equals "[true independence of the spirit.](#)" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, page 36.)
- Bill Wilson's "spiritual principles" = God's spiritual principles.
- Bill Wilson's cult practices = God's spiritual principles.
- Bill Wilson's strange ideas of God = God.
- Bill Wilson's favorite cult religion = "[simple principles](#)".
- "Having faith in God" = [believing what Bill Wilson says](#).
- The voices in Bill's head = [the voice of God](#).
- Or, the voices in Bill's head = [the voices of spirits of long-dead people](#) — medieval priests and Nantucket whalers.
- Bill Wilson's funny state of mind = "[restored to sanity by God](#)".
- Accepting the authoritarian structure and extreme demands of a pro-Nazi cult religion = "[getting good](#)".
- Using your own intelligence and will power to run your own life and take care of yourself = "[playing God](#)".
- Rejecting Bill's bull = being "[unreasoningly prejudiced](#)".
- Being a slave of the A.A. God = freedom:

First of all, we had to quit [playing God](#). It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

A.A. Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 5, *How It Works*, page 62.

- Many years of drunkenness = expertise about alcoholism and sobriety.

At an A.A. meeting, a member declares that A.A. is good for achieving sobriety, because: "[There's an aggregate of two thousand years of drinking experience in this meeting room. If we don't understand alcoholism, then nobody does.](#)"

Wrong. Bad logic.

[Expertise in getting drunk does not equal expertise in getting other people sober.](#)

[Heck, just look at the guys drinking under the bridge — they might have even more years of experience in drinking, because they never stopped — they must *really* understand drinking — but they haven't gotten anybody else sober lately, have they?](#)

• Double Bind

A *double bind* is a trap where you are damned if you do, and damned if you don't.

The classic double binds are the tests for whether a woman is a witch:

Throw her into a river or pond, and

If she sinks and drowns, she was innocent.

But if she floats and lives, then she's guilty (because the Devil is holding her up), so she gets burned at the stake.

Likewise,

If she confesses (under torture) to being a witch, then she is one.

If she denies being a witch, then that proves that she is an evil witch who lies about being a witch.

Closer to home, Alcoholics Anonymous says that

If you say that you are an alcoholic, then you obviously are one.

If you deny being an alcoholic, then that proves that you are a dishonest alcoholic who is *in denial*.

The Hazelden *Little Red Book* teaches us that this is a "symptom" that indicates "mental illness":

— Taking that first drink with the idea that "this time I'll control it."

The Little Red Book, Hazelden, page 28.

Oh? Is the opposite true? Is it a sign of good mental health if you think "*This time I won't control it. This time I'll just get totally smashed, drunk as a skunk, and righteously ripped...*"?

Bill Wilson gave us [another good example](#) of a double bind earlier, when he declared that we were selfish and unspiritual if we committed a bunch of sins and crimes, and we were also selfish and unspiritual if we didn't commit a bunch of sins and crimes, because, in the second case, we were just selfishly avoiding punishment. Damned if you do, and damned if you don't.

Another common Alcoholics Anonymous double bind is: "*If I don't feel like going to a meeting, I usually NEED to.*"

1. If you feel like going to a meeting, you should go to a meeting.

2. If you don't feel like going to a meeting, you should go to a meeting.

Damned if you do, damned if you don't. Either way, they insist that you should spend your evening at one of their meetings.

Danny M. Wilcox teaches us, in his book of A.A. dogma, that alcoholics are "people pleasers":

They spoke of the things they had been willing to do to please other people in their lives.

The need to please others and the perceived failure to do so were often cited as among the main reasons they drank. Generally, these members exhibited obvious anxiety concerning the opinion of other people, which really emphasizes our social needs as human beings.

Alcoholic Thinking: Language, Culture, and Belief in Alcoholics Anonymous, Danny M. Wilcox, page 86.

But five pages later, Wilcox also wrote that being selfish and not caring how other people feel is a sign of alcoholism:

"Selfishness, self-centeredness! That is the root cause of all our problems" (AA 1976: 62).

Everything revolves around self-centeredness. ... Amazingly, when first introduced to AA most members said that they did not think that they were especially self-centered. Some of them thought it patently ridiculous to suggest that they were interested only in themselves, since they could cite plenty of examples of their generosity and concern for others. ...

Most members said that their selfishness just got worse as their dependence on alcohol increased.

Alcoholic Thinking: Language, Culture, and Belief in Alcoholics Anonymous, Danny M. Wilcox, page 91-92.

So,

◦ you are an alcoholic if you care what other people think and feel,

◦ and you are an alcoholic if you don't care what other people think and feel.

Damned if you do, and damned if you don't.

They use the same trap on those people who are children of alcoholics:

- If you strive to please yourself, that proves you are a selfish, self-seeking alcoholic, and you need to join Alcoholics Anonymous and do the Twelve Steps.
- If you strive to please other people, that proves you are a neurotic "people-pleasing" Adult Child Of an Alcoholic, and you need to join [Al-Anon or ACOA](#) and do the Twelve Steps.

Damned if you do, and damned if you don't. You can't get out of it without joining some 12-Step group and doing the [guilt-inducing Twelve Steps](#).

For that matter, as Bill sees it, you can't ever escape from the Twelve Steps. Just being related to an alcoholic dooms you to having to do Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps for the rest of your life:

- If you drink alcohol, like your relative, you have to join Alcoholics Anonymous and do the Twelve Steps.
- If you don't drink alcohol, you have to join Al-Anon or ACOA and do the Twelve Steps to treat your "[spiritual disease](#)" of "codependency".

- **Project Future From Past**

Assume that history repeats itself, and just because something happened before, it will happen the same way again. Especially, make the mistake of attributing the causes of events to only one or two factors, while ignoring a lot of other factors.

For instance, "The last three times we had a full moon in Aquarius, the stock of XYZ went up. So let's bet big on XYZ the next full moon. It's a *can't-lose deal*." The people who use astrology to try to predict the stock market die broke, just like all of the other cycle-trackers and wave-finders.

A corollary to projecting the future from the past is the notion that history repeats itself. You will often hear someone arguing that we must do a certain thing, or follow a certain path, because that was the best thing to do back in 1938 in response to Hitler (or some such thing). While it is wise to learn from history, it is also wise to learn that history does not necessarily repeat itself.

[One wit declared that history doesn't repeat itself, it rhymes.](#)

- **False Analysis Of History**

Misinterpret history to make it look different than it really was, to create the impression that something happened which didn't.

For instance, some people say that Adolf Hitler was a military genius, who just went too far in killing the Jews. He was only beaten, they say, because America overwhelmed Germany with supplies and equipment.

[Fact: Adolf Hitler was a military fool. He constantly over-rode the decisions of his generals, who grumbled about the war being run by Corporal Hitler. Hitler lost battle after battle, and lost millions of troops, by stupidly attacking the wrong places at the wrong time, and refusing to retreat and save his armies when necessary.](#)

[And the Russians bore the brunt of the war, not the Western Allies. The fighting on the Russian Front was an unbelievable nightmare, featuring Russian human-wave attacks by the "punishment brigades". They lost many, many millions of people — something like 14 million — and gave a whole new meaning to the term "cannon fodder", while the USA only lost about a quarter of a million men.](#)

The Moral Re-Armament cult leader Frank Buchman declared:

"We finance our work as [George] Washington financed his revolution — on our knees."

Moral Re-Armament: What Is It?, page 106.

That is just so much nonsense. George Washington most assuredly did not finance the American revolution on his knees. He often had to beg the Continental Congress to cough up some more cash and guns and supplies, but he didn't do it on his knees.

And the old painting that portrays George Washington praying on his knees at Valley Forge perpetuates a myth. What George Washington really said was, "[I have examined the religion of the Christians, and the Jews, and the Musselman \(Islam\), and in none of them do I find any virtue.](#)" So much for financing the American Revolution on his knees.

The Buchmanites repeated that false analysis of history while they continued to harangue people to donate more money to Frank Buchman's cult:

Maybe you should give everything you've got. People did two hundred years ago when this country had to finance the Revolution.

Born To Upturn The World: The people who are making the Sing-Out explosion, "Up With People", David Allen, pub. 1967, Pace Publications, page 71.

[No, they didn't.](#)

Similarly, the often-heard claims that the United States of America is a nation that was founded on "Christian Principles" or is "based on Christianity" are also false. The Founding Fathers were very careful to *not* incorporate any religion into the Constitution of the United States. They had already tasted a State-enforced religion in England — the Church of England — and they didn't want any more of that, so the Founding Fathers created the "absolute firewall" of separation between Church and State. And where some colonies like Massachusetts and Maryland already had laws that enforced one religion over another (death to Jews), they had to nullify those laws in order to be part of the United States.

Another popular misinterpretation of American history is to say that the Vietnam War happened because America was defending democracy in Vietnam... There wasn't any democracy in Vietnam. There were a bunch of murdering heroin-dealing generals running the southern half of the country. The USA was fighting to keep control of the country, and keep its puppet dictators in power, and to protect American investments, but not to protect democracy or freedom. The truth is that there was never a free and fair election while the USA dominated Vietnam. President Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs that it was obvious that Ho Chi Minh would win any fair popular election by a landslide, so the promised elections were not held. Years later, they held some "elections" that were just stage-managed affairs with only American-approved candidates allowed to run. And of course the American selection, like the murderous Colonel Nguyen Kao Ky, was always the winner.

Even today, we still have a few racists in the USA whose analysis of history is a bit warped — they will tell you that the kindly Southern slave owners took good care of their slaves and gave them everything that they needed. Why, those poor pathetic blacks would have been lost without their kindly masters taking such good care of them... Al Jolson's most popular song, "Swanee", depicted a black man sentimentally pining away for his beloved plantation on the Swanee River, where kindly massuh made life so good. Ah, the good old days.

A popular variation on false history is to proclaim that current society is decadent and immoral, not at all like the good old days when everything was wonderful. But any reasonable analysis of history shows that things have often been far worse than they are now, no matter whether you are talking about sexual looseness, drug addiction, lawlessness, violent crime, wars of conquest, cruel and oppressive rulers, plagues, alcoholism, or social upheaval. One of my favorite quotes on this subject was found in an ancient Egyptian tomb, built 4000 years ago:

"Alas, the whole world is derelict. Children no longer obey their parents."

From dogmatic religious moralists, we often get raps like,

"The Roman Empire collapsed because of immorality and bread and circuses for the masses."

The speaker ignores the fact that the whole premise of the Roman empire was immoral. It was basically *"Rob, enslave, and murder others because you can get away with it — you are bigger and stronger and more vicious than they are, and you have better steel swords. Such conquest of other people is 'glorious'."*

The Romans even invented crucifixion to punish and terrorize those people who objected to being slaves of the Romans and giving all of their wealth to the Roman soldiers.

The "immorality" argument also ignores many other possible causes of the decline of the Roman Empire, particularly the fact that most of the later Roman Emperors appear to have been suffering from lead poisoning and were insane. Lead dishes were fashionable for the rich back then, and they even piped in their running water in lead pipes, so many of them suffered from brain damage caused by a lifetime of lead poisoning. Some of those Roman emperors were raving lunatics. It shows, when you read their history. But the "immorality" argument ignores all of those other important facts, and just tries to substitute a simplistic cause for a complex process.

And then there was the problem that Rome had a big silver mine in Spain. They mined it heavily for a long time, and used the silver to pay the entire Roman army. But when the miners dug to a certain depth, they hit an underground stream and the mine flooded. They could not ever get the water out of the mine, and the mine was finished. No more silver for Rome; no more silver for the army. When they got no more pay, the Roman soldiers deserted. Then the Vandals walked into Rome, and that was the end of the Roman Empire. Somehow, the "immorality" seems to have been largely irrelevant.

UPDATE: 2005.02.14:

It's Valentine's Day, from which we learn another bit of the history of Rome: Emperor Claudius outlawed marriage because he believed that unmarried young men made better warriors. (At least they were in a much nastier mood because they weren't getting laid much.) A courageous priest named Valentine performed secret marriages for young couples of lovers anyway. When Claudius found out, he had Valentine killed. And much later, Valentine was declared to be a saint, the patron saint of lovers.

Nero fiddled while Rome burned... Caligula killed everybody who bothered him, including his favorite teacher and his own mother. Constantine suffocated his wife and murdered his son. Claudius outlawed marriage... Those later Roman Emperors were mad as hatters.

— Which in turn is another example of insanity caused by heavy metal poisoning: English hatters used vials of mercury as weights to shape hats, and after 20 years of inhaling mercury vapors, their brains were gone and they were raving lunatics. See *Alice in Wonderland* for the story of one mad hatter.

And what will really tweak the noses of the religious fanatics is pointing out the fact that the Roman Empire did not collapse and fall apart until it adopted Christianity as the official state religion. As long as the Romans kept throwing the Christians to the lions, they were okay. But when the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and made Christianity the official state religion of Rome, and suppressed all other religions,²² the days of the Roman Empire were numbered.

Apparently God was okay with the Roman Empire being Pagan, but when they turned Christian, God got rid of them.

Does that mean that if the United States adopts Christianity as its official state religion, that the American empire will decline and fall too?

Bill Wilson similarly misinterpreted [the history of temperance movements](#). He declared that organizations like the Washingtonian Society and Women's Christian Temperance Movement were failures that didn't sober up any drinkers, and that Bill's Alcoholics Anonymous program was the first working sobriety program in history. Nothing could be further from the truth. Bill wasn't the first, and [A.A. doesn't work](#).

And the reason that those other temperance organizations didn't spread like cancers is because they were not evil mind-controlling cults that convinced their followers that [they absolutely must go recruiting](#) or else they will die.

Also see the example of [Hypnotic Bait And Switch](#) for another example of the false analysis of history.

- **It's Never Happened Before**

This is also an appeal to a false analysis of history. Imply that something just cannot happen because it has never happened before.

Variations:

- "It can't happen here."
- "It hasn't happened yet."
- "It always happens this way, so it can't happen that way."
- "*These people* have never done such a thing before, so they won't do it now."

Note that the statement that "It never happened before" does not really need to be true. This technique will work just fine if your audience is ignorant of the fact that "it" actually did happen before.

- **I Didn't See It Happen, So It Never Happened**

Claim that something never happened, or something does not exist, because you have not seen it.

As Carl Sagan said, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." Just because you haven't seen any intelligent extra-terrestrials yet doesn't prove that they don't exist.

Sexual exploitation is a problem in Alcoholics Anonymous. The evidence is overwhelming. The criminal behavior of A.A. groups like [the Midtown Group in Washington DC](#) has even been reported on television and in national magazines like Newsweek. Nevertheless, A.A. members who are in denial about the whole thing use the argument "I never saw it happen. It never happened in our group, so it never happened."

This logical fallacy also ignores the logical problem that you cannot prove a negative. Just because you haven't seen something does not prove that it doesn't exist. For example, you cannot prove that Santa Claus does not exist. Just because you didn't see him doesn't prove that he doesn't exist. Even if you went to the North Pole looking for him and didn't find him, doesn't prove that he doesn't exist. Santa could have been vacationing in Hawaii then.

I have never seen Sophia Loren, Dustin Hoffman, or Robert Redford either, so I guess they don't exist. Oh sure, I've seen pictures of them, but those pictures could have been faked, just like the photos of Santa Claus. You see the problem. This could go on forever.

- **Argue Inevitability**

Declare that something is inevitable, or unavoidable. This technique can weaken opposition to a certain plan or suggested course of action. (*"If it is going to happen anyway, there is no sense in wasting a lot of time and energy fighting it."*)

- *"It's Our Destiny."*
- *"It's fate. It's inevitable."*
- *"It's the unavoidable consequence of things that have already been done."*
- *"It's the Force Of History." — "Communism teaches us that we must overthrow the rich people and seize all of their property and kill them all and spread Communism everywhere because Dialectical Materialism teaches us that the Revolution of the Proletariat is inevitable — the 'Force of History' cannot be stopped."*
- *"History is on our side."*
- *"It's God's Will."*
- *"We are stuck with continuing the war, now that we have started it."*
- *"A clash between the Christian and Islamic cultures was inevitable."*

- **Pollyanna's Ploy — Unbridled Optimism**

Just proclaim that everything is wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, no matter what is really happening.

- Back in 1978, the U.S. Government General Accounting Office investigated the Saudi Arabian oil supply, just trying to figure out whether we were in any danger of insufficient oil supplies sometime in the future:

Search for New Oilfields or New Wells

The GAO investigative team was told that "prospects for additional oil discoveries were considered to be good." ...

In hindsight, Aramco's optimism about exploration prospects would prove unfounded. After 25 years of increasingly intense geological and geophysical efforts and equally intense exploratory drilling, Saudi Arabia failed to discover any significant new fields other than the series of complex, lower-productivity, tight reservoirs in the Hawtah Trend. History would prove, absent some major new discovery beyond 2005, that the last great oilfield in Saudi Arabia was found close to a decade before the GAO report was submitted to Congress.

Rate of Oil Production

Aramco's [the Arab-American oil company's] management, however, assured the GAO inspectors that most oilfields in Saudi Arabia were not rate sensitive, and that the rate at which each Saudi giant field was produced would not reduce the ultimate oil recovery from the field. The only risk Aramco's management saw from accidentally overproducing a field was an increase in the field's final production cost.

The Aramco experts who spoke to the GAO team confidently told these investigators that current production in at least some key fields could possibly be increased by as much as 50 percent or more without significantly affecting the ultimate volume of recoverable oil. This optimism also proved unfounded.

Twilight in the Desert, Matthew R. Simmons, page 73.

In 1982, OPEC stopped reporting oil production data.

- And politicians are currently yammering, *"The Surge is working. Things are wonderful in Iraq. Victory is just around the corner. Just a few more years..."*

- And need I even mention how the economy is always improving so much (under both Republican and Democratic Presidents) that we are all going to be living in luxury real soon now?

- **Chicken Little's Pessimism**

Scream that we live in the worst of all possible worlds and things are still getting even worse. We are all going to Hell in a bucket.

This technique is of course simply the opposite of the Pollyanna Ploy. Ignore all good news and emphasize the negative.

The Earth is degenerating today. Bribery and corruption abound. Children no longer obey their parents, every man wants to write a book, and it is evident that the end of the world is fast approaching.
 == Assyrian tablet, c. 2800 BC

- **Generalize, and the Sweeping Generality**

Project grand, sweeping generalizations from minimal information:

- Extrapolate sweeping generalities from just a few facts.
"I know three Martians, and all three of them are sleazy and dishonest and underhanded and will cheat you whenever they get a chance. Therefore all Martians are dishonest and untrustworthy."
- Claim that a few examples characterize the whole. When a few Catholics attended meetings of Frank Buchman's *Oxford Group* cult religion, Buchman declared that Catholics had no problem with his version of Christian theology, and that the Catholic Church approved of his organization. (Not so, [the Vatican banned Buchman's groups, repeatedly.](#))
- Apply general patterns or stereotypes to specific cases:
"You are a skeptic, so you just can't understand how people experience God."

The Sweeping Generality is a kind of exaggeration — Take something that is partially true, or only true in some cases, and make a universal statement out of it. For example, the former Miss USA got out of a rehab facility, and with her head still full of cult slogans, went on the Jay Leno show and announced:

"Everything that comes out of the mouth of an alcoholic or an addict is a lie."
 == Miss USA, Tara Conner, on the Jay Leno Show, 2 February 2007.

Now it is true that addicts or alcoholics who are in a bad way, in the depths of their addiction, will often lie to get more of whatever their favorite drug is. But no way is *everything* that they say a lie. Nor is their addiction the *only* motivation in their lives. Nor are *all* addicts and alcoholics so desperate, and lying to get something.

What is funny there is that Miss Conner invoked *"The Cretan's Paradox"* without realizing it.

That is the paradox created by Epimenides, a Greek from Crete, who went before the Spartans and announced, "All Cretans are liars." The Spartans thought that was pretty funny, but they didn't realize the gotcha:

- The speaker Epimenides was himself a Cretan, from Crete.
- Therefore he must be a liar.

- But if he is a liar, then he was lying when he said that all Cretans are liars.
- So Cretans are not liars.
- So Epimenides must have been telling the truth when he said that all Cretans are liars.
- Therefore, Cretans must be liars.
- Therefore Epimenides must be a liar...
- So Epimenides was lying when he said that all Cretans are liars.
- So Cretans are not liars.
- ... etc. ... 'Round and 'round forever.

When Tara Conner confessed to Jay Leno that she was an alcoholic, and then declared that everything that comes out of the mouth of an alcoholic or an addict is a lie, she was creating the same paradox. And Jay Leno knew it. He was actually wincing in pain as Tara Conner went on and on about how bad alcoholics are.

Likewise, A.A. makes sweeping generalizations about alcoholics:

- "I know of a hundred alcoholics who simply cannot learn to drink moderately. Their drinking always spins out of control. Therefore no alcoholics can ever learn to drink moderately and we should not even discuss the subject."
- Bill Wilson and a few of the other early A.A. members had arrogant, domineering, egotistical, grandiose personalities, so Bill declared that *all alcoholics in the world* had gigantic puffed-up self-centered strutting-peacock egos who thought that they were too big and too good to need God. [Dr. Harry Tiebout](#), Bill Wilson's psychiatrist, said of Bill: "[he had been trying to live out the infantile grandiose demands of 'His Majesty the Baby.'](#)" So Bill wrote of all alcoholics in general:

When A.A. was quite young, a number of eminent psychologists and doctors made an exhaustive study of a good-sized group of so-called problem drinkers. The doctors weren't trying to find how different we were from one another; they sought to find whatever personality traits, if any, this group of alcoholics had in common. They finally came up with a conclusion that shocked the A.A. members of that time. These distinguished men had the nerve to say that most of the alcoholics under investigation were still childish, emotionally sensitive, and grandiose.

How we alcoholics did resent that verdict!

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, pages 122-123.

The primary fact that we fail to recognize is our total inability to form a true partnership with another human being. Our egomania digs two disastrous pitfalls. Either we insist upon dominating people we know, or we depend on them far too much. ... When we habitually try to manipulate others to our own willful desires, they revolt, and resist us heavily. Then we develop hurt feelings, a sense of persecution, and a desire to retaliate. ... Of true brotherhood we had small comprehension.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 53.

...our crippling handicap has been our lack of humility. ...

That basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God's will, was missing.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 71-72.

