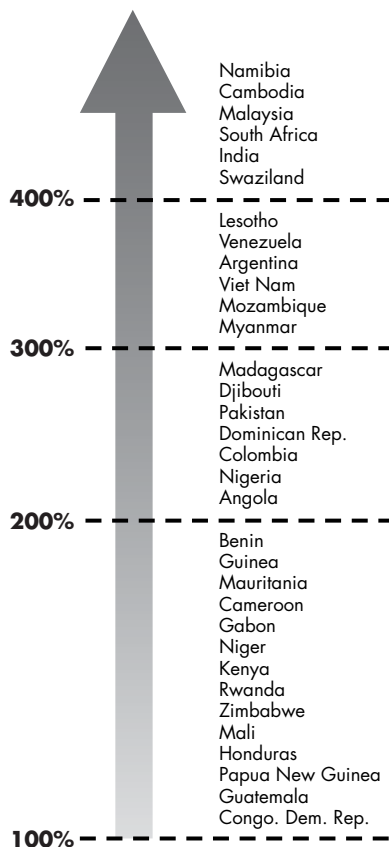


Mounting toll

Where the number of children orphaned by AIDS has increased sharply over three years*



* Countries are listed in descending order of percentage rate of increase over the three-year period, 1994-97. Here, orphans are defined as children under the age of 15 who have lost their mother or both parents to AIDS.

Source: UNAIDS/WHO.

now, with millions of children dying of AIDS, and millions more being orphaned, who will be left to replace this workforce? Among orphans in Zambia, 32% in urban areas were not enrolled in school, and in rural areas, 68% were not in school. But then, where will the necessary numbers of skilled teachers come from to teach the children? In Malawi, a study found that more than 30% of the schoolteachers were infected with HIV.

If the situation is not turned around in Africa, the future for the children will be filled with funerals, orphans, and an early death. The "Dark Age" that is currently sweeping through Africa, cutting down the young like a huge thresher, will continue to spread, unless a crash program of infrastructure building and medical research is undertaken on a scale also never before seen in human history.

Book Review

George Stephanopoulos, Gore, and Dick Morris

by Debra Hanania Freeman

All Too Human: A Political Education

by George Stephanopoulos

Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1999

456 pages, hardbound, \$27.95

I read this book back in March and decided then that I wouldn't review it. I read an awful lot of books of this genre: memoirs by "political insiders." I read them because it helps me do my job, not necessarily because I like them. In fact, the only such book I can honestly say I liked was the one written by Barbara Bush's dog. After reading that book, I liked the dog, even though the dog was a Republican.

Now, I should tell you right up front that I harbored prejudice against the book before I read it. It had to do with the book's title, "All Too Human." Presumably, it is taken from Nietzsche; I really hate Nietzsche. After reading this book, though, I decided that I really didn't like George Stephanopoulos, and that's why I wasn't going to review it. I couldn't seem to separate my dislike of him from his book.

Stephanopoulos wants the reader to feel sorry for him; for all he went through during his tenure in the White House. It was no picnic for poor George. The President even yelled at him! Stephanopoulos reveals that the experience was so stressful, his skin broke out, he experienced depression and anxiety, he began seeing a therapist, and he started taking the mood-elevating prescription drug Zoloft while working as the President's senior adviser. He tries to make the case that it was Bill Clinton's fault. He may have a better case against his therapist; I think she may have over-prescribed the Zoloft.

He repeatedly asks, "What is a nice boy like me doing in a brothel like the Clinton White House?" His moralizing can grow very tiresome, as the reader is treated to the story of how a good Greek Orthodox altar boy was almost corrupted by power, but, in the end, escapes.

An astute reader will see, however, that Stephanopoulos was never in danger of being corrupted by power. He *was*, however, corrupted by his fear of losing it. He was so afraid of losing it, in fact, that he was willing to climb in bed (figuratively, as far as I know) with Republican mole Dick Morris,

Clinton's former 1996 campaign adviser, so he could get back into meetings with President Clinton to which he was no longer invited, as the President became increasingly dissatisfied with his advice: "I was excluded, which was killing me and my pride. I needed to be in those strategy sessions. The President needed for me to be there." Stephanopoulos insists, "I had to hug Morris to stop his crazy ideas before they went too far."

