SELF-CENSORSHIP AND THE CONSTRICTION OF THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION UNDER MODERN COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

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INTRODUCTION

Censorship can take many forms. The nature of the censor; the justifications for censorship; the identities of the targeted parties; the forms and stages of thought and communication being censored; the topics or viewpoints subject to censorship; the means of censorship, pre- and post-speech; and the costs threatened or imposed on the censored parties and the broader society may all vary.[1]

A primary concern of the Enlightenment writers was the central case of prior licensing or legal punishment imposed by the government through formal, official processes. This general form of censorship draws the attention of such luminaries as John Milton,[2] Benedict Spinoza,[3] John Locke,[4] Lord Shaftes-

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1. *See, e.g.,* THOMAS I. EMERSON, THE SYSTEM OF FREE EXPRESSION (1970); FREDERICK SCHAUER, FREE SPEECH: A PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY (1982).

2. *See* JOHN MILTON, AREOPAGITICA 6 (John W. Hales ed., 1917) (1644) ("We should be wary . . . what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books; since we see a kinde of homicide may thus be committed, sometimes a martyrdome, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an immortality rather then a life.").

3. *See* 1 BENEDICT DE SPINOZA, *Theologico-Political Treatise, in* THE CHIEF WORKS OF BENEDICT DE SPINOZA 1, 257 (R.H.M. Elwes trans., 1951) (1670) ("[G]overnment which attempts to control minds is accounted tyrannical, and it is considered an abuse of sovereignty and a usurpation of the rights of subjects, to seek to prescribe what shall be accepted as true, or rejected as false . . . .").

4. *See* JOHN LOCKE, A LETTER CONCERNING TOLERATION 19 (John Horton & Susan Mendus eds., 1991) (1689) ("I affirm, that the magistrate's power extends not to the establishing of any articles of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his laws.").

bury,[5] David Hume,[6] Voltaire,[7] Thomas Jefferson,[8] Condorcet,[9] Thomas Paine,[10] James Madison,[11] and Joseph Story.[12]

Official governmental censorship, however, does not exhaust the different forms of censorship. Non-governmental groups of various sizes, ranging from one's own social circle, to a private organization, to one's small-town neighbors, to broader

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5. *See* 1 ANTHONY EARL OF SHAFTESBURY, *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, in* CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN, MANNERS, OPINIONS, TIMES, ETC. 5, 9–10 (John M. Robertson ed., 1900) (1708) ("But who shall be judge of what may be freely examined and what may not? . . . If men are vicious, petulant, or abusive, the magistrate may correct them: but if they reason ill, 'tis reason still must teach them to do better.").

6. *See* DAVID HUME, *Of the Liberty of the Press, in* ESSAYS MORAL, POLITICAL, AND LITERARY 9, 9 (Eugene F. Miller ed., Liberty Fund rev. ed. 1985) (1742) ("Nothing is more apt to surprize a foreigner, than the extreme liberty, which we enjoy in this country, of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure, entered into by the king or his ministers.").

7. *See* VOLTAIRE, *Liberty of the Press, in* PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY (1750), *reprinted in* THE PORTABLE ENLIGHTENMENT READER 416, 421–24 (Isaac Kramnick ed., Penguin Books 1995) (discussing the limited effect of heterodox books on the broad public well-being, and the availability of non-legal responses).

8. *See* THOMAS JEFFERSON, *A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, in* WRITINGS 346, 347 (Merrill D. Peterson ed., The Library of America 1984) (1777, 1779) ("[I]t is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for its officers to interfere when the principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order; . . . errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.").

9. *See* MARQUIS DE CONDORCET, ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN EUROPE (1786), *reprinted in* CONDORCET SELECTED WRITINGS 71, 79 (Keith M. Baker ed., 1976) ("We have seen [the American] respectfully obeying those entrusted with the public power, without renouncing the right to seek to enlighten them and to denounce to the nation their faults or their errors.").

10. *See* THOMAS PAINE, *The Rights of Man, in* REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS 133 (Harry Hayden Clark ed., American Century rev. ed. 1961) (1791–92) (generally citing favorably the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, including XI on the responsible "communication of thoughts and opinions" as "one of the most precious rights of man").

11. *See* JAMES MADISON, *Report On the Alien and Sedition Acts, in* WRITINGS 608, 651 (Jack N. Rakove ed., The Library of America ed. 1999) (1800) (describing the Sedition Act as "leveled against that right of freely examining public characters and measures, and of free communication among the people thereon, which has ever been justly deemed the only effectual guardian of every other right").

12. *See* JOSEPH STORY, COMMENTARIES ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES 704 (1833) (stating that the free speech clause "imports no more, than that every man shall have a right to speak, write, and print his opinions upon any subject whatsoever, without any prior restraint, so always, that he does not injure any other person in his rights, person, property, or reputation; and so always, that he does not thereby disturb the public peace, or attempt to subvert the government").

groupings including an entire society, can all exercise informal but effective forms of censorship.

Of those who have emphasized the varieties of social, as distinct from governmental, censorship, John Stuart Mill is perhaps the most influential. Mill expressly distinguishes *society* from *political functionaries*.[13] Mill speaks of "a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression."[14] While social tyranny cannot normally exact severe penalties,[15] "it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself."[16] Thus, Mill describes the need for "protection . . . against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling."[17]

There may be a sense in which law and government are still lurking in the background even in such cases,[18] but certainly a rough distinction remains between governmental repression and more "privatized" sorts of repression. Even if we set aside official government censorship, however, the range of the remaining forms of censorship is still surprisingly broad.

Our focus herein is on some forms of what may be classified as a third general form of censorship—self-censorship—and in particular on forms of what we call "input-side self-censorship," with an at least superficially voluntary quality. Of course, even the most apparently voluntary self-censorship occurs in a social context, and has important social elements and dimensions. But we will be considering cases that can reasonably be categorized as involving self-censorship rather than overt social group oppression that overbears the will of the potential dissenter.[19]

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    13. *See* JOHN STUART MILL, ON LIBERTY 63 (Gertrude Himmelfarb ed., 1974) (1859).

    14. *Id.*

    15. *See id.* We should not, however, overlook cases in which an oppressive group or culture has, through ostracism or evident disapproval and contempt, driven persons to depression or suicide.