- And Bill's disciples make the same mistake:

In most Twelve Step literature, the addictive self is called the "ego." Whenever I hear or read the word *ego*, I substitute the words *addictive self*.

The goal of a Fourth Step is to deflate the ego — or, in other words, to deflate the addictive self. The addictive self is marked by grandiosity (addicted people feel that they are more than or better than everyone else) and self-centeredness (they believe that they

are the center of the universe and there is little room left for anyone or anything else).

Understanding the Twelve Steps, Terence T. Gorski, page 81.

... those addicted to alcohol behave as though they were the center of their universe or their own God.

[*Spirituality: The key to recovery from alcoholism*](#), Warfield, Robert D.; Goldstein, Marc B., *Counseling & Values*, April 1996, Vol. 40, Issue 3, page 196.

A.A. members agree that while it is not necessary to believe in a personal God, it is important for alcoholics to realize that *they themselves are not God!* That is, they are not the center of the universe, nor are they running the show.

Drug-Impaired Professionals, Robert Holman Coombs, Page 217. (Italics in the original.)

Apparently, none of those authors can see the simple obvious fact that it really is possible to feel bad, and want to consume some alcohol or other drug to feel better, without suffering from [delusions of grandeur](#) and believing that you are God. Alcoholics are not all clones of Bill Wilson. Alcoholics don't all have Bill Wilson's mental illness. Alcoholics are not all the same.

- **Take Quotes Out Of Context**

It's like this:

Suppose that the police are interrogating a guy about a bank robbery. He responds with, "*What?! Are you trying to claim that I shot the bank teller?*"

If you lift just the five words "*I shot the bank teller*" out of that sentence, it turns the question into a confession of guilt. It completely reverses the meaning of the words. That is quoting out of context.

Here is a good example of quoting out of context to create a desired impression:

In August of 1936, the religious cult leader [Frank Buchman gave an interview to William A. H. Birnie](#), a newspaper reporter from the New York *World-Telegram*, wherein he stated, "*I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front line of defense against the anti-Christ of Communism.*"

[Read the entire interview here.](#)

While writing their history of Alcoholics Anonymous and biography of the founder William G. Wilson, the staff at Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. used the propaganda technique of *taking quotes out of context*, as well as some other propaganda techniques, to cover up the fact that Bill Wilson's spiritual teacher was a Nazi sympathizer. Charles Bufe described the AAWS machinations this way:

It's worth noting that Bill Wilson and his fellow AAs-to-be *must* have known about this interview, which caused a public furor, yet they continued to work as part of the Oxford Groups for more than another year in New York and another three years in Akron.

It's also worth noting that AA, in its official "Conference-approved" biography of Bill Wilson, *Pass It On*, treats this matter in what can only be described as a dishonest manner. This is all the more surprising and disappointing in that the book's dust jacket proclaims, "Every word is documented, every source checked."

In the section of *Pass It On* dealing with Buchman's remarks, the anonymous author states:

In August [1936], the New York *World-Telegram* published an article about Buchman, charging that he was pro-Nazi. The newspaper quoted Buchman as saying: "Thank

Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler who built a front-line defense against the Anti-Christ of Communism. Think what it would mean to the world if Hitler surrendered to God. Through such a man, God could control a nation and solve every problem. Human problems aren't economic, they're moral, and they can't be solved by immoral measures."

While most discussion of the incident, even by Buchman's critics, have since vindicated him, the article brought the group into public controversy.

[*PASS IT ON: The story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world*, authorship credited to 'anonymous', actually written by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. staff, pages 170-171.]

There are several remarkable features in this passage. The first is that the *World Telegram* piece is referred to as an "article" when in fact it was an *interview* in which Buchman's comments comprised well over half the text, with almost all of the remaining text consisting of descriptive passages, transitions between Buchman's statements, and uncontroversial background information on Buchman and the Oxford Group Movement. There is a tremendous difference between an "article" in which Buchman was "charged" with being pro-Nazi and an *interview* in which he himself clearly expressed pro-Nazi opinions, a fact which undoubtedly was not lost on the author of AA's official Wilson biography.

Another remarkable feature of the passage just quoted from *Pass It On* is that Buchman's statements are carefully edited to put his best possible face forward. The anonymous AA author took fragments separated by hundreds of words and patched them together as if they were a single statement, while dropping a number of words within the fragments. For example, by dropping the word "But" before the words "think what it would mean ...," the author made the fragments appear to fit together snugly — thus hiding the fact that the "statement" is a patchwork.

In normal literary practice, it's considered proper to separate patched-together fragments with ellipses if the intervening material doesn't alter the meaning of the quoted material. If the intervening material does alter the meaning, as it does in the "statement" cited in *Pass It On*, it's considered unethical to quote it even with ellipses, and blatantly dishonest to quote it as if it were a single unitary statement. It should also be noted that the author of *Pass It On* quoted Buchman's "statement" in such a way as to leave the impression that it was the *only* such "statement" in the "article."

Perhaps most remarkably, the anonymous AA author concludes that, "most discussions of the incident, even by Buchman's critics, have since vindicated him." One remarkable aspect of this statement is its deliberate fuzziness. What was Buchman "vindicated" of? Of making pro-Nazi statements? Of being pro-Nazi? Our AA author leaves that crucial matter unresolved.

Further, I've done my best to read *all* of the [widely circulated criticisms](#) of Buchman's remarks, and *none* "vindicate" him of making pro-Nazi statements.

— Charles Bufe, in his book *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure*

Oh well, so much for the A.A. practice of "rigorous honesty" (*Big Book*, page 58).

- **Claim That Quotes Are Taken Out Of Context**

This is just the opposite of taking quotes out of context: Try to reject all quotes that you don't like by screaming, "You are quoting out of context!"

[No matter how long and detailed the quote is](#), and no matter how much context is included with the quote, just dismiss *all* quotes that you don't like as being "[taken out of context](#)."

Politicians use this trick whenever they are caught in a lie or a flip-flop.

- **Begging The Question**

Get the desired answer by how the question is phrased.

Consider these two questions:

- Do you favor reducing property taxes?
- Do you favor drastically reducing funding to schools and emergency services?

Most people will answer "Yes" to the first question, and "No" to the second.

The problem is, they are the very same question, as the citizens of Oregon are now painfully discovering. The Oregon voters answered "yes" to the first question in past elections, and now they are faced with the consequences: not enough money for schools and emergency services.

Similarly, A.A. recruiters ask alcoholics,

"Well, wouldn't you like to escape from your addiction and be healthy and happy and free?"

— But they really mean,

"Wouldn't you like to join Alcoholics Anonymous and go to our meetings for the rest of your life?"

Variations on Begging The Question include:

- The Chicken and Egg Argument
- Circular Definition
- Circular Reasoning
- Ciruculus in Demonstrando
- Petitio Principii
- Reasoning in a circle

- **Meaningless Question**

Ask meaningless questions, like:

"What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object?"

The Japanese Zen masters had a great answer for such questions: "Mu." "Mu" means neither "yes" nor "no"; it means something like, "I reject your bogus question."

For example, one student asked the master, "Does a dog have Buddha-nature?", and the master simply answered, "Mu!"

- **Play the Victim, and Self-Victimization**

Claim that you are the victim, not the offender. No matter what happened, or who did what to whom, claim that you are the victim of all kinds of attacks, and nasty conspiracies, and slander and libel, and on and on.

Politicians use this trick often. A politician will attack his opponent with all kinds of criticism, denunciations and slander, and even blatant lies, and when the opponent fights back and counter-attacks, the first politician takes on a wounded look and complains how unfair it is for his opponent to be so vicious.

Other examples:

- "She seduced me. It's all her fault. She came on to me. It's her fault, and now I'm getting all of the blame."
- "Poland attacked Germany. We are just defending ourselves." — Adolf Hitler, 1939.
- "The Gays are demanding special rights and priveleges. They are undermining the institution of marriage. They are an attack on our family values."
All of those Hollywood stars and "celebrities" who repeatedly get married and divorced two weeks later couldn't possibly be undermining the institution of marriage, could they?

- **Claim to Have Special or Secret Knowledge**

Claim to have knowledge that isn't available to the listeners, or to ordinary people.

If you disagree with the way a crazy preacher is completely distorting and twisting the meaning of a Biblical passage, he might sneer at your ignorance and declare, "Well, you'd understand it if you read it in the original Greek." (See *Elmer Gantry*, by Sinclair Lewis.)

While running for President, Richard Nixon bragged that he had a secret plan for ending the War in Vietnam. He couldn't tell anybody what it was, because it was a secret. But if you would just vote for him, he would end the war. Well, he did eventually end the war, but in the final analysis, his secret plan was just *"Kill another million Vietnamese and Cambodian civilians, and then give up and go home."*

Other handy claims are:

- "You'll never understand; you weren't there."
- "You are the wrong generation; you can't know how it feels."
- "You don't know; you have never experienced... (whatever)."
- "You don't have access to my sources of information (which I can't tell you about because it's all classified)."

In speaking about patterns of cult behavior in many of our government institutions, Dr. Arthur Deikman wrote:

Secrecy supports cult-like behavior, as we saw in the Life Force group, where the hierarchy was maintained through limiting access to information. Secrecy functions not only to cover up unethical activities from outside eyes, but also to increase authoritarian control over the larger group. By promoting the idea that the leader or the in-group have special information and expertise, they remove themselves from criticism and justify the exclusion of others from the decision-making process.

In the case of religious cults the special information and expertise is described as divine inspiration or enlightenment. The cult leader's presumed higher state precludes lower beings from judging his or her actions. Similar claims are made in government where special knowledge of the enemy or secret technical information is said to justify decisions that would otherwise be objected to on moral or even practical grounds.

The Wrong Way Home, Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society, Arthur J. Deikman, M.D., page 145.

The former pretender to the throne in Washington D.C. claimed to have special knowledge of what Saddam Hussein had been doing that required that we eliminate him in a "pre-emptive" attack that resembled Adolf Hitler's 1939 "defense of Germany" from Poland and its horse-mounted cavalry... But we don't get to see what that special information is, before we attack... Will it be any better than Nixon's plan to end the war in Vietnam? Only the body count will say for sure.

And now that the war is over (Shrub said so on that aircraft carrier, remember?), we still haven't seen the "special intelligence" that warned Bush that he had to invade Iraq to defend America, nor have we seen the Weapons Of Mass Destruction that allegedly threatened America. So just what was the real reason for the invasion?

Don't accept, "To liberate Iraq." The USA does not have the right to bomb and invade countries whose leaders we do not like, to "liberate" them. That is what the Communists used to say — that they were "liberating" countries. Like how Stalin liberated Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania. And like how Khrushchev then liberated Hungary again. "Liberate" is what China says it did to Tibet. Besides, that is not what the Bush administration said in the beginning, to get us into the war. They were claiming that Saddam had lots of yellow-cake uranium from Niger, remember? Well he didn't. And stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which he didn't.

UPDATE, 2004.06.19, The September 11 Commission released their report that said that there was simply no evidence that Saddam Hussein had ever cooperated with Al Queda to commit terrorist acts against the United States. So acting Vice President Cheney went on television and said that they were wrong, and that he knew more about it than the Commission did.

Oh? Did Dick Cheney withhold critical facts from the 9/11 Commission? Did he lie to them? No wonder he refused to give his testimony under oath...

The 9/11 Commission immediately asked for the vital information that Cheney had withheld from the Commission, but Cheney refused to give them anything more. What a great patriot.

Likewise, Alcoholics Anonymous old-timers tell newcomers that "You don't know, and can't understand, how the magical Twelve Steps make people quit drinking" (because the newcomers are too new in their sobriety, and their thinking is alcoholic). Only the experienced old-timers understand it. But if the newcomers will just practice the Twelve Steps for a few years, then they will begin to see...

That is really a very common line that many cults use. They are forever explaining that you just don't know, and can't understand, the peace and tranquility and happiness and serenity and cosmic wisdom and divine enlightenment that comes from doing the cult's practices for years and years.... "But if you just faithfully do all of our practices — thoroughly follow our path — for a year, then you will see the light..."

Look at this emotional claim that A.A. old-timers know more than other people:

Re: Should interventionists use the word

Decon, One of the signs of an intelligent — well educated person is their ability to use tact and diplomacy, yes when I type I have typos for two reasons because I don't see well, and I don't spell well. Neither one of which have one darned thing to do with my knowledge or ability to deal with alcoholics and drug addicts — You ask what qualifies me to speak for other alcoholics. 40 years of drinking and 17 years of helping others get off of it. You know what statistics you either read or make up I don't know which. But until you hold a seizing alcoholic under a bridge, praying to God the ambulance gets there before it's too late. When you start sitting up all nite with a alcoholicin DT's strapped down to a hospital bed in a county hospital because he had no insurance to go anywhere else. When the police call you in the middle of the night to come down and ID a body of a drug addicted prostitute, that has no identification but has your card from a faith based rehab in her pocket — because you gave it her the last time she got out of jail. And no one know anything but her street name. When a addict strug out on drugs and alcohol calls you to come because they need you and by the time you get there they are dead on the bath-room floor of a cheap motel room. When you get a call from a thirteen year old child who's parents have already introduced her to drugs and alcohol and has her out on the streets hooking for them, and one of the other girls gives her a phone# to call for someone who will help her. When you live all of this for 17 years then you can ask

me what my qualifications are. Until then I suggest you put a sock in it, because you know nothing about the real face of addiction.

<http://community.abcv.com/service/display/DiscussionThreads.kickAction?as=119137&w=267410&d=34188&d.1169404.p=11>

The writer claimed to have special knowledge — many years of experience in dealing with addicts and alcoholics — but he provided zero information about how well his methods of treating those problems actually work. From the list of deaths, apparently not very well. And his emotional lecture begs the question: "How many of those people might still be alive if he had offered them something better than cult religion?"

- **Bad Math**

Use bad mathematics in calculating things.

One recent Internet hoax was a statement that listed a whole lot of crimes committed by members of Congress. The unknown author then calculated the crime rate of Congress as being several times higher than the average crime rate of the American people, ostensibly proving that all of those politicians are a bunch of crooks.

Be that as it may, the error was: The author listed all of the crimes ever committed by anyone who had been a member of Congress in the recent past, but calculated the crime rate as if all of those crimes were committed by just the current 535 members of Congress in just one year. Hey Presto! The result was a grossly inflated crime rate for the members of Congress.

We could list [lots of examples of Bill Wilson's bad mathematics](#) in computing the A.A. success rate, but we have already covered that in several other places.

- **The Gambler's Fallacy**

Imagine that objects must obey the law of averages.

If you toss a coin and it has come down heads three times in a row, you believe that it must come down tails the next time, because "The Law of Averages" dictates that the coin has to even things out.

Wrong. The odds of the coin coming down heads again are still 50-50. The coin has no memory. The coin does not remember how it came down the last several times, and so choose to come down the other way the next time. The coin is just an inanimate piece of metal that spins and comes down one way or another.

What people often misunderstand about "The Law of Averages" is that the Law of Averages only explains history, it does not cause things to happen. That is, the Law of Averages says that over the long haul, the dice will come up certain numbers certain percentages of times. But the dice do not have to obey the Law of Averages. They do not have to roll a certain way so as to satisfy the Law of Averages in the short term. The Law of Averages just says that over the long haul, certain numbers tend to come up certain percentages of times.

Similarly, the Law of Averages says that over the long run, a roulette wheel will tend to come up red and black an even number of times. But the wheel does not have to produce an equal number of reds and blacks in a short period of time. And if the wheel comes up red ten times in a row, a gambler has no way of knowing that this run merely balances out a run of ten blacks that the wheel did last week.

That brings up another interesting phenomenon: Brownian Motion. That is the motion observed in a particle resting on the surface of the water. If you place a really tiny, almost microscopic particle of something on the surface of water, it will jiggle around from being randomly struck by molecules of water that are whizzing around in the liquid. (And the warmer the water is, the more and the faster the molecules whiz around.)

In theory, you would expect the particle to stay still. That is, because it is randomly hit by water molecules coming from the left or right, front or back, the particle should just jiggle left and right, forwards and back, and stay in the same place. At least, you would think it should, theoretically. But that isn't what happens. What really happens is that the particle will get shoved around over long distances because the random strikes are not even. For a while, it may get hit by more molecules from the left than the right, so it gets shoved to the right. Then it gets hit from behind more than from in front, so it creeps forwards. It will do a random walk that can cover surprisingly large distances, and it may never return to its original position. Someone who believes that the water molecules must obey the Law of Averages will watch in frustration as the particle just wanders off in another direction, and never returns to its starting point, even though the strikes from the left and right and front and back are "supposed to even out".

There are some obvious easy exceptions to the "Law of Averages". If a certain district has voted Republican for the last 40 years, there is no reason to believe that they will suddenly vote Democratic, just to even things out. And the solid Democratic district will not suddenly vote Republican just to even things out. In those cases, the "Law of Averages" just does not apply. Other factors, like habit and entrenched attitudes, determine the outcome. So that brings up another logical fallacy: Mistaken Assumption of Randomness.

- **Mistaken Assumption of Randomness**

This fallacy is the mistake of assuming that things are random when they are not, and that the odds are even when they are not.

As described in the example above, the outcome of elections in certain districts is anything but random, and it would be a mistake to assume that Democrats and Republicans have an even chance in every district. There are many non-random factors that determine outcomes, like tradition, custom, habit, ingrained beliefs and preferences, culture, and even style and fashion.

There are many non-random things that determine why people do things, and it would be a big mistake to assume that their behavior is random.

- **Use the Passive Voice**

Instead of using the active voice and directly declaring who did what or who said what, use the passive voice where stuff just sort of happens, where something gets done by an invisible unnamed somebody...

- "Mistakes were made."
- "It is believed that..."
- "It is rumored that..."
- "It is often said that..."
- "Huge gains are predicted for..."

Obviously, we have to ask,

- Who is doing what, who is saying what, and who believes what?
- What are their credentials? Do they really know anything?
- Do they lie or tell the truth?
- What ax do they have to grind?
- What reason do we have to care what they think or what they say?

The true-believer Buchmanite T. Willard Hunter tried to [rationalize away](#) the issue of Frank Buchman's homosexuality — that is, the sexual orientation of [Frank the vicious homophobe](#) — with these words:

Because he never married and because of some aspects of appearance and manner, **innuendoes would turn up** in the press about his own orientation.

He was in good company. Similar **charges have been leveled** against Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Jesus and John, Paul and Timothy. ... Whether or not the suggestions have a basis in fact, **it is possible a case can be made that** some of the most powerful and creative personalities in history have had this predilection. **It is sometimes said that** the greatest saints were the most highly sexed.

World Changing Through Life Changing: The Story of Frank Buchman and Moral Re-Armament; A Thesis for the Degree of Master of Sacred Theology at Andover Newton Theological School, [T. Willard Hunter](#), 1977, pages 130-131.

Hunter used the passive voice a lot:

- ...innuendoes would turn up... *All by themselves?*
- ...charges have been leveled... *By whom?*
- ...a case can be made that... *Made by whom?*
- It is sometimes said that... *Said by whom?*

Mr. Hunter would have us believe that because some unnamed people allegedly accused Jesus Christ of homosexuality, and because some other unnamed people supposedly claimed that the greatest saints were highly sexed, that it was okay for Frank Buchman to be a vicious hateful homophobic hypocrite.

A radio advertisement for vitamins says, "Dr. Sawbones, a recognized authority on blah-blah..." Recognized by whom? What medical school or university or council of doctors recognized Dr. Sawbones as an authority on anything? We got no actual evidence that Dr. Sawbones knows anything, just a passive-voice declaration that Dr. Sawbones has been "recognized".

In the recent flap over the U.S. military secretly paying for propaganda stories to appear in Iraqi newspapers, we got these lines:

"Faults Are Acknowledged in Program That Pays Iraqi Newspapers."

"Secret Program May Have Erred, Pentagon Says"

'A top Pentagon official said Friday that "transgressions" may have occurred in a secret military program that pays Iraqi newspapers to publish information ...'

Mark Mazzetti, Los Angeles Times, 3 December 2005.

"Secret Program may have erred..." — Gee, the program erred all by itself?

Alcoholics Anonymous propaganda uses this technique often:

- "...it is widely believed that not including a Twelve-Step program in a treatment plan can put a recovering addict on the road to relapse."

[The Recovery Book](#), Al J. Mooney M.D., Arlene Eisenberg, and Howard Eisenberg, pages 40-41.

It is widely believed by whom, besides a few hard-core true-believer A.A. members?

It is certainly not believed by the doctors who know the facts.

- "AA has burgeoned and today is widely considered the most successful existing method for supporting sobriety..."

<http://www.naturalhealthnotebook.com/>

Is widely considered successful by whom? (The web site largely touts natural herbal cures and alternative healing practices, so I guess it must be the same people as the ones who buy things like diluted homeopathic remedies...)

- "It is believed in the study of 12-Step recovery processes that the mutual disclosures of members fosters processes of belonging and commitment to the collective goal of drug and alcohol abstinence."

*[Keep coming back! Narcotics Anonymous narrative and recovering-addict identity.](#) Adam Rafalovich, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, Spring 1999, v26, i1.*

Again, who believes it?

- **Use Slanted Language**

Recently (2012.02.20), the FBI raided a house in Portland, Oregon, for cyber-crimes. When the FBI wouldn't give the story to a TV news reporter (KOIN, Channel 6), he declared, "The FBI failed to give further information..." Not, "the FBI chose to release no further details," or "The FBI chose to maintain case confidentiality for now," no, the FBI "**failed** to provide information." How's that for getting back at someone who won't give you a juicy story?

When Princeton University President John Hibben banned Frank Buchman and his organization from the Princeton campus for explicit sexual confessions and sensational sexual revelations, [Hibben explained his actions](#) to newspaper reporters in a press conference. Peter Howard, a fanatical follower of Buchman, wrote of the event this way:

At Princeton, when the opposition appeared, the President, Dr. Hibben, allowed himself to be quoted as saying that so long as he was President there was no place for Dr. Buchman's work in the University.

Innocent Men, Peter Howard, page 89.

President Hibben did not passively "allow himself to be quoted" — he deliberately, clearly declared his position in a public statement to the press.

Also notice the use of passive language, where some vague "opposition" supposedly just mysteriously "appeared" from somewhere, rather than it being a case of intelligent people strongly objecting to Frank Buchman's behavior and treatment of students, and teaching bizarre occult theology, and all of the lurid talk about sex. [Some of Buchman's critics commented](#) that the sexual confessions at Oxford Group meetings were "as satisfying to the listeners as the original sin was to the confessors."

