

Evolution is the Root of All Evil: An Examination of the Paranoid Style of Creation Science Evangelism

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Abstract

This essay argues that Kent Hovind's Creation Science Evangelism message fits within the paranoid style of rhetoric first developed by Richard Hofstadter. Specifically this article will focus on an examination of rudiments of the paranoid style that were extracted from Hofstadter's work by Lesley Di Mare and Craig Allen Smith. This analysis will be comprised of the elements that both exemplify the paranoid style and that have developed uniquely to the field of modern creation science. While deliberating components of Hovind's Creation Science in its entirety, this work will spotlight two artifacts; part four of Hovind's Creation Science Seminar and Hovind's "college level course" Creation Science 103.

Keywords: Creation, Science, Evangelism, Paranoid, Rhetoric, Bible, Crusade

1.

Bible believing Christians recognize that the Grand Canyon formed from the great biblical flood in approximately thirty minutes, or so asserts Kent Hovind the founder of Creation Science Evangelism (Creation Science Evangelism [CSE], 1999). Creation Science Evangelism's goal is threefold; to demonstrate that there is no scientific evidence that contradicts the events in the Bible, to warn against the coming New World Order, and to caution against the dangerous secular teachings of evolution (Creation Today website, 2012).

The controversy between biblical creation and scientific knowledge has existed since the publication of Darwin's "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" (Darwin, 2009). In 1923, George McCready Price proposed the theory that the biblical flood was the cause of all geological formations on the earth, giving birth to modern creation science (Price, 1923).

Modern creation science, also known as young earth creation, interprets the Bible from a "historical-grammatical" perspective in regards to the six-day creation of the earth, the almost instantaneous formation of geological features as a result of "Noah's Flood," and the development of mankind from two singular humans, Adam and Eve ("Biblical Young Earth," 2012). Kent Hovind's Creation Science Seminar and Creation Science courses adhere to these principles.

2. Creation Science and Paranoid Rhetoric

Kent Hovind's teaching of creation science fits within the parameters of paranoid rhetoric as first introduced by Richard Hofstadter (Hofstadter, 1966). The paranoid style is often "...associated with the discourse of dominant conservative/reactionary groups within a society," such as the fundamentalist Christians that comprise the young earth movement (Doss, 1992, para. 6). This analysis of Hovind's creation science rhetoric will include significant elements of the paranoid paradigm extracted from Hofstadter's work by Leslie Di Mare (Di Mare, 1984). Di Mare allocated seven divisions of the paranoid style as follows; a speaker's style is considered to be paranoid if they/their message 1) view events in history as a conspiracy that is "sinister" in nature that prevents a group from leading a particular lifestyle, 2) produce evidence that supports the assertion of a global conspiracy impacting thousands, if not millions, of people, 3) and cautions that time for reaching their goal is limited, 4) that an "all-out crusade" is the only means of accomplishing the group's goal before their time ends, 5) identifies the common enemy as a "demonic agent" that is "powerful, cruel," 6) suggest a battle between good and evil, with the enemy defined as the unquestionable incarnation of evil itself, 7) paradoxically aligns him/herself with their enemy (Di Mare, 1984, p. 4-5).

Craig Allen Smith denotes five divisions of the paranoid style in his paper *The Hofstadter Hypothesis Revisited: The Nature of Evidence in Politically "Paranoid" Discourse* (Smith, 1977, p. 275). Three of the components, 1) the sinister conspiracy, 2) the all-out crusade, 3) and the common, amoral enemy, correspond with Di Mare's analysis of Hofstadter's work; however, he also points out a fifth element not recognized by Di Mare, the "preoccupation with documentation." According to Smith's article, Hofstadter did not expand upon this portion as fully as other sections of the paranoid style and thus is not useful for study.

This examination of Kent Hovind's Creation Science Evangelism will utilize the common elements culled by Di Mare and Smith from Hofstadter's original work on paranoid rhetoric; 1) the sinister conspiracy, 2) the all-out crusade, 3) the common amoral enemy (a combination of Di Mare's fifth and sixth elements) 4) as well as paradoxical alignment with the enemy. This assessment will also attempt to redefine one component of paranoid rhetoric-the all-out crusade, as it applies to the young earth message while establishing documentation as an important element for further analysis of the young earth movement.

