

Notes on  
I wear the black hat  
Author of book: Chuck Klosterman  
Author of of Notes: William Gasarch

**Preface** This book is about villains: how to you define them, how come some people who should be villains aren't, and vice versa. The book kind of rambles so its not that easy to pin down; however, I liked many of the tidbits.

## 1 What You Say About his Company Is What You Say About The Society

What is the most villainous move on the market?

Chuck says its tying a girl to a railroad track.

Has this ever happened? How did it get to be a cliché?

Someone who does it NOW just wants to be a villainous cliché.

### 1.1 Damsel Tied to a Railroad Track in Reality and in Fiction

So has it every happened?

Cecil Adams *The Straight Dope* Column:

<https://www.straightdope.com/21343402/did-anyone-really-ever-get-tied-to-railr>

The website *Today I found out* had an article on this:

[odayifoundout.com/index.php/2019/01/has-anyone-ever-actually-tied-a-damsel-in-](http://odayifoundout.com/index.php/2019/01/has-anyone-ever-actually-tied-a-damsel-in-)

The website *Atlas Obscura*

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/rethinking-the-origins-of-the-damsel-on->

I summarize some of this below:

#### **These really happened**

1. 1874: A Frenchman named Gardner was robbed and tied to a railroad. He managed to loosen all the ropes except the one that held is left foot. He died soon after from his injuries. Tying a *man* to a railroad track somehow does not seem as evil as tying a *women* to a railroad track. Source is Cecil Adams *The Straight Dope*
2. 1881: A kidnapped 13 year old boy.

3. A 40 year old mechanic (no year given)
4. 1905: A college freshman as part of a frat initiation. He died
5. 1906: A 10 year old boy
6. 1907: A 19 year old man. (This one and the prior two might have been copycat crimes.)

More recent cases:

1. 2008: Niparat Tawonporn was tied to a railroad track about 500 miles south of Bangkok and cut in half by the train. She was 27. Chuck claims that the rumors were that it was caused by an *unexplained disagreement*.

In my (Bill) search for more details I found NO other reference to this story. When I googled *Niparat Tawonporn* I only gets 5 links and all of them refer to the book *I wear the black hat*. Hence I do not know if this story is true.

2. 2017: (This one is not from the book. Its from the second link.) A Frenchman Guillaume Gremy was severely depressed. When his efforts to get back with his estranged wife Emilie Hallouin failed he bound her to a train tracks. He jumped in front of the tracks and both were killed. He was 37. It was her 34th birthday.

Of the 7 cases above (I count the one thats questionable) 5 are *males* being tied to the railroad track. More important is that there are so few cases.

### **These are Fictional**

1. 1863 Stage Play *The Engineer* has a male tied to a railroad track and saved by a women. NOT THE STANDARD TROPE.
2. 1867 Short Story *Captain Tom's fright*, which ran in the March 13, 1867 issue of *Galaxy Magazine*, has a scene where a man is tied to a railroad track but is saved when the train takes a different path. NOT THE STANDARD TROPE.

3. 1867 Stage Play *Under the Gaslight* has the a man, Snorkey, tied to the tracks and a women, Laura, rescuing him. This play was *not* the first to have someone tied to a railroad track but it popularized the notion. NOT THE STANDARD TROPE.

This play was written by Augustin Daley who saw many other plays using the trope and tried to sue. He won even though there were earlier works with a similar scene (see the two above). This was a landmark in copyright law: *It was specifically ruled that copying the essence of a scene closely in other plays did indeed infringe on intellectual property rights, even if not words were copied and it wasn't literally the exact same scene.* Theatre promoters ignored this.

4. 1868 Stage Play *After Dark*. This had its own railroad scene. The person tied to the tracks is Captain Gordon Chumley, a man, and he is rescued by Old tom, a man.

Daly's lawsuit was against him.

NOT THE STANDARD TROPE

5. 1868 According to Nicholas Daly's (no relation to Augstin Daly) book *Blood on the Tracks: Sensation Drama, The Railway, and the Dark Face of Modernity* says *In October 1868 the railroad scene could be witnessed in five different plays at five different London Theaters.*

I WOULD WANT TO KNOW HOW MANY OF THEM WERE THE STANDARD TROPE

6. 1905 Film *The Train Wreckers* is a 12-minute silent film that I found out about by asking ChatGPT *List all silent films that have a scene where a women is tied to a railroad track and rescued.* This film is the *only one* that it found. Here is the response

*It turns out this specific "woman tied to railroad tracks" image that most people associate with silent-era melodrama is mostly a myth—and in the actual silent films that survive, it was far more often used as parody or comedy than played completely straight. Most of the classic trope examples (e.g., Barney Oldfield's Race for a Life or Teddy at the Throttle) are explicitly comic spoofs.*

*Below are the known silent films from the era that include a scene where a woman is placed in peril on a railroad line or tied near tracks in a*

*dramatic (non-satirical) context:*

*Silent Films with (Non-Comedic) Railroad Peril Scenes*

1. *The Train Wreckers (1905)* A 12-minute silent drama directed by Edwin S. Porter.

*The villainous outlaws leave the switchman's daughter unconscious and lying on the railroad tracks with a train approaching. She is rescued at the last moment by the locomotive engineer.*

*This is not presented humorously and is closer to genuine melodrama than the later parodied versions of the trope.*

*[BILL- this is the complete list. Only one movie.]*

7. 1906 Stage Play *Nellie the Beautiful Cloak Model*. This one followed trope: Beautiful women tied to the tracks and rescued by a man.
8. 1913 film *Barney Olfeld's Race for a Life*. This has the stereotype: mustached villain wearing a fetching hat, a beautiful girl tied to the tracks, rescued at the last moment by a handsome hero. However, this was a comedy making fun of this trope.

MAKES FUN OF THE STANDARD TROPE

9. 1914-1917. Film Series *The Hazards of Helen*. This is a series of 119 12-minute films released between 1914 and 1917. The theme is that Helen faces all kinds of dangers. In one of them she is tied to a railroad track but she probably rescues herself. Very little documentation is left for this film series; however, the general theme was that she gets herself out of trouble.

DIDN'T HAVE THE TROPE

10. 1917 Film *Teddy at the Throttle*. Gloria Swanson humorously plays the girl. She rescues herself since the hero arrives too late. So this is making fun of the trope.

MAKES FUN OF THE STANDARD TROPE

11. 1917 Film *The Fatal Ring*. The movie poster has a woman tied to (or at least on) a railroad track; however, Google-AI says there is no such scene in the movie.

DIDN'T HAVE THE TROPE

12. 1947 Film *The Perils of Pauline*. This is a movie *about* the Silent movie era. In the movie they make a silent movie where a women is tied to a railroad track and rescued by a handsome man. The real movie is nostalgia for an era that never was—there were very few (perhaps none) movies from the silent film era that had that kind of scene in a non-comic way.