- **Use Inflammatory Language**

Use terminology and words that are guaranteed to excite passions and raise emotions.

Think of Mark Antony's classic speech at Caesar's funeral in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*:

Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.

...

I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts.
I am no orator, as Brutus is...

...

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, not utterance, nor the power of speech
To stir men's blood; I only speak right on.
I tell you that which you yourselves do know,
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
and bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus,
and Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

DEBATING TECHNIQUES:

- **Refute By Example**

This is a valid debating technique. Find exceptions to the rule or generalization to prove it false. If, for example, someone declares that "All ducks are white", you can answer, "No, that's wrong. Think of Mallard ducks, or Ringnecks, or Harlequin Ducks, or Wood Ducks. None of them are white."

Similarly, when A.A. people recite the line,

"RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path",

we can answer:

"No, Bill Wilson was lying when he wrote that. Think about:

- the *Big Book* co-author [Henry Parkhurst](#),
 - and the second A.A. woman [Florence Rankin](#),
 - and the enthusiastic A.A. recruiters [Jackie](#) and [Paddy](#),
 - and [Lillian Roth](#), the famous childhood movie star and singer who founded Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand, only to die drunk herself,
 - and Doctor Bob's son-in-law [Ernie Galbraith](#), "A.A. Number Four", the constantly-relapsing older philanderer whom the autocratic Doctor Robert Smith forced on his adopted daughter Sue Smith,
 - and then think about Bill's own recruiter [Ebby Thacher](#), who sucked Bill into the Oxford Group cult, only to relapse and die drunk himself,
- just to name the first half-dozen failures who come to mind.

We can also say:

"Lois Wilson's private secretary, Francis Hartigan, reported that [more than half of the authors](#) of the autobiographical stories in the first edition of the *Big Book* relapsed and returned to drinking, and Bill Wilson knew it, because he kept the first copy of the *Big Book* that came off of the presses, in which he checked off the names of the authors as they relapsed and left A.A..

"Dick B., the well-known A.A. historian, reports that the entire New York group, the one run by Bill Wilson, had [a horrendous relapse rate](#).

"And in more modern times we have many scientific studies, including [those by Prof. George Vaillant of Harvard University](#), who is a member of the Board of Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., which reveal that A.A. has a terrible failure rate — basically, 100% — and an 'appalling' death rate to go with it."

What Bill Wilson really should have written is:

"RARELY HAVE we seen a person *succeed* who has thoroughly followed our path."

- **Refute By Exposing Contradiction**

This is another valid debating technique. Show that a statement is false or at least unreliable by exposing a contradiction with other statements or facts.

For example, Bill Wilson wrote in the *Big Book* that 75 percent of the newcomers to A.A. got sobered up:

[Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried](#), 50% got sober at once and remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement.

Bill Wilson, in the Foreword to the Second Edition of "The Big Book", *Alcoholics Anonymous*, page XX, 1955.

But [Bill Wilson contradicted himself many times](#):

- At a memorial service for Dr. Bob, Bill Wilson actually bragged about the pathetically low success rate of the whole A.A. program. (Bill was making himself out to be a long-suffering hero, working tirelessly to promote Alcoholics Anonymous.) Bill described the early days of A.A. this way:

You have no conception these days of how much failure we had. You had to cull over hundreds of these drunks to get a handful to take the bait.

Bill Wilson, at the memorial service for Dr. Bob, Nov. 15, 1952; file available [here](#).

- When he wrote his history of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1957, Bill Wilson admitted that the early A.A. program had been a disaster:

At first nearly every alcoholic we approached began to slip, if indeed he sobered up at all. Others would stay dry six months or maybe a year and then take a skid. This was always a genuine catastrophe.

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age, William G. Wilson, (1957), page 97.

- And Nell Wing, a secretary of Alcoholics Anonymous for 35 years, and Bill Wilson's personal secretary for many of those years, as well as A.A.'s first archivist, reported:

"There were alcoholics in the hospitals of whom A.A. could touch and help only about five percent. The doctors started giving them [a dose of LSD](#), so that the resistance would be broken down. And they had about fifteen percent recoveries."

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age, William G. Wilson, (1957), page 370.

[\(It would appear that LSD is three times as effective as Alcoholics Anonymous for treating alcoholism. Unfortunately, that doesn't work either, in the long run.](#)

- **Minimization and Denial**

Go into denial and refuse to face the truth, or admit the truth. Believe in fantasies or fairy tales rather than the facts. Try to minimize undesired facts.

Minimization and denial is a kind of dishonesty. Criminals often use it to try to explain away the seriousness of their crimes: "That's no big deal. It's nothing new. Doesn't everybody do that?"

Minimization and Denial is the technique that a lot of alcoholics and cigarette smokers use to declare that they don't really need to quit drinking or smoking — they minimize the seriousness of their problem — "[Maybe I'm over-doing it a little bit right now, but frankly I'm not ready to quit just yet](#)" — or they deny that they even have a problem — "[Problem? What problem? I can quit any time I want.](#)"

Another name for denial is "The Ostrich Syndrome" — that behavior where someone just sticks his head into the sand and refuses to see the problem. — And where someone just refuses to see and to take responsibility for a situation. The ultimate personification of such mental midgetry was Sgt. Schultz, the immortal bumbler of TV's "Hogan's Heroes": "I know nothing! I see nothing! NOTHING!"

For example, Alcoholics Anonymous claims that you can have "any God of your understanding", and A.A. members brag and joke about worshipping a doorknob, a rock, a mountain or a motorcycle, and some even use a cat or a parakeet as their "god". When this was mentioned in a discussion, an A.A. defender replied: "[I would never pray to a doorknob and I never got that other than it simply means something other than yourself. I rather suspect that got started as a tongue in cheek reference.](#)"

That is denial.

A variation on the *Denial* is the line, "There is no evidence..." — just denying and ignoring all unwanted evidence — as in, "*There is no evidence that eating genetically-modified food crops causes health problems.*" Oh yes there is. The safety assurance studies submitted to show the safety of GMOs actually suggest hepatobiliary and renal toxicity:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=hammond+safety+assurance>

And an additional strategy is to prevent any undesired evidence from coming into existence, like how Monsanto refuses to allow research to be conducted on their patented genetically-modified crops, to see whether they are really harmful to wildlife, honeybees, livestock or humans.

Cults use this technique a lot, to explain away their every fault and flaw. Occasionally, they will even mention that their "enemies" have accused them of being a cult, and laugh and explain, "*It's just that some of our recruiters have been really enthusiastic about getting new people to come to meetings. That's all there is to it.*" (That is the rap I heard in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, which really is a cult.)

When cult members, or *true believers* in any cause, for that matter, are confronted with information that is contrary to their beliefs, they go through a predictable set of reactions:

1. **Denial.** They will deny that the information is true, and reject it: "*That can't possibly be true. No, I don't believe that. Where did you hear that?*"

Arianna Huffington described a fanatic as someone who simply rejects and disregards all information that conflicts with his chosen beliefs.

If you give them enough supporting evidence to make denial impossible, then they will progress to stage 2:

2. **Minimization and rationalization.** They will minimize the importance of the information, and claim that it doesn't matter, or just try to *rationalize* it all away:

"Well, it doesn't matter anyway. That's just a trivial detail. Don't most religious leaders do that? Churches, schools, corporations, everything is a cult, so it doesn't matter. Besides, he deserves a few of the simple pleasures of life, after all..."

(Like all of the money, all of the girls, all of the drugs, and then all of the boys — [Rev. Jim Jones, People's Temple.](#))

If you present them with convincing information that it really is an important point, and does matter, then they will progress to stage 3:

3. **Blanking.** True Believers will just blank their minds, and turn off, and refuse to hear anything more that you say. Sometimes they will even physically leave, walking or running away, to avoid hearing anything more.

Jon Atack described how blanking is taught to Scientologists: "*If the criticism cannot be silenced, then the scientologist should cease all communication with the critic, or "disconnect".*"¹⁹

Alternatively, if they don't blank out, then they will experience a change in viewpoint where they begin to see things from your viewpoint. They will suddenly wake up and "see the light." Whether they will blank out or change their minds depends on their willingness to change their opinions and beliefs, and willingness to accept the truth.

(The fanatic says, "*I won't allow my opinions to be swayed by mere facts.*")

Notice how when cults and other dogmatic organizations teach blanking to their members, they disguise it as a self-defense technique:

"Those critics are trying to hurt you (by telling you the truth).

They are trying to make you lose faith (in the leader or the cult).
Don't let them do it to you."

Amway teaches its soap distributors that their worst enemies are their friends and family members who try to talk a little common sense into them:

"Don't let them plant doubts in you."

"Don't let them steal your dreams."

There are a zillion flavors of minimization and denial.

- Dismiss undesired information as trivial nit-picking. For example, when people point out the flaws of a program or design, a defender of that program or design may answer: "Isn't all of that comparison and scrutiny with a magnification glass going much too far for this forum?"
- Dismiss information as unimportant. "That's old hat. Everybody knows that. It doesn't matter."
- When someone complained about black dots and artifacts that a digital camera inserted into his pictures, a defender of the camera posted: "Make a print and tell us how much of a problem it is." That is minimizing and denying the problem. Making prints on paper is not the ultimate goal of all photography. Just because a cheap low-resolution printer will mask defects in images does not make those defects okay.
- When members of a group or organization behave abominably, defenders of the group will argue that the problem is "just a few bad apples".
- In his recent Washington Post article about the murderous Khmer Rouge campaign of mass murder unleashed in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, Alex Hinton wrote:

"I interviewed former prison guards who told me with downcast eyes that they didn't do anything and, besides, they were only following orders."

Alex Hinton, "[We Can't Let the Khmer Rouge Escape](#)", The Washington Post, Friday, August 4, 2006; A17

Politicians and pundits for political parties often use variations of the *minimization and denial* technique:

- "Oh heck, all politicians lie and deceive. It just comes with the territory. It's part of the job. You just have to do it. It's no big deal."
- "Oh heck, all politicians take bribes and gifts and agree to vote a certain way in trade for money. It's called 'campaign contributions'. You have to do it, or you won't get re-elected. It's no big deal."

Rush Limbaugh gave us a great example of *minimization and denial* in trying to dismiss the torture and murder of prisoners at *Abu Ghraib* prison as a trivial matter — "It was just like a college fraternity prank. ... You ever heard of emotional release? You ever heard of the need to blow off some steam? ... Who died?" (Actually, several prisoners died from overdose of torture, and the Pentagon reported that two more were deliberately murdered.)

Rush Limbaugh also used minimization and denial to explain away his own addiction to pain-killers, after recommending the death sentence for junkies:

"I'm not like a junkie. I only took legal prescription pain-killers."

Yes, but Limbaugh didn't have a prescription for all of those drugs, so the drugs weren't legal. And they were bought on the black market, just the same as how every other junkie gets his illegal drugs.

George W. Bush, on his failure to capture Osama bin Laden:

"I don't know where he is. I don't think about him much any more."

During the U.S. Senate Hearings on the *Abu Ghraib* torture and abuse (2004.05.11), the *Al-Jazeera* news network showed a video tape of hooded men executing an American prisoner — Nicholas Berg — by chopping off his head with a big knife. The killers declared that the execution was done in retaliation for the torture and killing of prisoners in *Abu Ghraib*.

A Republican Senator responded "I don't believe this happened in a 'one-for-one'. That kind of stuff happens anyway."

The Senator ignored the simple fact that such a ceremonial execution of an American prisoner had never happened in Iraq before. The Iraqis even hospitalized Jessica Lynch until she was rescued, remember?

UPDATE: 2004.06.18 — Now the Al Qaeda terrorists in Saudi Arabia have announced that the Americans whom they kidnap will be treated in the same manner as the prisoners in *Abu Ghraib* prison...

Meanwhile, the Washington weasles had a truckload of minimization and denial and rationalizations to offer us:

- It wasn't really torture. It wasn't that bad. It was just some forceful interrogation.
- It was justified.
- It was necessary to get intelligence.
- They are the bad guys. It's okay to do it to them.
- It wasn't anything like the other side's beheadings.
- It's just being overblown by the Democrats.

— All of which simply declare that torture of prisoners is really okay now, and that the Geneva Convention is " quaint " and obsolete. We used to consider countries that tortured prisoners of war to be barbarians, and declare that they needed to learn some Christian morals. Now it's the so-called "Christians" who are doing it.

In March of 2006, a videotape came out that clearly showed White House officials receiving emphatic warnings that Hurricane Katrina could and would top the levees and flood New Orleans and cause a major disaster — warnings that the Bush Administration blithely ignored. G. W. Bush went on vacation, and went to a birthday party in Arizona where he pretended to play a guitar.

A White House spokesman responded to the tape by saying, "There is nothing new or insightful on the video." White House, 2 March 2006.

During a debate on the PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer, about the firing of Mary McCarthy for revealing the existence of secret CIA prisons in foreign countries, to which people were "disappeared" — secretly kidnapped, renditioned, and tortured, which is several war crimes — one Republican talking head, Richard Kerr, a former CIA deputy director, declared:

"Well, first of all, I'm not absolutely sure that I agree with the idea that these are crimes, an international crime." (PBS News Hour, 24 Apr 2006).

So, kidnapping people who might be innocent, and imprisoning them without a trial, and torturing them, even torturing them to death, is not a crime under the Bush administration? When did we rewrite those laws?

Declaring that "it's over, and nobody cares" is another kind of minimization. Politicians use this one whenever they can get away with it, to try to stop debate on a touchy subject. For example, when the American people discovered that George Bush had lied about the extent of warrantless surveillance of Americans that was going on — that the NSA was even collecting information about millions of phone calls made purely within the USA and between loyal Americans, not involving Al Quada, even while huge class-action lawsuits were being filed against the phone companies who gave out the phone records without a court warrant, the Republican talking heads went on the political talk shows Friday night on PBS (2006.05.12) and declared that "It's over. The furor has died down. It's all a big nothing. The American people don't care."

Likewise, in the current furor (1 October 2006) over Congressman Mark Foley (R-FL) sending very sexually explicit homosexually invitational emails to very young male Congressional pages — messages that one page described as "Sick, sick, sick, sick, sick, ... (for 13 'sicks') — Republican leaders have declared **"It's time to move on"**, when Democratic Congressmen asked for the resignations of those Republican leaders who knew what was going on because the under-age pages reported it to them, but the Republican leaders just covered it all up and allowed Foley to continue that behavior.

And, using the minimization tactic some more, the Republican leaders are now describing Rep. Foley's predatory homosexual emails as merely "overly friendly" and "acting as a mentor." White House Press Secretary Tony Snow said it was merely an issue of "simply naughty emails."

Another kind of denial is *depersonalization* — personally detaching from a problem or situation — the attitude that the big problem has nothing to do with you, or isn't really your responsibility. Donald Rumsfeld half-admitted that the U.S. military campaign in Iraq was not going well: **"If I were grading, I would say we probably deserve a D or D+ as a country."** (TIME, Apr 3-9, 2006)
Excuse me Rummy, but the failure is yours, not America's, and yes, this test counts.

A.A. defenders use the *minimization and denial* technique a lot to explain that A.A. doesn't really have [a dishonesty problem](#), and doesn't really need to get off it and start telling the truth. And A.A. doesn't really have [a humongous failure rate](#). And A.A. isn't really [a cult religion](#).

Likewise, A.A. true believers attempt to dismiss the A.A. 95% drop-out rate in just the first year as "the myth of the 5% retention rate", as if the drop-out rate had been somehow disproven and wasn't real. (It's real.)

In a debate, you can use the *Minimization and Denial* technique to defend Alcoholics Anonymous like this: Whenever your opponent says something that you don't like, or don't want to hear, just reply with one of these standard answers:

- "It's unimportant because it happened so long ago."
- "People have been criticizing AA forever; what's new there?"
- "Just because you found a hundred groups where [sponsors sexually harass the new pretty women members](#) doesn't mean that it is a universal characteristic of A.A., or that [it happens everywhere](#), or that you can fault all of A.A. for it. You can't generalize like that. No group has any control over any other group."
- "Each A.A. meeting is a little different. Look around and you'll find one that suits you..."
- "What appears to be a contradiction is just a paradox, just a wonderful paradox."
- "I suspect that the whole story is a hoax made up by the anti-A.A. people, just to discredit A.A.."
- "But the A.A. program is free. Where else can you find such a good recovery program for free?"
[\[Answer: SMART, WFS, MFS, or SOS.\]](#)
- "That's just another A.A.-basher, on an anti-A.A. pogrom again."

- "That doesn't matter — it's irrelevant — it isn't the real A.A., because it isn't a Council-approved activity."
[Actually, everything that A.A. members do at an A.A. meeting, or while recruiting and proselytizing, or in a sponsor/sponsee relationship, is "the real A.A.".]
- "That doesn't matter — it's irrelevant — it isn't the real A.A., because it's against The Traditions."
[Again, the real A.A. is everything that A.A. members really do at an A.A. meeting, or while recruiting and promoting A.A., or in a sponsor/sponsee relationship, not what the Traditions say they are *supposed to be doing*.]
- "That doesn't matter — it's irrelevant — it isn't the real A.A., because not all groups do it."
- "That does not happen in our group."
- "I never saw that."
- "That is not the real AA."
- "We are not aware of any dangerous situation."
- "That's beside the point..."
(When it is the point.)
- "You can't blame A.A. for the harm that some members do. They aren't supposed to be doing those things." ("But we will gladly take all of the credit for the good things that some other members do.")
- "What you are complaining about isn't the real A.A.. A.A. has just gone downhill a little lately. What you were exposed to is what AA has turned into, not what it used to be."
- "So what if it's a cult? All religions are cults. Everything is a cult. It doesn't matter."
- "That misbehavior is being done by the treatment centers, not A.A., so you can't blame A.A. for that."
(But the treatment centers are staffed and run by true-believer 12-Steppers who are using the treatment centers to shove the 12-Step religion on vulnerable sick people, so that is also another part of "the real A.A.".)
- "That [13th-stepping, rape, murder, abuse, exploitation, robbery] was just an isolated incident."
- "We don't take any position on outside issues." ("And we will call anything that we don't want to hear about an 'outside issue'.")
- "I cannot think of any belief, doctrine, institution or philosophy of any kind that is free from abuse."
- "I understand that the numbers are flat and the success rate has deteriorated over the last few decades. But that's just because people are not 'working the program' right."
Rather than admitting that 'the program' never ever worked right, and that Bill Wilson's bragging about a great success rate was just another lie.
- "That is of no interest to anyone but some A.A.-bashers. You people just keep digging up hundreds and hundreds of pieces of garbage like that because you are trying to discredit A.A.."
- "That story is just a hoax. It's full of factual errors. Somebody with a resentment cooked it up and sent it out. It would be a waste of time to even respond to it."
[Which saves the speaker from having to come up with any actual facts to back up his sweeping statements. Now he can run away without having to prove his statements, which also makes it a hit-and-run attack.]

- "That hasn't been proven. There hasn't been enough scientific research. That has never been fully proven."
- "That can't be confirmed." "That hasn't been fully verified."
 [No matter how much supporting and corroborating evidence there is, just stubbornly maintain that the point can't be confirmed, or hasn't been "fully verified", or hasn't been proved.]
 [Ah, but if Bill Wilson said something, then A.A. true believers consider it automatically "confirmed" and unquestionably true.]
- "I don't even know how we got side-tracked into wasting our time talking about this trivial detail."
- "I don't know why he spends so much time on this stuff. What's he trying to prove?"
- "The A.A.-bashers just hate us, that's all."
- "So what if the founders of A.A. committed all kinds of crimes and offenses and promoted cult religion and fascism? Every successful group makes mistakes in its infancy."
- "You are quoting out of context!"
 [No matter how long and detailed the quote is, and no matter how much context is included with the quote, just dismiss all quotes that you don't like as being "taken out of context."]
- "When I read your statement about young people seeking new answers while old people want to preserve the values that they have, I knew you were nuts. You must be a very young and foolish person to believe such a thing."
- "I've got 20 years in A.A., and while I can't speak for A.A. because nobody speaks for A.A., I must say..."
 (First he establishes his credentials, 20 years, to give himself the authority to speak for A.A., and then he spends the next five minutes speaking for A.A., and singing the praises of A.A., while claiming that he is "not speaking for A.A.".)
- "I wasn't trying to win an argument with you, but one more thing I have to say is..."
- "Yes, BUT!..."
- "I'm not paying any attention to what you say."
 (That is an example of blanking.)
- When you are losing an argument badly, ignore your opponent's points, and terminate the discussion by using a quote from Bill Wilson, "I'm resigning from the debating society!" which implies that you are superior to your opponent because you aren't wasting your time arguing over trivialities any more.
 (That is another example of blanking.)
- **And so is:** "You are still going on about this several hours later, and I don't really give a shit about it at present."

- **Instant Denial**

A variation on the denial technique is *Instant Denial*: Say something, and then immediately deny that you said it.

Peter Howard, [the fascist disciple](#) of Frank Buchman who assumed the leadership of the Oxford Groups/MRA organization after Buchman's death, attacked Frank Buchman's critics with these words:

...Christians forget that Christ was crucified not because he was wrong but because He was right. There was one of Christ's contemporaries who, while agreeing that the work being done was good, always disagreed with the methods and thought he could do things better. He was critical of the way money was spent, critical of the company Christ kept, critical of his comrades. His name was Judas.

This is not to suggest that Buchman was like Christ or that all his critics are like Judas....

Britain and the Beast, Peter Howard, 1963, page 106.

Peter Howard clearly suggested that Frank Buchman's critics were acting just like Judas, and then Howard immediately denied it, and declared that he wasn't suggesting it. Howard also implied that Frank Buchman was right, just like Jesus was, and then Howard denied that too.

People who are promoting Alcoholics Anonymous use the same *Instant Denial* technique, too. Here, the speaker denies it before he says it:

"This is not a commercial for A.A. Frankly, A.A. is not for everybody. But A.A. saved my life, and only through A.A. was I able to learn how to survive my disease."

So *it is* a commercial for A.A., and A.A. *is* the only way after all.

(And the speaker was also [assuming a couple of major premises](#) — that alcoholism is a disease, rather than behavior, and that A.A. has a working cure for that disease, rather than [a horrendous failure rate](#).)

