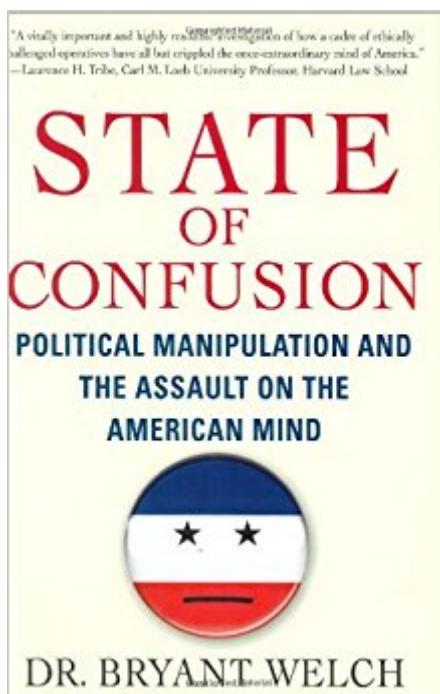


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# State Of Confusion: Political Manipulation And The Assault On The American Mind



## Synopsis

Finally, the answer to the many questions that have been preying on the minds of millions of Americans has arrived. Why are Americans so vulnerable to divisive political tactics? Why did Americans get dragged into such an unwise war in Iraq? Why do fundamentalist religious groups, Fox News, and right-wing radio still play such influential roles in America's political landscape? And why are long-accepted rational scientific ideas like evolution under siege? These questions hold America's future in the balance. Ultimately, they are questions about the American mind. Psychologist-attorney Dr. Bryant Welch has the answers. If America is going to change the mind-set that led us to war in Iraq and left us unable to confront our serious national problems, this book is vitally important. Drawing on his unique experience both as a clinical psychologist and a Washington, D.C., political figure with the American Psychological Association, Dr. Welch shows how the long-term effects of sophisticated new forms of political manipulation have not only led to our debacle in Iraq but are also currently undercutting America's ability to address its very serious problems. In the 1944 movie *Gaslight*, a husband drives his wife to the brink of insanity by playing games with her sense of reality. Just as in the movie, America's most recent political "gaslighters," such as George W. Bush, Karl Rove, Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and many religious leaders, have generated and exploited confusion in the minds of countless Americans. Gaslighters prey on their victim's vulnerability to paranoia, sexual perplexity, and envy to undermine the mind's ability to function rationally. Welch examines why millions of Americans, in response to such assaults, subconsciously and dangerously create their own simplistic reality, even if it is completely different from the more complex reality of the world. Most important, *State of Confusion* explains how and why Americans must act now to fight back against this harmful manipulation before it's too late. Dr. Welch's exploration of the American mind is both fascinating and frightening, and *State of Confusion* is a must-read for everyone who cares about the future of this great country.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is one of those few books that is a virtual Rosetta stone to understanding how so many Americans are living in an alternative reality." --BuzzFlash  
"Bryant Welch makes a fascinating and compelling case that right-wing politics has subverted our democracy by infecting us with a form of national political neurosis. This book unmasks the politics of fear--the deeper chords touched by campaigns that appeal to the dark side." --Robert Shrum, senior strategist of the Gore and Kerry presidential campaigns and author of *No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner*  
"Bryant Welch was born to write this vitally important and highly readable investigation of how a cadre of ethically challenged political operatives and their religious and journalistic allies have gradually distorted and disabled the minds of ordinary Americans  
and have all but crippled the once-extraordinary mind of America. It is not too late for us to reclaim our identity, but we will succeed only if we take to heart the lessons so lucidly laid bare by the remarkable work of this insightful psychologist and experienced political activist." --Laurence H. Tribe, Carl M. Loeb University Professor, Harvard Law School  
"State of Confusion is intense, clear, logical, and striking in its message. It will grab you emotionally and intellectually  
the message cannot be missed." --Bryant Welch sees through the smoke and mirrors and offers the only remedy that will place democracy firmly in the grip of the people from whom it is being stolen: the truth.  
--Dr. Harold I. Eist, M.D., clinical professor of psychiatry, George Washington University, and former president of the American Psychiatric Association  
"Dr. Welch is a master of making complex psychological concepts understandable and using them to explain the disturbing political climate of our time. This beautifully written, urgently relevant work should be on the bookshelf of everyone who cares about the survival of American democracy." --Nancy McWilliams, Ph.D., president of the Division of Psychoanalysis, American Psychological Association, and professor, Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional

Psychologyâ€”[State of Confusion] is a unique and successful effort to understand the machinations of politicians and others who have significant influence on others.â€”With professional credentials in both law and psychology, Dr. Bryant Welch is ideally suited to raise the issuesâ€”fascinating reading.â€”Lewis P. Lipsitt, Ph.D., professor of psychology, emeritus, Brown University

Bryant Welch, J.D., Ph.D. has more than thirty-five years of experience in law, psychology, and politics. He spent seventeen years in Washington, D.C., where he built the American Psychological Associationâ€”â€œs Practice Directorate, and has held faculty appointments at the University of North Carolina and George Washington University. He currently lectures and consults nationally and practices clinical psychology on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, where he lives with his wife, Debbie.