ASSUME THAT THE TROPE WAS COMMON IN SILENT MOVIES AND RE-ENACTS THEM.

13. i1959 cartoon segment *Dudley Do-right*. This was a segment of *The adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends* and later had its own show. This has the standard beautiful women (Nell Fenwich) tied to the tracks by a villain with a mustache and a hat (Snidely Whiplash) and is rescued by a handsome(?) man (Dudley Do-right). Much like *The Perils of Pauline* this was a homage/satire of a genre that never was. Two other notes: (1) Nell loves Dudley’s horse but not Dudley, (2) The Wikipedia entry claims that the plot of the Dudley Do-right segments were a similar plot as the silent movie *O’Malley of the Mounted* but google-AI says that that movie does not have anyone tied to a railroad track.

MAKES FUN OF THE STANDARD TROPE

14. 2010 Music video *Mean* by Taylor Swift. The song is a complaint about her critics, but more of an anti-bullying song. There is one very brief scene has her tied to a railroad track (while still singing) and a top-hatted mustached male is tying her there.

USES THE STANDARD TROPE AS METAPHOR

The above is WAY MORE than what is in the book but reaches an interesting point:

The Trope RARELY happened.

Reminds me of the trope *The Butler Did it*.

Chuck does note that this scenario is often satirical.

## 1.2 What The Book Says About This Crime

The books point is that the scenario is so absurd and complicated that *of course* its mostly presented satirically.

Sydney Whiplash has not external motivation. He just likes to tie women (or at least Nell) to railroad tracks. It what he does. This makes him truly villainous. I think Chuck would think he was *less* villainous if he did it for a reason. However, its hard to imagine a good reason to kill someone in this way.

### 1.3 Machiavelli

1. Niccolo Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy, in 1469. He was a diplomat for his city for 14 year and the was wrongly accused of conspiracy against the Medici family. He was eventually released and exiled to a farm where he became a writer.
2. His most famous book *The Prince* challenged the premise of royalty at the time. At the time rulers believed (or claimed to) that the best wa to stay in power was to rule well for the population and appear (though not necc be) virtuous. *The Prince* famously says its better to be feared than loved.
3. There are several ways to interpret the book.
  - (a) The book is a self-help manual for tyrants. Those who think that think of M as being a villain.
  - (b) The book is satire and a warning—royalty is very powerful so maybe thats bad.
  - (c) The book is a criticism of human nature.

Alas, he is usually though of negatively which is not fair.

### 1.4 Joe Paterno

Joe Paterno was a great football coach both in terms of winning and in terms of is players actually going to their classes. No scandals.

Until the one BIG scandal- The teams Defensive Coordinator Jerry Sandusky was a pedophile. A grad assistant Mike McQueary saw this and reported it to Paterno who did only what was required—reported it to his *superior (more on that later)* Tim Curley. Tim Curley then took no action? Why? Here is what Google-AI said

*Tim Curley did not take action against Jerry Sandusky primarily because he and other top Penn State officials, including Joe Paterno and Graham Spanier, were focused on managing the situation internally and avoiding negative publicity for the university rather than reporting the allegations to the police or child welfare authorities.*

*Key reasons for Curley's inaction and the resulting "conspiracy of silence" include:*

*1) Minimizing the Incident: Curley and then-Vice President Gary Schultz claimed they did not believe the 2001 incident, reported by graduate assistant Mike McQueary, was sexual in nature. They testified to the grand jury that McQueary described the conduct merely as "horseplay" or "wrestling in the shower," not a crime. The grand jury and prosecutors did not believe them.*

*2) Internal Handling: Instead of contacting law enforcement, Curley met with Sandusky and told him he was not to bring children to the university's athletic facilities. Curley also reported the incident to Jack Raykovitz, the CEO of Sandusky's charity, The Second Mile, which fell under the supervision of the Department of Public Welfare. Officials decided on a plan that involved The Second Mile handling the matter internally, bypassing an immediate official report to public welfare authorities or police.*

*3) Avoiding Publicity: Emails between Spanier, Curley, and Schultz showed them considering, then rejecting, the idea of reporting the incident to the police, with a clear concern for potential "publicity issues".*

*4) Following the Plan/Lack of Urgency: Curley, Schultz, and Spanier believed they were dealing with "boundary issues" rather than a pattern of serial abuse, and felt the steps they took were appropriate at the time. They failed to grasp the severity of the situation and did not ask enough questions.*

*5) Lack of Oversight/Follow-up: The internal steps taken were ineffective; Sandusky continued to have access to university facilities and children, and the university officials did not ensure compliance with their own rules or check that Raykovitz had taken appropriate action.*

*6) Previous Incident: Curley had also been aware of a 1998 police investigation into Sandusky after a mother complained about him showering with her son, but that investigation ended without criminal charges, possibly leading to a belief that the 2001 incident was similarly minor.*

*Ultimately, Curley, Schultz, and Spanier were charged for their actions and inactions. Curley and Schultz eventually pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of child endangerment in 2017, for which Curley served jail time. Curley expressed remorse, stating, "At the end of the day, I wished I*

*would have done more, didn't ask enough questions, so I pled guilty".*

Paterno got lots of the blame and he is most remembered for that.

Paterno KNEW what was happening and DID very little.

He choose football over humanity.

This is a theme of the book: Villains are people who KNOW the most and DO the least.

## **2 Another Thing That Interests Me About The Eagles Is That I Am Contractually Obligated to Hate Them**

### **2.1 Bands He Hates**

This is a subsection I don't really understand since I do not know that much about Rock. But I view that as a reason TO read it carefully to learn stuff. Still, I don't have the context. I in act,I only summarize four of the bands he lists because the others I have NO idea what he is talking about.

1. *The Eagles*. They are rich hippies, uncaring womanizers, self-absorbed Hollywood liberals, shallow, cokeheads. They never rocked. They claimed to care about the environment but flew around in private jets. But one day he just stopped being able to hate rock bands. BILL COMMENT- the description above fits so many celebs so why pick on *The Eagles*?
2. *Bruce Springsteen*. Fake lower class. Actually Motley Crue is also fake, but they don't claim to be real. However, he has some good songs and I no longer hate him.
3. *Dire Straits*. I initially didn't like the song *Money for Nothing* since he thought the line *that little faggot with the earring and the makeup / Yeah, buddy, that's his own hair* was criticizing glam rock (he notes later that in that era the notion that it was bad to gay people just wasn't a thing). He later found out that the song was quoting a random guy working in a kitchen appliance store. He notes that that is the kind of think you could not find out in 1987 but can find out easily now.

4. it U2. This band has such adoration for Southern Black Culture that they somehow seem marginally racist.