A variation on this *Instant Denial* technique is to say something and then immediately declare that you didn't mean it.

Another variation is the one that you see lawyers using in TV shows all of the time: A clever lawyer asks an improper question, and then immediately withdraws it. A lawyer will attack a witness with a question like, "Isn't it true that you hated your husband and wanted him dead?"

The opposing attorney will scream, "Objection, your Honor!"

And the first lawyer answers, "I withdraw the question, your Honor."

Even if the judge says, "Let that question be stricken from the record. The jury will disregard the question.", the harm has already been done.

- **Understatement**

Understatement is a kind of minimization.

When news reporters discovered that New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson was making false claims on his resumé, and had been for forty years, when he claimed that he had been drafted to pitch for the Kansas City Athletics in 1966, allegedly before "an injury compelled him to bow out of baseball", Richardson answered:

"After being notified of the situation and after researching the matter... I came to the conclusion that I was not drafted by the A's."

([TIME, Nov 28 to Dec 4, 2005](#))

- **Not As Bad As**

The "*Not As Bad As*" ploy is a kind of minimization and denial. The debater declares that whatever is being criticized is not nearly as bad as something really awful:

- That isn't nearly as bad as what the Nazis did to the Jews.
- The censorship of the press that we have to endure isn't nearly as bad as what goes on in Russia.
- Our politicians aren't nearly as corrupt as the ones in Africa and Asia.
- Alcoholics Anonymous isn't nearly as bad as the People's Temple or the Branch Davidians or Heaven's Gate. Now those were really some nasty cults.

- **Admit a Small Fault to Cover a Big Denial**

Likewise, confess a small error to cover a large one. Or confess a minor vice to create the appearance of having no bad ones. Confess small transgressions to create the appearance of humility and repentance and honesty.

Some "pious" people are often eager to loudly confess their small shortcomings in order to fool others into believing that they have no larger ones.

We confess our little faults to persuade people that we have no large ones.
== François de La Rochefoucauld

In the Oxford Group confession sessions, [members routinely confessed to having been jealous of someone](#), or having smoked a cigarette, or having worn makeup, or any of several other petty imperfections, but they just didn't confess any large crimes like grand larceny or fraud or murder or treason (like [killing Leftists in street fighting in Oxford and London](#), and [supporting Adolf Hitler](#) before and during World War II, and [dodging the draft](#) to avoid serving in the British Army and fighting the Nazis...)

Similarly,

President Bush today said mistakes were made in planning for the Iraq invasion, but he defended the troop level he ordered in the initial strike, saying he would have committed the same number if given a second chance.

Recalling his pre-war conversations with Gen. Tommy Franks, who led the invasion and is now retired, Bush told a business group in Irvine, Calif.: "The level that he suggested was the troop level necessary to do the job, and I support it strongly."

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/24/AR2006042400850_pf.html)

Also notice the use of [the passive voice](#): "mistakes were made..." What mistakes? Were made by whom? Was George actually admitting that he screwed up? Or was he just shoving the blame onto Gen. Tommy Franks?

- **False Comparison**

You can make something appear to be larger or smaller, or better or worse, by comparing it to something else.

Late-night TV infomercials and shopping channel "auctions" habitually declare, "You would expect to pay \$XXX, but here the cost to you is only \$yyy."

Wrong. I would never "expect" to pay the numbers that they announce. I always think that their phony "expected" prices are absurdly high.

A variation on that rap is "value" — "This complete package is a \$200 value, but now, in this special offer, it will only cost you \$34.95."

A similar advertising trick is to compare your product to a competitors worst low-end model — the wimpy, weak, lowest-price shoddy loser model — and then call your product "high power" and "superior" (when it is really only average).

- **Give a Non-reason Reason**

Give reasons for things that are not reasons for things.

For example,

- "That's just the way it is."
- "Because."
- "That's the way it's always been done."
- "I'm sure the Leader has his reasons." (Or the Elders, or the Priests, or whomever...)
- "It's a tradition."

- **Divert Attention — Change the Subject**

If you have nothing to say, distract them. Misdirect attention.

- The old saying is, "Drag a Red Herring across the trail."
- The Madison Avenue advertising gurus say, "If you have nothing to say, sing it."
- When you are losing a point, change the subject. Start talking about something else, anything else, where you at least can't lose because there isn't anything to lose.
- When asked a very embarrassing question in a political debate, claim that you have already fully answered that question before, and change the subject.
(Like, "Did G. W. Bush desert from his Air National Guard unit in a time of war? Why didn't he show up for his flight physical? Why did his commanding officer ground him?" Was young Lt. Bush busted for cocaine in Texas and forced to do community service? ...And then the whole thing was covered up because Daddy was a Congressman...)
 - Claim, "I've already dealt with that", and change the subject.
or
 - Claim, "I already apologized for that", and change the subject.
- Dismiss a critic and change the subject with a condescending remark like, "Why don't you quit stirring the pot and move on?"

If a conversation or debate leads into a discussion of the American use of chemical weapons during the Vietnam War, immediately bring up the story of "*Yellow Rain*", a rather paranoid rumor about the U.S.A. spraying poison from the air on American defectors, a story that turned out to be groundless. Ignore the much larger, undeniably true story of tens of thousands of Vietnamese women giving birth to deformed babies as a result of being sprayed with the poisonous defoliant *Agent Orange*. Also ignore the many American G.I.s who came back from Vietnam suffering from Agent Orange poisoning. Just keep mentioning "*Yellow Rain*", as if the falseness of that one story proves that the American forces didn't use chemical weapons on Vietnam.

Senate investigators have been trying, for more than two years now, to get information about Enron's involvement with the White House and national energy policy planning. The White House has consistently refused to hand over the information. When the Senate investigating committee issued subpoenas, a White House spokesman replied, "*Such subpoenas are premature. The investigation is just politically motivated.*"

Question: When would the Administration feel that it was *not* "premature" or "political" to investigate the actions of the occupants of the White House while they were helping a criminal gang like Enron? A hundred years from now?

Some of the key phrases that indicate a change of subject are:

- "Well, let's get down to the real issue..."

- "The bottom line is..."
- "Now look at the real facts here..."

When used in response to a question, all of them mean, "I'm not going to answer your question. I'm changing the subject and diverting attention and won't even talk about your question."

A good one that I heard on Al Franken's radio show (20 April 2004) was: A ditto-head was claiming that rich Democrats do not really care about the poor. When asked for proof of that statement, he answered, "Well, let's look at the results of their programs."

Whoops! Stop right there. That's a different issue. That is changing the subject. The effectiveness of any help-the-poor program does not prove or disprove how much someone *cares* about the poor.

Now one could claim that an ineffective program shows that someone was inept or incompetent at designing or administering programs, but that is a very different issue. That does not prove how much someone cares or doesn't care.

And such an accusation may be groundless because it completely ignores issues like funding. Was the program really ineffective or badly designed or poorly managed, or was it just grossly underfunded by the Republican Congress that even cut Veteran's benefits and closed V.A. hospitals while it sent the troops off to war in Iraq? (Hint: It's the later cause.)

The U.S. Senate hearings on the torture of prisoners at *Abu Ghraib* prison (2004.05.11) provide us with another example of misdirection of attention: Instead of talking about the horrors that the pictures showed, one Republican Senator went off on a tangent complaining about how the pictures had been taken improperly by a soldier who had no authority to do so — he had used his own privately-owned digital camera, and had no orders from his superiors to take the pictures, so his taking of the pictures violated the military regulations regarding how military prisons were to be operated....

Never mind the fact that torturing, raping, and murdering prisoners was also against those same military regulations....

(And that political stunt is also an obvious attempt to "Kill the Messenger" — just attack the whistle-blower who dared to document the illegal abuses.)

Ah politics, isn't it wonderful?

Not to be outdone, another Republican Senator started waxing eloquent about what a great job our soldiers are doing, and how we shouldn't distract our men, or the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, from "the more important job of defending America from terrorism."

Right. Stopping the practice of war crimes is just an annoying little distraction keeping us from doing what is really important. Our efforts to stop terrorism won't be undermined by the entire Arab and Moslem world seeing us as a bunch of vicious, racist, religious-bigot Nazis who torture innocent men and women; no, not at all....

Over in the A.A. arena, one of Bill Wilson's standard stunts was, when someone like [Clarence Snyder](#) would [criticize Wilson](#) for [massive fraud](#) and [felonious dishonesty](#), Wilson would reply with something like, "My, how those alcoholics love to squabble and argue. Being the [argumentative lot](#) that they are, they just love to [challenge authority](#)."

Doctor Bob also gave us a great example of diverting attention, back in the early days of the Oxford Group, before Alcoholics Anonymous got started. Henrietta Seiberling was trying to get Doctor Bob to quit drinking. She said that she had received "[Guidance](#)" that "Bob must not touch one drop of alcohol", and she told Doctor Bob about it.

He answered, "Henrietta, I don't understand this thing [alcoholism]. *Nobody* understands it."¹⁸

Doctor Bob changed the subject from "not drinking alcohol" to something abstract and inconsequential like "understanding alcoholism", because he didn't want to talk about *actually really quitting drinking*. He also tried to imply that because "nobody understood alcoholism", it wasn't possible to quit drinking, so there was no sense in even wasting any time trying. Cute avoidance technique, huh?

Similarly, if a critic of A.A. says:

"An awful lot of state and federal courts have now ruled that Alcoholics Anonymous is a religious organization, or engages in religious activities, as defined by Constitutional law. The most interesting one happened just a few months ago, when [a judge threw out a murder conviction](#) because the killer confessed to the murder in an A.A. meeting, and one of the other members reported it to the police. The judge ruled that '*sharing*' in an A.A. meeting is a form of protected confession in a religious ceremony, just like confessing your sins to the priest in a Catholic Church."

a Stepper can divert attention by answering:

"I don't think that is an appropriate subject of discussion in this context. We don't get involved in outside issues. I was just getting to how to use the Seventh Step to cure [people's instincts for security and society](#). Let's concentrate on that."

Or:

"It isn't fair of you to attack A.A. when no one can answer, because nobody speaks for A.A.. Go pick on somebody who can fight back."

If someone starts talking about [the corruption and dishonesty at the A.A. headquarters](#), a Stepper can change the subject by saying, "Well, that's a different issue. Let's not get into that now. Let's just read page 49 of the *Big Book* and talk about that."

And don't forget obfuscation. That is also an effective way to divert attention, by confusing and clouding an issue, and muddying the waters so thoroughly that you can't even see it:

"The judge was completely off base, and his judgement was totally wrong, because there are no priests in Alcoholics Anonymous. I mean, who's the priest in a meeting, and who are you confessing your sins to?"

That bogus argument ignores the obvious fact that you can confess something to someone besides an ordained priest. (Just ask any criminal who ever confessed something to the police.) And you can have a religious ceremony without a priest. Lots of churches, like the Quakers, for instance, don't have any ordained clergy. Everybody in the church is free to speak when the spirit moves him.

You can also divert attention with slogans. A.A. does that a lot. If someone is asking pointed, critical questions about the illogical parts of the A.A. program, trying to understand how the whole thing is supposed to work, the old-timers answer:

- o "Utilize, Don't Analyze."
- o "Stop Your Stinkin' Thinkin'."
- o "Your best thinking got you here."
- o "You know, sometimes you can be too smart for your own good."
- o "You don't have to understand how electricity works in order to use it."
- o "Nobody is too stupid to get the program, but some people are too intelligent."

All of those slogans are designed to keep newcomers from thinking, and discovering how flawed, crazy, illogical and irrational the A.A. program really is.

Another common A.A. diversion is to accuse the speaker of being angry. A.A. true believers actually think that someone is automatically wrong if he is at all angry, [no matter how outrageous the sins or crimes that have angered the speaker](#), because "*Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake.*" (*Big Book*, 3rd Edition, page 449.)

Bill Wilson wrote that [you are always wrong if you are "disturbed"](#), and that alcoholics cannot handle anger:

It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong *with us*. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong also.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, William G. Wilson, page 90.

["Gee, duh... somebody just shot my friend dead in the middle of the street, and raped my girlfriend, and kicked my dog. But I'm not going to get disturbed about it, because Bill Wilson says that if I did, it would axiomatically mean that there is something spiritually wrong with me... Duh..."]

So the point of the discussion gets lost in an argument about whether the speaker is angry, and whether it is okay to be angry. Where it really gets funny is when the believers cop an attitude like, "*Well, you're angry, so that makes everything you say invalid. That takes care of you. We don't have to listen to anything else that you say, because you admitted that you were angry.*"

([Look here and here and here and here and here and here and here and here and here.](#))

- **Prove Something Else**

This is a kind of diversion tactic.

"If you can't prove what you want to prove, demonstrate something else and pretend that they are the same thing."
== Darrell Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics*, p. 74

Alcoholics Anonymous uses this trick often. If someone criticizes A.A. for failing to sober us alcoholics, A.A. members cite the large sales figures for the A.A. *Big Book*, and claim that those numbers prove that A.A. is a big success.

Likewise, they also cite the membership numbers — a claimed 2 million — as proof that A.A. works. They supply no evidence to show what percentage of those members are sober, or newcomers, or repeat relapsers, or insane...

- **"Well, all I know is..."**

When you list a bunch of points for your side, your opponent says, "*Well, all I know is...*" That is a diversionary tactic — an attempt to ignore all of the facts that you just mentioned, and divert attention to something else that he or she would rather talk about.

- **The Positive Accomplishments Sidestep**

This is a kind of diversion tactic. When criticized, avoid the point and change the subject by citing some positive accomplishments.

When George W. Bush is criticized for his failures in war, like, "You didn't catch Osama bin Laden, and you didn't find any Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Iraq is degenerating into civil war!", he answers:

1. "But we got rid of the Taliban."
2. "But we established democracy."
3. "But we got rid of a dictator."
4. "But we established freedom. Freedom is on the march."

- **Declare Victory**

When facing criticism, like for incompetence and failure, just suddenly, arbitrarily declare victory. Another name for this behavior is "triumphalism".

For instance, on December 10, 2008, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson had to explain to the Congressional Oversight Panel how TARP had been implemented, and what had been accomplished with the \$350,000,000,000 that had been allocated so far. Never mind the facts that unemployment was still going up — a lot — and nationwide, the economic conditions were worsening — a lot. And middle-class homes were still being foreclosed on — a lot. Paulson just declared victory and announced that things were *much* better because the TED spread was smaller.

The TED spread is the difference between the interest rate on the 3-month U.S. Treasury bills and on the 3-month "LIBOR" — the interest rate that commercial banks charge for lending each other money in Europe. It is basically a measure of how nervous the big financial players are about lending each other money. So, because Americans weren't much more nervous than Europeans this month, Paulson declared victory and implied that we had gotten good results from our \$350 billion worth of bailout to Wall Street banks and gamblers.

- **Red Herring**

A *Red Herring Fallacy* is a distraction technique where you talk about one subject and then immediately blame an unrelated topic or group as a cause or correlation to it.

Another explanation of the *Red Herring* is: A Red Herring is a fallacy in which an irrelevant topic is presented in order to divert attention from the original issue. The basic idea is to "win" an argument by leading attention away from the argument and to another topic. This sort of "reasoning" has the following form:

1. Topic A is under discussion.
2. Topic B is introduced under the guise of being relevant to topic A (when topic B is actually not relevant to topic A).
3. Topic A is abandoned.

This sort of "reasoning" is fallacious because merely changing the topic of discussion hardly counts as an argument against a claim.

Examples of Red Herring:

1. "Teachers shouldn't make students wear school uniforms. The Nazis made children wear uniforms too!"
2. "We admit that this measure is popular. But we also urge you to note that there are so many bond issues on this ballot that the whole thing is getting ridiculous."
3. "Argument" for a tax cut:
"You know, I've begun to think that there is some merit in the Republican's tax cut plan. I suggest that

you come up with something like it, because if we Democrats are going to survive as a party, we have got to show that we are as tough-minded as the Republicans, since that is what the public wants."

4. "Argument" for making grad school requirements stricter:

"I think there is great merit in making the requirements stricter for the graduate students. I recommend that you support it, too. After all, we are in a budget crisis and we do not want our salaries affected."

(Thanks to "Dr. Herring" for that one.)

- **The Personal Loyalty Red Herring**

This is another kind of diversion tactic. Change the issue into a test of loyalty. When George Bush is criticized, he declares,

1. "You're either with us or you're against us."
2. "Who are you going to side with, the patriotic Americans, or the terrorists?"

A variation on this tactic is demanding promises of loyalty from others as a way of manipulating them. When the future Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels married his sweetheart Magda, Adolf Hitler said, "I wish you a lifetime of happiness and hope you will remain my good friend." It was supposed to be Goebbels' day of happiness, but Hitler managed to turn it around and make it about himself.

(Goebbels replied that he would remain Hitler's friend, and that Magda would help him keep that promise. Goebbels did keep it too, right up to the minute in the bunker in Berlin when he killed his wife and children and then committed suicide at the same time as Hitler and Eva Braun did.)

- **The Story Sourcing Distraction**

This is yet another kind of diversion tactic. Instead of answering criticism, attack the source of the information:

1. Bush declared: "Who leaked that? We are going to find those leakers and take care of them." (Ignore the fact that George Bush and his staff turned out to be the leakers.)
2. "You read that in the liberal media?"
3. "This is Washington. People say all kinds of things."
4. "That's the kind of language you might expect to hear from the sovereign leader of an Arab country." — That was Joshua Bolten, the White House Chief of Staff, explaining why the Prime Minister of Lebanon objected to Israel bombing his country. (*Meet The Press*, NBC, 23 July 2006)

When six retired U.S. generals criticized Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld for incompetence and demanded his resignation (April 2006), the White House shills complained that it was "inappropriate" for retired generals to criticize Rumsfeld's conduct of the war — trying to imply that the criticism was somehow invalid because it came from retired generals — and that they were too late, anyway. Oh really?

So when *is* it appropriate for generals to raise objections and condemn politicians' stupidity?

- While they are still in uniform? (Thus violating the sacred American principle that the U.S. military always obeys civilian authority so that we don't degenerate into a banana republic that is run by a murdering Colonel Manuel Norriega or General Augusto Pinochet?) General McArthur was fired by President Truman for criticizing the President and his policies while still serving in uniform.
- Or never? Do men lose the right to criticize bumbling conduct of a war if they once served in the military?
Actually, who would be more entitled to have an opinion on the subject?

- **The Drama Queen, the Prima Donna Ploy**

This ploy is also a kind of diversion of attention. Switch the focus to oneself and one's own immense problems.

"People always come up to me and say that my smoking
is bothering them... Well, it's killing me!"
== Wendy Liebman

For example, if a captain of industry is accused:

ACCUSATION: "You are polluting the water and air and land and destroying the very ability of the biosphere to continue supporting human life."

ANSWER: "Hey! Don't you think I'm trying? Do you have any idea how hard it is to balance the interests of profit and ecology?"

Why are you always blaming us CEOs?

Do you have any idea how demanding the stockholders are?

Do you realize how quickly they will replace me if I don't produce the maximum profit?"

— None of which answers the accusation of him being a polluter.

Bill Wilson used this stunt like this:

When they wrote the opening chapters of the "Big Book" *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Henry Parkhurst and Bill Wilson were partners. But Wilson refused to give Parkhurst fair credit for what he wrote, and eventually cheated Parkhurst out of everything. [Disillusioned and disappointed at the betrayal, Parkhurst relapsed.](#)

When Henry Parkhurst came around drunk and begging for money, asking to be paid for some furniture that he had left in the office, Wilson talked him out of his shares in the publishing company that would publish the *Big Book* — shares that would have eventually made Parkhurst a moderately wealthy man. Wilson also denied Parkhurst any share in the royalties from the *Big Book*, using the excuse that Parkhurst had returned to drinking.

And Wilson didn't try to save his friend's life. Henry Parkhurst was the friend that Bill and Lois turned to when they were homeless because the bank foreclosed on their 182 Clinton Street house. Henry was their friend then, and Bill and Lois moved in with Parkhurst. But when Parkhurst needed some friendship and help in return, Wilson robbed Parkhurst and then left him to die drunk and penniless, alone. Which he did.

Then Wilson complained about how hard it was to take, that Parkhurst was gone.

...At length he broke down completely and went on a terrific bender after four years of sobriety. He never again showed any real sign of recovery, and he went on drinking until his death recently. Considering what he had done for the book, and the further fact that he was one of our first New York members, this was hard to take.

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age, William G. Wilson, page 179.

What about how hard it was for Henry Parkhurst to take?

Bill Wilson really was a drama queen.

- **"I'm so offended."**

Reject an opponent's point by claiming to be offended. This is a kind of drama queen ploy.

During a Presidential debate, candidate John Kerry mentioned the fact that Liz Cheney was a Lesbian, and argued for a more tolerant world. That was after Liz Cheney had revealed her Lesbian sexual orientation to the whole world in the press and on radio and TV.

Liz Cheney and her mother both immediately went on TV and complained that they were "so offended" that John Kerry would say such a thing.

- **Claim that "It's unfair."**

For example, Romney defenders complain: "It's unfair of the Obama campaign to demand that Romney release a dozen years of his tax returns, like Obama did."

This petulant complaint goes well with [the Drama Queen Ploy "I'm so offended."](#)

- **Answer A Question That Was Not Asked (To Avoid Answering One That Was Asked)**

When asked an embarrassing question, answer a different question.

This technique is closely related to the previous item "creating a diversion", but it has twists of its own. Politicians routinely use this trick to avoid answering the tough questions. Really skilled politicians actually use this technique to turn hard questions to their advantage — they will answer the question that they really wish had been asked, so that they can go on and on about how great their accomplishments have been lately.

For example: The Oxford Group cult leader Frank Buchman attracted a lot of attention and criticism back in the nineteen-thirties for associating with high-ranking Nazis like [the Gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler](#). Buchman's faithful follower and apologist Peter Howard wrote that Buchman never met Hitler ([which was probably untrue](#)), and then added:

Nor was Buchman an intimate of Himmler or of any other member of the Nazi hierarchy.

The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament; A Study of Frank Buchman and His Movement, Tom Driberg, 1965, page 66.

Nobody was asking whether Frank Buchman and Heinrich Himmler got in bed together; they were asking how sympathetic Frank Buchman was to the Nazi philosophy and goals. But Peter Howard didn't want to talk about that, so he just declared that Buchman and Himmler were not "intimate".