Bad advice

Now, that is just crazy! How could *anyone* defeat Morris by "hugging" him? It is also the case that Stephanopoulos's fall from grace inside the Clinton White House might be more of a positive recommendation for the President than anything else. Stephanopoulos was giving the President very bad advice. The "gays in the military" debacle was his brainchild. Later on, President Clinton wisely ignored his advice that we should evade our own laws against assassinating foreign rulers.

It is also clear from reading the book that Stephanopoulos didn't pick up his ambition and opportunism in the Clinton White House. He brought it with him. He tells us, in his own words, that he did not choose Clinton as his candidate because he admired him. He tells us that he admired Mario Cuomo, had ties to House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (he worked for him), and was urged by his family to support Paul Tsongas because he was Greek. He went with Clinton for two reasons: He thought Clinton admired *him*, and he thought Clinton could win.

Stephanopoulos has an uncanny ability to be self-flagellating and self-promoting simultaneously. One anecdote: Stephanopoulos writes that he found himself "a wreck" in 1993 when, during a nationally televised appearance, the President's TelePrompTer, which was supposed to unspool a major health care address, instead showed the last State of the Union address.

"This screwup might not have been my fault, but it was my responsibility. 'This is the worst thing that's ever happened,' I muttered." It is very hard to tell if Stephanopoulos gets the point when another staffer, Mike Feldman, is astounded. Feldman replies, "I dunno, George, the Holocaust was pretty bad."

But, despite the fact that all this self-importance and self-promotion grows tiresome, the book is worth reading. It was not until I read it that I began to understand Morris's rise to power inside the Clinton White House.

Stephanopoulos explains that for months, Morris was banned from ever setting foot in the White House. The President talked to Morris only on rare occasions, and then, it was over the telephone, usually late at night, and the President even used a code name.

Gore and the Morris disaster

We learn that all this changed after the Democrats' disastrous 1994 loss of Congress to the Newt Gingrich-Conserva-

tive Revolution crazies. It didn't change because of the President. And, it didn't change, as I had always assumed, because of Hillary Clinton's superstitious attachment to Dick Morris. *It changed because Al Gore insisted that Dickie be brought in!* It was Al Gore who promoted Morris's "triangulation" theories. Gore argued that it boiled down to a relatively simple idea: steal the popular-sounding parts of the Republican platform—like welfare reform—sign them into law, and we win! Gore apparently argued that the fact that it would anger Democrats was not a drawback, but a bonus!

It's an interesting bit of information. It should go a long way in helping to cast aside that poisonous rumor that, as a matter of pre-ordination, it will be the increasingly unelectable Vice President who will carry the Democratic banner in the year 2000 election. It makes wading through the rest of the book worth it.

An insightful reader gains a great deal. Illusions created by the media are dispelled. The picture of Stephanopoulos that was established during the 1992 campaign, of the moral, quiet, intellectual, sensitive foil to James Carville's "Ragin' Cajun" flamboyant, win-at-all-costs ruthlessness, disappears. Stephanopoulos emerges as nasty and opportunistic. The reader is taken aback by his italicized put-downs and muttered obscenities to *all* the people, including the First Lady, that George is too much of a coward to tell off to their faces.

Finally, Stephanopoulos notes that, before Monica Lewinsky, he had intended to write the story of "how an ambitious and idealistic President of uncertain personal character grew in office," and how a group of "good, talented but fallible people tried to use (what Vaclav Havel called) 'the art of the possible' to effect the 'art of the impossible,' namely, the art of improving ourselves and the world."

He says that the Lewinsky affair changed his appraisal of President Clinton. He tells us that, if he had known in 1992 what he knows now, he would not have supported Bill Clinton; he would not have worked in the Clinton White House.

Don't believe a word of it. He owes Clinton everything. Were it not for his association with a gifted (though obviously flawed) President, George Stephanopoulos would not be working as a very highly paid television commentator, he would never have had a teaching job at Columbia University, and he most certainly would never have received the \$2.85 million advance that Little, Brown and Co. gave him for this book.

Judge for yourself. You don't have to buy the book. Take it out of the library. There are things to be learned here. I hope the President learned something about how to select the people who serve him. I hope Bill Clinton learned, for instance, that someone like James Carville, the anti-racist Southerner from a large Roman Catholic family, will always be a more trustworthy ally than someone like George Stephanopoulos, the theologically trained schemer with the cherubic face.