3. The Paranoid Paradigm and Creation Science Evangelism

3.1 sinister conspiracy.

In *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, Hofstadter defines the first element of paranoid rhetoric as "...a vast and sinister conspiracy (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 29). While Di Mare's interpretation of a conspiracy involved the "eradication of a particular group," the rhetoric of Creation Science Evangelism views such a plot as a motive to move the nation from a Christian base of belief to a secular faith in science. Eradication comes through a change in philosophy, not the demise of people.

In his Creation Science Seminar class Hovind states that "...the theory of evolution changed us from a Christian to a pagan nation" (Christian Science Evangelism [CSE], n.d.). In his Creation Seminar course 103, Dr. Hovind asserts that in the early 1800's textbooks taught creationism (CSE, n.d.). Students in the public school system were taught creationism from these textbooks, or from the Bible. It was not until the Scopes Trial of 1925 that the tide began to turn away from the creationist view of education and the Biblical way of life. From that point onward the "religion of evolution" gained a toehold in the American consciousness and moved the country towards a more secular system of beliefs and behavior and en route to New World Order (CSE, n.d.).

At the root of the New World Order is none other than Satan. According to the book of Genesis, Lucifer rebelled against God and was cast out of Paradise; thus, asserts Hovind, Satan made it his goal to destroy God's creation – man (CSE, n.d.). According to Hovind's Creation Science Evangelism, Satan began constructing the New World Order shortly after the Biblical flood failed to annihilate humanity (CSE, n.d.). Hovind continues by describing Satan's earlier attempts at assembling his order, which included the Tower of Babel, the rise of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, the Roman Empire, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, and Hitler's Third Reich.

Satan's current endeavor at establishing the New World Order has given rise to "Satan's religion," the doctrine of evolution. This New World Order will be "...evil, is going to be wicked" and will lead to the persecution of and murder of Christians. Consequences of a nation following a belief system based on evolution in place of God are democracy, government interference, communism, Marxism, Nazism, and racism (CSE, n.d.).

Democracy, according to Hovind, is directly against God's teachings and thus is an integral part of the New World Order. Democracy developed from man's belief that he is the ultimate creation of evolution, which gives him the inalienable right to decide right from wrong, which in turn allows man to see himself as a "god" (CSE, n.d.). As with many fundamentalist Christians, Hovind sees this more human-centric view of the world as displacing Christian morals and values (Duffy, 1984, p. 341). If a man is in charge of his destiny, then how does he know right from wrong? It is man's belief that he can make this determination without God that has led to such doctrines as communism, Marxism, and Nazism (CSE, n.d.).

Racism is also a direct result of man's belief in evolution over God's law. Hovind informs his audience that Darwin's teaching did not invent racism but gives credence to the idea. Hovind's primary argument is the complete title of Darwin's work, "*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*," a title evolutionists do not use in an effort to hide the truth behind the theory (CSE, n.d.). There is no examination of how, or even if, race is a factor in Darwin's work, nor any mention of the revisions Darwin made to "On the Origin of Species." Hovind's case is based solely on the title of Darwin's work. As proof of evolution's impact on racism, Hovind quotes Henry Fairfield Osborn, president of the Museum of Natural History for over twenty-five years.

Hovind quotes "...standard of intelligence of the average adult Negro is similar to that of the eleven-year-old youth of the species *Homo sapiens*" (CSE, n.d.). While Hovind's assertion that Osborn was an evolutionist is correct, his implication that Darwin's work was Osborn's basis of belief in evolution is false. Osborn did not agree with Darwin's work, leading Osborn to develop his theory of evolution; while he did believe in a common ancestor of man and ape his belief was in a more human-like ancestor (Osborn, 1927). It is Hovind's belief that this philosophy of superior races led to eugenics and such regimes as The Third Reich (CSE, n.d.). In another example, Hovind asserts that the teaching of evolution is directly responsible for Native American's displacement in the United States. "Evolution is responsible for what happened to the Indians. How any Indian can believe in evolution just blows my mind" (Forrest, 1999, p. 28).