Peter Howard used this technique after World War II when he triumphantly produced a letter from the Secretary of the U.S. Air Force that declared that the Moral Re-Armament organization (the renamed Oxford Group) was not a bunch of pacifists. Nobody had accused MRA of being pacifists. (Not ever, that I know of.) They were accused of being fascists, [Nazi-like](#), [Nazi-sympathizers](#), [draft dodgers](#), and [chicken-hawk "super-patriots"](#), but not pacifists. Peter Howard's "proof" that MRA was not pacifistic did not prove that MRA was not fascistic in nature, or that they weren't chicken-hawk draft-dodgers or Nazi sympathizers.

For another example, at a press conference, when George W. Bush was asked about the torture of prisoners in *Abu Ghraib* prison, Bush answered the question by talking about how wonderful freedom is, and how "we" are bringing freedom to the people of Iraq, and how just a small minority of the Iraqi people hated freedom... That's changing the subject and answering a different question.

The press conference is a duty the president [G. W. Bush] generally avoids, and approaches only with apparent great discomfort. As he casually confessed at the Associated Press annual luncheon on April 21, 2004, "I kind of like ducking questions, and I would be glad to duck any questions, like my mother once told me to do." His responses generally conform to a number of different input-control strategies. He turns his awkward

and memorized answers to any question into a question itself, and then answers *that* instead of the original one.

Bush On The Couch, Justin A. Frank, M.D., page 125.

- **Answer a Question With A Question**

Do not — simply *do not* — answer your opponent's question. Immediately counter-attack with another question that may or may not be relevant to the subject under discussion.

In a recent discussion in a newsgroup, one fellow was declaring that Alcoholics Anonymous had been designed to make people quit drinking. I responded by pointing out that A.A. had not been "designed" that way at all — that in fact Frank Buchman had developed [those cult religion practices](#) to grow his own cult, and Bill Wilson simply split off and took over a branch of Buchman's cult — the "Alcoholic Squadron of the Oxford Group".

The other fellow replied, "Do you go to A.A. meetings?"

- **Monopolizing the Question (*Hypophora*)**

Ask a question and then immediately give the answer.

"Who was sent to us to redeem us? Jesus, of course!"

"What is the only solution for alcoholism? It's Alcoholics Anonymous, of course."

- **Surfeit of Questions (*Plurium Interrogationum*)**

Demand a simple answer when this is not possible:

"Okay, if God didn't create the universe, tell me how it got here."

(The obvious answer is another question: *"But who created God? How did God get here?"*)

- **Obfuscate**

Confuse and cloud an issue, so that the original point gets lost. This can often be accomplished by overloading the listeners with myriad details or irrelevant facts. False facts are especially good. Then you can get distracted by arguing over the validity of the false facts.

- "You don't know what the technical issues are. The fix that you desire may not be as simple as you think. Don't assume that you are smarter than the Olympus Corporation's engineers. I mean, if they haven't done that fix in all of these years, what makes you think that it's easy to do?"

(Answer: It was Olympus corporate policy to not fix or enable camera features like Focus Confirmation and Image Stabilization with legacy lenses, not an engineering problem. Olympus just wanted to force people to buy new Olympus lenses, by making the old lenses harder to use.)

- "A.A. meetings can't be confession sessions. I mean, who is the priest? You can't be confessing if there isn't a priest."

(Answer: You can confess things to anybody, not just a priest. Like, you can confess to the police, or a wife, or a friend...

- **Obfuscate With Bureaucritese**

Bureaucrats and politicians have a special incomprehensible language all their own, which makes communicating with them, or understanding them, difficult or impossible. They are skilled at using it to not answer questions and not give real explanations:

- We will take that under advisement.
- We will look into it.
- Top people are investigating it.
- We are working on a contingency plan.
- We will consider that a priority issue.
- The Subcommittee For Superwidgets is working on that.
- That will be addressed in the next five-year plan.

- **Confuse With Technicalese**

This one is pretty obvious — just confuse the issue with a lot of technical-sounding garbage that means little or nothing.

*"Today's Terrorist Level Color is **Chartreuse with Pink Polka-Dots**. Do not panic. In fact, do nothing."*

(The only Terror Color I'm really sure about is Yellow. That's the level where George W. Bush parks his ass safely 5000 miles behind the front lines and then bravely yells, "Bring 'em on!")

- **Attack Without Appearing To Attack By Using Paralipsis or Apophasis**

Paralipsis is a rhetorical figure of speech wherein the speaker or writer invokes a subject by denying that it should be invoked.

Paralepsis is almost the same thing — a pretended or apparent omission where a speaker artfully pretends to pass by what he really mentions, as in: "I will not speak of my adversary's scandalous venality and rapacity, his brutal conduct, or his treachery and malice."

Apophasis is denial of one's intention to speak of a subject that is at the same time named or insinuated, as in, "I shall not mention Caesar's avarice, nor his cunning, nor his morality."

- "I don't want to stoop to calling my opponent names like bribe-taker and war-profiteer, so I won't."
- "I would tell you about my opponent's predilection for under-age girls, but it would be unkind of me to publicly embarrass those innocent girls."
- "It would be unfair of me to bring my opponent's family into the debate by telling you things like the fact that my opponent's wife is an alcoholic and his lesbian daughter smokes crack cocaine, so I won't talk about those things."

- **Passive-Aggressive Attack**

Use subtle passive attack modes.

- "Oh, it isn't like I need my fair share of the credit. That would just inflate my ego."
- "Did I say that you are an ungrateful child? Don't worry about me. I'll just sit here and freeze and starve in the dark."
- "So go ahead and refuse to attend Al-Anon meetings. It isn't like I need any support from my family or anything. It won't be your fault if I relapse again."

- **Sarcasm, Condescension, and Patronizing Attitudes**

This is easy to understand.

- A debater declares, "Oh dear. Another ill-informed critic. Would someone please explain it to him?"
- Dismiss a critic with, "You really like the sound of your own voice, don't you?"
- Adopt an attitude of moral superiority. "I'll pray for you. I forgive you. I'm above doing that. I hope you will see the light eventually."
- Arnold Schwarzenegger used to sneer at his political opponents and call them "girly-men". (He doesn't any more; it back-fired.)
- On *Meet The Press*, Sunday, December 21, 2003, Representative Tom Delay (R-TX) was asked about General Wesley Clark's statement that he would have persisted in hunting for Osama bin Laden, rather than get distracted chasing Saddam Hussein [who did not attack the U.S.A. on September 11], and that he, Clark, would have gotten Osama by now if he had been in charge.

Tom Delay's answer: "Sometimes it is easier to find Osama [bin Laden] than it is to find Wesley Clark's foreign policy. ... What he says doesn't hold a whole lot of weight with me."

Note that Rep. Delay didn't actually answer any of General Clark's statements; he just tried to dismiss them with a condescending sneer.

- Ronald Reagan is famous for having used this technique in the Presidential debates with Jimmy Carter. After Carter made a point, Reagan laughed it off with, "There you go again." Reagan didn't bother to actually refute Carter's statement, because he couldn't. Note that laughing something off (or pretending to laugh) is a subtle form of the Condescension technique.
- When British reports of a leaked document from a meeting of George W. Bush and Tony Blair revealed that Bush had expressed an interest in bombing the headquarters of the Arab television news network *Al Jazeera*, White House spokesman Scott McClellan answered, "We are not interested in dignifying something so outlandish and inconceivable with a response." When critics called this a classic non-denial denial, a White House official said the allegations were false and "absurd". ([TIME, Nov 28 to Dec 4 2005](#))
- In comments to a Washington Post story about limiting tax deductions for charitable contributions (2012.12.13), various debaters wrote:
 - "You may have been drinking the government kool-aid way to *[sic.]* fast. Slow down."
 - "I see yrevatrr and towiron1 have just finished watching the latest Disney channel movies..."
 - "You morons won. That you aren't sorry yet only means you're still a moron."
 - "Hairless, I have a feeling these cowards will crawl back into their holes when asked to suffer for their cause."
 - "Yrevatrr, you bring the zeal of a Marxist ideologue to economics, bereft of sound economic analysis."
 - "If you feel you're being demonized because you're affluent, you might want to spend some of your declining-spending-power dollars on a psychiatrist."
 - "You poor thing! You're wealthy and resentful because somebody said something bad about rich people?"
 - "Liberals are mathematically Illiterate."
 - "You silly conservatives, always longing for an America that never really was, never will be again, and exists now only in your foolishly nostalgic, over-nationalist memories."
 - "Wow, you must have a truly grim existence."
 - "Poor libs! No ability to think. :("
 - "Get an education you dimwit."

- "Just a typical liberal. Of no value or benefit to society."
 - "Must be tough trying to breath up where your nose is."
 - "Planned Parenthood! You mean testing women for cancer? The horror? Idiots."
 - "Now that Obama has been empowered by an uninformed electorate..."
 - "I have to say, with all the Winger name calling, it is clear they are still bitter about the fact that an intelligent, charming competent man of non-European descent, Barack Hussein Obama, is their President for the next four years. Poor fellas. I can see just see there [*sic.*] faces, red and twisted with rage as they pound away at their keyboards, when all of sudden: POP! goes the Winger's head."
- When a photographer complained in an Internet forum that his Canon camera does not have in-body image stabilization, a defender of Canon cameras declared, "Take a breath joe!! Really man, you don't need in-body IS, you just have to cut down on the caffeine." (Notice the failure to capitalize the name "Joe". That is also a subtle condescension and put-down.)
- Alcoholics Anonymous provides us with a wealth of examples of this technique — A.A. is almost "Condescension Incorporated".
 - If you are picky and hesitant about deciding which old-timer you wish to have as your sponsor, they will slap you with condescending remarks like: "Maybe she's trying to break all known records of the time it's taken somebody to find a sponsor."
 - An Al-Anon slogan: "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."
 - "You think you are qualified to criticize A.A.? [How many millions of drunks](#) have you sobered up?"
 - "He is suffering from terminal uniqueness."
 - "Nobody is too stupid to get the program, but some people are too intelligent."
 - "You think too much."
 - "Your best thinking got you here."
 - "Now you know everything, huh?"
 - "You need to pray more."
 - "My, my. Don't we have a resentment?"
 - "You are in denial."
 - "Damn, Brennan! Did A.A. run over your dog or something?"
 - "Gosh. Calm down. Maybe a drink would help?"
 - "You are so full of bologna or yourself or something..."
 - "This has to be a joke post."
 - "You'll eventually learn and join us."
 - "He's one of those people who wants to spend the rest of his life crying about how much A.A. hurt him."
 - "I read your criticism of A.A.. Very cute. Now why don't you buy a copy of the *Big Book* and find out what it's all about?"

- "Go back under your bridge."
- "He has collected a wealth of anti-A.A. material on his web site. Maybe next year he'll get a life."
- "Oh God! Just what we need. Another Ken Ragge clone!"
- "You anti-AA guys are a bunch of pussies who couldn't handle the responsibility that goes with being a member of AA."
- When someone angrily criticizes A.A. for harming sick people, say, "I admire your level of serenity."
- When presented with annoying facts, respond: "Oh *that guy!* Do you expect me to believe anything *he* says?"
- This exchange occurred in a newsgroup:

Q: Friends, I am scheduled to make a presentation on the 3rd Tradition this month, and so far, I have been unable to find out when the word: "sincere" was removed from the text of the Tradition. Can any of you be of help?

A: What difference does it make? Are you "presenting" to a bunch of lawyers?

<http://groups.google.com/group/alt.recovery.addiction.alcoholism/msg/2d9a96d050fadbe4>

Is the message there that new members are not supposed to ask too many discerning questions about the history of Alcoholics Anonymous?

- A critic who thought that I was an atheist wrote:

Some suggest that only those truly freed by the possession of exceptional intelligence can find peace in the absence of faith, yet so many intellectual giants — Hawking, Einstein, Bohr, MacLuan, Marquez, Rushdie, Friedman et al. all possess and follow their own brand of faith, and worship (gasp!) in loose cults — such as Catholicism, Judaism, Islam etc... despite the attendant irrational and delusional qualities required thereto.

I suspect you must be smarter than them all. God/Allah/Tao/Buddha/Vishnu et al. bless you.

(Curiously, when I explained to the critic that I was neither an atheist nor an agnostic, he then switched sides and declared that he was actually a skeptic. Go figure.)

Another form of the superior condescending technique is giving people nicknames, especially demeaning nicknames. Call a black woman "Brown Sugar". A guy who wears glasses is "Four-eyes". A man who belongs to any of several Eastern religions is "Rag-head". And so on.

- **Adopt an air of superiority**

Claim that you are better-educated and more intelligent than your decadent and immoral opponent. Claim that you are a far superior example of manhood (or womanhood). Adopt a superior Puritan attitude, or a superior "open-minded" attitude. Flaunt your church membership, or your business connections, or your friends in high places.

This technique is a natural for people who suffer from [Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#).

"I am much more intelligent than my opponent. And more moral. And more respectable. And more trustworthy. Also better educated. And better-looking. And more charismatic. And more fun. I don't know why my opponent in this debate even bothers to open his mouth and embarrass himself."

- **Damn with Faint Praise**

Praise someone, but make the praise so small that it is actually a subtle criticism. Or praise only some small unimportant aspect of a person's endeavor, leaving an implied criticism of the endeavor.

- *"What I really like about my opponent is that she can make me laugh."*
- *"While running a billion-dollar government program, he keeps a tidy desk, and his hair is always neatly groomed, and his shoes are shined."*

- **Reductio Ad Absurdum**

This means, "reduce to absurdity." Take a point, and exaggerate it until it is ridiculous, to show that the original idea was stupid or wrong. For example, [start with this story](#), from the *Big Book*:

Whether the family goes on a spiritual basis or not, the alcoholic member has to if he would recover. The others must be convinced of his new status beyond the shadow of a doubt. Seeing is believing to most families who have lived with a drinker.

Here is a case in point: One of our friends is a heavy smoker and coffee drinker. There was no doubt he over-indulged. Seeing this, and meaning to be helpful, his wife commenced to admonish him about it. He admitted he was overdoing these things, but frankly said that he was not ready to stop. His wife is one of those persons who really feels there is something rather sinful about these commodities, so she nagged, and her intolerance finally threw him into a fit of anger. He got drunk.

Of course our friend was wrong — dead wrong. He had to painfully admit that and mend his spiritual fences. Though he is now a most effective member of Alcoholics Anonymous, he still smokes and drinks coffee, but neither his wife nor anyone else stands in judgement. She sees she was wrong to make a burning issue out of such a matter when his more serious ailments were being rapidly cured.

The *Big Book*, William G. Wilson, page 135.

And then attack it like this:

Notice the powerful hidden assumption in this sentence:

"He admitted he was overdoing these things, but frankly said that he was not ready to stop."

Oh? Somebody can continue doing whatever he is doing just because he *frankly* says that he isn't ready to stop?

- When was the last time that you heard an A.A. member accept that as a good excuse for someone to continue drinking? Can the alcoholic say, "I know I'm over-doing it right now, but *frankly*, I'm not ready to stop just yet", and keep right on drinking forever?
- If you catch someone robbing your house, can the burglar say, "I know I'm over-doing it right now, but *frankly*, I'm not ready to stop just yet" and keep on robbing forever?
- And, if the guy next door has a bad habit of molesting 10-year-old little girls during full moons, can he say, "I know I'm over-doing it, but *frankly*, I'm just not ready to stop right now" and keep on molesting children forever?

Logically, there is not any connection between molesting little girls and smoking cigarettes, or between smoking and robbing houses, but there doesn't need to be. The point is to exaggerate the *"Frankly, I'm not*

ready to stop" excuse to the point where it becomes absurd, to show the falseness of that argument.

Also note the use of another technique in that quote, one that we might call *Context Shift* or *Biased Viewpoint*:

- The author Bill Wilson used *Slanted Language* — he referred to the man in the story as "our friend" and "a most effective member of Alcoholics Anonymous", even after he got drunk and threw his angry screaming temper tantrum. (So it's also a *Stroking Ploy*.)
His clean and sober wife, on the other hand, was called "one of those persons." You know, one of those nagging wives that you get away from by going to an A.A. meeting...
- Likewise, Bill wrote that "her intolerance finally threw him into a fit of anger."
Wanting your husband to live and be healthy is "intolerance"?
Was she also "intolerant" when she wanted him to quit drinking himself to death?
- And she didn't throw him into a fit of anger; he willingly walked right into it by his own choice, to put on a big loud drunken show of anger that would scare her off and make her quit "nagging him" to quit smoking.

Bill Wilson's goal was to promote a feeling of "us good old boys versus the nagging wives", which is just one of Bill's many attacks on his wife.³ And it's also an example of the creation of a "granfalloon", a distinguishing characteristic that will define and unite a group.

And also note the use of yet another propaganda technique: "*Assume The Major Premise*." Look at this sentence:

"She sees she was wrong to make a burning issue out of such a matter when his more serious ailments were being rapidly cured."

Wilson actually managed to do it twice, and pack two lies into one sentence:

1. She was wrong to try to get him to quit smoking.
2. His more serious ailments were being rapidly cured.

First off, she wasn't wrong. Bill Wilson was just a hard-core chain smoker who didn't ever quit smoking, not even when he had burned out his lungs and gotten fatal emphysema, and he hated his wife Lois nagging him, so he said that she was wrong to try to get him to quit smoking. (For that matter, Bill also said that his wife Lois was wrong to nag him to quit drinking.)

Then, what "more serious ailments were being rapidly cured"? His alcoholism? No way. He just used alcohol as a blackmail weapon when she tried to get him to quit smoking. He used alcohol to get his own way, and he holds that weapon in reserve for use against her again. At any time, he can blackmail her with more threats to relapse and drink if she doesn't let him have his own way. He is still using alcohol as an easy solution to his problems. But Bill Wilson arbitrarily declared that "his more serious ailments were being rapidly cured", because Bill wanted to make the A.A. program look good.

- **Rationalize**

This one is great, an old classic. Rationalization. No matter what you or somebody else did, you can always rationalize it, and justify it somehow, and put a happy face on it.

For instance,

- "Tommy did it. O.J. got away with it. So I should be able to do it too."
- "I did it for the children."
- "Well, he did his best."

- When politicians are caught telling lies about their opponents, they rationalize, *"Well, the other side did it first."*
Or, *"Well, my opponents do it all of the time. I have to fight fire with fire or else I'll lose."*
- Politicians also rationalize their lies and distortions by saying, *"But we will lose the election if we tell the voters the truth. We are using dirty tricks for the good of America."*
They overlook the obvious objection that if they will lose elections by telling the American people the truth, then maybe they are pushing the wrong programs. They certainly are not supporting democracy — democracy requires that the voters know what they are really voting for.
- And when they get caught with their hand in the cookie jar, they say, *"Well, it's the system. That's just how it is done. Everybody's doing it. You have to cooperate with the system and not make waves. Go along to get along..."*

The Bush administration is having to do a lot of rationalizing, lately. *"We have to invade Iraq and take out Saddam Hussein because he threatens us with an imminent attack with Weapons of Mass Destruction,"* they said. Tony Blair even said that Saddam had a 45-minute-to-launch capability.

But you know what happened. No WMD. Nothing. Not even close. No yellow-cake uranium from Niger. Not even one missile that could hit England, never mind the USA. So they rationalized, *"Well, we had to stop Saddam from giving WMD to al Qaeda. It's because of September 11."*

But there were no such weapons. And even more importantly,

- Saddam Hussein hated al Qaeda and al Qaeda hated Saddam.
- They never worked together, and Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with September 11.
- Osama bin Laden is a fundamentalist religious fanatic, and Saddam Hussein was a secular military dictator who killed the Islamic religious extremists who made trouble for him. They didn't get along at all.
- Osama bin Laden even made a videotape shortly before the USA attacked Iraq, telling the Islamic radicals to ignore Saddam Hussein because he wasn't a friend.

So the Bush administration rationalized, *"Well, at least we got rid of a bad guy. Now Iraq can have democracy and freedom."*

But you know what happened. Ayatollah al Sistani demanded real democracy and an elected government, immediately. You know, one man, one vote, and all of that old American stuff. But the Bushies said, *"Oh, nooooo! You can't do that! You will elect the wrong people! I'll tell you what: You can have an election where you can only vote for the candidates that we choose. On second thought, why don't we just forget about that whole democracy thing for a while. We will just appoint a council of rulers for you."*

So they rationalized, *"Well, at least we got rid of the bad guy. Saddam Hussein was torturing and killing his own people."*

But you know what happened.

- Torture of prisoners in *Abu Ghraib* prison.
- Rapes of women prisoners.
- The homosexual rape of a teenage boy.
- At least 35 deaths of prisoners while under interrogation (overly enthusiastic questioning), and 2 known deliberate murders.

- Lots of pictures.
- Naked men stacked in pyramids.
- Sadistic torture.
- Police dogs biting them.
- Photographs of naked women prisoners taking showers.
- A 70-year-old Iraqi woman stripped naked, shoved to the floor, and ridden like a donkey by a British soldier.
- Unreleased video tapes, perhaps even showing Iraqi women being raped and Iraqi male prisoners being murdered.
- Pornography films: Reports of a video tape showing a certain U.S. Army woman having consensual sex with her boyfriend in front of Iraqi prisoners.
- Snuff films. Really hot stuff, much better than what you can get at your local adult bookstore.

[Wow, the U.S. Army snuff films are even better than the Mexican ones. Heck, they're even better than Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* — you know, "*Mad Max and Jesus Meet the Road Warrior in the Thunderdome, and the Road Warrior Wins*".]

How will they rationalize their way out of this one? *"Well, they were bad guys. We grabbed them off of the streets because they looked at us cross-eyed. Maybe his second cousin took a pot-shot at us. They don't appreciate the freedom we are giving them. Besides, we need to get information out of them. It's just part of the 'softening-up' process, before interrogation."*

But you know what happened. The U.S. military generals admitted, in the U.S. Senate Hearings (2004-05-11), that 70 to 90 percent of the prisoners in *Abu Ghraib* prison were innocent, just grabbed by mistake in sweeps of the streets.

So how will they rationalize their way out of this one?

"Well, those abuse things were only done by a few bad apples."

- — In spite of the fact that it was done by both American and British soldiers in several different prisons over a long span of time, and there are *thousands* of pictures that document an on-going program of abuse, and now an American colonel has sworn that the commanding general in charge of intelligence watched it being done.