    16. *Id.* Arguably, a social tyranny that comes to enslave the soul itself is worse, along the dimension of severity, than an official, formal imprisonment that involves no further attempt to shape and control the prisoner's thoughts or words.

    17. *Id.* Of course a locally dominant and even realistically inescapable social tyranny may be at odds with the opinion prevailing at a broader and more general social level; a "cult" could presumably operate in just such an environment.

    18. Reciprocally, of course, many cases of official government repression may ultimately depend upon popular or private group sentiment.

    19. For representative treatments of the still importantly unclear and contested idea of coercion, see, for example, COERCION (J. Roland Pennock & John W. Chapman eds., 2007); ROBERT NOZICK, SOCRATIC PUZZLES 15–44 (1997);

This Essay will focus on the impact of self-censorship on our modern society and why this should be a disturbing phenomenon. The Essay will also suggest a way to move away from the current trajectory towards increasing self-censorship. Part I of this Essay will begin by focusing on some of the legal scholars and political philosophers who have discussed self-censorship and how it harms society. Next, the Essay will turn to the implications of our modern world, with a special emphasis on the Internet. Part II will focus on how changing our cultural emphasis to embrace the pursuit of truth can help stem the tide of our ever-increasing self-censorship. Finally, the Essay will conclude by tying the ideas of self-censorship and the pursuit of truth into our countries' current problems with political partisanship.

I.   SELF-CENSORSHIP AND ITS CONTEMPORARY FORM

A.   *The Choice to Self-Censor*

The well-known theorizing and experimentation of Professor Cass Sunstein provides an entry into the problem of arguably voluntary self-censorship.[20] Of course, there are many forms of broadly political self-censorship. And issues of political self-censorship in general are hardly new.[21] But Professor Sunstein's concerns are distinctive and, to a degree, focus on the effects of contemporary communications technology.

Professor Sunstein does not himself generally use the term *self-censorship*. And the problems he discusses stem, at least partially, from genuine information consumption choices facilitated by technological advances. We can thus hardly deny that the kinds of self-censorship in which we are interested reflect individ-

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ALAN WERTHEIMER, COERCION (1987); Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Consent, Coercion, and Hard Choices*, 67 VA. L. REV. 79 (1981).

20.   *See, e.g.,* CASS R. SUNSTEIN, GOING TO EXTREMES: HOW LIKE MINDS UNITE AND DIVIDE (2009) [hereinafter GOING TO EXTREMES]; Cass R. Sunstein, *The Law of Group Polarization*, 10 J. POL. PHIL. 175 (2002); Cass R. Sunstein, *Deliberative Trouble? Why Groups Go to Extremes*, 110 YALE L.J. 71 (2000); Cass Sunstein, *The Daily We*, BOS. REVIEW (Summer 2001), http://www.bostonreview.net/BR26.3/sunstein.php. *See also* Andrew Kalloch, *Sunstein: Lack of Ideological Diversity Leads to Extremism*, HARV. LAW RECORD (Sept. 29, 2009), http://www.hl record.org/2.4463/sunstein-lack-of-ideological-diversity-leads-to-extremism-1.577488.

21.   Consider the alternative rhetorical strategies, involving less candor and less public educational value, available to Socrates at his trial. *See* PLATO, THE LAST DAYS OF SOCRATES: EUTHYPHRO, APOLOGY, CRITO, PHAEDO (Hugh Tredennick & Harold Tarrant trans., Penguin Books ed. 1993) (399 B.C.). For self-censorship that apparently backfired, see *Debs v. United States*, 249 U.S. 211, 213 (1919) (supposedly prudent verbal self-restraint, if explicitly referred to, as intimating that a stronger message may be inferred by an audience).

ual choices among alternatives, and in that sense, reflect personal freedom. But on Professor Sunstein's analysis, things are a bit more complicated and equivocal.

Professor Sunstein posits a process of fragmentation, polarization, and "cyberbalkanization"[22] via social processes that may take on a partly unrecognized and generally unintended life of their own. Sunstein crucially argues that more than with prior communications technologies, "[t]he Internet is making it possible for people to design a kind of Daily Me—their personal communications packages, which include only the topics and opinions that they like and exclude troublesome issues and disfavored voices."[23]

This may, in a sense, be seen as an enhancement of individual freedom. But the potential for negative as well as positive effects, intended as well as unintended, on freedom seems clear. Self-selection can, for example, lead to something like self-segregation at the level of partisan affiliation or ideology. Worse still, Sunstein suggests, based on his own empirical research and that of others, that some of the most disturbing unintended dynamics of deliberation and discussion occur mainly among the mostly like-minded. In particular, "[i]f people on the Internet are deliberating mostly with like-minded others, their views will not merely be reinforced; they will instead be shifted to more extreme points."[24]

The term *polarization* is ambiguous; Professor Sunstein is thus positing a process, affecting largely homogeneous political groupings, of what might awkwardly be called "extremification" of preexisting political perspectives.[25] The term "echo chamber" is thus misleadingly benign. We do not merely echo our selected colleagues. To the extent that many of us begin to communicate

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22. *See* SUNSTEIN, GOING TO EXTREMES, *supra* note 20, at 79.

23. *Id.* at 79–80.

24. *Id.* at 81.

25. *See id.* at 20, 89. Particularly within an already ideologically distinctive, if not homogeneous, grouping, after deliberating with one another, people are likely to move toward a more extreme point in the direction to which they were previously inclined, as indicated by the median of their predeliberation judgments. Sunstein, *The Daily We, supra* note 20. One possible reason for this might be that the unusual validation of one's articulated views may seem to lower the costs and risks of expressing a more extreme—and in some ways, more self-indulgent—view. Speculatively, we might imagine that "extremification" could contribute to an increase not only in useful "watchdog" behavior, but in what neutral observers would view as corruption. We might also speculate that increased "extremification" could encourage political "attack ads." *See* STEPHEN ANSOLABEHERE & SHANTO IYENGAR, GOING NEGATIVE: HOW POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS SHRINK AND POLARIZE THE ELECTORATE (1996).

mainly in ways that reinforce, intensify, and "extremify" our views, we engage in varying degrees in a form of "input" self-censorship.