## 2.2 Reverse Engineering

### Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift's *Fearless* was a mega hit crossover (from country to rock) album. Great! But then everyone (Bill comment—who?) decided it was also culturally relevant. So now she superimposed a maturity on her which she probably had some of. By then she became famous to people who didn't even know her music.

Paraphrase. *All the qualities her previous audience had once used to justify her success as a pop star felt annoying to those who were caring about her for the first time. She seemed unconvincingly shocked by her own success and obsessed with market share. Instead of seeming mature she seemed calculating. Her album Speak Now was a massive hit but she was hammered for being self-absorbed and oversharing (two qualities that singer-songwriters are supposed to have—but apparently not for young female ones). Her song Dear John about her failed relationship with John Mayer seemed fake even though it actually happened.*

*For later songs people who didn't like her found reasons to not like her that weren't there, like her songs were about something other than what they were about.*

### The Eagles

If you don't like The Eagles (see his reasons above) then every song you hear you filter through that lens. Chuck realized that if he didn't know a song was by The Eagles then he would like it. So he can no longer hate rock bands.

## 3 Villains Who Are Not Villains

### 3.1 D.C.Cooper

The hijacker D.D. Cooper is viewed positively. This is crazy. Why?

1. He was polite.
2. He didn't hurt anyone or intend to.

3. He got away with it (Chuck thinks D.C. Cooper died in the fall and this is quite possible.)
4. The money he got was from an airline. Not from *real people*. (Reminds me of Bonnie and Clyde.)
5. He had confidence in himself.

## 3.2 Con Men

In movies they are portrayed positively. The reasons are similar to D.C. Cooper. And also, if they are the main character you are forced to root for them.

In the real world they are viewed very negatively by those they rip off and (in a case he discusses) by the con men's family since he family is on the run.

[Bill] I am reminded of the *Gentleman Thief* trope. I asked Google-AI how realistic it was:

*In reality, a few historical figures have approached this archetype, earning the "gentleman" moniker from the public:*

1) *Charles E. Boles ("Black Bart")*: An outlaw of the American West in the 1870s and 1880s known for robbing stagecoaches. He was notable for his civility, never swearing or firing his shotgun, and sometimes leaving poetic messages at the scene of his crimes.

2) *Christopher Rocancourt*: A modern-day con artist who impersonated French royalty, an heir to the Rockefeller family, and a film producer, successfully scamming wealthy individuals and earning a reputation for his style and deception.

3) *Bill Mason*: A renowned art and jewel thief known for a smooth and sophisticated approach to his crimes, often blending into high society.

4) *Matthew Brady ("Gentleman Brady")*: A bushranger (an Australian equivalent of a highwayman) in the early 1800s, noted for his good manners and considerate treatment of his victims, particularly women.

## 3.3 Drug Dealer

In the modern era of quality TV one way to tell if a show is art is how they view drug dealers. If they are portrayed positively, or at least not negatively, then the show is quality.

Portrayals of Drug Dealers that are not nec. negative.

1. *Easy Rider* 1969. A movie for people over 18 (the movie was rated R).
2. *Coming into Los Angeles* 1969. Song by Arlo Guthrie. This song clearly celebrates and roots for the drug dealer (who is also the singer).
3. *Miami Vice*. 1984. Drug dealers were immoral, but they were engaging.
4. *Six Feet Under*. 2001. In the pilot the daughter being high on ecstasy is played for laughs. This is an outlier- *taking* hard drugs is always portrayed negatively.
5. *The Wire* 2002. The drug dealers have a stronger moral code than the cops. Fun fact: the drug deal Stringer Bell is modeled after two real drug dealers: Stringer Reed and Roland Bell.
6. *Weeds* 2005. A suburban housewife sells pot and is a good person and the main character of the series.
7. *Breaking Bad* 2008. Walter White goes from cooking meth to make money for his family (so morally good) to making more than he could possibly need and killing people (bad). The fans never turned on him.

Why were these shows made? Why did fans accept these people. Chuck's speculation.

1. Audiences support these characters because they are the main characters. Tony Soprano and Dexter Morgan also get fan approval.
2. (More interesting) People were raised being told drugs were bad. Nancy Reagan had the *Just Say No* campaign. But people saw pot smoking as harmless, and Bill Clinton even admitted to smoking (but not inhaling) pot. This was a cognitive dissidence. So the stories rebel- Yes, drug dealers aren't so bad.

### 3.4 Mohammad Ali

This section told me very negative things about Ali that I didn't know (I will get to them). But the point is that these negative things seem to have been forgotten (I never knew them). Why were they forgotten.

1. Ali insulted Frazier in a racist way, comparing him to a gorilla, claiming he Frazier was dumb (did he ever call Frazier a *Dumb N-word?*). He also claimed that Frazier was not authentically black since he was backed by mostly white investment firm (Ali was backed by the Nation of Islam). Frazier was smart and authentically black, but Ali's lies took hold and Ali was who people rooted for.
2. Ali went to a KKK meeting and agreed with them that interracial marriage is an abomination.

How come none of this has harmed his reputation?

1. He was drafted for the Vietnam war but refused so serve. He said *No Vietcong ever called me an N-Word*. This scores him points as both a pacifist and a civil right advocate. On both counts he ended up on the right side of history. (I am not implying this was a plan on his part.)
2. Because of this his boxing license was suspended. He was tried and convicted for draft dodging and was sentenced to five years in jail. He never served because the Supreme Court overturned the conviction since it did not take into account his conscientious objector status. Even so, the boxing license and trial made him a martyr. (I am not implying this was a plan on his part.)
3. (Chuck doesn't say this one so this is my speculation, not his.) Ali was a winner in the ring, Ali was handsome, Ali was articulate, and he wrote cute poems. Here is one:  
*I've wrestled with alligators*  
*I've tussled with a whale*  
*I done handcuffed lightning*  
*And thow'd thunder in jail*
4. Winners right the history.

Chuck makes another point: The winners are always progressives since societies evolve and change.

My take: This is true if conservatives are seen just as people who don't want things to change.

## 4 Easier than Typing

### 4.1 Fictional and Real Vigilantes

If Batman really existed how would people react?