UPDATE, 2004.05.11: *Oh heck, now al Qaeda is making snuff films too. They just chopped the head off of Nicholas Berg, as revenge for abuses in Abu Ghraib, they say. What a bunch of disgusting copy-cats.*

Alcoholics Anonymous also teaches us how to rationalize.

- For example, if a critic says, "*Bill Wilson cheated on his wife Lois a lot, both before and after sobriety. He took sexual advantage of sick women who came to A.A. seeking help to avoid death from alcohol. Bill even had the gall to be routinely unfaithful to Lois while she was working in a department store to support his lazy ass. And Bill even used the Alcoholics Anonymous headquarters as an employment agency for his many mistresses who couldn't even type. That is hardly what I would call a good spiritual role model.*"

You can answer, *"It just goes to show that Bill Wilson was human, and not a saint, and that's wonderful, because it means that ordinary people like you and I can recover, too. So Bill Wilson had to be human, and not a saint, so that he could help others. It was the Will of God."*

- Likewise: *"All of that vague, confusing, grandiose, contradictory stuff that Bill Wilson wrote in the Big Book is okay. Even if Bill wasn't a great writer, that book will still save your life. Eventually, you will be able to figure out what it means."*
- And: *"Bill Wilson had to steal the Big Book publishing fund and the copyright of the Big Book, in order to keep Henry Parkhurst from stealing it. It's what the other A.A. members wanted Bill to do."*

- **Exchange A Term**

Exchange a term in your opponent's argument, thereby redefining the debate to better suit your own prejudices.

Back in the nineteen-sixties, when proponents of psychedelic drugs spoke of visions of paradise, critical newspaper editors changed the wording to visions of an "inferno".¹⁷

Those women who desire control over their reproductive lives call their goal "Pro-Choice", and they call their opponents "anti-abortion". The opponents of abortion, on the other hand, call themselves "Pro-Life", while calling their opponents "pro-abortion people".

Con artists who are trying to get people to participate in illegal chain letters and pyramid sales schemes brag, "I made \$3000 in my first week." What we call criminal fraud, they call "making money".

When the Chinese People's Army attacked and conquered Tibet, and brutally murdered great numbers of innocent people, the Chinese leaders called it "the liberation of Tibet", while we call it "the invasion of Tibet".

Likewise, George W. Bush calls the invasion of Iraq "giving them freedom" and "liberating them from a dictator" (accompanied by a only a little "collateral damage"), while the Iraqi resistance calls it the invasion and occupation of their country, accompanied by the murder of their families, children, and neighbors by the massive use of firepower and dropping cluster bombs in civilian neighborhoods during Donald Rumsfeld's *Shock And Awe* bombing.

G. W. Bush complains that "foreign fighters" and "terrorists" have come into Iraq from the outside and are making trouble. The Iraqis say that they are the "freedom fighters", and that the Americans are the "foreign fighters" and the "terrorists" who came from other countries to enforce the will of the Bush family and their oil company friends with "Shock and Awe" bombing.

Likewise, in Israel:

The formula is simple: suicide in the West is thought to be caused by despair, hopelessness, panic, and mental illness, so we assume that such must be the case among Moslems. To date, we have been unable to see the issue through any but Western eyes, and so have missed recognizing that the young Palestinian bombers are seen by large numbers of Muslims as heroes who are willing to sacrifice their lives — in martyrdom, not suicide attacks — for a cause that is greater than themselves and sanctioned by their God. What the West sees as tragic brutality practiced by despairing or deviant individuals is perceived in much of the Moslem world as a heroic act of self-sacrifice, patriotism, and worship, an act to be greeted not with condemnation and revulsion, but with awe, respect, and a determination to emulate. Moreover, it is an act Muslims deem a just military response to Israel's fifty-plus-year occupation of Palestine and its relegation of three generations of Palestinians to refugee [concentration] camps.

Thus, American's evil suicide bombers can also be seen as Islam's martyr-heroes, men and women following in the steps and under the guidance of their prophet and according to the revealed word of their God.

Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror, Anonymous, pages 135-136.

In March of 2006, there was a flap at the Washington Post about a right-wing blogger, Ben Domenech, getting hired to write opinion pieces for the online edition. Some critics who investigated his background quickly discovered a history of plagiarism in his writings.

A Washington Post spokesman commented that he "wasn't aware of those allegations."

Someone posted to a forum,

'Is not being "aware of allegations" the same as not being aware of the facts?'

In another recent example, a local politician declared, "My opponent has spent \$400 million on his political agenda." The so-called "political agenda" was health care for people, and unemployment compensation for the unemployed people, and other social services like that. (Portland, Oregon, KGW *Straight Talk*, 2011.04.10)

Alcoholics Anonymous constantly uses this technique. Talk to them about the harmful cult practices that are embodied in [the Twelve Steps](#), and they will respond by calling the Twelve Steps "spiritual principles". [The Twelve Steps are practices, not principles](#). The Twelve Steps are specific practices for people to do, things like surrendering your will and confessing your sins, and hearing the voices of spirits or gods or something while [conducting séances](#), not guidelines for a spiritual life.

- **Frame The Argument**

This is very closely related to *Exchange A Term*; in fact, they are often identical. You can re-frame an argument by exchanging a term and redefining the debate in terms that you like better.

When someone says that conservative politics should be about preserving the Constitution Of The United States and the Bill Of Rights that our Founders gave us, twist the argument around to "defending the country from terrorists who don't deserve Constitutional protections". Suddenly it becomes okay to violate loyal Americans' rights because terrorists don't deserve any rights.

Comcast uses this technique when they cry about heavy users of the Internet stealing bandwidth from other users, as in "[Those people who download movies are slowing down the Internet for everybody else.](#)"

The truth is, Comcast is saddled with a very limited technology: sharing a cable — trying to cram all of the data communications of a neighborhood into one single thin cable, which means that the available bandwidth is inherently very limited. You can only cram so much data through one piece of wire. And the more customers who share that cable, the less bandwidth each customer gets, so the slower it gets.

But rather than admit that Comcast cannot supply sufficient bandwidth to meet their customers' needs and desires — to whom Comcast has sold "high speed connections" — Comcast frames the argument as some heavy users taking too much. "[They are taking more than their fair share. Things would be fine if nobody used very much.](#)"

(That also smacks of finding a scapegoat to blame: *It isn't Comcast's fault for not investing in infrastructure and building a good network; it's the fault of users who want to actually use the connection that they paid for.*)

Propaganda Trick of the Day: President Obama's press conference, 20 December 2013:

While he was trying to minimize the damage caused by revelations that the NSA is spying on everybody's phone calls all of the time, and a Federal judge declared that the NSA surveillance program was an illegal violation of the American peoples' Constitutional protection against unwarranted searches, President Obama said, "...Whatever benefits this program has, may be

outweighed by the concerns that people have..." (about their privacy and rights). Obama didn't say, "outweighed by the gravity of egregious violation of our Constitutional rights", he only said that some nervous nellys were "concerned". As if there was really nothing wrong going on, it's just those silly people who worry, and now Obama has to soothe their hurt feelings.

Those childish worrying twits are such a bother. Having secret police spying on everybody all of the time didn't hurt the people in Nazi Germany or Communist Russia, now did it? Didn't the Gestapo and the KGB do a good job of defending their countries, and respecting their peoples' rights?

You can trust the secret police. Really. They always have your best interests at heart.

Alcoholics Anonymous likes to frame opposition to A.A. in terms of "the atheists versus the Christian believers". But they are framing the argument in false terms. Alcoholics Anonymous theology is not Christian at all — [it is grossly heretical](#), and conflicts with Christianity in many major ways.

Opponents of Alcoholics Anonymous would do well to re-frame the argument in terms of "the heretical anti-Christian nonsense of A.A. versus everyday common sense."

- **Argue with Unrealistic Hypothetical Situations**

Imagine a guy who is in the process of committing suicide by hanging himself. He is standing on a chair, and tying the noose up to something. His cross nagging wife looks on and asks, "Where would we be if everybody did that?"

- **Misrepresent Your Opponent's Position, or Mischaracterize Your Opponent, or Mischaracterize His Statements or Questions**

For example: The Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) is an organization that does just what its title sounds like: it investigates claims of the paranormal. That often results in its debunking some phony psychics and quack healers and various other fakes and charlatans.

That really annoyed some people who didn't like to see their favorite scams exposed. They fired back by declaring that,

"CSICOP [is] a defensive league of American Scientists whose basic aim is to argue that the paranormal does not exist, and is an invention of cranks and wierdos."

Skeptical Inquirer, Nov/Dec 2001, page 67.

That is a mischaracterization of CSICOP.

Such mischaracterization is standard behavior for the Bush administration. In April, 2007, when Congress put into a funding bill a non-binding resolution asking for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, George W. Bush declared, "I will strongly reject an artificial timetable withdrawal, and/or Washington politicians trying to tell those who wear the uniform how to do their job."

1. As if there was a "non-artificial" or "natural" time-table for withdrawal from Iraq?
2. And isn't George W. Bush the biggest politician in Washington who is telling the generals what to do? Isn't he the Commander In Chief, as well as "the decider"?

(Bush routinely hides behind the generals, and says that he is "supporting them" when things aren't going well. But he is the one who is giving the orders.)

Likewise, Vice President Cheney declared: "Some Democratic leaders seem to believe that blind opposition to the new strategy in Iraq is good politics."

1. Is opposition to the administration's policies "blind", or a well-informed and well-thought-out, considered, rational response to four years of failure?
2. What new strategy? "The Surge" is just sending in a few more troops. This "new strategy" comes from the administration that, way back at the beginning of the war, fired the generals who said that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wasn't sending in enough troops to do the job properly. Remember General Shinseki, who was fired for declaring to Congress that Rumsfeld was not sending in nearly enough troops to accomplish the job?
(Will those generals who were right all along get their jobs back and get another star for being right? Not likely. G. W. Bush gives more stars to those generals who say that he is right about everything.)
3. And Cheney declares that the opposition must be rooted in "politics". The opposition couldn't possibly be based on principles and intelligent, realistic, well-thought-out decision-making, presumably because reasonable American people cannot possibly have good cause for disagreeing with the administration, even after four years of shifting goals and lies and incompetence, and cover-ups and misinformation and fabricated stories, and secret prisons and renditions and torture and war crimes and declaring the Geneva Convention "quaint", and the loss of far more troops in Iraq than Americans killed and maimed on 9/11.

- **Nit-Pick and Split Hairs**

This is easy to understand. Everybody knows what nit-picking is:

"Hah! You misspelled Henrietta Seiberling's name! That totally blows your credibility. Now I'm not going to believe anything else you say."

Yeh, right. As if you were planning to before that unfortunate misspelling... :-)

- **Quibble**

Quibble over irrelevant tiny details, quibble over the definitions of words, quibble over anything you can find that will divert attention from your opponent's points.

For example, when Alexander Litvinenko, the Russian defector, former Russian spy, and author of tell-all books about the new Russian spy agencies, was [poisoned with the rare radioactive metal Polonium](#) for persistently criticizing the Russian president/dictator Vladimir Putin, Putin claimed that he didn't do it, that he had nothing to do with it, because the British medical documents did not show "that it was a result of violence, this is not a violent death, so there is no ground for speculations of this kind." To argue that poisoning somebody with a radioactive substance is not a "violent" act is quibbling over the definitions of words. It was still murder most foul.

Another kind of quibbling is quibbling over terms, like "legitimate", as in "legitimate rape", or "legitimate claims" against BP. We all remember the flap over a Republican candidate (Aiken) arguing that women didn't get pregnant from "legitimate rape". And earlier, BP, the British oil company, declared that it was paying for all "legitimate claims" of damage from their oil spill. But they didn't explain what kinds of hoops ruined people had to jump through to prove that their claims were "legitimate". And how does a girl prove that her rape was "legitimate", rather than illegitimate?

On another note, one critic of mine actually spent several letters quibbling over whether President Lincoln ever told a joke [that contained the word "ass"](#), as in "*maybe those generals will get off of their asses and do something*"... That critic tried to claim that everything I said in my web site was all wrong because he was sure that Abraham Lincoln — the rough home-spun frontiersman — would never use crude words in jokes.

- **Hit And Run**

Launch an attack on your opponent, and then run away before your opponent can counter-attack or ask you to prove your accusations.

"That story is all wrong. It's full of factual errors. It is so stupid that would be a waste of time to even respond to it. It doesn't even warrant an answer. I'm not going to waste any more time on this stupid argument. I'm out of here."

Now you can run away without actually answering any of your opponent's points, or supplying any facts to back up your sweeping statements and denunciations.

(And, if your opponent refutes your statements after you have left, and supplies a lot of facts to prove that he is correct, you can later accuse him of talking about you behind your back, and of attacking you when you couldn't defend yourself, which implies that he is a coward. That stratagem has sweet touches of [ad hominem](#) and [blame the victim](#) in it.)

- **Hifalutin' Denunciations**

Denounce your opponent with vague, grand-sounding generalized accusations that don't have very specific meanings:

- "the proposal shows a failure of initiative"...
- "his program shows a failure of imagination"...
- "he exhibits a lack of vision"...

What the heck does any of that really mean, in plain English?

- **Make Unreasonable Demands**

For example: Demand that your opponent write his whole autobiography to show us that his life is okay without doing the Twelve Steps.

The Oxford Group cult leader Frank Buchman used this trick this way:

The world needs a miracle. Miracles of science have been the wonder of the age. But they have not brought peace and happiness to the nations. A miracle of the spirit is what we need.

Frank Buchman, speaking at Kronberg, Denmark, Whit Sunday, 1935, quoted in

Remaking the World, the speeches of Frank Buchman, Frank N. D. Buchman, page 157.

For Frank Buchman to demand that science do everything from end the Great Depression to prevent World War Two was unreasonable. It isn't the job of "the miracles of science" like penicillin or the light bulb to do that. Nevertheless, [Buchman then declared](#) that his religion was the only answer, because "science" didn't meet his demands.

One contemporary booster of Alcoholics Anonymous used that trick like this: When I stated that [93% of the drug and alcohol treatment facilities in the USA use the 12-Step approach](#), he demanded a list of all of those

facilities, including the names of the owners, addresses, and phone numbers.

- **Make False Demands**

For example: Demand that your opponent prove that his life is still full of "*Serenity and Gratitude*", in spite of his not doing the Twelve Steps.

That demand is false because normal, sane, people do not judge their lives by how much "*Serenity and Gratitude*" they have; nor do they believe that a good life must be emotionally flat, without any of the other emotions like the passions, the love and the anger, the agony and the ecstasy, that make us greater than the rocks.

- **Shift the Burden of Proof Onto Your Opponent**

Make all kinds of unsubstantiated statements and claims, and when your opponent objects and challenges those statements, say, "*Do some research on the subject and you will see that what I am saying is true.*"

It is the job of the person who is making the statements and claims to do the research and supply the evidence to support his assertions.

- **Double Standards**

This is a well-known propaganda and debating technique. One standard or set of rules applies to one group, and a very different set of rules applies to another group. Also known as *hypocrisy*, when the easier, looser, standards apply to oneself.

For example:

- Men who philander are called "real ladies' men", while women who philander are considered whores.
- Men are "demanding bosses", while similar women are "bitches".
- Men who climb the corporate ladder while sleeping with several women are "normal, healthy, hard-working achievers", while women who do the same are guilty of "sleeping their way to the top."
- Poor people who get money from the government are "takers", and "leeches getting handouts", but rich people who get millions or billions of dollars from the government are "smart businessmen".
- The extremist Right-winger Senators and Congressmen say that extending unemployment benefits for poor unemployed people removes their incentive to go get a job. (Ignore the fact that there are not enough jobs to go around.) But giving hundreds of billions of dollars to Wall Street gamblers to bail them out after they lost gigantic bets does not remove their incentive to act responsibly, and stop gambling with other people's money.
- Similarly, "Conservative" politicians say that giving money to poor people in various aid programs removes their incentive to strive and succeed in life. Those lazy poor people won't work hard and accomplish great things if they aren't hungry. But letting rich people's children inherit millions or billions of dollars tax-free does not remove their incentive to work hard and excel.
- Poor people whose houses are foreclosed were financially irresponsible, and they deserve to lose their homes. But ultra-rich bankers who gambled and bet everything and lost and bankrupted their banks are "too big to fail", and must be bailed out with the poor taxpayers' money "for the good of us all."

- Police officers and judges who take bribes are corrupt criminals, but Senators and Congressmen who take bribes to vote a certain way are "great statesmen who are serving their nation".
- A.A. members talk constantly about God and "Higher Power", and declare that God is keeping them from drinking, and doing all kinds of wonderful things for them, granting their wishes and doing favors for them, and they don't consider that excessive, or obsession with religion. But when somebody else talks about God, and even dares to mention Jesus Christ, [the A.A. members attack him](#) as a "Bible-beating fundamentalist", and tell him to "take it to Church".

(Conversely, if somebody does not talk about God, and declare that "Higher Power" and "A.A. spirituality" are keeping him sober, then he is accused of being an agnostic or an atheist. That is a [Double-Bind](#).)

- When A.A. members [lie, cheat, and thirteen-step under-age girls](#) who came to A.A. seeking help for a drug or alcohol problem, that's okay, because "We are not saints." But when a non-member does those things, he is a criminal who should go to jail.

- **Demand an Uneven Burden of Proof**

Use very different standards of proof for opposite sides of an argument.

For example: Exhaustively fact-check and nit-pick an opponent's statements, but do not challenge outrageous claims made by friends and allies.

Another example: demand very strong, iron-clad, absolute proof for an opponent's statements, while insisting that the flimsiest of evidence proves one's own statements to be true.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a past master of this stunt. In the opinion of Alcoholics Anonymous pundits:

1.
 - If one person quits drinking while attending A.A. meetings, then that "proves" that A.A. works.
 - The numerous A.A. members who relapse do not prove that A.A. doesn't work.
2.
 - If one person relapses, even once, while *not* attending A.A. meetings, then that "proves" that nobody can do it alone.
 - The numerous "do-it-yourself" people who succeed in getting sober and staying sober without A.A. meetings do not prove that people can get sober without Alcoholics Anonymous, because those people *might* relapse some day. A.A. boosters do not ask whether the other sober A.A. members are likely to eventually relapse. (Nor do they bother to keep count of those who did.)
3.
 - If someone has a bad drinking problem and he quits drinking while going to A.A. meetings, then that proves that he was a real alcoholic and A.A. works.
 - If someone has a bad drinking problem and he quits drinking without going to A.A. meetings, then that proves that he was not a real alcoholic. ([The Real Scotsman Fallacy](#)) It doesn't prove that alcoholics can quit drinking without A.A.

- **Demand Uneven Standards of Acceptance**

Demand very different standards of acceptance and tolerance for statements and beliefs from opposite sides of an argument. This is a variation on the technique of *demanding an uneven burden of proof*.

For example,

- Demand that your opponents accept your statements and illogical beliefs in the name of open-mindedness and tolerance, while simultaneously attacking and shredding your opponents' statements and

beliefs, and being very intolerant of other peoples' opinions.

- Call other peoples' criticism of your policies and attitudes "prejudiced, narrow-minded, and intolerant", while freely criticizing your opponents' policies and attitudes.
- Harshly criticize other people's religions and beliefs, while demanding that people respect your religion and not criticize it. (Alcoholics Anonymous does this one often.)
- Complain that your opponents are inconsiderate and don't care whose feelings they hurt with harsh criticism, while having no such problems with criticizing others. (That is also an example of hypocrisy.)

- **Specious Argument**

When you can't think of anything better to say, make a specious argument.

For example, during a debate about Mary McCarthy, the CIA analyst who revealed the existence of illegal secret CIA prisons in foreign countries where kidnapped people were held incommunicado and tortured, Ray McGovern, a former CIA analyst, called such activities war crimes and declared that McCarthy was obligated to reveal the existence of such activities. Richard Kerr, a former CIA assistant director and current Bush administration apologist, argued that if McCarthy had moral objections to such projects, she should have resigned her position and then criticized the policy but without revealing any classified information. Kerr didn't bother to mention that even if she resigned, McCarthy would still be barred by the National Secrets Act from revealing the existence of the secret illegal prisons and torture centers, so her resigning in silent protest would accomplish nothing. ([PBS News Hour, 24 Apr 2006](#)).

- **Spurious Agreement**

An utterance, typically with a strong emotional content, designed to establish a false sense of agreement: "Don't you *want to live forever*?" This is an attempt to placate an opponent in a debate.

Amway recruiters ask, "Don't you want financial security?"

Bill Wilson taught Alcoholics Anonymous recruiters to use this technique on prospects who had religious beliefs that were different from Bill's:

Your prospect may belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training may be far superior to yours. In that case he is going to wonder how you can add anything to what he already knows. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient.

...

Admit that he probably knows more about it [religion] than you do, but call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink.

The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 93.

Bill Wilson does not think that the prospect knows more about religion than he does — Bill thinks that the prospective new recruit is wrong about everything. Bill only pretends to agree with the prospect long enough to sell him on the A.A. religion.

Bill Wilson is actually saying that the other guy's religion is worthless because it didn't keep him from drinking. Bill stubbornly ignored the obvious implication that, by that logic, [all of the relapsers in Alcoholics Anonymous](#) prove that Bill Wilson's religion is also worthless.

- **Escape via Ignorance**

When stuck with an unanswerable question, allude to an existing answer unknown to either party: *"Maybe I can't answer your point, but any of the Elders at our congregation could."* (But then the elders forget to come and answer the questions...)

Similarly, you can dismiss all arguments put forth so far by arguing, *"I wish we had an expert here, who really knew about these things."*

- **Escape to the Future**

When stuck with an unanswerable question, allude to an answer that will allegedly become known at a future date.

Jehovah's Witnesses argue: *"Maybe I can't answer your point, but we Witnesses are told to 'Wait on Jehovah' when we encounter things we can't understand. He eventually provides us with the answers."*⁸

Note that no time limit is specified.

A defender of a particular brand of camera deflected criticism of the camera with the remark, *"Just pick up the camera and shoot with it and then decide."* — Which did not actually answer the questions and criticisms at all. The speaker imagined that people would like the camera, and not notice the defects and shortcomings, if they just handled and used the camera.

- **Escape via Relativism**

Dismiss an irrefutable argument as simply a point of view:

"Well, that's just your opinion."

This can interrupt and sabotage a chain of logic.