Our concern is not with whether this general process of political self-segregation, mutual reinforcement, and "extremification" is more prominent today, with contemporary technologies, than at any previous point in our history.[26] Nor is our concern with the undoubtedly few, if any, persons who experience only pure ideological homogeneity.[27] Neither do we assume that the process Professor Sunstein describes can never in any respect contribute favorably to the quality of public discussion and debate.[28]

In fact, for our purposes, we need not even assume that what we refer to as input-side "self-censorship" has been established in any strong, pervasive form by clear and incontestable scientific evidence.[29] It suffices for our purposes if there is enough evidence of self-censorship processes to raise legitimate concerns regarding the promotion of the long-term public interest.

From our perspective, it is important to remember that self-censorship can take on a variety of forms. Our main concern is not that consumers of news and opinion are not freely choosing from available media outlets. Nor is our main concern that per-

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26. It would be difficult to compare today's technology to a time of three major television network nightly newscasts, competing largely for a similar audience, as well as a time in which major cities may have supported a number of highly partisan daily newspapers.

27. Certainly the bulk of the theory and evidence discussed below, *see infra* notes 61–69 and accompanying text, involve some diversity of perspective for most news and opinion consumers.

28. Newly formed, stigmatized, privacy-emphasizing, or otherwise vulnerable groups, may at least for a time benefit from an unusually isolated, protective, or incubational environment. Such groups may otherwise, at the very least, find themselves devoting too much time and energy to repeated, basic-level arguments and group-defense, at the expense of further elaborating and developing their program, with certain basic premises taken largely for granted within the group. Of course, such groups should also be sensitive, perhaps especially so, to their broader political and cultural environment. But this broader environmental sensitivity can presumably be maintained at the group's own initiative. And in some contexts, even a group that we think has become implausibly extremist can perform "gadfly"-type public service. Further, groups with a charitable or public service focus may actually draw useful motivation from their artificial extremism, lack of perspective, "tunnel vision," or obsessiveness.

29. See the sampling of some of the relevant evidence *infra* at notes 41–69 and accompanying text. See also, at least suggestively, the language of James Davison Hunter, *Polarization and the Crisis of Legitimacy*, 12 THE HEDGEHOG REV. 62 (Fall 2010); *Group Polarization: The Trend to Extreme Decisions*, PSYBLOG (Sept. 1, 2009), http://www.spring.org.uk/2009/09/group-polarization-the-trend-to-extreme-decisions.php (last visited Jan. 7, 2011).

sons are not genuinely free—at least initially—in what they choose to say, as their speech "output," before any unintended and unrecognized group dynamics change what the members of homogeneous groups may want to say.

Our main concern is instead really with persons' constructing, perhaps partly unintentionally, various sorts of barriers, obvious and subtle, to their recognizing or taking genuinely seriously the best arguments against whatever political opinions they eventually adopt. To the extent that persons somehow participate in screening out, distorting, oversimplifying, trivializing, depreciating, dismissing, or remaining ignorant of the apparently best arguments against their own perspectives, they are engaging in a process of input-side self-censorship.

What is distinctive about this form of self-censorship is the at least partly voluntary and systematic constriction and distortion of the flow of potentially vital inputs into one's thinking or speaking. This is not a matter of refusing to express or articulate one's fully formulated beliefs. The main concern is thus not with self-imposed gag orders, but with self-censorship as systematically refusing to access or seriously engage potentially crucial inputs into the formulation and testing of one's thoughts and speech. Of course, time and attention for such matters are scarce resources for everyone. One cannot read everything of importance. *Neutrality* of choice in this context is generally an illusion. But not everyone's processes of news and opinion gathering, and of belief formation, are thus systematically skewed in an equal fashion.[30]

Professor Sunstein's work, as well as the related work of others,[31] has drawn significant media attention and provoked ongoing discussion.[32] Even the most tentative assessment of any

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30. Equally clearly, we can recognize a systematically impoverished and distorted process of information gathering without presuming to recognize a "neutrally" or properly formed political opinion, or being able to say in great detail what a supposedly "neutral" or otherwise supposedly undistorted diet of news and opinion would consist of for any given reason. Certainly what counts as a minimally adequate diet will depend to a degree on a person's pre-existing time-availability, commitments, capacities, interests, circumstances, and identity, even if these are revisable over time.

31. *See, e.g.,* FARHAD MANJOO, TRUE ENOUGH: LEARNING TO LIVE IN A POST-FACT SOCIETY 173–74 (2008) ("[F]ragmentation in the media has allowed . . . aggrieved viewers to seek out news that is more to their liking and has consequently made a fortune for organizations . . . that purposefully slant news *toward* certain partisan groups.") (emphasis in the original). *See also id.* at 175–77 & 175 n.*.

32. *See, e.g.,* Tejinder Singh, *The Case for Viral Citizenship,* 4 HARV. L. & POL'Y REV. (ONLINE) (Jan. 5, 2010), http://www.hlpronline.com/2010/01/

possible link between modern communications technology and input self-censorship must be multifaceted. We must certainly take some account, for example, of the related work on declining social capital by Robert Putnam,[33] and of Bill Bishop on our increasingly homogeneous neighborhoods.[34]

Or consider the continuing relevance of a classic argument of John Stuart Mill. Mill famously asserts:

> He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.[35]

Perhaps even more relevantly for our purposes, Mill emphasizes that we must hear more than our allies' versions of our opponents' arguments, perhaps prepackaged with refutations. That amounts to something like mere shadowboxing. Instead, we must hear opposing positions as formulated and expressed by

