

the concept of radio commentary from minutes to hours, but remained true to Harvey's basic formula of personalizing the news, turning the events of the day into a longform diary of American life." The continued popu-

larity of Harvey and his formula, Fisher suggests, is a reflection of "an American craving for belonging, an insistent desire for community in a nation that has grown . . . scattered and rootless."

## *Media Theory Down Under*

"The Poverty of Media Theory" by Keith Windschuttle, in *Quadrant* (Mar. 1998), P.O. Box 1495, Collingwood, Victoria 3066, Australia.

Australian students aspiring to careers in journalism are flocking to programs granting degrees in communications and media studies. Little do they realize, writes Windschuttle, author of *The Killing of History* (1997), that the large doses of media theory they will have to swallow are directly opposed to journalism's underlying principles.

Those principles, he notes, include a commitment to "reporting the truth about what occurs in the world," and to informing their readers, listeners, and viewers, not just pleasing their employers or advertisers. And, of course, journalists should be committed to good, clear writing. "However, in most of the media theory that is taught within Australian communications and media degrees," Windschuttle says, "none of these principles are upheld. In fact, they are specifically denied, either by argument or example."

Australian institutions of higher learning that began to offer journalism as a subject in the mid-1970s felt it necessary, he says, to offer something besides mere vocational education. Enter British cultural studies, a movement created by English literary critics, most of them Marxists. In their view, objective understanding of any "real world" is impossible; the "real world" is nothing but a "text" to be read by literary analysis. By the late 1970s, Windschuttle writes, media students were being taught "that capitalist ideology was generated in the form of a system of linguis-

tic rules by the agents of the ruling class who worked for the media. Ideology was transmitted by communication signals and lodged not in people's conscious minds but at a level of 'deep structure' in their unconscious." The readers, listeners, and viewers, in short, were "little more than robots."

Over the years, Windschuttle notes, the fashions and gurus in media theory have changed, but assumptions about the influence of language and culture have not. Just as French postmodernist Jean Baudrillard claims there is no way to be sure that the 1991 Persian Gulf War really took place, so media theorist John Hartley, until recently a professor at Edith Cowan University, in Perth, Australia, maintains that audiences are mere fictions serving "the need of the imagining institution."

Once exposed to media theory, most journalism students come to regard it, Windschuttle says, as "a largely incomprehensible and odious gauntlet they must run."

Most of the media theorists in Australia "have never even set foot inside a newspaper office or television studio," Windschuttle observes. He would like to see the veteran journalists who also teach in Australia's universities step up to write general textbooks and develop "their own theory"—in short, compete "head on" with the addled theorists. Most of the students, he suggests, would be very grateful.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### *Does Knowledge Destroy Faith?*

"Rationality and the 'Religious Mind'" by Laurence Iannaccone, Rodney Stark, and Roger Finke, in *Economic Inquiry* (July 1998), Texas A&M Univ., Dept. of Economics, College Station, Texas 77843-4228.

Social scientists have long been inclined to look upon religion as an irrational vestige of the premodern world, destined any day now for

extinction. *Everyone knows* that as science advances, religion retreats, and that as people become more educated, they grow less reli-