Another common phrase is,

"Everybody has their own opinion"

— as if every opinion is backed up with equally valid or equally compelling evidence.

And another is, *"Anyone can present a pro/con to an argument."*

"Every point does not have equal weight. Lies should not get the same weight as truth."

== Daniel Zwerdling, PBS *Exposé*, 2007.08.28

"All opinions are not created equal."

== Tavis Smiley, PBS, in interview with Mary Wilson, 2012.12.14

A native who didn't understand how genetic analysis of people revealed the origins and migrations of the earliest human races said, *"You have your creation myths, and we have ours. Why should your myths be more true than ours?"*

The logical fallacy there is of course trying to assert that studying and decoding the human genome is merely a "creation myth".

[A letter from an A.A. member](#) criticized my analysis of treatment programs (A.A. versus non-A.A.) by writing:

If there are 10 interpretations of an event, you ... accept the one that suits your beliefs, and ignore all the others.

The writer simply assumed that all opinions had equal merit, and that all interpretations of failed treatment programs' results were equally valid. He even ignored the fact that a Trustee of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., [Doctor George E. Vaillant](#), Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, was the doctor who reported that his A.A.-based treatment program had failed to help the alcoholics, and that, by Vaillant's own admission, for eight years his A.A.-based treatment program had an "appalling" death rate in spite of his persistent attempts to make A.A. produce good results. The critic also ignored the obvious fact that whether people are dead isn't just a matter of someone's opinion.

Other examples:

- "Leave AA on the table for those who choose to try it." — as if A.A. is just as good as any other treatment for alcohol or drug problems, and should get equal consideration.
- "The goal is to get sober — you can take 45 to Dallas or you can take 35 to Dallas — you still get to Dallas anyway." — as if A.A. is just as effective as any other treatment. It isn't.

There are several variations on this *escape via relativism* technique:

1. Declare that both sides of any issue should get equal representation, as if arguments for or against slavery or freedom have equal merit, and should get equal time and space. So should arguments for and against justice or injustice, peace or war, celibacy or child-molestation, racial discrimination or equality, or good or evil. Just demand that everything gets equal consideration. "We have to consider both sides of the issue now. The other side might have a point."
2. Demand that presentations and news coverage not be "biased". Again, both good and reprehensible positions should be given equal time and consideration, in the interest of "fairness". If one side has overwhelming evidence and good arguments in its favor, just don't mention all of that stuff — only feature a few arguments from each side, for "balanced" coverage.
3. Declare that the issue is "controversial". The goal is to leave the impression that we can't really decide the issue and arrive at a conclusion, and determine the truth, because there are just too many conflicting opinions. (As if all of those different opinions were equally valid and really worth considering.)

That ploy uses [antirationalism](#). Antirationalism is the idea that there are no such things as valid, reliable facts or hard indisputable evidence, just various conflicting opinions. Speakers who are pushing antirationalism argue that "It's just my opinion versus your opinion, and it's all so controversial that we can't decide anything for sure. You never really know anything for sure, do you?"

And the people who don't wish for anything to be decided are the people who do not have enough facts, or any facts, to back up their arguments and support their opinions, and who are losing the debate. "So let's agree to disagree, and not decide anything," they say.

For example, when an A.A. booster was presented with evidence that A.A.-based treatment does not work, he replied:

"Yes you are rite [*sic.*] you can find almost anything on the internet, but just because it there doesn't mean it's true. There are many who claim there was not Holocaust, that it was all in the Jews imagination. I got in a rather heated conflict with someone over that. I said that I guess the numbers tatoood on my father's arm was his imagination. I am of the belief that I could care less how you get sober as long as you get there. If you believe that sitting in a corner 3 hours a day repeating multiflication tables will get and keep you sober — you try it and it works then repeat all you want — it's ok — however if it dosn't work then try something else — till you find what does. Everyone is different — and everyone should

be able to choose for themselves which type of recovery road they want to take."

<http://community.aetv.com/service/display/DiscussionThreads.kickAction?as=119137&w=267410&d=341884&d-1169404.p=10>

Yes, everyone should be able to choose their recovery program — I'm very opposed to sentencing people to A.A. meetings — but people should be told the truth about A.A. recovery, and the truth about the other treatment modalities too. Telling them *Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path* is just lying to sick people.

4. Claiming that experiences are relative is another variation on the same escape:

"Oh, that was just your experience. Other people experienced the opposite."

As in,

"Maybe you got robbed and raped by that cult, but that was just your experience. Tom, Dick, and Harry say that they really like the organization."

(Yeh, and they especially like it when they get to be the privileged old-timer guys who are doing the robbing and raping of newcomers...)

5. Another variation on this technique is dismissing criticism of something by saying, "Your mileage may vary...", as if someone's bad experiences with something are just a personal problem, irrelevant to other people.

As in, "Sally may not have liked it, but Joe liked it..."

6. And another variation on this technique is to dismiss someone's statements or complaints as "just an opinion", or "just a viewpoint". Recently, a Veterans' Administration spokesman dismissed the complaints of a crippled, blinded veteran of the Iraq War who was not getting full benefits for his disabilities with this condescending statement, "Well, it's perfectly understandable that he would have that view." (National Public Radio, *All Things Considered*, 25 June 2007)

- **Escape via Irrationality**

Dismiss an irrefutable argument by claiming a magical or non-logical answer.

Claim that,

- "Of course it defies simple logic — it's miraculous."
- "It's a paradox."
- "It's spiritual."
- "It's supernatural."
- "It can't be explained in normal terms."

"I find every sect, as far as reason will help them, make use of it gladly; and where it fails them, they cry out, 'It is a matter of faith, and above reason.'"

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690

One Alcoholics Anonymous propagandist wrote:

Certainly, however, the spiritual dimension that is so strong in AA is at odds with the scientific, medical tradition. Says Dr. Ken: "We [physicians] tend to be analytical. Spirituality is a gut or heart-felt experience that certainly can't be scientifically studied and falls outside our training."

Dr. Whitfield agrees that AA's effectiveness can't be explained in scientific terms, or tested in controlled studies.

[Doctors in A.A.: the profession's skepticism persists, but MDs in Alcoholics Anonymous say the 12-Step program could benefit all physicians.](#) C. Thomas Anderson, American Medical News, Jan 12, 1990 v33 n2 p33(2)

But the simplest, most obvious reason that A.A.'s effectiveness cannot be explained or measured in valid scientific or medical tests is because [there is no effectiveness to measure — A.A. doesn't work at all.](#) To explain that A.A. works in some mystical, magical manner that cannot be measured or explained is dishonest. If A.A. works, then groups of alcoholics who get A.A.-based "treatment" should have a lower death rate than other groups of alcoholics who get no "treatment" at all. [They don't.](#) And A.A. members should have a lower binge-drinking rate. [They don't.](#)

Inducing pleasant "gut or heart-felt experiences" is not at all the same thing as curing alcoholism or saving the alcoholics' lives — which is supposed to be the goal of A.A., but which A.A. does not actually do. So the author is also using the propaganda tricks of changing the subject, [diverting attention away from the point,](#) and pulling a bait-and-switch stunt there: First the goal is to save the lives of alcoholics by making them quit drinking, and then suddenly the goal is to induce "gut or heart-felt experiences" that can't be measured.

- **Pack the House**

— with crowds of sycophant followers, shills, and hand-picked audiences.

Politicians and phoney gurus often come attended by an entourage of fawning sycophants, because it makes them look much more important, like a real leader.

In November of 1922, the Lauzanne Conference was assembled to revise the Turkish Peace Treaty. When the British and French representatives, British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and French Prime Minister M. Poincaré, went to see the very new Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini (who had been in office only a few weeks),

There, in the Hall of the Grand Hotel, Mussolini awaited them. He held in his hand a thick black stick, which at that time never left him, and was surrounded by a phalanx of young Fascist secretaries of pugnacious appearance, dressed in black shirts and black fezes with long tassels.

It was a situation for which nothing in the past experience of the French and British statesmen had prepared them. An exchange of glacial salutations took place. Then followed a constrained silence. The Duce broke this by suggesting that his visitors might like to dine after their journey.

I Know These Dictators, George Ward Price, page 217.

Politicians also like to pack audiences. Richard Nixon was infamous for bussing in loads of Young Republicans to pack the stands at the Republican National Convention so that the TV cameras would see crowds of enthusiastic young people cheering for Nixon. George W. Bush always packs audiences with hand-picked, loyalty-checked sympathizers — he refuses to allow dissenters anywhere near his rallies and conventions. He isolates them in small fenced so-called "Free Speech Zones" a mile or so away. (G. W. Bush has somehow forgotten that all of the United States of America is supposed to be a free speech zone.)

The cult leader Frank Buchman used a variation on this trick: Move the debate to a favorable forum. When someone was arguing with him, Buchman declared:

["If you have any objections, the proper place to raise them is on the convention floor. I will debate you there."](#)²¹

But the Moral Re-Armament convention was packed with Buchman's loyal followers, of course. No matter what Buchman said, the audience would cheer and yell its approval. With the audience acting as the judge and jury of the debate, Buchman couldn't lose.

Politicians also like to use planted shells to ask favorable questions in fake town hall meetings or press conferences. George W. Bush is notorious for doing that. Recently, Bush's favorite White House shell — "James Gucker" or "James Gannon" — was a total fraud — a male homosexual "escort", not a news reporter — who attended White House press conferences while using an alias (*really great White House security there, yes?*), and then asked G. W. Bush easy cream-puff questions like "How do you manage to deal with the Democrats who are out of touch with reality?"

Over in the Alcoholics Anonymous world, Bill Wilson collected sycophant followers like a dog collecting fleas. As [Henrietta Seiberling complained](#): "he has his henchmen & ingratiates himself with those in the dark..."

- **Embarrass Your Opponent**

Especially, ask embarrassing questions that your opponent cannot answer.

Back in the 1930s, the Oxford Group cult was notorious for self-promotion and recruiting by using vicious tactics like Beverly Nichols bragged about in this story. (The embarrassing questions that Oxford Groupers liked to ask usually pertained to people's private sexual habits, like masturbation.) Here, Nichols was trying to sell [the Oxford Group practice of public confessions](#) to a vicar:

... We will assume that we are addressing somebody who is, at least in theory, a Christian, in order to emphasize the importance of the Group's attitude to confession and the consciousness of sin.

They have a practice they call 'sharing,' which means that they confess to one another and not only to God. A lot of cheap laughs have been gained at the expense of the Group through a misunderstanding of this practice.

'I regard it as pernicious,' said a very bright young vicar to me, after I had come down from Oxford. 'It might lead to very great abuses.'

'Have you ever tried it?'

'Certainly not.'

'Why not? Because it's so unpleasant?'

He began to grow red in the face. 'Are you suggesting that I shirk confessing my sins in prayer?'

'No. But will you give me a quite honest answer to a question?'

'Yes,' he said rashly.

'Very well. And when you've answered it, I'd be glad if you'd tell me, equally honestly, whether it was easier to tell the truth to me, to a man, face to face, or whether it would have been easier to shut your eyes and mumble a few polite phrases to God.'

'You are extremely offensive,' said the vicar.

'Not nearly so offensive as I'm going to be.'

I then asked the question.

I did not get an answer. But by the horror in that man's eyes, I knew the answer he would have given if he had dared.

The Fool Hath Said, Beverly Nichols, page 163-164.

Beverly Nichols did not actually prove that there was any virtue in the Oxford Group's practices; nor did he even supply a good argument; he merely shut down the debate by embarrassing the other fellow.

(The Oxford Group taught Beverly Nichols how to be a really insufferable arrogant little prig who smugly asserted that he had unquestionable truths and who didn't care how much he hurt other people's feelings in his pursuit of victory in arguments. But later, Nichols completely reversed his opinion of the Oxford Group. He discovered that his conversion to the Oxford Group had all been based on a fraud — that [the Oxford Group had deceived him into joining](#), and that the whole cult was just a big con.)

- **Obtuseness — Refuse to See the Point**

Just stubbornly refuse to see your opponent's points, no matter how good his arguments may be. When an opponent makes a point, just ignore it and pretend that it doesn't exist. Pretend that you didn't hear it; do not in any way recognize that it even exists.

The psychological escape devices of *Minimization and Denial* figure in here too. When confronted with undesired facts, just declare that it's all a pack of lies, and those are just unimportant details, and that stuff doesn't matter anyway.

- When presented with irrefutable facts, a stubborn *true believer* declares, "*I see it another way.*" Or, "*I do not find the evidence convincing.*"
- "*There is still room for doubt. Somebody else might have done it. You cannot prove that the crime was not really committed by little green men from Mars.*"

- **fake it til ou make it lying? again , example please**

You didn't give me an example of how faking it til you make it is bad/lying. I know all your other "facts" — you really don't need to repeat yourself — seriously — you have made your points clear. I would like an example, however, on the faking ... part. Because I really do use this technique often and am wondering how it is lying.

<http://community.aetv.com/service/displayDiscussionThreads.kickAction?as=119137&w=267410&d=341884&d-1169404-p=7>

- When presented with actual documented facts, argue:

"What I see here is opinion — the same thing can be printed on a web site for the other side. There is no proof of anything here."

- "I Have never once heard the word God in four years and hundreds of meetings. I live in NYC and maybe it's different here."

— when every A.A. meeting is begun by reciting the religious dogma from *Big Book* pages 58 through 60, which includes the 12 Steps, where people surrender their wills and their lives to God and beg God to save them and remove their defects, and God supposedly talks to them in séances and gives them power... and also restores them to sanity. Six of the 12 Steps refer to "God" or "Him" or your "Higher Power", and the 12 Traditions refer to "God" some more, but this woman insists that she never heard the word "God" in four years of A.A. meetings.

<http://community.aetv.com/service/displayDiscussionThreads.kickAction?as=119137&w=267410&d=341884&d-1169404-p=8>

- Well, all I know is, I like it.
Well, all I know is, it worked for me.
Well, all I know is...

That line attempts to disregard all of the facts, and just stubbornly cling to one sentiment as the final word on the matter.

- In the last days of Mitt Romney's Presidential campaign, he attacked President Obama's bail-out of the auto manufacturers, and declared that Jeep was going to move its manufacturing to China. The president of American Motors gave a press conference where he refuted the claim and said that the American factories were staying where they were, and even adding workers.

The Romney campaign responded, ""I stand by my claim."

Willful ignorance is another flavor of such obtuseness.

This technique naturally leads into [create a diversion](#): Just change the subject and talk about something else.

- **Laugh It Off**

When somebody says something that you don't like, just laugh it off. Refuse to take it seriously. Imply that whatever your opponent just said is silly, absurd, ridiculous, brain-damaged, or just awfully darned funny.

This technique is obviously closely related to [Obtuseness](#), and also to [Humor, Ridicule and Satire](#), but it isn't quite the same as either of them.

Back in the 1930s, [the Bishop of Durham told a story](#) about a foolish member of the Oxford Group who pledged his love to one girl on Friday, but who suddenly believed that he had received "Guidance" from God to propose marriage to a different girl on the following Monday. The father of the first girl complained to the Bishop:

"The young man had written a love-letter to his daughter on the Friday, but on the Monday he had been 'guided' to propose to another girl.

'The father said he wanted a horse-whipping, for his sense of decency should have come in to check such ungentlemanly conduct. ... When I told my story at the Group meeting, it raised a laugh; but it is a serious objection, none the less, for the story is true.'

One Thing I Know, A. J. Russell (1933), pages 291-292.

The other Oxford Group members did not wish to seriously consider the flaws in their [occult practice of Guidance](#) (imagining that they were receiving infallible messages from God), so they just laughed at the sad story of a girl who was hurt by an Oxford Group member who thoughtlessly and inconsiderately followed the sudden impulses that he believed he had received through psychic means. They just wouldn't, or couldn't, sincerely consider the merits of the criticism, so they just laughed.

A.A. members use this technique too:

- "[BUT ON THE LIGHTER SIDE, THIS WAS SUCH OUTRAGIOUS IT MADE ME LAUGH.](#)
- "[It got absurd. I was laughed at, literally laughed at, by this counselor who sounds nothing short of a hyenna when I called what they're doing to people sad and ridiculous.](#)
- "[When i tell people](#) in meetings that Bill Wilson died of nicotine addiction which does not sound too spiritual (most are shocked) and the womanizing thing, they just laugh about it."
- "[I went to a meeting one day](#) a bit late late. I was the only newcomer there. It had been decided not to hold a regular meeting because there were no newcomers. I sat at the table with a bunch of toking smokers who had been around the program for a while. I stated I did not understand how they could smoke if they were leading spiritual lives. I can't remember what was said in response, but I can tell you they belittled me and laughed at me. These people say they are in the business of saving lives. But I guess not their own."
- "[But I thank you](#) for making me laugh and see how fucked up one single man can be."
- "[Thanks So much!](#) ... For the morning laughter with my coffee this morning!
- "[I found your web site](#) to be the funniest thing I have seen in a while.
- "[the minute you say](#) that you have recovered from alcoholism you get laughed at, sneered at, and told you're heading for relapse haha.
- "[Your bait and switch con game page gave me the best laughs](#) I've had all week."

- ["As soon as I divulged that "The God of my understanding" is God Almighty](#) (God The Father, God The Son, God The Holy Spirit) — I noticed a HUGE change. I experienced being ostracized, I was keenly made aware that I was the "joke in the room".... people laughed when I "shared" anything. I saw people in the room nodding their head, rolling their eyes at the ceiling, snickering, putting their finger up to their nose and looking in my direction.
- ["You gotta be kidding me? Snitches to report who is attending or not attending???](#) Hahaha!!
- ["Finally, your criticism of the founders of AA is laughable.](#) They're human beings for god's sake.
- ["I doubt seriously if you have many believers in what you write. It is so off the wall as to be laughable.](#)
- ["All you've done is give me a good laugh and a quick way to waste 15 minutes by replying to your response.](#)
- ["I get a laugh out of your paper every time I find my self searching for answers on the Internet. Your attempt to bam the 12 step program and the fellowship in the same content is laughable](#)
- ["I have just read through "The Orange Papers" and am intermittently laughing my ass off or shaking my head saying, "God, that poor f-ed up soul who wrote this needs help!"](#)
- ["Subject: Too funny](#)
Your site cracks me up.
The amount of misinformation and your obvious lack of understanding of A.A. and alcoholism is laughable.
- ["No one makes you believe anything either.](#) It is no cult.either. To say it is is ludicrous and laughable.
- ["YOU have labelled our fellowship.... "Nazi Cult Religion". Everyone laughed and then we proceeded to discuss more important issues](#)
- ["thank you for the great laugh by calling aa a cult.](#)
- ["Bill acknowledged he wasn't a saint. Why are you pointing that out after he did? \(I am laughing as I write this\)](#)
- ["Really a cult? How funny- thanks for the laugh though.](#)
- ["As usual, you have succeeded in making us all laugh.](#)
- ["Thanks for the good laughs, now why don't you get a copy of the big book and study it and find out what AA is really about.](#)

- **Dominate the Conversation, Talk Non-Stop, and Interrupt Constantly**

Just never quit talking, never let up, never give your opponent a chance to get a word in edgewise. Even shout and scream to drown out the voice of your opponent.

A variation on this technique is *Constant Interruptions* — just interrupt your opponent every time he starts to make a point. For example, shout "Hold it a second! Hold it a second!" whenever your opponent starts to make a point, and then shout a stream of other things — anything — to keep him from finishing his sentence.

This technique is closely related to *Obtuseness*. It is a technique for simply not hearing your opponent, and it is an attempt to keep anybody else from hearing him either.

This technique is not allowed in formal debates, but you hear it in talk radio and TV panel shows a lot.

This debating technique can be combined with other debating techniques to *Talk Non-Stop* AND *Interrupt Your Opponent* whenever he starts to make a point, AND *Divert Attention* by changing the subject AND *Launch Another Personal Attack On Your Opponent* to change the subject and keep him from making his point.

This technique also works well with the next technique, *Bullying and Intimidation*.

- **Escape via Bullying and Intimidation**

Whenever you are losing an argument,

- Bluster, yell, scream, act threatening, make menacing gestures.
- Glare, growl, and make other hostile facial expressions.
- Use hints of violence to intimidate and silence your opponent.
- Make your opponents think that you are dangerously mentally unhinged and will explode in a homicidal rage if they say something that upsets you.
- Act like Bill O'Reilly and scream, "*Shut up! Just shut up!*" whenever someone says something that you don't want to hear.

The Argument from Intimidation is a confession of intellectual impotence.

== Ayn Rand (1905—1982)

This technique works best when your debating opponent is half your size. Be very careful when trying this technique on people who are much larger than you are — they might not put up with it.

- **Shut Down the Debate**

When you can't win the debate, just stop it:

- "Don't be disrespectful."
- "I'm not going to argue with you."
- "Don't be sacreligious."
- "Quit wasting my time with your nonsense."
- "That isn't worth discussing."
- "I don't have the time for this bullshit."

Obviously, this trick works best in an uneven situation where one side has the power to shut down the debate, as in a parent arguing with a child, or a boss with an employee, or a powerful politician with a common citizen.





Footnotes:

1) RE: The "ancients", meaning the Roman Catholic Church authorities in the Middle Ages, were "biased and unreasonable" about the "realm of the spirit." They would not tolerate any "spiritual", religious, or philosophical ideas that were different from their own. They opposed science because science described the world in a different way than the Bible did, like Galileo saying that Jupiter had moons, which the authors of the Bible failed to mention, and science asked people to use their own eyes and brains to see the world for themselves, rather than to have blind faith in what was written in the Bible, or to have blind faith in what some priest said.

If Jupiter really has moons, and Galileo is right and the Bible is wrong, then that destroys the Church's claims that the Bible is the infallible, indisputable Word of God, and that the Church has a monopoly on God and Truth.

The ideas, "Think for yourself", "see for yourself", and "trust your own senses, rather than what the 'elders' tell you" were revolutionary ideas — revolutionary in both the religious and political spheres. They led to the overthrow of absolute authorities like The Church and The King, and eventually led to the establishment of the European democracies. Perhaps the most subversive idea that Martin Luther came up with was the idea that you could communicate with God directly, rather than having to use a priest as an intermediary. That was the kind of stuff about which the Church was *really* "biased and unreasonable," because that would ultimately break the power of the Church — the Church would lose its monopoly on God.

2) *Insiders Cash Out*, *Newsweek* Magazine, Jan 21, 2002, page 23.