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singh (explaining that citizens are increasingly behaving like consumers, in the sense of seeking out favorable evidence, and ignoring or dismissing unfavorable evidence bearing upon their pre-existing preferences, in an increasingly empty, gladiatorial, vitriolic public policy and electoral debate); Thomas S. Ulen, *Democracy on the Line: A Review of Republic.com by Cass Sunstein*, 2001 U. ILL. J.L. TECH. & POL'Y 317, 337–38 (arguing from Putnam's work that the decline in our "social capital," connectedness, and mutual engagement predates any possible influence of computer-accessed news and opinion—"Voting, giving, trusting, meeting, visiting, and so on had all begun to decline while Bill Gates was still in grade school."); David Brooks, *Riders on the Storm*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 20, 2010, at A21 (discussing Sunstein's basic argument and some empirical evidence presenting critiques and limitations thereof); Nicholas D. Kristof, *The Daily Me*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 19, 2009, at A31 (citing a number of relevant works, along with that of Professor Sunstein, including BILL BISHOP, THE BIG SORT: WHY THE CLUSTERING OF LIKE-MINDED AMERICA IS TEARING US APART (2008) (on historically increasing tendencies toward geographic segregation by political beliefs and other criteria, resulting in increasing localized political homogeneity)); Christopher Caldwell, *How On Earth Do You Tame Extremists? Cass Sunstein Tackles an Impossible Task*, SLATE (June 15, 2009), http://www.slate.com/id/221 9486 (discussing the possibility of different forms of deliberation having either positive or negative effects on democracy); James A. Thomson, *A House Divided: Polarization and Partisanship*, PLAIN DEALER ONLINE (Cleveland) (May 14, 2010), http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2010/05/a_house_divided_ polarization_a.html ("Countries at war seek to dehumanize the enemy, to underscore its supposed moral defects, in order to motivate the troops. In politics, the same applies.").

    33. *See* Ulen, *supra* note 32, at 338 (discussing Putnam).

    34. *See* Kristof, *supra* note 32 (discussing Bishop's "Big Sort" phenomenon).

    35. MILL, *supra* note 13, at 98.

those "who actually believe them, who defend them in earnest and do their very utmost for them."[36] We must hear opposing arguments from those able and motivated to formulate them "in their most plausible and persuasive form."[37] And even before self-segregation through modern communications technologies, Mill argues that the overwhelming majority of educated persons "have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them."[38]

Overall, Mill seems not only to have recognized the censorship potential of informal, non-governmental groups, as we saw above,[39] but to have anticipated some elements[40] of the contemporary Sunstein-type concerns as well. To this we could easily add the work of any number of contemporary social scientists and other writers.

James Surowiecki, for example, emphasizes the importance of diverse perspectives and independence of individual thought and experience in some kinds of group decisionmaking.[41] Surowiecki argues that "groups that are too much alike find it harder to keep learning, because each member is bringing less and less new information to the table. Homogenous groups . . . become progressively less able to investigate alternatives."[42]

Surowiecki argues that such a group's increasing errors tend to be unidirectional, cumulative, and systematic, rather than random and uncorrelated, and therefore often more damaging.[43] As a group excludes or rationalizes away challenging perspectives, its members increasingly reinforce rather than adapt their

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36.   *Id.* at 99.

37.   *Id.*

38.   *Id.* Mill's overall implication, though, seems to be that political partisans who enjoy self-validation and self-confirmation might actually benefit by attempting to construct the strongest possible cases against their own views, but that any such attempt would be far inferior to an authentic encounter with the best articulations of sincere opponents. *See id.* at 98–99. *See also Balanced Arguments are More Persuasive,* PSYBLOG (Nov. 8, 2010), http://www.spring.org.uk/2010/11/balanced-arguments-are-more-persuasive.php (last visited Jan. 7, 2011).

39.   *See supra* notes 13–17 and accompanying text.

40.   I cannot personally recall Mill, in any of his writings, clearly making the claim that deliberations within mostly homogeneous groups tend to drive the group further toward a more extreme position. For the view that homogeneity leads to "extremification," see *supra* notes 24–25 and accompanying text.

41.   *See* JAMES SUROWIECKI, THE WISDOM OF CROWDS xix–xx (2005).

42.   *Id.* at 31. Any such inadvertent serious and systematic impairment of one's own *information-gathering* and information-processing would fall within what we have referred to as input-side self-censorship.

43.   *See id.* at 41.

beliefs.[44] The homogeneous group thus becomes vulnerable to "groupthink"[45] and to dogmatism or closed-mindedness.[46] Meaningful group self-correction may eventually become almost impossible.

Relatedly, social scientist Philip Tetlock[47] suggests that "[w]e need to cultivate the art of self-overhearing. . . . If we listen to ourselves carefully, we will often not like what we hear."[48] Professor Tetlock's studies recognize the possible danger of the "vice of excessive open-mindedness,"[49] but conclude that the generally greater danger in judging and forecasting is "hubris, the . . . vice of closed-mindedness, of dismissing dissonant possibilities too quickly."[50] Specifically, Professor Tetlock refers to "the ridiculously low thresholds of proof that partisans set for rustling up evidence that supports their side or casts aspersions on the other."[51]

There is also a related social science literature on what has been called "confirmation bias." The general idea of confirmation bias is hardly new, dating at the very least from the time of Francis Bacon.[52] Bacon observed:

> The human understanding, once it has adopted opinions . . . draws everything else to support and agree with them. And though it may meet a greater number and weight of contrary instances, it will, with great and harmful prejudice, ignore or condemn or exclude them . . . in order that the authority of those earlier assumptions may remain intact and unharmed.[53]

Of course, input self-censorship can also take the additional form of, in various ways, ensuring that one rarely encounters

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44. *See id.* at 37.

45. *See id.* at 36–37 (discussing the political-psychological classic IRVING L. JANIS, GROUPTHINK: PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES OF POLICY DECISIONS AND FIASCOS (2d ed. 1982)).

46. *See id.* at 37–38. *See generally,* T. W. ADORNO ET AL., THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY (1950) (empirical study on the rise of the "authoritarian type of man" and the concomitant rise of fascism); MILTON ROKEACH, THE OPEN AND CLOSED MIND: INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE NATURE OF BELIEF SYSTEMS AND PERSONALITY SYSTEMS (1960).

47. PHILIP E. TETLOCK, EXPERT POLITICAL JUDGMENT: HOW GOOD IS IT? HOW CAN WE KNOW? (2005).

48. *Id.* at 215.

49. *Id.* at 23.

50. *Id.*

51. *Id.* at 215.