**Bernhard Goetz**

1. In 1984 Bernhard Goetz shot four black youths who were going to rob him. All four survived though one was paralyzed for life. For a time he was considered a hero. The more the public learned about him the worse he looked. He was a racist. He was not at all sad about the death He said if he had more bullets he would have shot them more.
2. Goetz said that shooting the youths was *easier than typing* hence the title of the chapter.
3. Goetz had his defenders back in the late 1980's. Now he does not. Even those who want to say *that was then, he had a point* preface it with *of course he's crazy*.
4. Goetz later became a radical vegetarian and an advocate for squirrels. He also ran for Mayor and got  $\leq 1000$  votes. Less than Kenny Kramer, the person Kramer on Seinfeld is based on. This just added to his oddness.
5. Goetz had an origin story: in 1981 he was injured when three teenagers mugged him in the subway. Also, when he was 12 his father pleaded guilty to molestation charges.
6. Goetz should have said the following and then shut up: *I know how it feels to be scared and I know how it feels to be hurt, and I didn't want anyone else to have those feelings just because they were out in public.*

**Why is Batman considered a hero**

1. Batman is fictional.
2. Batman never gives interviews. That helps.
3. The readers know Batman's origin story, his defining moment, Parents killed by a mugger when he was young. That helps the reader like

Batman. People in the Batman-Universe don't know that but they still like him— again, fiction. (Goetz was mugged as a kid and survived. If people just knew that, and nothing else, that might help.)

**Death Wish** The book and movie and reaction are interesting. The main character's name is Paul.

1. Paul is a pacifist but after his wife is killed (in the movie also raped) he becomes a vigilante.
2. The book was anti-vig. In the book he ends up Killing teenagers that are just throwing rocks at a building.
3. The movie was pro-vig. Charles Bronson was cast as the main character. Both the author and Bronson agree this was a bad choice since Bronson is an action hero so the audience is going to route for him. I could not tell if the movie was intentionally pro-vig or just by accident. (Dustin Hoffman might have been better for the role. He was the main character in *Straw Dogs* which is a much more complex movie about a similar topic.)
4. The reaction to the movie was anti-Vig as the critics said the movie glamorized vig.

### **Defining Moments**

1. Batman and Paul (in Death Wish) had defining moments. Goetz is rarely portrayed that way.
2. Chuck notes the following: Batman *never questions that a defining moment should affect his entire life*. And he has the money to keep on being Batman.
3. The movie and the book Death Wish were too short a time span to expect the main character to reflect on *should a defining moment should affect his entire life*.
4. Goetz did not have the intellectual or emotional depth to ask that question. Also, since he did not do vig stuff later, one could argue that the defining moment did not affect his life.

A more recent case, not in the book, from Google AI

*In May 2023, Marine veteran Daniel Penny placed Jordan Neely, a homeless man with a history of mental health issues, in a fatal chokehold on an F train in New York City after Neely allegedly acted aggressively toward passengers. Penny, who argued he was defending others, was charged with manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide.*

*Key details of the case include:*

*1) The Incident: Jordan Neely (30), a former Michael Jackson impersonator with documented mental illness, was acting erratically and threatening passengers on a subway car.*

*2) The Action: Daniel Penny (26) held Neely in a chokehold for several minutes until his body went limp.*

*3) Legal Proceedings: The trial saw the dismissal of the most serious manslaughter charge, with jurors focusing on criminally negligent homicide.*

*Outcome: In December 2024, Daniel Penny was acquitted of all charges, a decision reported by Al Jazeera. This case sparked intense national debate regarding self-defense, racial justice, and the handling of mental health crises in public spaces.*

I asked if Daniel Penny is viewed as a hero. Google AI said it was mixed. I wonder how he will look 10 years from now. From what I've read Daniel Penny is a much more likable guy than Goetz (and he's not crazy). He is also keeping a low profile.

## 5 Human Clay

Andrew Dice Clay was (and probably still is) a comedian who was vulgar and anti-PC.

Some artists (comedians, singers) are misunderstood in their time but are later rediscovered. Chuck claims this will never happen with Andrew Dice Clay.

He gives many reasons.

**ONE** Note the contrast.

1. *Two Live Crew* was a rap group that sang songs like *Me so Horny* and other songs that were controversial. The song seems tame now but more important is that they get a pass because they were *Authentic*.

2. *Stephen Colbert* on his original show played an over-the-top right-wing conservative. Everyone (well... not everyone as I will discuss soon) knew it was parody. SO he doesn't need to get a pass for saying outrageous things.

I asked google AI if some people thought he was serious. Yes. It doesn't say how many and I doubt it was that many but here is their comment:

*Yes, research and studies have shown that a significant number of people, particularly those with conservative political views, interpreted Stephen Colbert's persona on The Colbert Report as genuine, rather than as satire.*

*Key Findings and Reasons for Misinterpretation:*

1) *The Satire Paradox: Studies found that viewers often interpreted the show based on their own political beliefs. While liberals largely understood the show was mocking conservative ideology, many conservatives saw the character as a sincere, right-wing commentator who was actually poking fun at liberals.*

2) *Motivated Processing: A 2009 Ohio State University study found that the more conservative a viewer was, the more likely they were to believe Colbert was "not joking" or that he meant what he said.*

3) *Misinterpreted Intent: Some viewers and conservative figures, such as the National Organization for Marriage's Maggie Gallagher, even believed Colbert was a "double-agent" pretending to be a liberal pretending to be a conservative.*

4) *Deadpan Style: The ambiguous nature of the deadpan satire, which lacked overt cues indicating it was a joke to those unfamiliar with him, contributed to this confusion.*

*Despite this, the show was immensely popular, and the same studies noted that both liberals and conservatives found the show equally funny, though they were laughing for opposite reasons.*

3. *Andrew Dice Clay* He claimed that his stage act was different from his real personality but never made a clear distinction. This just doesn't work. Here is a direct quote from Chuck

*He was generating a persona that the Real Andrew Clay Silverstein was somehow separate (and that **he** could always tell the difference, even*

*when nobody else could). It was like choosing to become the worst idealized version of himself, without taking responsibility for what that implied. As such he'll never get credit for being dangerously authentic [like Two Live Crew and also NWA who are discussed in a later chapter] or secretly insightful [not quite Colbert who is non-so-secretly insightful]. The only positive memory of his career is that he was popular.*

## **TWO**

He wasn't that funny. Here is an example of a "joke"

**Dice:** Jack and Jill went up the hill with a buck and a quarter [each]. Jill comes down with \$2.50.

**Audience** (together) What a whore!

Chuck notes that being unfunny is not necc. a career-killer if the comedian has a certain style. This ADC did have—he smoked on stage and was (on stage) unapologetic in his anti-PC stance.

There are other comedians who say vulgar things and are funny. Some of their critics claim they are not funny, but that's not fair. Chuck says that Louis C.K. is like this.

## **THREE**

He was anti-PC. At the time PC was being made fun of, but by now it's seeped into the culture so much that ACD just comes across as nasty and not that insightful. [It not as though he was a free-speech crusader making some point, like Lenny Bruce.]

This reminds me of the movie *Kisses for My President* made in 1964 about the first female president. At the end of the movie she resigns because she is pregnant and needs to quit her job to raise a family. It's just so jarring to modern viewers, even conservative ones.

So his old act may be seen as similar to (and I don't know if this happened) a comedian in the early 1900's making fun of the concept of Women getting the vote.

