

Part One of my review which is reference to the text evaluation Rubric item that reads: **“Does the text provide a background of information that will motivate students to examine their own attitudes and behavior, responsibilities, rights, and privileges as citizens in our society, and to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives?”**

Exhibit:

My answer to this is a most certain no: Students and parents expect that their teachers and the community that support them, for the high-quality books needed to develop this social responsibility, and intelligence needed to exercise it. The heart of any textbook, or any book in social or any other science is first--truth, when there is fundamental commonsense and scientific social agreement on facts. Then when the truth may be still open to question, substantiation.

The following is a record of untruth, and/or unsubstantiated claims which the authors are presenting to our students.

There are 10 pages here, covering just the first 30 pages of text. If that is the tendency throughout then one can imagine 100 of its 300 pages can be consumed identifying the falsehoods and/or reckless claims in a book we will certify for consumption for students in this school district.

*“Humans became wise 40,000 years ago. That is when we learned to make deals with strangers.”*

Fact: “When we learned this” is simply, in fact, unknown.

*“Our superpower is our ability to make deals.”*

In fact: That is simply not our most super, power. This is also just rhetoric, and borders on sounding insincere, flip, almost as if it is a joke. It is the beginning of a persistent, unsettling sense that if this were written by academics, they were in a room laughing as they wrote it, wondering if they could get away with this joke, and how funny it would be if they did. I will continue: with their claims in *italics*:

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*“Large mammals are hermits. If we were we would live and die like them.”*

In fact: No species of large mammal is hermetic. A few go through periods of individual isolation. But as a rule: Not one.

*“The capacity and the need for gossip evolved together and together they created the possibility of developing a reputation.”*

In fact: What can be said here? This is just nonsense.

In the first chance to substantiate comes with a comment on the political philosopher Rawls, an essential figure in the field they claim to be working in. He is simply caricatured, then abandoned, with no student guidance about his work or what they might explore about it.

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*“We can get what we want in ways that make others better off. For example, we can trade.”*

In fact, trade by itself is not “existentially” moral, making others better off BY DEFINITION.

*“People get rich when they make people better off, like the light bulb invention, not when they make people worse off.”*

Well, consider the trade involving child prostitution, heroin, tainted baby formula, no name a few? What about the slave trade which flourished when the authors’ hero, Adam Smith wrote? or the phenomena of market cornering, when desperate people are forced to overpay for essentials? Or commodities hoarding? Or price gouging during disasters? Or the trade in 400 to 600 percent payday loans?

*“If society were a zero-sum game, though we would be born in caves resulting in a balanced diet of seeds and stone that ruined our teeth before the age of thirty. Without teeth, we would starve shortly afterwards, as our ancestors did when human society was in its infancy.*

None of this is true. We simply have no evidence that starvation from tooth loss is the major or even minor cause of early mortality for these populations. Disease, exposure, and general hardship, including warfare and natural starvation are much better documented.

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*“Suppose you find market society repulsive, and you are seeking the most devastating critique of markets you can find. Where would you go? The places for top-quality criticism are London, New York, or Boston – Pyongyang, Havana, or even Moscow.”*

Setting up these four “straw men” as examples, it’s the start of a text-long pattern where this logical fallacy is used to mislead students into agreement. First straw man—choosing someone who finds market society (whatever that is) “repulsive” and then the places to find this person, who is a writer---again three straw men: *Pyongyang, Havana, or even Moscow.*”

We could list fifty cities, easily where there is better or at least equally trenchant criticism of capitalism.

Is this point of view opposed to a society that is “non-commercial?” Uses no money, has no businesses? That barter? What could this possibly mean? There is not one place where “commercial society” the stalking horse for the entire book, is defined.

*Critics, needless to say, come from the right as well as from the left. Conservatives, fundamentalists, and evangelicals today, who lament the moral decay of commercial society, never dream of leaving it, because there was a good reason why their ancestors risked their lives in order to migrate to commercial societies. Only in a commercial society were they secure in the right to choose their faith. In other words, alternatives to materialistic lifestyles tend to be secure in commercial societies and less so elsewhere, since commercial societies tend also to be tolerant societies.*

First, these people fled “commercial societies” that sought and found financial advantages by exploiting religious hatreds to solidify restrictions on commercial activity by religious “others.” They again begin a textbook-long effort to firmly

establish that justice is simply—equivalent to commerce. Simply that. There is not one counter example where commerce does not achieve justice. And commercial society achieves its existential perfection again, and here is the second of what I found were dozens of examples, using one of the oldest logical fallacies known, and one that any responsible philosopher or ethicist would zealously guard against—the STRAW MAN fallacy. As follows: It goes like this: the perfection of tolerance is to be found in London, or New York, or Boston, not the straw man—example--Pyongyang. “See? that proves our point!”

Note: it is not incidental that they begin a pattern of Anglo centrism. These English speaking, “Anglish” examples are the highest standard? Why not Rome, Berlin, Paris, Budapest, Istanbul, Delhi, etc. But that would be also to flatter the author with insight on diversity that is lacking throughout the book. It is also the beginning of a persistent Anglo-centric worldview, to define scientific progress as a creation of English and to a very much smaller extent still, European, brilliance.