52. FRANCIS BACON, NOVUM ORGANUM (Peter Urbach & John Gibson ed. & trans., Open Court 1994) (1620).

53. *Id.* at *Book I: Aphorisms* 46, at 57.

views contrary to one's own convictions, at least as cogently expressed by the best opposing advocates.[54] As we shall see, opposing views can be approached in a wide variety of materially different spirits.[55]

The contemporary literature on confirmation bias is now sizable,[56] with the Baconian formula undergoing some clarification, if not modification. One contemporary reviewer of the literature has concluded:

> [Confirmation bias] refers usually to unwitting selectivity in the acquisition and use of evidence. The line between deliberate selectivity in the use of evidence and unwitting molding of facts to fit hypotheses or beliefs is a difficult one to draw in practice, but the distinction is meaningful conceptually, and confirmation bias has more to do with the latter than with the former.[57]

More broadly, there is a continuum of self-censorship from the most self-conscious and deliberate sorts, to the most "unwitting" and consciously unrecognized sorts. Researchers have found that participants in social science studies have, from one point on the continuum or another, "distorted new information to favor their preferred alternative."[58] Neither is this just an individual phenomenon—"groups [also] displayed a confirmation bias; groups requested more information that supported the initial group opinion than information contrary to the group opinion."[59]

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54. *See supra* notes 35–40 and accompanying text.

55. *See infra* notes 56–69 and accompanying text.

56. *See generally* Raymond S. Nickerson, *Confirmation Bias: A Ubiquitous Phenomenon in Many Guises*, 2 REV. GEN. PSYCHOL. 175 (1998).

57. *Id.* at 175. Much more narrowly, under the concept of confirmation bias one could imagine that "hypothesis testers are unlikely to seek information expected to be inconsistent with the target hypothesis, even if that information is quite diagnostic." Gretchen B. Chapman & Eric J. Johnson, *Incorporating the Irrelevant: Anchors in Judgment of Belief and Value, in* HEURISTICS AND BIASES: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF INTUITIVE JUDGMENT 120, 133 (Thomas Gilovich et al. eds., 2002) [hereinafter HEURISTICS].

58. Lyn M. Van Swol, *Perceived Importance of Information: The Effects of Mentioning Information, Shared Information Bias, Ownership Bias, and Confirmation Bias*, 10 GROUP PROCESSES & INTERGROUP REL. 239, 242 (2007). Relatedly, "[p]eople rated confirming information as more convincing and were more critical of disconfirming information." *Id. See also* David K. Sherman & Geoffrey L. Cohen, *Accepting Threatening Information: Self-Affirmation and the Reduction of Defensive Biases*, 11 CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN PSYCHOL. SCI. 119, 119–20 (2002) (describing reader beliefs as biasing their interpretation of new information, and further confirming those beliefs).

59. *See* Swol, *supra* note 58. Stable, if unfortunate, equilibria can be the result of reasoning and social processes that may seem justifiable. *See, e.g.,* Wing

Beyond this general social science work, a number of studies have focused more particularly on the dynamics of contemporary news and opinion dissemination, and on the Internet in particular, with more directly specific relevance to the Sunstein thesis[60] and to our concern for input self-censorship. This additional analysis, while occasionally being optimistic, has raised serious concerns about the type of self-censorship now freely available to all. This Essay will next contemplate those studies and their ramifications.

B.   *The Impact of Modern Media & Technology*

With the advent of modern technology, most specifically the Internet, the ability to self-censor has increased. Many recent studies have concentrated on how this technology has influenced the types of ideas and arguments to which people are exposed. The more optimistic studies conclude, for example, that the Internet "is a 'mixed blessing' for deliberation, as it generates both unintentional exposure to opposing views, as well as 'drivers' that channel users away from opposing views."[61] Even so, there seems to be evidence that "[i]n many online settings, individuals effectively choose to deliberate only with similarly-interested or likely-positioned others; in such settings there is not only

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Suen, *Mutual Admiration Clubs*, 48 ECON. INQUIRY 123 (2010) (describing the tendency to consider people with similar beliefs well-informed and associate more with them, as then leading to like-minded groups each believing in their own insightfulness); Matthew Gentzkow & Jesse M. Shapiro, *Media Bias and Reputation*, 114 J. POL. ECON. 280 (2006) (describing the model in which news providers bias their presentations toward customer beliefs in order to build a reputation for quality among those customers). Note as well the social costs of a tendency to believe that one's own opinions, validated by more or less homogeneous peers, are more widely shared than they actually are. *See* Emily Pronin et al., *Understanding Misunderstanding: Social Psychological Perspectives, in* HEURISTICS, *supra* note 57, at 636, 642. There are also the social costs of what is called "motivated reasoning" about politics, in which the focus is not on a disinterested pursuit of the truth, wherever it may lie, but on some form of psychological or social gratification based on one's established opinions. *See, e.g.*, DREW WESTEN, THE POLITICAL BRAIN: THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN DECIDING THE FATE OF THE NATION (2007); Philip E. Tetlock, *Intuitive Politicians, Theologians, and Prosecutors: Exploring the Empirical Implications of Deviant Functionalist Metaphors, in* HEURISTICS, *supra* note 57, at 582, 583 (referring to the desire not to be right in some objective sense, or even as judged by a broader culture, but to "protect and enhance" one's social identity "in the eyes of the constituencies" toward which one feels the most accountability).

60.   *See supra* notes 20–25 and accompanying text.

61.   Azi Lev-On & Bernard Manin, *Happy Accidents: Deliberation and Online Exposure to Opposing Views*, EUROZINE (July 19, 2006), http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-07-19-manin-en.html.

a reduced diversity of views, but also limited opportunities to encounter opposing views."[62]

Specifying, and then quantifying, these phenomena pose problems. But there is certainly some reasonable grounds for overall public interest concern. One study, for example, found that "[a]bout 94% of political blog readers consume only blogs from one side of the ideological spectrum. The remaining 6% read blogs from both sides . . . . Few who read political blogs habitually seek out blogs from the other side of the ideological spectrum."[63] At first blush, these sorts of numbers suggest a disturbing willful intellectual and political isolationism, whatever further social effects may occur.

The picture is complicated by phenomena such as blog-to-blog linking, which can cross partisan and ideological lines.[64] Most blog-to-blog links, however—91% in one study—do not seem to cross political lines.[65] Of the blog-to-blog links that do cross political lines, many do so in a spirit falling far short of a joint enterprise in dispassionately seeking the truth.[66] The "spirit" with which one blog links to a generally politically opposed political blog can range across a broad continuum. The spirit or tone of the link may be one of crediting a point well made, to a variety of more neutral states of mind, to condescension, derision, dismissiveness, basic incomprehension, astonishment, or contempt.