If you're interested in the overlap of psychology, politics and the cultural state of now, then this book is excellent reading. Very unfortunately, it is also out of print. Hopefully, the publisher will take notice and rush a new edition out. Frittering around one evening, years and years ago, in a hotel room, with a woman who had been a victim of manipulative men, we happened to watch the 1944 "Gaslight" on TV by chance. My companion became mesmerized by Ingrid Bergman's situation, trapped in the devious grip of Charles Boyer, and saw her own past reflected in that dark grey mirror, and those flickering lights. She became very afraid. It took a long time to calm her down and assure her that I had no such devious plot in mind or heart. The U.S. is in such a grip now. Will she escape and recover, despite the damage already done? What will it take? We can begin by trying for clear, honest examinations of our situation and how it got that way. This book is a big help.

The author is an attorney (Harvard) and clinical psychologist (UNC) who has psychoanalytic training and Washington DC political experience who brings his diverse background together in an analysis of the success of the Bush/Rove campaigns which he attributes to psychological manipulation of the electorate. A fascinating book for anyone interested in psychotherapy and the processes underlying psychological voter's emotional reactions. A stimulating and readable exposition of psychoanalytic thinking that is appropriate for the lay reader and peppered with the history of recent presidential campaigns including an account of the author's college debate with John Kerry. A pro-Democrat book that may not appeal to the religious right of the Republican party.

This is not an easy book to read because it discusses many of the far reaching and deep weaknesses in the American consciousness--and it's devastating impact on the types of political decisions that Americans make and it's fallout on our daily lives. It is, however, extremely important to read it for the same reason. Dr. Welch is able to apply extremely relevant and deeply insightful psychological tools (in addition to his legal experience as an attorney and one of psychology's advocacy leaders in Washington) in his dissection of how mammoth industries and top flight political "operatives" manipulate, distort, and ultimate control the way Americans think, feel, act, and vote through incredibly subtle ways. It is a work of great brilliance and precision and I strongly recommend it to any student of American political culture and experience. It will stretch your imagination and awareness of America in many directions and you will never view things the same way again.

I great book that should be mandatory in High School Civics classes.

This is a must read for anyone who wonders where America is and where it is headed. Although most non-fiction is not exactly hard to put down, I found myself wanting to read more (and fearful as I did).

This volume is one of the best on the market in analyzing how this nation has lost its way to irrational forces and persons presently. It is indeed frightening to think and judge rationally and then witness the public's acceptance of the untruth of Fox News, Coulter, Limbaugh, O'Reilly, Hannity, and Ailes. These mean and materialistic folk with loud cadence and nonsense have created a reality that never was. Their assault on the mind is actually scary for if followed, this nation would cease to be a light of freedom. The electorate has been deceived and misled by these "gaslighters". Welch has done an excellent exposure of these hypocritical folk who are critically dividing the nation. These "gaslighters" have created a most dangerous false reality. This book has not received the attention it fully deserves. The media has let us all down in not giving attention to this true and correct exposure of hypocrisy in our midst.

Excellent book!

Though I agree with Welch's view of the right-wing movement, too much of the book appears overly facile and superficial. Take for example this excerpt from Welch's discussion of envy as a necessary

part of the human condition. "All human achievement as well as much destructive human aggression is a reflection of envy." (P. 252). Now, this is a sweeping conclusion, to say the least, about the connection between envy and human achievement. It also strikes me as just plain wrong. This morning it took me an hour to draw a little picture-- a minor achievement, for sure, but an achievement nonetheless. More importantly, I did it for the sheer pleasure of doing it. There are many, more significant examples of non-envious achievements from all walks of life. Welch is not just wrong in this case, but factually wrong, unless, that is, he resorts to playing games with a vague term like "reflection" which, to his credit, he gives no indication of doing. The problem with the book is not just this one egregious example, but that the entire work consists of little more than a series of bald assertions: some common-sense, some speculative, and others just plain arguable. As a result, there is a general lack of grounding of key statements beyond their simple assertion and how well they fit into the general story he tells. For example, I agree that envy is a very potent force in our hierarchical competitive economy, but must we agree that it's envy that "creates our motivation to work and be productive." (p. 105) Again, a big load for envy to carry and another sweeping assertion that goes unargued. Moreover, it's not clear to me that envy is in fact "a necessary part of the human condition." (p.252) On the contrary, it can be argued that desiring what others have arises in those cultures that emphasize property and status, but not in those that don't. Now, perhaps in the last analysis Welch is right. Nonetheless, the problem here is that there is not even a first analysis, just an assertion. Now, I'm certainly in agreement with his view of the political right-wing. Their movement is becoming ever more solipsistic as the facts go against them. But I picked up the book, hoping to gain more insight than what I found. To be sure, the text does contain points of interest and is an easy read-- though I'm not sure the latter is a point in its favor. All in all, however, I found the book both oddly comforting and definitely disappointing.

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