*Whats next? A female in the cabinet? Make her the Secretary of Baking Cookies.*

DIFF TOPIC: PC. He has a few comments on this, mostly agreeing, but pointing out the absurdity of the following: The Show *Girls* on HBO was about four white women who live together and a lot of it was about Sex. The show was not racist. But having a show in NY with no black or other non-white characters has been seen by some as racist.

## 6 Without a Gun They Can't Get None

Most people pretend to be nice. For example when we buy something we say *Thank You* to the cashier and they say *Have a nice day*. Chuck's point is that we can only judge people by their actions and not by what they are *really like inside*.

I've thought about this with the following scenarios:

1. A high school student volunteers at a homeless shelter so that it will be on their resume and help them get into Harvard. Does Harvard want people who help the homeless independent of why, or do they want people who really care about the homeless? Can they tell the difference? Or do they say *I don't know and I don't care*.
2. That person graduates and goes into business and gives money to charities. But its not because he cares about people, its to look good to society. I can imagine this helping his career prospects or even finding a spouse. Do his bosses or his spouse care if he really cares about the poor?
3. One can make up more scenarios

This is all a prelude to the opposite.

NWA is a rap group that *wants* to appear evil. Here is a quote

*Everything they attempted had to possess criminal overtones. I can only assume they spend hours trying to deduce villainous ways to microwave popcorn (and if they'd succeeded, there would absolutely be a song about it, assumedly titled "Pop goes the corn Killa" or "45 seconds to Bitch Snack*.

Chuck contrasts NWA with another rap group Public Enemy (PE)

- NWA seemed authentic and non-pretentious. They had no over arching message. If they sang a song about black cops shooting blacks to impress the white cops then Chuck assumed it happened all the time (it did not). Why? Because they were not making a statement about society, they were just telling it like it is (even if it isn't).
- PE sang about historical and current wrongs, especially against black people. So when they sang about an event, it was seen (at least by Chuck) as a metaphor.

NWA songs said that all the matters in life was *money and bitches*.

The FBI claimed that NWA songs lead to violence against police. The publicity made sales skyrocket.

They have since broken up.

1. Ice Cube, now plays a cop on Law and Order: SVU from 2000 until now (and still is- this is written in 2026). He also does commercials for Coors.
2. Dr. Dre had a great solo career and does commercials for Dr. Pepper.
3. Eazy-E died of AIDS. He had sired 7 kids with 6 women (probably more).
4. *The two less famous members, DJ Yella and MC Ren, are generally only mentioned in retrospective discussions about the heyday of NWA (but almost always in complementary manner, as is often the case with forgotten role players.)*

Bill here: Were they sell-outs? No. They never claimed to be idealists or to make any big point. You can't abandon your ideals if you don't have any.

## 7 Arrested For Smoking

The title of this section refers to the scene in Basic Instinct where Sharon Stone is told she can't smoke in the interrogation room and she suggests they arrest her for smoking.

### Love vs Lust: Basic Instinct

In *Basic Instinct* Catherine Tramell (played by Sharon Stone) is a bisexual novelist who (probably) kills her lover (sex-partner is more accurate) with an icepick to heighten her sexual pleasure. So its out of lust not love.

Yet she is the protagonist and the audience is rooting for her.

What?

Killing for lust is more like an insanity defense and seems more sympathetic than killing for love.

Side Note: Mike Douglas has been in at least three movie with an evil female lover: *Basic Instinct*, *Fatal Attraction*, *Disclosure*.

### *The Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal*

Clinton is clearly the villain of the story. So why is he not seen that way?

1. The impeachment made him the victim.
2. He never talks about it. In his book *My Life* which is 1056 pages *Lewinsky* is in the book 17 times and is referred to as a policy problem.
3. Monica is a bit overweight, Linda Tripp is ugly, but Clinton was handsome. (Another aspect of this chapter is how much looks matters. He point out that A *feminist* friend of Chuck said *I could almost understand [Clinton's affair] if it was with Sharon Stone but not with that fat pig.* we will never have a dwarf president, or a president with some deformity that shows.)
4. Hillary was already disliked. Also, standing by her man is bad for her feminist credentials.
5. Ken Starr overreached. He was supposed to be investigating Whitewater.
6. Bill Clinton was a good president. Michael Moore called him *our best republican president* which was not meant as a compliment. If you ask a rep now what they didn't like about Clinton they may talk about Monica but not his centrist effective policies.

*Its not the sex, its the lying*

All presidents lie. They really have to. Both to get elected and to govern effectively.

1. Lincoln in 1858 said he was against abolition.
2. FDR lied about the US helping England before war was declared.
3. Ronald Reagan lied about Iran-Contra.
4. Clinton, before Monica, lied about his commitment to gay rights during the 1992 campaign. He claimed to be for gay right but uring his term passed the don't ask don't tell bill.

If being honest was required then

- Jimmy Carter would have won a second term.

- The 2008 election would be between Ron Paul and Dennis Kucinich.

**Ted Bundy** He got away with it for so long since he was handsome. Early on he was in jail for kidnapping and suspected murder. The jail let him use the prison library without leg irons or handcuffs. He jumped out of the window and escaped.

Why did they let him use the library like that?

Because he didn't look like a serial killer.

Mark Harmon played Ted Bundy in a TV movie. Mark Harmon also doesn't look like a serial killer.

**Wilt Chamberlain** In his autobiography he claimed he slept with 20,000 women. That would be 1.2 women a day since he was 15 until he was 50. Unlikely; however, it is clear he slept with a lot of women.

This made his reputation decline but more because *he is the one who said it*. If a teammate or friend said it, pos or neg, Wilt's rep would be fine. If someone said it neg, their rep would decline.

## 8 Electric Funeral

**What parent worried about and what has changed significantly.**

1. In the 1950's parents worried about *Elvis* being a bad cultural influence.
2. In the 1960's parents worried about *The Beatles* being a bad cultural influence. (Alan Sherman has a song to the tune of *Pop Goes the Weasel* which is *I hate the Beatles*.)
3. In the 1970's parents worried about *Black Sabbath* (and other groups with a Satanic angle).
4. In the 1980's parents worried about the movie *Porky's* (I don't know if parents really worried about it, though they should have.)
5. In the 1990's parents worried about *Beavis and Butthead* and also *Bart Simpsons*.

Note that in all of the cases above the parents worried about how the *content* mentioned would affect their children. In the 2000's that changed. Parents worried about *The Medium Itself*. Kids looking at screens to much.

Parents can fret about this all they want but, a quote  
*The Future Always Wins: Perez Hilton*

And we can't stop it.