“*Tolerant societies.*” ?? What does the author mean. No definition given. Another caricature. Where do we start our list of examples where “commercial” societies have been deeply lacking in the standard dictionary definition: the ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with.

1. The Jim Crow south 2. Nazi Germany --- the persistence of racism, xenophobia, violence against women, etc. in commercial society after commercial society.

*Best places for high quality criticism are London, New York, or Boston -not Havana, Pyongyang or even Moscow. "Only in commercial societies were critics like Marx and Rousseau free to speak their minds."*

Neither were free to speak their minds in "commercial society." Rousseau spent a lifetime avoiding death threats, censorship, and the authorities who were direct representatives of the commercial powers of his time. Both saw their books destroyed, burned, and followers, also. Marx and those who agreed with him saw a century of blacklists, imprisonment, torture, and murder in dozens of "commercial societies" for speaking their minds. And note---there is no academic debate on this---allowing that the authors represent a minority view. What they have written has no academic support. And like in every other assertion in this book, none is given. None.

*Somehow, we have accomplished what Francis Bacon and his secretary, Thomas Hobbes, said we needed to accomplish in order for vanity from turning the world into a war of all against all. Western powers figured out how to turn people away from war and toward trucking and bartering. The West turned other people's talents into a boon rather than a threat.*

This is not just absurd, but dangerous for students to read such an astounding, unsubstantiated statement. How can educated persons have written such absolute drivel? --- Other people's talents were turned into a boon and not a threat? The "west" did this? No "talents" were turned toward war, crime, bigotry, indeed, holocaust?

*In a nutshell, society's most liberating achievement lies in how, under favor-able circumstances, it turns human energy and*

*ingenuity away from war (away from zero-sum and negative-sum games in general) and toward peaceful, voluntary, mutually advantageous cooperation. To be sure, the peace of which Bacon dreamt still eludes much of the developing world. However, western powers are no longer embroiled in century-long wars with each other. Bacon's vision of what science could achieve turned out to be right.*

In fact, it did not: This is a distortion of history and its uses. Note the subject change: it is “trucking and bartering” which is the most liberating achievement, a choice that does not include war. Trucking and bartering are the lifeblood of war economies. They say we moved to peaceful, voluntary, mutually advantageous cooperation, and then say the truth—peace has eluded both Bacon’s dreams, and the world. We are not embroiled in “century long” war? Our own country, along with its allies has been at war constantly since the end of WWII. And as regards “world war” in the manner of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are still early in this century.

So, “commercial society” did not prevent the wars of the twentieth century, there is no evidence whatsoever given that some triumphal moment or change to a commercial society will prevent war. (I have to take a breath here: This is all so absurd, I almost can’t believe I am reading it in a textbook.)

*The work of a scientist Marie Curie one paradigm of Francis Bacon's noblest ambition for humanity.*

In fact, Curie was not a paradigm. She might be a *paragon*, but “paradigm” as a “paradigm shift” is reserved for large changes in scientific perception. This is one of many examples

of actual illiteracy that appear too often this early, and continue, in a book supposedly written by academics.

*Indeed, Smith followed in Bacon's footsteps, insofar as both, like Hobbes, pondered the prospects for channeling natural human propensities in the direction of mutual advantage rather than mutual destruction, Thus Smith studied how natural propensities (to truck and barter, and to be more or less insatiably acquisitive) could be channeled toward pursuits that would make the rest of humanity better off rather than worse off. An exemplar of Bacon's noblest ambition would be technological innovation. For the 1700s, consider Smith's fellow Scots, the steam engine pioneers James Watt and Matthew Boulton, For the 1800s, consider the American steamship operator Cornelius Vanderbilt and the steam-powered locomotives of the Canadian railroad builder James J. Hill.*

First, the cute anachronism, to “truck and barter” is never defined or explained as to why they would use it.

*Neanderthals lived 500,000 years ago, and were “static,” Neanderthal cultural cross fertilization did not occur. In contrast modern humans engaged in trade “almost from the start.” P. 24*

This is simply false. Paleo-anthropologists agree, they lived from 240,000 to 26,000 years ago. In fact, it did not. Trade was present from the start? What start? When they began to trade, which is when they became modern? The vicious circular reasoning is obvious? And IF it was present from a start trade did not begin with their flawed date of 40,000 years



ago, but 200,000 to 300,000 years ago, give or take, depending on the source, but **never near** 40,000.

*“According to Jane Jacobs, cities must have come before agriculture.”*

In fact, they did not. Her speculation on this, did have an unwarranted shelf life but was eventually debunked. It was simply and totally, false. She was a good urban journalist, but not a social scientist. See Smith, et. al.: “People who ought to know better have been willing to accept interpretations about archaeology without consulting archaeologists or works, but solely on the authority of Jane Jacobs, who had no archaeological training or knowledge. If such an urban icon said cities preceded agriculture, then it must be so. Well, I'm afraid Jane Jacobs was just plain wrong about this one fact.”

[Smith, Michael E., Jason Ur, and Gary M. Feinman  
2014 Jane Jacobs's 'Cities-First' Model and Archaeological Reality.  
International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 38 \(4\): 1525-  
1535.](#)