

Most Powerful Information-Control Machine in Human History



By Steven Yates

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Is It Possible to Break the Grip?

[“The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly – it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over.”](#) –Joseph Goebbels

[“Media manipulation in the U.S. today is more efficient than it was in Nazi Germany, because here we have the pretense that we are getting all the information we want. That misconception prevents people from even looking for the truth.”](#) –Mark Crispin Miller

“Those of us in the West rely primarily on news reports. Virtually all news that we see in the media was created by one of three agencies – Associated Press, Reuters, and, to a lesser degree, AFP.

“All three companies are owned by the same parent companies, who, in turn, own most of the Western corporatist structure, and, not surprisingly, the reports that they distribute to the media are boilerplate.

“As such, the TV news tends to be uniform, and whenever a new catch-phrase pops up, such as ‘extreme right activists’ or

'January sixth insurrection,' it tends to appear in all major media on the very same day and is then used ubiquitously. We, therefore, receive only one 'truth,' and we're left to either accept it or comb the internet for alternate possibilities."

**–Jeff Thomas, "[The Outcome of War with Russia](#),"
–*InternationalMan.com*, Aug. 28, 2023.**

In various ways, I've been a student of language all my life. What is a language? It is a complex system of signs or symbols – words with sufficiently specific meanings and references, spoken or inscribed, combined into grammatical sentences, combined further into logically structured paragraphs, and so on: used to communicate as members of a language community both send and receive information, instructions, ideas, etc., of various sorts.

Professional philosophy introduced me to the philosophy of language, with dusty and arcane questions such as, "What is going on when proper names, descriptive phrases, and general terms 'hook onto' specific persons, places and things, or classes of things?" The study of language includes grammar or *syntax* – the ways sentences hang together to express ideas and provide information – and then *semantics* – the ways terms and phrases both singular and general relate to objects and classes of objects in the world – and finally *pragmatics* (not to be confused with *pragmatism*, the philosophical movement) – the ways language-*users* and their motivations affect how language works. There is room here for observing how language changes over time from pressures placed on it by social change, technological change, etc.

Over the years – and it's reflected in a lot of material I've written here – my interest in the third of these has grown. What are the various uses to which language can be put by users?

Lemme see. *Describing* facts or states of affairs we can observe directly, e.g., "The cat is on the mat." Sometimes

these are called declarative statements, or just declaratives. We normally make the charitable assumption that we're not dreaming or hallucinating.

Or *relaying information obtained from books or other second-hand sources* and accepted as true. Most of these we also have no reason to question. Example: "Hungary is a country in Europe, situated east of Austria." What is interesting here is how the enormous range of such truths indicates the *narrowness* of our personal experience. In fact, none of us experiences more than a tiny slice of reality; this realization and its implications are truly jarring if we think about it, and I don't think any of us, myself included, have come to grips with it. At the very least, it calls for interdependence with others and on sources we have to verify are reliable. Becoming a world traveler, or at least living in a foreign country for a while, may mitigate this some but not as much as any of us would like.

Then there are *formal truths* like "seven plus five equals twelve" or "the sum of the squares of the sides of a right triangle equals the square of the hypotenuse." Or Aristotle's, "All contradictions are necessarily false" (a much-shortened account of the lengthy discussion in his *Metaphysics IV*). It makes little sense to question these. They're known *a priori*, an analytic philosopher would say. Claim to have a counterexample, and you'll be thought joking or confused.

What others?

Identifying things, e.g., "That's a specimen of amethyst" when pointing at the purple cluster of crystals on my shelf, or "That's of a seashore," pointing to the painting on my wall," or, "That's a map of South America" pointing elsewhere in my home office. Also called ostension.

Asking questions or requesting information, e.g., "Is the cat on the mat?" or "Who was president during the Cuban Missile

Crisis?" Also called interrogatives.