While it seems improbable that man would "race toward [a] one-world government" based on such doctrines as Communism, Hovind argues that man is greedy for control over his destiny. If God created the world, then God is in charge and his rules apply. If man evolved, if there is no God, then man is master of his world. Hovind postulates that man's desire to control his life is utilized by Satan for a singular purpose, to take man away from God, thus towards policies that will bring about the destruction of not only the Christian way of life, but God's creation, man himself.

In summary, Hovind's perception of "the sinister conspiracy" revolves around Satan's great plan to lead man away from God's righteous path. Hovind promotes the idea that through Satan's influence man has turned to the secular world of science, driven by the adoption of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, creating a New World Order. Hovind asserts that America's change from a Christian-based belief system to a secular belief system has given rise to democracy – a system of government that sets man above God, and racism. Hovind, through the tool of paranoid rhetoric, espouses that man, because of Satan's master plan, has become the master of his destiny, thereby condemning himself to ultimate destruction.

3.2 all-out crusade.

Hofstadter's definition of paranoid rhetoric includes the belief that the enemy cannot be defeated by ordinary means, but only by a "...all-out crusade" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 29). Creation Science Evangelism supports no such crusade. Although Kent Hovind does espouse that humanity is currently witness to the greatest war in history - the war between God and Satan with humankind as the battlefield - his methods of combating the enemy are less aggressive than previous incarnations of fundamental Christendom. "All you need to do is decide which side you want to be on and do what you can to help your general win," states Hovind in his Creation Science course (CSE, n.d.). What Christians can do is two-fold, education and avoidance. This gentler form of waging a battle is based on the belief that the war has already been won.

Education of the masses is achieved by methods common to religious groups, such as the spreading of the Gospel, and by unusual methods, such as irritation. In contrast to the fire-and-brimstone rhetoric of earlier conservative Christian preachers, Kent Hovind encourages his audience to "irritate" those in the secular realm. Using this more user-friendly term, Hovind encourages his disciples to spread the Gospel without fighting, to Young Earth Creationist a skirmish is preferable to combat. Hovind encourages students to ask "impertinent" questions when the subject of evolution is taught. Specifically, Hovind urges the young protagonist to ask the instructor if they were present at the time of evolution (Forrest, 1999). Hovind makes no mention of asking preachers if they were present during the process of creation.

Hovind recommends Christians educate the world on "riotousness ..., not democracy," as democracy is contrary to God's teachings (CSE, n.d.). To spread this message, Hovind recommends careful consideration in one's choice of weapon, the Bible. A Bible believing Christian can use almost any Bible to bring someone to Christ, Catholic Bible or Jehovah Witness Bible, for example, as they still contain "...enough Gospel in them...it can be done."

The preferred method of confronting the enemy is straightforward: don't. Along with many fundamental Christians, Hovind proposes separation from the secular environment. From the UP channel's Bates family, who promote homeschooling and attendance at Christian Colleges, to attendees at Bob Jones University, who welcome "...the sectarian Other into the separatist lifestyle," severance from the secular has become the norm (The Bates Family Blog, 2015; The Bates Family Blog, 2012-2015; Lewis, 2007, p. 67). Hovind's directly encourages his audience to "...transfer children from public to private schools" to avoid exposure to evolutionary indoctrination (CSE, n.d.).

This doctrine of a more passive crusade is formulated from Hovind's belief that Christians have an advantage over Satan due to the knowledge that God is already victorious. As in the case of many fundamentalist Christians, Hovind believes that the biblical book of Revelations reveals that God will be triumphant in the final battle. Though many Christians may suffer in the present, they will emerge as champions in the end. Hovind assures his listeners that "... [The] kingdom of Jesus Christ will fill the world," and that there is no reason to be nervous or worry about the ongoing struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan's attempt to destroy man through the teachings of evolution (CSE, n.d.).

Hovind's Creation Science Evangelism's message does not align with Hofstadter's second element of paranoid rhetoric, the all-out crusade. Hovind supports a more sedate style of resistance, namely avoidance of evil and education against evil. While it may seem that Hovind is not as concerned with defeating evil as he is with other elements of the paranoid style, Hovind's rhetoric is based on his belief that the battle between good and evil has already been won, and by the mere act of being on the right side – God's side – a person has won the war and triumphed over sin.