We don't even have a debate about if a new technology should be used. It will be. The argument FOR is circular: *Use it because its inevitable.*

Here is a story from the book and a meta-story. The book says that in the Third Season of *The Sopranos* Christopher sticks up a charity concert at Rutgers University (the headliner is Jewel). Here is his exact quote

*What's most interesting about the robbery is the person who hands over the money: The role of the terrified box office clerk is portrayed by an unknown actor named Mario Lavanderia. He has only two lines, but the scene—when viewed retrospectively— is more culturally significant than everything else that happens in that particular episode. This is because Mario Lavanderia would soon rename himself Perez Hilton and become the first authentically famous blogger, which (of course) made him the most hated blogger of his generation.*

Here is the weird thing about the book

**He doesn't say what episode it is!**

**He doesn't give the quote!**

I have the Sopranos on On-Demand.

I asked google for the episode where Mario Lavanderia appears. It told me *Pine Barrows*. I watched it and it didn't seem to be going towards a heist of a benefit concert, and it didn't. Google was wrong. I then asked Google which episode had Chris ripping off a benefit concert. It told me *Fortunate Son* which is correct. I watched it.

Here is the conversation Mario played a cashier at the ticket office. His character didn't even have a name.

### **Begin Conversation**

**Cashier:** You're robbing a benefit concert. You know that?

**Chris:** Is that all there is? I'll fuckin blow your head off.

**Cashier:** Most people charge it to their student card

### **End Conversation**

While it's an interesting quote—pointing out that ripping off a benefit

concert is just so wrong—I don't see it as being that big a deal.

Chuck then goes on to talk about Perez Hilton.

Perez was an early famous blogger (though I never heard of him) who mostly blogged about nasty (and much of it not true) celeb gossip. He had a large following.

Some hated him because he was successful

Some hated the idea that someone like him could be successful.

But Chuck's point is that this is the future and nobody could stop it whether or not its good for society (its not).

On the web number-of-followers seems to be more important than money or any other parameter.

There is no downside to having everyone outside your fan base hate you. (This also applies to Donald Trump now)

*The Future Always Wins: Kim Dotcom*

(Real name: Kim Schmitz)

He made it possible for people to email music and movies like Napster only better. He was arrested in New Zealand in a brutal way. He only spend a month in jail and later sued the police and won a confidential 6-figure settlement.

But what interests Chuck is that Kim published a letter warning that file sharing is the future and can't be stopped.

What has happened since then is that i-tunes and streaming have made it easy to LEGALLY get stuff. I am not sure how much. Google AI says that Hollywood loses billions of dollars but Chuck disagrees: People are downloading stuff just because the title sounds cool. They likely would not have gone to those movies. (Actually Chuck was talking about music but the same principle applies.)

*The Future Always wins: Wikileaks*

Julian Assuage is not bother that someone (e.g., an exposed spy) might die because of his leak. He thinks the world will be a better place if all nations dirty secrets have the threat of coming out, so they stop doing bad things.

Chuck points out we have no way of knowing. Even so, Wikileaks may be the future.

## 9 I am Perplexed-This is Why They Hate You

### Why People Hate Chevy Chase

Chevy Chase is nasty and bad to women. But a lot of actors are like that. So why do people in Hollywood hate him.

Chuck speculates the following

Most comedians want to do serious roles

### Bill Murry

1. *1984- The Razor's Edge*: A traumatized WW I veteran goes on a quest for meaning that leads him through Paris and the Himalayas.
2. *2005-Broken Flowers*: An Aging Don Juan embarks on a cross country journal to track down four of his former lovers after getting an anonymous letter saying he has a son.
3. *2012-Get Low*: A hermit in the 1930s throws his own funeral party while still alive.
4. *Hyde Park on the Hudson*: Historical drama about FDR and his mistress Daisy.

### Steve Martin

*1981-Pennies from Heaven* During the depression Arthur Parker, a sheet music seller, has fantasies that are musical.

### Dan Ackroyd

*Driving Miss Daisy* (I think in a supporting role)

### John Belushi

*Continental Divide* A romantic comedy so might not count.

### Tom Hanks

*Philadelphia* Lawsuit about gay rights.

### Robin Williams

*Good Will Hunting* and others.

### Eddie Murphy

*Dreamgirls* (He got a golden globe)

**Chevy Chase has no such ambitions!**

Why not? Chuck thinks Chevy Chase is handsome and does deadpan very well so could be a great leading man in a drama.

People hate him because Chevy's reluctance to do so show that he does not take any of this seriously.

### **Why People Hate Howard Cosell**

1. In 1982 Cosell covered a brutal fight between Larry Holmes and Randal Cobb. Holmes pummeled Cobb for 15 rounds. It was a real mismatch. Two weeks earlier boxer Kim Duk-koo died after injuries in a boxing match (he died 5 days later). Cosell was so appalled by the Holmes-Cobb fight, and may have also been thinking about the death of Duk-Koo, that he vowed to never announce another fight. Cobbs said that he'd let Holmes punch in the face for another fifteen rounds if Howard promised to quite covering football too. Cobbs later joked(?) that his greatest achievement in boxing was forcing Cosell out of the sport.
2. So why do people hate him? Quote from the book: *The very smart believed he was fake smart; the semi-smart thought he was too smart for his own good the not-so-smart assumed he was an idiot (and sometimes they were right).*
3. Howard Cosell would use circular reasoning in a bad way: *What I'm saying is true because I'm the one saying it.*

### **Alistair Crowley**

Chuck K never heard of Alistair Crowley until he was mentioned in a song by Ozzie Osbourne. I never heard of Alistair Crowley until I read about him in this book.

1. AC was born in 1875 and died in 1947 (a year before Ozzy Osbourne was born).
2. Wikipedia says he was a British Occultist. The book says he was a writer, a "real" magician, a mountaineer, a general spouter of aphorisms. He was born wealthy but squandered it all.
3. He invented his own religion and had some followers. Chuck says he was a druggie Ron Hubbard.
4. Chuck's interest is that AC wanted to be known as evil. Quote: *His single-minded focus was on being terrible remains unchallenged. And*

*his was not a situation like NWA or the Oakland Raiders, where the perception of badness was supposed to inform the art; this was a situation where the badness has to be real. The badness was the art.*

5. AC boasted that he inspired Hitler's Mein Kampf by sending a young Hitler his book the book of the law. So he wanted to be known as someone who inspired Hitler.

### **Sarah Palin**

In 2010 Sarah Palin designed a map (likely someone designed it for her) labelled *take back the 20* which featured 20 Democratic congressman whose seats she wanted to go to Republicans. It was a map of America and in the states that had one of the 20 she had a circle with a vertical line and a horizontal line which could be interpreted as rifle crosshairs (some states had more than one). The map also had a list of the representatives that were targeted. One of them was Gabrielle "Gabby" Gifford.

In 2011 Jarred Loughner tried to kill Gabby by shooting her in the head. She survived but has Aphasia (difficulty speaking and forming sentences), limited use of her right arm, and a limp.