Also: the NBC Evening News, and ABC Evening News, both on February 7, 2002.

And: the *60 Minutes* television news program, April 14, 2002.

The *Newsweek* article gives these figures:

Ken Lay with \$37,683,887,

Jeff Skilling with \$14,480,755,

and Lou Pai with \$62,936,552.

The NBC Evening News listed Andrew Fastow with \$30 million, and the ABC Evening News listed Michael Kopper with \$30 million, and stated that Jeffrey Skilling had gotten \$70 million from the sale of his worthless hyped Enron stock when he quit Enron.

60 Minutes described how Rebecca Mark cashed in her Enron shares for \$79 million after robbing the nation of India for everything she could get.

The National Public Radio morning news on May 8, 2002, reported that Senate testimony the previous day revealed that Andrew Fastow had made \$45 million from deals with off-the-books Enron subsidiaries.

The fascinating book *The Smartest Guys in the Room* by Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind gave the following numbers:

- Ken Rice, \$53 million (page 299), later up to \$70 million (page 335)
- Tom White (G. W. Bush's Secretary of the Army) \$14 million (page 302)
- Lou Pai sold \$250 million worth of Enron stock, more than anybody else at the company (page 334)
- Jeff Skilling \$70 million (page 350)
- Andy Fastow got \$60.6 million out of his "Special Purpose Entities" (off-the-balance-sheet limited partnerships) which he used to hide Enron losses from stockholders and investors. He had earlier said that it was \$45 million, but he was understating the facts. (page 366)

The *Nightly Business Report* on public television, 19 February 2004, stated that Jeffrey Skilling was charged in the government's indictment with getting \$63 million from the sale of his Enron stock just four months before Enron collapsed in bankruptcy.

That's quite a [pump-and-dump](#) scheme they pulled...

3) Bill Wilson really had a thing about his wife nagging him. In the *Big Book*, he also wrote these instructions to wives of alcoholics:

The first principle of success is that you should never be angry. ...

Our next thought is that you should never tell him what he must do about his drinking. If he gets the idea that you are a nag or a killjoy, your chance of accomplishing anything useful may be zero. ... This may lead to lonely evenings for you. He may seek someone else to console him — not always another man.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, page 111.

So don't nag your hubby about his drinking, or else he might become moody and resentful and go spend the night with his mistress ([like Bill did](#)).

4) You want logic about Nessie? How about:

1. The small coelacanth had two entire oceans to hide in, while the large Loch Ness monster only has a small lake. (Loch Ness is small, compared to the American Great Lakes, or Lake Victoria in Africa, or Lake Baikal in Russia, none of which seems to host a living dinosaur.)
2. The same problem applies to their food supply. Nessie would only have the fish in a lake to eat, while the coelacanth had an entire ocean to munch on.
3. Then the food supply problem gets much worse: To avoid extinction, there would obviously have to be at least two living Loch Ness monsters at all times, so they would need twice as much fish to eat. But then they would have offspring, and those kids need to eat too, so now they need even more food. Somebody did the math on it and figured out that they would strip the lake of all fish pretty quickly. There goes the monster. Starvation will kill it.
4. The population problem is much worse than that, even. A species that is reduced to two adults and two offspring will probably die out. Lack of genetic diversity. Or some random disease, sometime in the last 60 million years. Or just bad luck — lose one of the breeding pair due to an accident, and it's all over. Or a drought for a few years, or something. Or what if, for just one generation, they have only male offspring? That's almost a certainty, eventually. Lots of families have 3 or 4 sons, and no daughters, just by random chance. If that happens to the Loch Ness family just one time, ever, at any time in history, then they are extinct. The real rules of the game of life say that you have to have lots of individuals, at least thousands, and preferably millions or billions (like us), if you want your species to continue.
5. The Loch Ness has been searched, very thoroughly searched, using fancy electronic equipment, and still, no monster.
6. On the other hand, once some ichthyologists learned that coelacanths really did exist, by seeing just one dead, decomposing one, they posted a reward for some more, and within a dozen years, the fishermen brought them several. Seek ye and ye shall find, if it exists. People have been looking for Nessie for a long time, and still, no Nessie.
7. If Nessie is really left over from the age of the dinosaurs, she would probably be a cold-blooded reptile. But the Loch Ness is a very cold lake, not a tropical swamp. Nessie would freeze up and be stiff as a board, unless she evolved anti-freeze blood. If Nessie is a warm-blooded animal, then she needs to eat and burn even more fish to keep her body warm. Now we are back to the food supply problem.
8. If Nessie really lives in the North Sea, and just visits Loch Ness through the river that flows from the Loch to the North Sea, then it is unlikely that no one ever saw Nessie in the river. The river isn't big or deep, so it isn't a good hiding place for a large dinosaur. And the North Sea is notorious for being very cold, so now we are back to the body temperature problem.

9. Animals die and leave corpses or bones. Nobody has ever found even one little bone from any Loch Ness monster.

Really, it would be a lot easier to believe in the Tahiti Lagoon Monster, or a Guamanian Godzilla that hides at the bottom of the Marianas Trench, but nobody is talking about one of them.

5) card-carrying Communists".

Several days later, the number was 81.

McCarthy never produced any of those lists, not even when he was pointedly asked to do so by the Senate subcommittees that were investigating McCarthy's charges. Eventually, after a period of national terror that hurt a lot of innocent people, Joe McCarthy was censured by the U.S. Senate for bad conduct.

15) Tom Driberg, *The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament*, pages 112-113.

16) The Chris Matthews Show, NBC, 6:30 AM Saturday Morning, May 8, 2004. George W. Bush went to Ohio and spoke before a friendly, invitation-only crowd. Obviously, that creates the appearance that Bush is popular and everybody likes him.

17) Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, page 8.

18) Ernest Kurtz, *Not God*, page 28.

19) Jon Atack, *Scientology: Religion or Intelligence Agency? The view from the lion's den*, A paper by Jon Atack, delivered at the Dialog Centre International conference in Berlin, October 1995.

20) Cornel West, *Democracy Matters*, page 147.

West gives us a good discussion of how much Emperor Constantine actually damaged and perverted Christianity when he made it the official state religion of Rome.

21) Arthur Strong, *Preview of a New World*, page 126.

22) *Extreme Oil*, Public Broadcasting System, 11 July 2005.

23) Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1989, page 1440.



Bibliography:

"*The Big Book*", really:

Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition.

(written by William G. Wilson, Henry Parkhurst, Joe Worth, and 40 or so others; published as 'anonymous.')

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY.

ISBN: 0-916856-00-3

Dewey: 362.29 A347 1976

Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition published as "anonymous", but really written by William G. Wilson, Henry Parkhurst, Joe Worth, and many other people.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY, 2001.

ISBN: 1-893007-16-2

Dewey: 362.29 A347 2001

"12X12" =

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, by 'anonymous' ; (The real authors were William G. Wilson and [Tom Powers](#).)

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY, 1952, 1953, 1984.

ISBN: 0-916856-01-1 (larger older hard cover edition, 1984)

LCCN: 53-5454

also:

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY, 2000.

ISBN: 0-916856-06-2 (smaller hard cover edition, 2000)

LCCN: 53-5454

Dewey: 362.2928 T969 1965

Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous Ernest Kurtz

Hazelden Educational Foundation, Center City, MN, 1979.

ISBN: 0-899-486065-8 or ISBN: 0-89486-065-8 (pbk.)

LC: HV5278

LCCN: 79-88264

Dewey: 362.2/9286 or 362.29286 K87 1979

This is a very pro-A.A., toe-the-party-line history of Alcoholics Anonymous, but it is still a valuable resource for a wealth of historical facts and details.

The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark Carl Sagan

Random House, New York, 1995.

ISBN: 0-394-53512-X

Dewey: 001.9 S129d

This book is a beauty. Carl Sagan always was easy to read, highly informative, and clear, and this book lives up to his reputation. This book includes "the baloney detector", which is a list of deceitful propaganda techniques that gave me the idea for this web page.

How To Lie With Statistics Darrell Huff

W. W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 1954, 1982.

ISBN: 0-393-31072-8

Dewey: 519.5 H84

This is a beautiful little classic that explains a lot of the deceptions and propaganda stunts that you can pull with statistics, and some other methods, too, like "The Gee-Whiz Graph", "The One-Dimensional Picture", and "Post Hoc Rides Again". Recommended.

Propaganda, the Formation of Men's Attitudes Jacques Ellul
Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965.
LCC 64-17708
Dewey: 301.1523 E47p

Propaganda Comes Of Age Michael Choukas
Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1965.
LCC 65-27072
Dewey: 301.1523 C45

Untruth, Why the Conventional Wisdom is (Almost Always) Wrong Robert J. Samuelson
Random House, Inc., New York, 2001.
ISBN: 0-8129-9164-8
Dewey: 303.375 S193u 2001
<http://www.atrandom.com>

Brave New World Revisited Aldous Huxley
Harper & Rowe, New York, 1958.
Perennial Classics, HarperPerennial, HarperCollins Publishers, 2000.
ISBN: 0-06-095551-1
Dewey: 824 H986br

Channels of Propaganda J. Michael Sproule
EDINFO Press, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47407, 1994.
ISBN: 0-927516-34-9 (cloth)
ISBN: 0-927516-61-6 (paperback)
Dewey: 303.375 S771c

Plagues of the Mind, The New Epidemic of False Knowledge Bruce S. Thornton
ISI Books, Wilmington, Delaware, 1999
ISBN: 1-882926-34-X
Dewey: 001.2 T513p 1999

Official Lies, How Washington Misleads Us James T. Bennett & Thomas J. DiLorenzo
Groom Books, Alexandria, VA, 1992.
ISBN: 0-9632701-0-9
LCC 92-072083
Dewey: 351.00819 B471o

Total Propaganda, From Mass Culture to Popular Culture Alex Edelstein
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Mahwah, New Jersey, London, 1997.

ISBN: 0-8058-0891-4 (cloth); ISBN: 0-8058-0892-2 (paperback)
Dewey: 302.23 E21t

Brainwashing, From Pavlov to Powers, Edward Hunter
Originally published by Farrar, Straus, & Cudahy, Inc., 1956.
Reprinted by The Bookmailer, Inc., 30 West Price Street, Linden, New Jersey, 1958, 1965.
LCCN: 56-7817 and 60-53397
Dewey: 131.33 H91

This book is very good. It is a classic. And the book is fascinating and a good read. It really gives you the feeling of being there and going through the brainwashing to which the American, British, and other United Nations soldiers were subjected during the Korean War. It also clearly explains just how the brainwashing worked and how some men succumbed to it, and some successfully resisted it. It also turns out that this was the first book on Communist brainwashing published, and Hunter was actually the author who coined the term "brainwashing" — it's just a translation of the Chinese phrase *Hsi Nao*, which Mao Tse Tung (aka Mao Zhe Dhong) and gang used to denote the idea of washing away the vestiges of the old system (literally "cleansing the mind") in the process of being re-educated to assume one's place in the new Communist society.

The Hidden Persuaders Vance Packard
David McKay Company, Inc., New York, 1957.
Dewey: 659.1 P12

This book is an old classic. It was quite revolutionary in its day. It particularly exposed how the modern mass media, like TV, were using sophisticated psychological manipulation of the audience's minds to sell products. (Gasp! You mean they do that?)

Age of Propaganda, The Everyday Use And Abuse of Persuasion Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson,
University of California at Santa Cruz.
W. H. Freeman and Co., New York, 1992.
ISBN: 0-7167-2210-0 (hardcover), ISBN: 0-7167-2211-9 (paperback)
Dewey: 303.375 P912a
This book is especially clear and readable. Recommended.

The Bush Dyslexicon, Observations on a National Disorder Mark Crispin Miller
W.W. Norton and Company, New York and London, 2001.
ISBN: 0-393-04183-2
Dewey: 973.931 M649b 2001

The Betrayal of America, How the Supreme Court Undermined the Constitution and Chose Our President
Vincent Bugliosi
Thunder Mouth Press / Nation Books, New York, 2001.
ISBN: 1-56025-355-X
Dewey: 342.075 B931b 2001

Supreme Injustice, How the High Court Hijacked Election 2000 Alan M. Dershowitz
Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2001.
ISBN: 0-19-514827-4
Dewey: 342.075 D438s 2001

Stupid White Men... and other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation Michael Moore

ReganBooks, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2001.

ISBN: 0-06-039245-2

Dewey 973.929 M823s 2001

Funny, true, a good read. Michael Moore's slant on everything from the Bush family coup to the Dumbing of America.

The True Believer, Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements Eric Hoffer

Harper & Rowe, Publishers, New York and Evanston, 1951.

Dewey: 301.1582 H69

This book is a blockbuster. Hoffer wrote it half a century ago, but it reads like a description of this afternoon's latest cult. This is one of those beautiful all-time classics that we see too seldom. Quotes:

- [hatred as a unifying force](#)
- [effective cult doctrines](#)

In the Sleep Room Anne Collins

Key Porter Books Limited, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1988, 1997.

ISBN: 1-55013-937-0

LC: RC339.52.C34C64

LCCN: C97-932042-9

Dewey: 616.89'0092 or 616.89 C712i 1997

Quite a blockbuster. Documents immoral and illegal research into mind control and brainwashing financed by the CIA in Canada. See the [description above](#).

Acid Dreams: the CIA, LSD, and the sixties rebellion Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain

Grove Press, 1985.

ISBN: 0394550137

ISBN: 039462081X (1st Evergreen ed.)

LC: HV5822 .L9L44 1985

and

Acid Dreams: the complete social history of LSD: the CIA, the sixties, and beyond Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain

Evergreen Press, 1992.

ISBN: 0802130623

LC: HV5822 .L9L45 1992

This book is fascinating. It tells how the CIA was one of the first investigators of LSD. They hoped it would make a great truth serum, or at least a good incapacitating agent — something that would render enemy soldiers helpless, and give us "war without killing". They did a lot of experimenting with it, trying it on everybody from themselves to unaware civilians in San Francisco. They even gave Ken Kesey his first dose. So bone up on your history, kiddies. Before there was the Grateful Dead and the Merry Pranksters, there was the CIA.

Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream Jay Stevens

The Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1987.

ISBN: 0-87113-076-9

LC: HV5822.L9S74 1987

LCCN: 87-1191

Dewey: 306.1

A large and complete history, from a fair and balanced viewpoint. A fascinating stroll down memory lane for some of us.

The Making Of A Moonie: Brainwashing Or Choice? Eileen Barker

Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., Oxford, UK, 1984.

ISBN: 0-631-13246-5

LC: BX9750.S4B37 1984

LCCN: 84-12414

Dewey: 289.9 B225m

Quite good. Rather than just sensationalizing the Moonies, or grandly proclaiming that cults can brainwash people in a few days, like some extremist anti-cult people and professional "deprogrammers" do, the author really delves into how the recruiting and indoctrination mind games work, and how much the victim cooperates with the program (or doesn't cooperate). The author also reveals that the recruiters' success rate was actually only about 0.005% (page 147). Obviously, most people had no problems resisting the mind games. The author even gets into psychoanalyzing the members, revealing that many of them had mental problems before joining the Moonies, and suggesting that that was why they joined. This book is a breath of sanity in a field that needs more.

Frank Buchman's Secret Peter Howard

Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1961.

Dewey: 248 H85f

More praise of Frank Buchman from Peter Howard. Peter Howard is the man who took over the leadership of Moral Re-Armament when Frank Buchman died. As you can imagine, he was a true believer and had nothing but praise for Buchman. This book is some of the most outrageous, grandiose, propaganda you will find — cult propaganda written by one of the cult leaders. Some pretty intense garbage. If you wish to look straight into the mouth of the Beast, this book will give you a good view. Some quotes:

- [either/or propaganda technique](#)
- [unprovable statements](#)

Dynamic Out Of Silence: Frank Buchman's relevance today Theophil Spoerri

Grosvenor Books, London, 1976.

Originally published as *Dynamik aus der Stille*, Caux Verlag, Luzern, Switzerland, 1971.

ISBN: 0-901269-19-0

Pure propaganda. A falsified and sanitized history of Frank Buchman and his various "movements".

"12-Step programs help maintain abstinence" R. Fiorentine

The Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application, Sept 1999, v18 i9 p1.

"Debating with Jehovah's Witnesses" Timothy Campbell

<http://members.aol.com/beyondjw/dwjw.htm>

Oxford and the Groups Rev. G. F. Allen, John Maud, Miss B. E. Gwyer, C. R. Morris, W. H. Auden, R. H.

S. Crossman, Dr. L. P. Jacks, Rev. E. R. Micklem, Rev. J. W. C. Wand, Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., Prof. L. W.

Grensted; Edited by R. H. S. Crossman

Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1934.

LC: BV4915.C7

This is a great little book; very informative. It consists of essays from both leaders of the Oxford Groups like Rev. G. F. Allen, and criticisms of the Groups from critics like R. H. S. Crossman. It gives you a first-hand

look at the Groups from several viewpoints, a snap-shot in time of the thinking of contemporaries, before Buchman's public praise of Adolf Hitler.

The Fine Art of Propaganda: a study of Father Coughlin's Speeches The Institute for Propaganda Analysis; edited by Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee
Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1939.

LC: HM263.I54

A great little book that dissects [the hate-mongering speeches of Father Coughlin](#) and exposes the propaganda techniques that he used. They reduce the list of the many possible logical fallacies and propaganda tricks to just this short list that was in Father Coughlin's toolbox:

1. Name Calling — giving an idea or a person a bad name
2. Glittering Generality — create over-generalized positive images and stereotypes
3. Transfer (also known as Association) — gaining respectability or admiration by association with something else that is widely admired or respected
4. Testimonial — people tell stories that praise the propagandist's favorite cause
5. Plain Folks — it's just us regular plain good-old-boys; nothing to get upset about
6. Card Stacking — also called Monopolistic Card Stacking — it's stacking the odds in your favor by carefully arranging the "facts" while excluding undesired facts
7. Band Wagon — the same thing as "Everybody's doing it", or "Everybody knows", or "Everybody believes"...

The Smartest Guys in the Room; The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind

Portfolio, The Penguin Group, New York, 2003.

ISBN: 1-59184-008-2

Dewey: 333.79 M163s 2003

LC: HD9502.U54E5763 2003

A great book, a fascinating story of brilliance, greed, ambition, arrogance, and dishonesty.

Cold Turkey A movie starring Dick Van Dyke and Bob Newhart

A great comedy, a classic. The basic plotline is that a backwoods town is dying because the military base closed. Bob Newhart plays an evil tobacco executive who wants to become the 'Alfred Nobel' of smoking by offering an huge prize to any town that totally quits smoking for a month (which he doesn't believe any town will ever be able to do). Dick Van Dyke plays the preacher of the dying town, who decides that winning the prize is the only way to get the town back on its feet. The results are both very funny and very true. It's a great spoof on smoking and addiction. [See ref here.](#)

McCarthy, The Man, The Senator, The "ISM" Jack Anderson and Ronald W. May

The Beacon Press, Boston, 1952.

LCCN: 52-11115

Dewey: B M1225A

A pretty good analysis of Senator Joe McCarthy and his methods. Because this book was published in 1952, it does not tell the end of the story — the Army-McCarthy hearings and the Senate's censure of McCarthy.

Democracy Matters; Winning the Fight Against Imperialism Cornel West

The Penguin Press, New York, 2004.

ISBN: 1-59420-029-7

LC: JC423.W384 2004

Dewey: 321.8 W516d 2004

A great book. Gives about the clearest analysis that I've seen of the current predicament and threats to the survival of our democracy. Also offers a higher, clearer, moral vision of the future than I see anybody else offering.

Sleeping With The Devil; How Washington Sold Our Soul For Saudi Crude Robert Baer
Crown Publishers, New York, 2003.

ISBN: 1-4000-5021-9

Dewey: 327.538 B141s 2003

Robert Baer is a former CIA agent who has a lot of expertise about the Middle East. He has written a very disturbing and revealing book here, which basically says that the days of the House of Sa'ud are numbered, and when it goes, so does our dependable oil supply.

Baer says that the Saudi royal family is paying off the terrorists and extreme Islamic fundamentalists to keep them from attacking the royal family, but that is an "end game" — only a matter of buying time while the terrorist organizations grow richer and more powerful, and the non-royal population of the country becomes poorer and increasingly dissatisfied with the extravagant profligate behavior of the *thousands* of high-living Saudi princes. Baer says that there are 30,000 royals in Saudi Arabia, and they have a population explosion problem: each prince has a dozen or two wives, and many have 50 to 70 children, and all of the royal children expect and demand a life of opulent luxury while the common people can't even get a job. At that birth rate, in another generation, there could be many hundreds of thousands of royals for the oil dole to support — and the money has actually already run out.

The hey-day when Saudi Arabia had more money than sand is gone. Now they are borrowing money to keep the circus going. Sooner or later, the situation will become unstable and blow up. And Baer shows us many reasons why the time will probably be sooner than later.

And yes, the money that financed the 9/11 attacks on the USA came from Saudi Arabia. And the Washington politicians know it, or should know it, but they are too busy taking big campaign contributions and other huge payoffs from the Saudis to make a fuss about the situation in Saudi Arabia — "sleeping with the devil". But the times they are a'changin'. [See quotes above.](#)

Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror, Anonymous (His real name is Mike Shoyer — he later broke his anonymity.)

Brassey's Inc., Washington, D.C., 2004.

ISBN: 1-57488-849-8

LC: HV6432.I47 2004

Dewey: 973.931 I3445 2004 or 973.931—dc22

A fascinating and disturbing book. The author, a CIA agent who preferred to remain anonymous, makes a very good case for the USA being in big trouble because of arrogance, ignorance, and stupidity in the highest offices. He says that we do not clearly see our enemies because we insist on stereotyping them and seeing them through Western eyes, rather than on their own terms. What we call suicide bombers they call heroes who are going straight to Heaven. The author says that our conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is so incompetent and unrealistic that defeat is inevitable — that in Afghanistan, it has already happened.

Monumental hubris and insane arrogance led American leaders to think that they could easily defeat, with just a few troops, a little precision bombing, and a short war, the very Afghani freedom fighters who had just defeated the Soviet Army. The Soviets had already learned the hard way that it isn't that easy, but the arrogant Washington neo-Cons didn't listen, look, or learn. This is a good book for those who are interested in current politics and the "war on terrorism".

Quote: [here](#).

Also see [the larger bibliography from the Cult Test](#).