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these empires were converted to the religion and thus inherited the culture.

It also helps if an empire is the only civilizing force in a region. As Issawi points out, "Rome was dealing with relatively primitive peoples and Greece with highly civilized ones, strongly tenacious of their old cultures." Likewise, it was easier for Portugal and Spain to persuade the natives

of the New World to adopt their culture than it was for the French to supplant the peoples' powerful ties to Islam in their North African colonies.

In almost every case that Issawi studied "it was the culturally less creative people that imprinted a large area." Good fortune, not merit, he believes, is the stuff of which lasting legacies are made.

PRESS & TELEVISION

TV's Critics

"Real and Perceived Effects of 'Amerika'" by Dominic L. Lasorsa, in *Journalism Quarterly* (Summer 1989), Univ. of S.C., 1621 College St., College of Journalism, Columbia, S.C. 29208-0251.

Liberal critics were hopping mad in 1987 when ABC broadcast its tedious seven-part miniseries, *Amerika*. The miniseries' grim depiction of life in a Soviet-occupied United States, they exclaimed, would turn the American people into raving anti-Soviet Rambos. Although Lasorsa, a professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, does not mention it, ABC aired the miniseries partly to mollify conservative critics, who were hopping mad over ABC's broadcast of *The Day After* in 1983. These critics were convinced that ABC's dire portrait of life in the United States after a nuclear war would turn the American public into pacifist sheep.

As we all know, Americans became neither Rambos nor wimps, and Lasorsa has the opinion poll data to prove it, at least in the case of *Amerika*. But the controversies do raise an interesting question: Why do critics who consider themselves immune

to the influence of television assume that others are such utterly helpless prey to it?

Lasorsa suggests an answer. Of the 523 people he surveyed about *Amerika*, 31 percent felt that the program had much greater impact on others than on themselves. Social scientists call this the "third person effect." What was the distinguishing characteristic of this group? Lasorsa found that many thought of themselves as "political experts." But when he tested all 523 respondents for "real" political knowledge, he found that only 22.5 percent of those "high" in real knowledge exhibited the "third person effect" while 34.7 of those who were "low" in knowledge did.

Lasorsa is rather polite in his conclusion: "Perceived political knowledge rather than real political knowledge fuels the third-person effect." In other words, when it comes to television, those who know least criticize most.

No More Deep Throats?

"When Unnamed Sources Are Banned" by Felix Winternitz, in *The Quill* (Oct. 1989), 53 W. Jackson Blvd., Ste. 731, Chicago, Ill. 60604-3610.

In 1988, George Blake, editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, voiced the anxiety of many news executives when he criticized the widespread use of anonymous sources—the ubiquitous "high administration official" or the mysterious "source

close to the investigation." News stories that rely on anonymous sources, Blake said, are "trust-me" pieces that make it "difficult, if not impossible, for the reader to evaluate the accuracy of the information presented." Unlike his peers, how-

ever, Blake did something. He banned most anonymous sources from stories in the *Enquirer*.

The result, according to Winternitz, editor of *Cincinnati* magazine, has been disaster. The *Enquirer* (circ: 195,000) has been scooped time and again on local stories. Last summer, television's *60 Minutes* broke the story of illegal wiretaps by local policemen and Cincinnati Bell employees; a Columbus, Ohio, television station revealed Representative Donald "Buz" Lukens's (R.-Ohio) alleged sexual misconduct; the gambling charges against Pete Rose, manager of baseball's Cincinnati Reds, surfaced in *Sports Illustrated* and

three Ohio newspapers.

Anonymous sources were vital to the development of all three stories. If every journalist shared Blake's high standards, Winternitz says, these shenanigans would have gone undisclosed.

The *Enquirer's* George Blake insists that keeping anonymous sources to a minimum is essential to maintaining journalistic credibility. But Winternitz argues that a newspaper that misses big stories "will lose the trust of its readers a whole lot faster than a newspaper that relies on unnamed sources on a daily basis." In his opinion, the *Enquirer's* policy is "a noble experiment that has failed."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Praise and Punishment

"In Praise of Punishment" by Stanley C. Brubaker, in *The Public Interest* (Fall 1989), 1112 16th St. N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Americans were outraged to discover last May that Representative Jim Wright (D.-Texas), then Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, had a convicted criminal on his staff. In 1973, before he became Wright's aide, John Mack had assaulted a young woman with a hammer, stabbed her five times, then slit her throat and left her for dead. Miraculously, the woman survived. Mack served only 27 months in jail for his deed.

After the story came out, Mack resigned from his Capitol Hill job. Wright, who had long known of his aide's crime, declared, "I have never regretted giving John an opportunity all these years. I don't suppose anybody is immune from mistakes." Unwittingly, writes Brubaker, a Colgate political scientist, Wright was reflecting the ideas of the contemporary liberal political philosophers grouped around Harvard's John Rawls. These thinkers "cannot take crime seriously."

In his now-classic work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), Rawls argued that to construct principles of justice we must forget everything that is allegedly morally arbitrary—

genetic endowments, conceptions of the good, personal talents and traits. Rawls reasoned that in this "original position" people would be "risk averse." They would choose two principles: 1) maximum individual liberty that is compatible with the liberty of others and 2) social and economic inequality arranged so that the least advantaged would be most favored and so that offices and positions would be open to all under conditions of equal opportunity.

The problem, Brubaker argues, is the assumption in the "original position" that all differences among people are morally arbitrary, or undeserved. If that is so, one can justify creating rational rewards and penalties to shape behavior in the *future*—that is in everybody's self-interest—but not punishment (or praise) for *past* deeds. Criminal sanctions, in Rawls' words, are not "primarily retributive." Many jurists, notably Justice Thurgood Marshall, take the same position.

But punishment must be given its due, Brubaker insists, "for it reminds us of human responsibility as well as the limits of human choice."