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Seduction & politics

by [Kenneth Minogue](#)

The moral and political history of seduction.

The original meaning of “seduction” was “to persuade a vassal, servant, soldier, etc. to desert his allegiances or service.” The *OED* dates that first usage from 1477, and it was only in 1560 that “seduction” came to be used also as inducing a woman to surrender her chastity. As usage evolved, “seduction” was generalized to mean “being persuaded to abandon, or betray, a commitment.” And also from early on, the term came to be used to cover “a cause of error; an allurements.” By 1782 we have “seductive” as “tending to lead astray,” and a decent gender balance was restored in 1803 with the appearance of “seductress.”

Seduction is thus a central, indeed in certain respects, *the* central, idea, in political life. It signifies a course of action deliberately designed by one or more interested agents ...

Kenneth Minogue is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics.

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