3.3 demonic agent.

Hofstadter's paranoid agent sees the enemy in "...apocalyptic terms-he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 29). One aspect of this element of the paranoid style not included in Di Mare's distillation of Hofstadter is the enemy's ability to cause catastrophes due to an "effective source of power" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 29) developed primarily through ... funding (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 32). The central adversary in Creation Science Evangelism is the ultimate demonic figure, Satan himself. Today's fundamentalist Christian sees Satan as "...the secular humanist, whose handiwork is, manifested in the public schools...the scientific community...and the government" (Duffy, 1984, p. 340). Satan's quest is the ultimate destruction of humanity to save his existence as prophesied in the book of Genesis. Satan was tantalizingly close to his supreme objective when God destroyed all but Noah and his family through the means of a great flood. Satan continues his campaign against mankind through the teachings of evolution and the development of his New World Order, the combination of which will make man so malicious that God will be forced to extinguish his creation (CSE, n.d.).

Satan has manufactured numerous attempts to establish a New World Order. Satan's current attempt involves the European common market, the ACLU, the Masons, the United Nations, and government's interference in man's use of the earth. The European common market is Satan's attempt to restore the Roman Empire, the ACLU-referred to by Hovind as the American Communist Lawyers Union, supports and defends the teachings of evolution, the Masons' spread a gospel of a "good" Satan and an "evil" God, the United Nations attempt to control the world under one government, and those governments now enforce rules that require man to seek permission to use the resources that they were given dominion over by God (CSE, n.d.). Hovind himself had his Creation Science museum shut down due to failure to secure a permit from the city of Pensacola, Florida (Martinez, 2004).

In the United States, Satan's founding of a New World Order has been assisted by the Federal Reserve and the rise of the debit card. Hovind credits the federal government with depriving populaces of authentic money. The federal government is the bearer of all gold, the paper and coins that are issued to citizens is not money, merely a representation of funding. Therefore, the citizenry is under the control of the federal government, not God. The debit card is the current instrument Satan is using in the regulation of funds. As with its paper counterpart, the debit card is not "real" money, and will lead to even greater restrictions when the next step is taken: chips placed not in plastic cards, but in the hands of the populace. UPC barcodes on food, clothing and other material goods correlates with the "mark of the beast" from the book of Revelations. According to Hovind, customers in grocery stores in the states of Missouri and Arkansas have paid for purchases by "...scanning their hand[s]" ("Anti-Semitism," 2001, para. 9).

3.4 paradoxical alignment.

Di Mare emphasizes that a spokesperson's message fits within Hofstadter's framework of paranoid rhetoric if the spokesperson emulates the enemy (Di Mare, 1984, p. 5). Hofstadter states that the herald will "...outdo him in the apparatus of scholarship" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 32). This element of the paranoid style of rhetoric is not only paradoxical in nature, but is noteworthy in the context of Creation Science. Hovind not only attempts to align Young Earth beliefs with the field of science but also tries to ally science with the area of religion. At the beginning of each seminar Kent Hovind begins with the same mantra; "I was a high school science teacher for fifteen years" (Creation Science Evangelism [CSE], 2003).

His biography from the Creation Today website lists Mr. Hovind as holding a bachelor's degree from Midwestern Baptist College as well as a master and doctorate of religious education, though the university granting the graduate degrees is not named. In fact, Hovind's master and doctorate degrees are from Patriot Bible University located in a single building in Colorado. Patriot Bible University advertises itself as a "distance learning" institution which offers an affordable Bible based education (Patriot Bible University [PBU], 2015). The 2012 cost for the initial course at Patriot was listed at \$99.00. An undergraduate degree is estimated to cost less than \$3,500, a Master of Arts at just under \$1,800, and the Doctorate of Ministry may be obtained for less than \$2,500 (Patriot Bible University [PBU], 2015, para. 1). The Doctorate in Religious Education obtained by Mr. Hovind is no longer offered. Buried within the website is the disclaimer that the University "...is an unaccredited fundamentalist Christian correspondence school... which issues religious degrees only." Critics of the university list Patriot as a diploma mill (Forrest, 1999; The TalkOrigins Archive, 1998-2006). Therefore, Hovind's attempt to align himself with science though his assertion that he is a science teacher who holds advanced degrees is undermined by his lack of accredited educational credentials.

