

children's health from those who are simply against government regulation. The very issue would create a frame in which regulation favors health, and being against regulation endangers health.

This is also a slippery slope issue. Once you get people looking at how and where mercury enters the environment—for example, from the processing of coal and many other kinds of chemicals—and you get people thinking about cleaning up mercury, and about mercury poisoning, and how it works in the environment, you can move to the next poison in the environment, and the poison after that, and the poison after that.

This is an issue that is not just about mercury or about poisons in the environment, but about nurturant morality in general. Wedge issues are stand-ins for the whole of a moral system. Abortion is an issue that serves as a stand-in for the control of women's lives and for a moral hierarchy that conservatives want to impose. Abortion, as we have seen, is a stand-in for strict father morality in general. Similarly, there are all sorts of wedge issues that can be stand-ins for progressive morality in general.

Is religion inherently conservative? Are progressive ideals inconsistent with *religious beliefs*?

Conservatives would have us believe that religions are conservative, but they're not. Millions of Christians in this country are liberal Christians. Most Jews are liberal Jews. And I suspect that most Muslims in America are progressive, liberal Muslims, not radically conservative Muslims. However, the progressive religious community in this country is not well organized, while the conservative religious community is extremely well organized. One of the problems is that the progressive religious community, particularly progressive Christianity, doesn't really know how to express its own theology in a way that makes its politics clear, whereas conservative Christians do know the direct link between their theology and their politics. Conservative Christianity is a strict father religion. Here's how the strict father view of the world is mapped onto conservative Christianity.

First, God is understood as punitive—that is, if you sin you are going to go to hell, and if you don't sin you are going to be rewarded and go to