

Elle magazine, for example, only 39 weren't ads or ad-related. *Glamour's* April 1990 edition had 339 pages; 274 were either ads or ad-related articles. Similar ratios hold true for *Vogue*, *Redbook*, and *Family Circle*.

She points to *Lear's*, which recently featured a woman executive on the cover. The contents page said she was wearing Guerlain makeup and a new fragrance by the same company. Inside the magazine were full-page ads for two Guerlain products. The woman on the cover, it turned out, was Guerlain's public relations director.

Food and cosmetic companies regularly advertise in magazines such as *People* and the *New Yorker* without demanding recipes or beauty columns, Steinem adds. So where does the habit of controlling the content of women's magazines come from? "Tradition." Since the invention of the clothing pattern in 1863 and the mass-manufacture of patent medicines, women's magazines have been little more than catalogues of products alongside articles on how to use them.

This "ad-edit linkage" is slowly creeping beyond the women's magazine market, Steinem warns: The *New York Times Magazine* recently ran an article on "firming creams" that mentioned advertisers; *Vanity Fair* profiled a major advertiser, Ralph Lauren. "What could women's magazines be like

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Ms. courted skeptical advertisers with this 1988 trade magazine advertisement, which suggests that even feminists, such as the Gloria Steinem look-alike pictured, buy makeup.

if they were as free as books? as realistic as newspapers? as creative as films?" The only way women will ever find out, says Steinem, is by refusing to buy magazines "that are just editorial extensions of ads."

Not Necessarily The News

During the 1960s, black leaders and the news media were allies in the struggle against Jim Crow. Today, however, says William J. Drummond, a professor of Journalism at Berkeley, "a deep suspicion of the news media" appears to be endemic

among blacks.

The civil rights movement, Drummond recalls, provided reporters and editors with the kind of predictable storyline and easily identifiable heroes and villains that they yearn for: "Negroes heroically mount

"About Face: Blacks and the News Media" by William J. Drummond, in *American Enterprise* (July-Aug. 1990), 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

nonviolent civil disobedience; white segregationists react with violence; federal government steps in." The alliance between blacks and the media, however, was built on shifting sand. When the civil rights movement splintered in the late 1960s, it no longer lent itself to simple "sound bite" reports, and the press lost interest.

Two decades later, the news media are fitting blacks "into a terrible new storyline: black pathology. Blacks are routinely portrayed in the news as drug lords and crack victims. They make up the underclass, the homeless, the subway muggers." In fact, blacks are no more likely than are whites to use drugs; and more whites than blacks are arrested on drug charges. And yet news stories about drug abuse, crime, and poverty overwhelmingly center around blacks.

Drummond contends that this distorted portrayal of blacks is made worse by a lack of non-crime-related news reporting on blacks. "Reports invariably will give minority legislators ample coverage when the subject is a so-called minority issue,"

notes one black state legislator, "but when minority legislators become involved in the mainstream of economic, political, government, and social matters," they are "either ignored or very lightly reported."

The small number of black reporters is one reason for the media's poor coverage of blacks, Drummond says. In 1989, for example, black reporters and news anchors garnered just five percent of network news air time. Less than eight percent of American newspaper reporters are black; more than half of the nation's 1,600 papers have no black reporters at all. Still fewer blacks make it into newspaper or television news management, where the decisions about what stories will be covered are made.

Drummond suggests, however, that hiring black reporters and editors may not change the way news about blacks is reported. One reason is that many black professionals are reluctant to become pigeonholed as "black affairs" specialists. More important, the news media will always favor the story that is "easy to find and photograph."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Revolutionary Thought

"Positivism, Pragmatism, and Everyday Life" by Steven Ross, in *Society* (Nov.-Dec. 1990), Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

In 1936, a slim volume written by a 26-year-old philosopher rattled the world of Anglo-American philosophy. In *Language, Truth, and Logic*, A. J. Ayer argued that the big questions that philosophers had been wrestling with for 2,500 years—questions such as "What is truth?" and "What is man's purpose?"—are unanswerable. Not because they are so profound, but because they are nonsense.

Ayer's "logical positivism," writes Ross, who teaches philosophy at Hunter College, energized Anglo-American philosophy. Often criticized as sterile in its preoccupation with analyses of language, especially in contrast to the pyrotechnics of Continental philosophers such as Heidegger

and Sartre, the field has in fact been in a state of creative ferment for the past 50 years. Or so Ross maintains.

Positivism emphasized the use and meaning of specific language rather than abstract notions. Ayer argued that only two kinds of statements are meaningful: Analytic statements are true by definition ("A triangle is a three-sided figure"); synthetic statements are true because they happen to match the way things are ("No man weighs more than 2,000 pounds"). Any statement that doesn't fall into either of these categories is considered meaningless for the purposes of philosophy. Abstract discussions of justice and morality are therefore impossible. Virtually overnight,