1. For a week weeks after the shooting there some people thought that the map had inspired the shooting and that Palin was indirectly responsible.
2. Sarah Palin claimed that the map was not rifle crosshairs but instead the scope of a road surveyor. *This made her seem 10 times more guilty and 100 times more unreasonable.*
3. Sarah Palin took down the map. That was reasonable.
4. It turns out that Jarred Loughner was a nut job who had hated Gabby since three years ago when she did not sufficiently answer the question "What is Government for if words have no meaning."
5. Some people were still mad at Palin for inspiring a culture of violence though that Jarred would not be the poster child for that.
6. Nobody is mad at Jarred. He was more pathetic than evil. And if you are mad at people that are pathetic, then you are pathetic.

7. Chuck K felt sorry for Palin in that this one incident could have upset her political career.

### **Something I learned from this book that does not fit into any category**

The book mentioned that Abraham Lincoln jumped out of a building to avoid having a quorum. I looked it up for more details. Google AI:

*In 1840, Lincoln was serving in the Illinois House of Representatives as a member of the Whig Party. The Democrats, who held the majority, were trying to push through a measure involving the state banks. The Whigs strongly opposed it and tried to stop the vote by breaking the quorum – that is, preventing enough members from being present to legally conduct business.*

*Under parliamentary rules, if fewer than a quorum of legislators are present, no vote can occur. So the Whigs attempted to leave the chamber to block proceedings.*

*However, the doors were locked to prevent them from escaping – a tactic sometimes used in 19th-century legislatures to keep members from fleeing and breaking quorum.*

*At that point:*

- a) Lincoln and several fellow Whigs ran for the windows.*
- b) Lincoln reportedly jumped out of a first-story window to avoid being counted as present.*
- c) The maneuver was meant to stop the Democrats from having enough members to conduct business.*

*Did it work?*

*No – the effort ultimately failed. The majority still managed to proceed, and the legislation moved forward. But the episode became one of the most colorful stories from Lincoln’s early political career.*

*Historical significance*

*The story is often remembered because it shows:*

- a) Lincoln’s intense partisanship in his younger days*
- b) The rough-and-tumble nature of 19th-century politics*
- c) That “quorum-breaking” tactics have a long history in American legislatures*

*Lincoln himself later joked about the incident, and historians generally accept that it really happened (though details vary slightly in different accounts).*

*Years later, Lincoln described the event in a matter-of-fact and slightly amused tone. According to accounts from colleagues and early biographers (notably William Herndon, his law partner), Lincoln acknowledged that he and the others:*

*Were trying to prevent a quorum,  
Were physically prevented from leaving,  
And so climbed out the window to avoid being counted as present.*

*Lincoln didn't present the episode as especially noble or dramatic. Instead, he treated it as a practical bit of hardball politics from his early career. Herndon reported that Lincoln described it as a straightforward partisan maneuver — essentially an example of the rough legislative tactics common at the time.*

*One paraphrased recollection attributed to Lincoln is along the lines of: finding the doors locked, we jumped out of the window to avoid the count.*

*Historians generally agree that Lincoln looked back on the episode with mild amusement, as a youthful partisan escapade rather than a defining moment. It fits with other evidence that Lincoln saw his early political career as full of sharp elbows and tactical maneuvering — something he later practiced in a more restrained way as president.*

*If you'd like, I can explain the quorum-breaking rules they were exploiting — they're surprisingly similar to tactics still used in legislatures today.*

## 10 Crime and Punishment

This chapter compares OJ Simpsons with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Both are disliked but for very different reasons. Spoiler alert: OJ's dislike is earned, Kareem's is not.

### Similarities

The book mentions 9 similarities. I only mention those I find interesting.

1. Both were culturally defined (before Nicole Brown's murder) by their responses to identity politics.

Jabbar refused to participate in the 1968 Olympics in accordance with the black power movement.

OJ was the first black athlete to break into the white world of advertising on a national scale. (Best known for Hertz Commercials.)

2. Both were superstars (Kareem more so).
3. Both were also actors in parody movies (Kareem-Airplane, OJ-Naked Gun).
4. Both are vilified. Ignoring the murder for now, Chuck K makes the point that celebrities, especially black celebrities, have to pick just the right level of exposure. Kareem is too private. OJ is (even after the murder) too public.

I looked up why Kareem did *Airplane*, especially since he is a private person. I learned some awesome things:

**Interesting facts *Airplane*.**

1. Arthur Hailey wrote a Canadian live television play that aired in 1956 titled *Flight into Danger*. James Doohan (Scotty) starred in it. This was the basis for *Zero Hour* which was the basis for *Airplane! Flight into Danger* and *Zero Hour* were dramas. Author Hailey later wrote the book *Airport* which was the basis for a movie, a drama, of the same title.
2. The producers of *Airplane* bought the rights to *Zero Hour* for \$2500 so that they could freely use the plot and even the names of the characters.
3. In *Zero Hours* the role of one of the pilots to succumb to food poisoning, was played by Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch. He was a former football player. He was in a few other movies as well.
 

1957: Reg season Sept 29-Dec 22. Championship game: Dec 29. About 3 months.

2026: Reg seasons: Sept 8-Jan 4. Super Bowl: Feb 8. About 5 months.

Number of Reg games: 12 in 1957, 17 in 2026.

Playoffs: none in 1957. 4 rounds in 2026.

Weeks off in 1957: None

Weeks off now: A few.
4. In making *Airplane* the producers looked for an athlete for the same role. They considered Pete Rose. One source says he turned it down

because he thought it was silly, but another source says he was unavailable since it was baseball season and he was still playing. Kareem Abdul was free (he was still playing—he retired in 1989 and the movie came out in 1980) and was free.

5. Why did he take the role?

a) It paid \$30,000. He wanted to buy a \$35,000 oriental rug and he negotiate the salary up to that. (Other sources just say he needed the money.)

b) The schedule fit the NBA off season

c) He was interested in acting and had already done some (he did some after also).

d) He liked the idea of playing himself yet not himself. That was the joke- he was an airplane pilot named Robert Murdock but a little boy recognizes him as Kareem. This results in him having to admit he is Kareem:

**Boy: Hey, you're Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**

**Kareem: My name is Roger Murdock and I'm the copilot.**

**Boy: I think you're the greatest, but my dad says you don't work hard enough on defense.**

**Kareem: I've been hearing that crap ever since I was at UCLA. I'm out there busting my buns every night! Tell your old man to drag Walton and Lanier up and down the court for 48 minutes.**

One source on the web said that Kareem wasn't acting (or he was a very good actor) and the actor playing the boy was actually scared.

e) Kareem's friends read the script and thought it was hilarious so they urged him to do it.

**Why was OJ found innocent?**

Possibilities.

