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American Democracy in Jeopardy: A Nation of People Vulnerable to Being Told What to Think

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In a nation that values interpretation of the news as much as the news itself, people can easily be subjected to brainwashing. Even in a democracy, the media slants facts to create propaganda appropriate for a specific audience or group of readers. In fact, this is the method behind most advertising. Though it is generally accepted by society, this approach smothers freethinkers who do not appreciate being told what to think.

American Democracy in Jeopardy is a concise analysis of our present technology and the distribution of information. Frank Dalotto discusses our tendency to divide into factions and the reasons for predetermined angling or skewing of the news, a phenomenon that has been observed in conservative and liberal networks, magazines, newspapers, and Internet sources. Critical thinking is the key to overcoming this manipulation. Dalotto examines the ways that preconceived beliefs control our actions, and explains the difference between conviction and knowledge. He warns that the propensity to see only what we want to see does not enlighten, but may actually have a detrimental outcome. Myths and disinformation, mind control, as well as subtle persuasion, can cause harm. His solution involves education rather than training.

Frank Dalotto holds an MBA in professional management from Pace University. He has held a variety of executive management positions with international corporations and is now involved in children's programs to teach life skills.

This astute author compiles fascinating, thought-provoking material, but does not linger on certain concepts long enough to thoroughly explore the nuances of the issues and questions he has raised. Though too many writers overwhelm the reader with unnecessary details, Dalotto makes the opposite mistake by not elaborating enough. His bulleted lists and separated points reveal a businessman accustomed to getting his information across quickly.

Dalotto's hardest hitting statements are about the decline of the broadcast television news media. His views on journalism, the Internet, and balanced reports express cynicism interspersed with common sense. American Democracy in Jeopardy is worthwhile reading even for a seasoned journalist. Political bias is an accepted, perhaps anticipated, plan of action in programming as people gravitate toward what they want to hear. The question is whether this is preventable human behavior and whether it is possible to present information without a hint of partiality.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (July 12, 2010)

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