While a critical examination of Mr. Hovind's dissertation is not the focus of this analysis, it is important to point out the dissertation's place in the foundation of shaping Hovind's religious beliefs, and his perception of being a qualified science teacher. When questioned on the subject of his dissertation Mr. Hovind replied, "My 250-page dissertation dealt with the topic of the effects of teaching evolution on the students in our public school system" (Bartlet, n.d., para. 9). Hovind's dissertation, which is without a title, contains no chapter relating to the effects of teaching evolution in the public schools. The introduction gives background on the 16 upcoming chapters; however the "250-page dissertation" contains only four chapters and runs 101 pages (Bartlet, n.d.). Mr. Hovind also affirms that there is no new material in his dissertation; rather, it is a review of his beliefs. Again, Hovind attempts to align himself with the enemy though his advanced degree; however, evidence of an incomplete dissertation undermines his claim of holding a doctorate, and, therefore, enhancing his scholarly credibility.

As stated earlier Hovind begins his seminars and college-level courses with the statement that he taught high school science for fifteen years. Mr. Hovind makes no mention that all his teaching experience was at small Christian schools that did not follow a standard science curriculum. Hovind assures his audience that he "loves science," and performs simple experiments, such as a demonstration of physics that utilizes shooting rubber bands into the crowd, with young audience members in order to support this claim. Hovind further aligns himself to the enemy of science through his "apparatus of scholarship," Dinosaur Adventure Land (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 32). Hovind's Dinosaur Adventure Land, which was closed due to Hovind's incarceration on tax evasion, offered science lessons laden with young earth doctrine. Children were taught basic science lessons through which parallels were drawn to Biblical principles. The "Circle Swivel Spinosaurus" demonstrated centrifugal force by spinning a young visitor fitted with a swiveling harness. While the child was coached on arm and leg positions that would give the child control over the size and shape of the arc, guides spouted lessons focused on God's guidance throughout life, without which we are left "...dizzy and confused..." (Martinez, 2004, para. 3). Guests of the park's Science Center were greeted by a faucet suspended above a sand-filled trough that displayed a sign encouraging visitors to make a "Grand Canyon" the Biblical way as done by the Noachian Flood.

Hovind seems anxious to link his academic knowledge with Biblical principles to strengthen his scientific credibility; at the same time he rails against the "religion" of evolution (Creation Science Evangelism [CSE], 2003b). Hovind defines evolution as a "religious world view" that encourages the worship of "Mother Earth" over God (Creation Science Evangelism [CSE], 2003c; Duffy, 1984) God should have dominion over the earth; instead the religion of evolution has given authority to humanity. If the earth evolved without the help of God, then earth's salvation (or destruction) is in the hands of man. This religious mindset has led to the development of governmental interference between man and God's promised earthly authority.

3.5 documentation.

In his paper *The Hofstadter Hypothesis Revisited: The Nature of Evidence in Politically "Paranoid" Discourse*, Craig Allen Smith asserts that Hofstadter's notion of preoccupation with documentation is not beneficial in the analysis of paranoid rhetoric; however, providing "credible proof" though the process of documentation is a staple of the young earth creationist movement (CSE, n.d.; Smith, 1977). In his Creation Science College Level Class, Dr. Hovind asserts "I try to document everything I say ... I have read many books on the subject (CSE, n.d.). Hovind cites such works as *The Long War Against God*, by Henry M. Morris, *The Forth Rich of the Rich*, by Des Griffin, *The Waco Whitewash*, by Jack de Vault, and *The Creature From Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve*, by G. Edward Griffin, as sources of much of his information.

It should be noted that no specific quotations are used from these sources during the course Dr. Hovind's seminars, nor is any specific information referenced. What is clear is that Hovind attempts to back up his paranoid rhetoric with, what he considers to be, credible sources, thereby lending integrity to his arguments. While it would seem obvious that the young earth movements' primary source of "credible proof" is from the Holy Bible, it is important to note that not all Bibles are acceptable. Dr. Hovind encourages students in his College Level courses to "...study before they choose a Bible..." (CSE, n.d.). While some Bibles "...still [have] enough Gospel in them ..." they are not considered the optimum choice for the young earth movement. Hovind is especially critical of modern interpretations of the Bible, such as the New International Version, for their less than fundamental illuminations of scripture.