1. The LA police wrecked prosecutors case by attempting to frame and already guilty man. (Chuck thinks this is the most likely.)
2. The prosecuting attorney was inept and choked under pressure.

3. The jury was equalizing centuries of real racial unfairness by allowing the black Simpson for a crime he clearly did. (I tend towards this one.)
4. The jury was not educated enough to understand DNA evidence.
5. OJ was innocent and the jury was able to see that, devoid of bias. (There is a theory that it was OJ's son, though this has been widely dismissed.)

### **OJ's options post-trial**

What do you do if you are found innocent of murder but everyone thinks you are guilty.

1. Alan Dershowitz advised OJ to disappear from public view (he told Clause Von Bulow the same thing, and he did so). Simpsons was incapable of that. On the night of his acquittal he called into the Larry King show. But even if OJ did to try to disappear, there are enough people who want to see him or contact him or gawk and him that this would be hard. (Contrast: JD Salinger disappeared from public view and nobody bothered him.)
2. Leave the country. Hard logistically and makes you look guilty.
3. Live as though you were innocent. Play golf, go to restaurants. This is what OJ did. One downside—people are forced to still think about OJ, and in OJ's case, hate him. Writing the book *What if I did it* also reminded people of who he was and what he did. (Side note: The Brown family got a few hundred thousand dollars from the sale of the book.)
4. Here are to contrasts:
  - a) Kobe Bryant raped a women in 2003. He never talks about it, and refuses to answer questions about it. Hence it is somewhat forgotten. He is not forcing people to think about it.
  - b) Bill Clinton-Monica-same thing
  - c) Lizzie Borden (who was probably innocent)- same thing.

### **OJ Coda**

He tries to steal, using guns and kidnapping, some sports memorabilia that he thought was rightfully his. He was sentenced to 9-33 years. Some think (including Chuck K) that the harsh sentence was because of the murder. I've seen arguments for both sides. He was paroled after 9 years.

### **Some Notes On Kareem**

1. Some people *choose* to play a sport. Others, those who are over 7 feet tall, are perhaps pushed into basketball. Chuck speculates that while Kareem *liked* basketball he didn't *love* basketball. The shortest player in the NBA now is Yuki Kawamura at 5 feet 8 inches. He is the only current NBA player under 6 feet. Only around 10% of the league is under 6 feet 5 inches.
2. Kareem does not feel an obligation to appreciate his fans. In music that's okay: Nirvana didn't appreciate their fans. But in sports it's not acceptable.
3. Kareem is an intellectual. He's written 12 books. I list the ones that are not about autobiographical (so real books).
  - a) Brothers in Arms: The Epic story of the 761st tank Battalion, WW II's forgotten Heroes. (It was an all-black regiment)
  - b) Mycroft Holmes (a 4-novel series). Fiction about Sherlock Holmes Brother.
  - c) Black profiles in Courage
  - d) What Color is my world: The lost history of African-American Inventors
  - e) Writings on the wall: Searching for a new equality beyond black and white.

I wonder (Chuck didn't say this) if being a black ex-athlete intellectual does not fit in to anyone's world view, and works against him.

## **11 Hitler is in this book**

Hitler's evil is perceived as being totally different from other villains such as Stalin and Mao. Chuck gives us evidence for this and reasons why it is true.

Evidence

1. Emil Fackenheim, a Jewish rabbi and philosopher.

*Fackenheim . . . makes an exceptionalist argument about Hitler and human nature: You cannot locate Hitler on the ordinary continuum of human nature; you cannot merely say that he is a very, very, very, very bad man, perhaps the most wicked yet, but still explicable as the product of the same human nature, the same psychological forces that produced, say, the next-worst human being and the next etc. No, Fackenheim says, Hitler is off the charts, off the grid, in another category of radical evil entirely.*

2. We all know what Hitler looked like even from a young age. We don't know what Stalin and Mao Tsung and other tyrants look like.
3. (Page 186) *Hitler is still a historical figure, but he's predominately a placeholder for cognitive darkness, he's the entity we use in the same way people once employed the devil.*
4. If you say *Hitler was a Vegetarian* then Vegetarian's get mad and claim that Hitler did eat meat, or that his friends snuck some bone marrow into his food.
5. There is a rumor that Hitler had only one testicle (I've heard he had a micro-penis). Whether this is true or false is not the point Chuck is making. That we are even talking about the issue is what's interesting. Nobody talks about the genitals of other villains.
6. Nobody says *I had a time machine I'd go back in time and kill X* where X is Judas, Stalin, Mao, Idi Amin, others.
7. (Page 191)

*Other genocides can be viewed as sinister in concept and heartbreaking in practice, but without any pressure to understand and personify the men who made them happen. Mao and Stalin (and Hirohito and Amin and Leopold and Robespierre) are dead, both literally and figuratively. They are historic caricatures. They can disappear. But we need Hitler alive. Hitler needs to be a person we hate on a one-to-one basis. He's the worst. That's his job.*

8. (Page 193) The movie *Der Untergang* depicts the last days of the Third Reich. There is a scene where Hitler is very angry. There is an internet meme where they have (incorrect) subtitles where he is bad about something trivial like the cancellation of a TV show. Its hilarious. I once saw one where he complains about the math terms *homology* and *co-homology* but I couldn't find it on the Youtube.

Is Hitler really different than Stalin and Mao-Tseng? Chuck does not go into this.

Why are Stalin and Mao-Tseng given a pass?

1. (Chuck says this) Mao-Tseng has eccentricities that make him unusual and detract you from thinking about the number of people he killed. He was obsessed with sex, swimming, and luxuries. (BILL- the leader of North Korea also has eccentricities that distract from his evil.)
2. (Bill thought of this) Stalin was on America's side during WW II. And he really did help us win. More generally, people who are our allies get a pass.

Bob Dylan had a song *With God on our Side* which notes that whoever wins (a war or something else) claims God was on their side. Here is a verse:

When the Second World War  
Came to an end  
We forgave the Germans  
And we were friends  
Though they murdered six million  
In the ovens they fried  
The Germans now too  
Have God on their side

A later verse wonders if Judas Iscariot has God on his side or not.

Chuck points out that if Dylan had speculated if Hitler has God on his side, Dylan's career would have been over.

## 12 The Problem of Overrated Ideas

This chapter is rather personal to Chuck.

He had the following dilemma

1. In 8th grade basketball camp Chuck met Rick Helling who was a complete asshole *as an 8th grader*.
2. Much later Rick Helling was *the first baseball player to take a meaningful stance against performance enhancing drugs*.

Chuck so much wanted to still hate Rick that he made up reasons why the noble speaking out was not legit.

Chuck admits that

*In my own story, I am the villain. Rick is not a bad guy because of what I remember from 1985. I'm am a bad guy because I still remember it (and it informs how I think about everything else) ... I know the truth but I do not care. ... I wear the plaid hat.*