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62. Bernard Manin, Professor, N.Y. Univ. & Azi Lev-On, Professor, N.Y. Univ., Address at the Second Conference on Online Deliberation: Online Deliberation and Exposure to Opposing Views (May 20, 2005), *available at* http://www.online-deliberation.net/conf2005/viewabstract.php?id=24.

63. Henry Farrell, Eric Lawrence & John Sides, *Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation and Polarization in American Politics*, 8 PERSP. ON POL. 141 (2010).

64. *See, e.g.*, Eszter Hargittai et al., *Cross-Ideological Discussions Among Conservative and Liberal Bloggers*, 134 PUB. CHOICE 67 (2008).

65. *Id.* at 76. For a definition of the blog phenomenon of "trolling," see the noun form "troll," UrbanDictionary, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=troll (last visited Jan. 10, 2011) ("One who posts a deliberately provocative message to a newsgroup or message board with the intention of causing maximum disruption and argument."). For the broadly "disinhibiting effect" of Internet communications, see Lyrissa Barnett Lidsky & Thomas F. Cotter, *Authorship, Audiences, and Anonymous Speech*, 82 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 1537, 1575 (2007); John Suler, *The Online Disinhibition Effect*, 7 CYBERPSYCHOL. & BEHAV. 321 (2004).

66. The most common form of such linkage has been found to be of the so-called "straw-man" variety. Hargittai, *supra* note 64, at 84. There are also occasional blogs that may proclaim: We read [a politically opposed blog] so you don't have to.

The frequency of cross-ideological blog linkage, quantitatively, may also tell us little about whether anyone who clicks on the link is genuinely open to influence. Certainly, a favorite and predictable blog routinely presenting mind-cocoa for its devotees may offer no links at all, or links only to predictably safe, reassuring, unchallenging blogs. Similar blogs may also offer links to pre-refuted opposing views, intended mainly to re-confirm the standard perspective of the "gateway" blog. Many of those who do click on such a link may do so only in the corresponding spirit. In the extreme case, some may even post troll-type comments that tend to degrade the quality of the opposing site, and invite similarly degrading retaliation. The overall result may be that both sites become less appealing to anyone interested in an efficient search for truth, let alone civil discourse.

It is in this context that we must place the studies that have found reassuringly low and stable degrees of ideological self-segregation, and the common use of multiple news sources, on the Internet.[67] Unfortunately, it is not easy to answer the really crucial questions in this area. We might want to know at a minimum the typical length of stay at a politically uncongenial newspaper's website. But even then, the meaning of a long stay might not be clear. It is possible that some conservatives might spend an hour on the New York Times website working on the Sunday Crossword Puzzle. It is also possible that some political liberals might spend substantial time on relatively conservative New York newspaper websites for their sports sections.

Visiting a politically uncongenial website merely to keep track of what one's political opponents are saying, in an only minimally closed-minded[68] fashion, should not count as self-censorship for our purposes. But at some point visiting an opposing news or opinion site with a sufficiently dismissive attitude or even

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67. See the widely cited work of Gentzkow and Shapiro, especially Matthew Gentzkow & Jesse M. Shapiro, *Ideological Segregation Online and Offline* (Chicago Booth Sch. of Bus. Working Paper No. 10-19, Initiative on Global Markets Working Paper No. 55, 2010), *available at* http://www.ssrn.com/abstract=1588920.

68. *See supra* note 46. For additional contemporary work on dogmatism or closed-mindedness and political ideology, see, for example, John T. Jost et al., *Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition*, 129 PSYCHOL. BULL. 339 (2003); Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick & Jingbo Meng, *Looking the Other Way: Selective Exposure to Attitude-Consistent and Counterattitudinal Political Information*, 36 COMM. RES. 426 (2009) (finding rather substantial voluntary exposure to counterattitudinal media messages, but in an artificial experimental context). *See also* Jonathan Haidt, *What Makes People Vote Republican?*, EDGE (Sept. 9, 2008), http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/haidt08/haidt08_index.html (referring to the "partisan mindset" of "reject first, ask rhetorical questions later").

a fundamental ignorance and hostility amounts to self-censorship if one's preconceptions are typically intensified[69] by the visit.

II. A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE: EMPHASIZING THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH AS A CIVIC AND PERSONAL VIRTUE

One partial response to the problem of widespread self-censorship, in whatever form, cuts across ideological boundaries. This consists in cultivating a desire, even an overriding desire in this context, to seek the truth in matters of politics. The quest for a closer approach to the truth in policy and politics, precisely given our inevitable biases[70] and fallibility, can be seen as a personal and civic virtue.

There are admittedly costs to prioritizing the pursuit of truth as a virtue. One's political commitments may be intense and important to one's identity and may help secure one's place in institutions and social organizations. It is possible that more strongly prioritizing the pursuit of the truth in politics might take the edge off one's political intensity, or even off of one's active quest for justice as a political goal. There may be a risk of turning from a Quixote into a Hamlet.[71]

More positively, though, prioritizing a conscientious search for truth, even as an unattainable ideal, may allow one to better balance the qualities of the single-system obsessed "hedgehog" and the more nuanced, eclectic-minded "fox," to one's general betterment as a judge of events.[72] One dedicated first to truth rather than to partisanship or to predetermined answers may

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69. For the broader metaphors of "the politics of the centrifuge" and of the perhaps unduly optimistic formulation of "echo chambers," see BISHOP, *supra* note 32, at 228, 227. Orwell famously depicts this phenomenon in its most extreme form in the famous Two Minutes of Hate ritual. *See* GEORGE ORWELL, NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR 12–13 (Plume 2003) (1949) (involving more or less voluntary exposure to a "venomous attack upon the doctrines of the Party—an attack so exaggerated and perverse that a child should have been able to see through it, and yet just plausible enough to fill one with an alarmed feeling that other people, less level-headed than oneself, might be taken in").

70. *See generally* HEURISTICS, *supra* note 57; JUDGMENT UNDER UNCERTAINTY: HEURISTICS AND BIASES (Daniel Kahneman et al. eds., 1982) (explaining that people rely on a limited number of heuristic principles).