Dr. Hovind's dependence on documentation skews off-course when he discusses more controversial topics. Hovind states that "very reliable sources" have documented the existence of more than 33,000 skulls in the Smithsonian, which were used as partial proof of evolution. These skulls, according to Hovind's sources, were "...taken from some [people] while still alive ..." and are only "... 200 years old," thereby disproving evidence that supports the theory of evolution (CSE, n.d.). These unnamed sources are unique in Hovind's seminars, occurring when his "evidence" is hugely controversial or related to a conspiracy theory such as the New World Order.

When documenting opinion and research in support of evolutionary theory, Hovind cherry-picks sources that replace God with a human perspective or construct a negative framework in his audiences' mind. One such source is Henri de Lubec, referred to as an "atheist humanist" in Des Griffin's *The Fourth Reich of the Rich*, whom Hovind quotes as saying, "... the turning point in history will be the moment man becomes aware that the only god of man is man himself" (CSE, n.d.; Griffin, 1994). Hovind rounds out his sources that are pro-evolution with Marx, de Lubec, Jefferies, and Adolf Hitler. Of particular interest is Dr. Hovind's claim that "...there is not one shred of scientific evidence to support evolution (CSE, n.d.). Ignoring or decrying research and proofs from the time of Darwin (and often before), Hovind claims that "...the science of evolution is lies..." Dr. Hovind's also asserts that the "geological column exist nowhere other than in print" (CSE, 1999).

4. Conclusion

Kent Hovind's young earth message has a threefold purpose; to strengthen the commitment of fundamentalist Christians to a literal understanding of the Bible, to sway Christians with a more liberal interpretation of the Bible to a stringent interpretation, and to bring non-believers into the "fold" in order to assure them everlasting salvation. To fortify the fundamentalist young earth interpretation, Hovind attacks the enemy, the one that will offer "new knowledge" and separate the individual from God, Satan's religion of Evolution (CSE, 1999).

Hovind's pattern of attack on the science of evolution closely parallels Hofstadter's definition of paranoid rhetoric. In Dr. Hovind's many writings, seminars, and college level courses some elements of paranoid rhetoric are clearly recognizable. Hovind weaves a tale of the sinister conspiracy lead by none other than the ultimate demonic agent, Satan. Satan's plan to distance humans from God has evolved from the time of the Tower of Babel and God's cunning use of isolated languages to the science of evolution, which is the capstone of a New World Order.

Hovind also endeavors to ally himself with the very thing he criticizes, science. Although condemning the science of evolution Hovind champions "creation science." Echoing F. Sherwood Taylor's belief that "There is little doubt that ... the theory of evolution is what changed us from a Christian to a pagan nation," Hovind claims his love for science and his belief that when conducted correctly experimentation results come down on the side of creation (Taylor, 1948, p. 573). Hovind attempts to show his love for and knowledge of science by showcasing simple experiments in his seminars and creation science museum.

Though Smith's analysis of Hofstadter's paranoid rhetoric did not give credence to the component of documentation, some emphasis should be placed upon an analysis of documentation. Documentation is a staple of the young earth movement with its primary resource being the Holy Bible, as long as it is the correct version. While admitting that there is some gospel available in all versions, a strict interpretation is necessary when analyzing the actual word of God.

The final element of Hofstadter's paranoid rhetoric is the all-out crusade. While religion has often been associated with the term crusade, Christianity being no exception, Dr. Hovind's belief that the battle has already been won is unique in its viewpoint.

The “crusade” is over before it has begun and “In the end we will look in wonder ‘cause Satan is a wimp,” a “...puny little fellow” (CSE, n.d.). Dr. Hovind quotes Isaiah 14:15 that the enemy “...shalt be brought down to hell..,” only one source of Biblical proof that Satan will lose in the war against humanity. Thus, with the war already won, man need only concern himself with his salvation and the salvation of others.

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