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# Letters to the Editor

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## A Reply to Harry Eckstein

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I wish Harry Eckstein would tell us how he knows what constitutes such things as the "gradual reformation of society," and "social betterment" ("A Comment on Positive Theory," *PS*, March 1989, p. 77). Does his empirical research tell him this? Hardly so, since "reformation" and "betterment" don't exist in what can be observed at the moment but are derived from some construction of the future. Put another way, his two phrases imply a normative "ought." How does the "is" of his empirical world supply these?

We probably would not consider Mr. Eckstein's confusion dangerous, but we well know how in other hands there can be different results. Consider the empiricist entrapment of Aristotle, who concluded that some people were naturally slaves, and women naturally inferior, because that was in fact what an honest observation of the spontaneous order of life of that time could be said to call for.

Our study of politics therefore must not simply reflect the facts of the behavioral world, but must also engage the quality of the normative ("negative") elements that are present there in a constitutive way (as indeed they are even in Mr. Eckstein's own piece). Politics is after all doing things toward some purpose, to either change or resist change. Scientific scholars today know this well, and have in recent decades come a long way from the epistemological innocence of the predecessors Mr. Eckstein cites

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## On Political Censorship

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I've just finished Robert Weissberg's article in the March issue of *PS*—"Political Censorship: A Different View." Having recently written a high school textbook and experienced the ideological pressures he describes, I can keenly appreciate his observations, and have been very interested to learn that my experiences were not unique.

For me, the strangest moment was when I had to fight for the restoration of language that admitted that any Americans had ever believed in God. In my draft, I had written that one important basis for the early American belief in natural rights was the then-common assumption that God intended human beings to serve His purposes, rather than those of one another. This wording, by the way, isn't mine, but John Locke's, and was no doubt in Jefferson's mind when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. My editor—a decent fellow in all other respects—almost passed out with embarrassment. After recovering, he tried to find a "neutral" compromise. Couldn't we talk about good instead of God? After all, doesn't it mean the same thing?

My congratulations to the author for a truthful article. Now I wish someone would discuss parallel biases in research publishing. I've come to smell a censor whenever anyone uses the term "neutrality."

J. Budziszewski  
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## **A Room with A View**

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**A** couple of years ago, the Legislative Section carried in its newsletter a listing of places to stay on Capitol Hill for short periods of time. I used that listing this spring to stay a short time in a bed and breakfast and then move into an apart-

ment at 629 E Capitol, SE. I appreciate very much that I had the information when I needed it.

For further information, readers can contact: Sandra M. Kloner, Capitol Hill Bed & Breakfast, 210 Sixth Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 544-3926.

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