71. *See* IVAN TURGENEV, HAMLET AND DON QUIXOTE (Robert Nichols trans., 1976) (1860). *See also* Sherman & Cohen, *supra* note 58 (noting that taking seriously political information at odds with one's own views may threaten one's self-esteem and recommending, on this basis, that persons—or at least those seeking to persuade them—emphasize alternative sources of self-worth and self-esteem).

72. *See* TETLOCK, *supra* note 47 (finding superior predictive results and greater self-awareness to be associated with nuanced, multi-dimensional, adaptive fox-type theorists, as distinct from single system-bound hedgehog-type

also be more persuasive to the uncommitted. There are also dignity-related interests in pursuing an assumedly meaningful truth.

Even more deeply, we might ask about the ultimate value of political commitments not based upon a constraining commitment to the truth, or to some meaningful check upon individual and group self-delusion.[73] There may in time be a surprising fragility even to dominant, shared political commitments not disciplined by a concern for truth in any serious sense.[74] If the truth does not much matter, are one's political commitments, whatever goals they may otherwise serve, not ultimately arbitrary? Does one want to admit this ultimate arbitrariness in the course of one's advocacy and actual politicking?

But if the pursuit of the truth does matter,[75] and one does not prioritize that pursuit, does that not undermine the ultimate dignity of one's political life and commitments? Is there much dignity in political commitments based on what one could, with reasonable good faith effort, discover to be illusion? Do we have, on the other hand, any reason to fear that committing first to the pursuit of the truth will lead us toward genuinely disastrous political conclusions?[76] Why not adopt a pleasant, if ultimately disastrous course, if there is no truth of the matter? Reflecting on

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thinkers). For the basic metaphor, see ISAIAH BERLIN, THE HEDGEHOG AND THE FOX: AN ESSAY ON TOLSTOY'S VIEW OF HISTORY (Ivan R. Dee 1993) (1953).

73. For a recent debate on this general subject, see RICHARD RORTY & PASCAL ENGEL, WHAT'S THE USE OF TRUTH? (Patrick Savidan ed., William McCuaig trans., 2007). For some relevant moral theory, see, for example, RICHARD JOYCE, THE MYTH OF MORALITY (2001); MARK ELI KALDERON, MORAL FICTIONALISM (2005); WALTER SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG, MORAL SKEPTICISMS (2006).

74. See VÁCLAV HAVEL, OPEN LETTERS: SELECTED WRITINGS 1965–1990 147 (Paul Wilson ed., 1992).

75. Even an irritated sense that any unbiased person should be able to somehow "see" the rightness of one's commitments seems to involve a crude form of intuitionism regarding moral truth. For sophisticated versions of intuitionism, see ROBERT AUDI, THE GOOD IN THE RIGHT: A THEORY OF INTUITION AND INTRINSIC VALUE (2005); MICHAEL HUEMER, ETHICAL INTUITIONISM (2005); ETHICAL INTUITIONISM: RE-EVALUATIONS (Philip Stratton-Lake ed., 2003).

76. Suppose that we discover the (perhaps paradoxical) truth of the matter to be that "[t]he human race is just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet." PAUL DAVIES, COSMIC JACKPOT: WHY OUR UNIVERSE IS JUST RIGHT FOR LIFE 222 (2007) (quoting DAVID DEUTSCH, THE FABRIC OF REALITY 177–78 (1997)). If this were so, and our political commitments were dampened as a result, wherein would lie the great objective loss in facing that reality? If people genuinely are reducible to a chemical scum, we would never have had any traditional sort of dignity to lose either way. Our political commitments would be ultimately arbitrary, gratuitous, and deluded. If some form of skepticism really turns out to be our best answer, then we never really had especially much to lose.

these questions may properly lead us to take the pursuit of truth more seriously as an intellectual and practical virtue.

We must of course first see an enhanced commitment to pursuing the truth as at least possible, before we can see it as a crucial virtue. From the standpoint of sheer possibility, consider the testimony of the writer and free press advocate Hilaire Belloc:

> There are some (and I count myself one) who will read anything, however much they may differ from its tone and standpoint, in order to obtain more knowledge. I am not sure that it is a healthy habit. At any rate it is an unusual one. Most men will only read that which, while informing them, takes for granted a philosophy more or less sympathetic with their own.[77]

Nor are occasional free press advocates and particular scholars the only persons for whom the appeal of truth can be important. The philosopher Michael Dummett more broadly suggests that "[o]ur progression, from childhood on, through successive layers of distinction of the objective from the subjective forms in us a desire to understand what things are like in themselves, as opposed to how they appear to us."[78]

Those who would prioritize the pursuit of truth over their commitment to a substantive school of thought are not without their admirable modern role models. Consider at a minimum Ludwig Wittgenstein's remark that "[t]he philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes [him or her] into a philosopher."[79] This does not commit Wittgenstein to any robust theory of truth. But Wittgenstein here seems at least to adopt a certain distancing from one's own policy preferences and substantive conclusions.

More concretely, and more directly, consider the approach of Charles Darwin. Darwin, apparently, did not ignore or elbow

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77. HILAIRE BELLOC, THE FREE PRESS 66–67 (Wildside Press 2006) (1918).

78. MICHAEL DUMMETT, THE NATURE AND FUTURE OF PHILOSOPHY 43 (Akeel Bilgrami ed., 2010). *See also* 3 Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, in* COLLECTED WORKS OF BERNARD LONERGAN 619 (Frederick E. Crowe & Robert M. Doran eds., 5th ed. 1992) (referring to a "desire to know" that is "independent of the individual's likes and dislikes, of his wishful and his anxious thinking").

79. LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, ZETTEL § 455 (G.E.M. Anscombe & G.H. von Wright eds., G.E.M. Anscombe trans., 1967). *See also* the London Times obituary for noted philosopher Sir Peter Strawson: "He had no interest, though, in gathering disciples; . . . he always wished [his students] to attach them[selves] not to himself, but to the highest standards of philosophical argument." *Sir Peter Strawson*, TIMES (London), Feb. 15, 2006, *available at* http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article730826.ece.

aside apparent discrepancies within what was to become known as Darwinism. In particular, a contemporary theorist indicates that

> Darwin . . . kept a special notebook to write down observa-
> tions that seemed to falsify his theory. Darwin did this
> because he realized he had a tendency to forget these
> anomalous observations, . . . presaging psychological
> research on cognitive biases such as the tendency of people
> to search selectively for evidence that confirms held
> hypotheses.[80]

In this and other respects, pursuit of the truth may require psychological sacrifices.[81] But the examples of Wittgenstein,[82] Darwin,[83] and others[84] illustrate how this virtue can be cultivated. Importantly for our purposes, the example of Darwin in particular shows how genuine openness and receptivity to unwelcome data can protect against the subtle self-censorship of artificial isolation and self-validation.

III. CONCLUSION

When we otherwise freely choose to, at a minimum, largely "cocoon" ourselves within a self-confirming political communication environment, we engage, on the "input" side, in a form of political self-censorship. The problem of self-censorship in its contemporary forms should not be minimized. Enhanced communications technology has apparently not upgraded our general level of civic and political knowledge from modest previous baseline levels.[85] The current quality of political discourse across partisan and ideological lines has understandably been called

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80. David M. Buss, *Sexual Strategies Theory: Historical Origins and Current Status*, 35 J. SEX RES. 19, 19 (1998).

81. It has been argued, at the extreme, that "[t]he seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust. . . . Only then, and not until then, will he have a glimpse of truth." M.K. GANDHI, An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth ix–x (Mahadev Desai trans., 1957).

82. *See* WITTGENSTEIN, *supra* note 79 and accompanying text.

83. *See* Buss, *supra* note 80 and accompanying text.

84. *See* GANDHI, *supra* note 81. This would include Gandhi as a seeker after truth.

85. *See, e.g.,* Daniel F. Stone, Ideological Media Bias, (Aug. 2010) (unpublished manuscript), *available at* http://www.ssrn.com/abstract=1376085 (citing PEW RESEARCH CENTER, WHAT AMERICANS KNOW: 1989–2007 (2007), http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/319.pdf ("[D]espite consumer media options increasing in recent years, the degree to which the population is informed on political issues is not improving.")). *See also* William A. Galston, *Civic Education and Political Participation*, 37 PS: POL. SCI. & POL. 263 (2004). In general, it seems fair to say that any increase in political vitriol and contempt has not been

into serious question.[86] Professor Ronald Dworkin has gone so far as to judge that our overall political discourse is in an "appalling state."[87] Thus, we must turn to an emphasis on the civic and personal virtue of the pursuit of truth, prior to or constraining our substantive political commitments.[88]

We unfortunately cannot be sure that most people will find the pursuit of political truth, wherever it may lead,[89] more rewarding than simply retaining their pre-existing political commitments. We occasionally find an odd combination of "true believership" and a litigator adversarialism on behalf of one's adopted political "client" and one's own ideas. There can be a sense that ignorance, strategy, posturing, and disingenuousness have occasionally replaced candor and genuine inquiry.

Part of the problem here is that in the realm of politics, individuals who hold what turn out to be false or otherwise unexpectedly costly beliefs do not generally, as individuals, absorb or internalize the costs of their own mistaken beliefs.[90] Being even grossly and perpetually personally wrong about broad political matters normally involves few personal costs that can be attributed to the personal error itself, as opposed to, say, the popularity or unpopularity of the view.

A person who, in contrast, buys a defective and unwarranted consumer product, or who mistakenly drinks spoiled milk, or even, on some accounts, adopts an untrue religion, typically internalizes and personally bears much of the costs of those personal mistakes. But a citizen's mistaken opinion about a broad economic or political issue, even as a voter,[91] does not cause a legislature to adopt a policy where it would otherwise not do so.

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matched by an increasingly sophisticated public grasp of opposing positions, or of the relevant underlying social sciences and humanities.

86.   *See, e.g.,* STEVEN D. SMITH, THE DISENCHANTMENT OF SECULAR DIS-COURSE 3–6 (2010) (citing RONALD DWORKIN, IS DEMOCRACY POSSIBLE HERE? PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW POLITICAL DEBATE 22 (2006) ("[M]ost people now have no interest in discussion or debate with those they regard as belonging to an entirely alien religious or political culture.")).

87.   DWORKIN, *supra* note 86, at 1.

88.   *See supra* notes 70–84 and accompanying text.

89.   This phrase echoes that of Thomas Jefferson: "[W]e are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead . . . ." Letter from Thomas Jefferson to William Roscoe (Dec. 27, 1820) (on file with the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Paper Series I, Image #419).

90.   For a useful discussion, see Michael Huemer, *Why People Are Irrational About Politics,* http://home.sprynet.com/~owl1/irrationality.htm (last visited Jan. 10, 2011).

91.   *See, e.g.,* Satoshi Kanazawa, *Why Do People Vote? I,* PSYCHOL. TODAY: SCI. FUNDAMENTALIST (Nov. 8, 2009), http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-scientific-fundamentalist/200911/why-do-people-vote-i.

Such mistaken individual judgments typically impose no detectable public policy costs at all, let alone public policy costs that any individual voter must internalize. There is, in this sense, little incentive on the merits for individuals to try to be right about public policy.

Of course, there are all sorts of possible social and psychological costs (and benefits) of speaking in favor of policies in which one has insufficient reason to believe.[92] Membership in a valued group may exert pressure toward adopting particular beliefs. Self-image may also play a role. From the standpoint of minimizing self-censorship, though, we must hope that reasons for conscientiously seeking the truth are at least as strong. The degree of appeal of strengthening one's desire to determine the truth, based on considering a broader range of views, reflects in part one's perceived costs in doing so. On the positive side, though, there does not seem to be any law of nature holding that we cannot take genuine pleasure, or at least less displeasure, in encountering an apparent counterexample to even an intensely held belief.[93]

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92. *See generally* Huemer, *supra* note 90 (describing differing views for voters' beliefs).

93. *See* Buss, *supra* note 80 and accompanying text. We might see such experiences as enhancing our knowledge, dignity, temperance, self-realization, and prudential wisdom. More broadly, note the inevitable collective indispensability over time of the classic virtues. *See, e.g.,* JOSEF PIEPER, THE FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES (Richard Winston trans., 1966). Seeing value in these qualities, for their own sake, might tend to partially allay the fear that reduced "extremism" by one side of a political dispute simply advantages the other, as yet not moderated, side. Virtue need not be simply a tactical gambit in which one attempts to sucker one's pre-determined political opponents.