Telling stories, e.g., what J.R.R. Tolkien did in *The Lord of the Rings*, or C.S. Lewis in his Space Trilogy, or George Orwell in *1984*. Stories often contain indirect messages, sometimes profound, as with *Aesop's Fables*. Films also accomplish this, obviously. Think of *The Matrix*. Narratives, which we'll discuss below (and which I've discussed in numerous places before) are stories intended to convey messages able to direct mass belief and actions desired by the narrative scriptwriter (or his/her superior!).

Giving how-to explanations such as, "To download an app onto your iPhone, click the button on the right side twice."
Providing other sorts of explanations, such as, "You caught a cold because you went outside without properly drying your hair, this weakened your immune system, and you got exposed."
Scientific explanations are more sophisticated because they appeal to unobservables: "According to Newton, gravitation is the physical force that explains both the trajectories of projectiles such as arrows and bullets and the behaviors of the moon in its orbit around the Earth and the planets in their orbits around the Sun." No one has ever seen gravity. All we see and measure are its effects.

Praying. Talking to the Creator.

Issuing commands ("Shut the door." "Lock her up!").

Expressing humor which often involves purposeful equivocations or plays on words ("Did you take a shower?" "Why, is one missing?"). *Dry humor* is used to mitigate unpleasant realities, as when George Carlin says, "*It's a Big Club! And you ain't in it! You and I are not in the Big Club!*"

Some statements, you'll note, are true. They fit the reality(-ies) they purport to describe. Others are false. They don't fit reality. The true/false dichotomy doesn't always apply. Questions aren't true or false; they are either answered or

ignored. The answers are either true or false (or their truth value is unknown). Commands are either obeyed or disobeyed. Etc. Stories either capture an audience's attention through containing something the audience can relate to such as a lead character facing a problem, or they fall flat. Jokes are either funny and laughed at, or not if their audience doesn't "get the joke."

Some uses of language are *darker*, shall we say, than others. We can use language to insult someone ("You're an idiot!"). We can use it to *lie*, e.g., saying you weren't with Susan last night when the truth is, you were. We can use language to confuse, mislead, or obfuscate. It happens all the time.

Speaker credentialing matters. Statements about, say, professional writing carry more weight coming from Stephen King than they do from an unknown blogger (not necessarily King's politics which I don't care for). Statements about business carry weight if they come from, e.g., Jeff Bezos (whatever your opinion of Amazon); less so from the unemployed town drunk. A statement about physics means something if Richard Feynman made it; less so (I would think) if it came from a flat-earther. There are degrees here. We're talking about people who spent years studying their craft. This doesn't make them infallible, and it doesn't rule out factors able to through them off track (e.g., the human-all-to-human impulse to conform, and the need for funding!). But it makes them worth listening to. To make a long story short, "normal" science is based on consensus: that certain statements about fundamentals have solved a range of perplexing problems reasonably well, and provide a generally reliable guide to how to go about tackling remaining problems (Thomas S. Kuhn's concept of a *paradigm* reduced to one sentence if that is possible!).

A use of language [I've written about previously](#): media talking heads, or "hit piece" writers whose purpose is denunciatory and not informative, use the same words or phrases *over and*

over again to hypnotize and mislead – and control the thought processes of their audience. When a given usage appears everywhere, almost overnight, in widely disparate places, this is, or should be, a dead giveaway of top-down orchestration from would-be thought controllers (“**Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!**” –*The Wizard of Oz*, a bit of storytelling from long ago that can be appreciated on multiple levels!).

Here’s a list of such usages, with variants, I’ve compiled over the past several weeks. Naturally, the professional philosophers of language have no interest in this kind of analysis:

- *conspiracy theory (-ist)* (or *baseless conspiracy theory* or *false conspiracy theory* – occasionally *harmful conspiracy theory*);
- *hate group* (or *extremist hate group*) always applied by corporate media to organizations on the right, never on the left;
- *misinformation* or *disinformation* (don’t mean the same thing but are often used carelessly as if they were synonymous, used to imply ulterior motives by those trading in such);
- *debunked* (used without stating *when, where, by whom, how, etc.*);
- *unprovoked attack* (applied, obviously, to Russia invading eastern Ukraine in February 2022; not applied to the U.S. attacking Iraq in March 2003);
- *January 6 insurrection* (or *riot*);
- *threat to democracy* (or some variant such as *subverting democracy*);
- *overturned the election* (or *subverted a free and fair election* or *election interference* or again *overturning democracy* or some variant on such);
- *Big Lie* (or *election lies* or *election falsehoods*);
- *mostly peaceful protesters* (applied to violent

- leftists);
- *right-wing extremist* (or *ultra-right* or *far-right populist*; see again the second above);
 - *autocrat* (or *proto-fascist*) (applied to a political leader resisting globalist policies diluting or destroying the national culture);
 - *pro-choice* (an old standby, belying the fact that the choice is to kill a human life);
 - *toxic masculinity* (applied to traditional male behavior);
 - *white supremacists* (closely related: *white nationalists*);
 - *systemic racism* (sometimes *structural racism*);
 - *Black* (not capitalized before the George Floyd riots; the capitalization of the term suddenly appeared everywhere and continues to this day in mainstream outlets whose writers usually do *not* capitalize 'white');
 - *Karen* (applied to an "entitled white woman");
 - *antisemitic* (applied to exposés on George Soros, or the ADL; or just to criticisms of Israel or of Jews generally)
 - *homophobic* and *transphobic* (which are not real, clinically-diagnosed phobias such as agoraphobia or claustrophobia, and this should indicate the mind-controlling intent of whoever introduced them; in this same category can be found *xenophobic* and *Islamophobic* but not *Christophobic*—see how this works?)
 - *false equivalence* (to circumvent the free expression of a perspective unwanted by those attempting to dominate the public conversation);
 - *Christian Taliban*; (to propagandistically associate U.S.-based Christians and their institutions with brutal regimes in the Middle East);
 - *safe and effective* (whether *shown* to be or not; or possibly *We believe in Science* (the latter shows a complete misunderstanding of what science is).

This is probably not an exhaustive list. I recorded those I've seen in corporate media in recent weeks. Some doubtless raise issues worth discussing. Most, however, are brain-paralyzing conversation-stoppers. They're designed to circumvent challenge, or the asking of questions, but turning off critical thinking. They're intended to discredit, *a priori*, those they're used to target. That's their purpose. What they communicate to listeners / readers is: *we, the authorities, don't want you peasants going there! Don't do your own research. Just listen to us. We're the experts.*

All were imposed from the top downward. We can infer this because when the triggering event occurred, all appeared simultaneously in every corporate media outlet. The CIA first weaponized the term *conspiracy theory* back in the 1960s. Or see again my remark on the use of *Black*, now always capitalized to refer to a member of the race.

In fairness, those of us operating out here in the boonies, far from the centers of corporate media influence and blogging away as best we can, have our own phraseology, which we use because we think it offers superior matches to present-moment cultural and political-economic realities than those above:

- *Deep State* (or just *deep state* without the caps; the octopus entity incorporating the Pentagon war machine, the alphabet-soup intel agencies such as DARPA, their many satellite organizations funded with public monies; and so on);
- *power elite* (or just *elite* or some variation; used in the context of the obvious realization that in every advanced society on the planet a small minority is dominant: politically, economically, and culturally; while it may be possible to deny the reality of a more-or-less unified Deep State, how one denies the existence of *elites* baffles me completely);
- *political prisoners* (imprisoned for political crimes; and I do not maintain that this began with the Jan6ers.

The U.S. has always had political prisoners. There were political prisoners in the 1960s. Eugene Debs was made a political prisoner for criticizing the U.S. entrance into what became World War I. It is not generally known, but [Abraham Lincoln imprisoned dissidents against his war effort on behalf of the Union](#)).

- *globalism* (or global elites or global ruling class, etc., whose goal, some of us has maintained, has been to build up a world government that answered, ultimately, to the uppermost echelons of global corporations);
- *woke* (or wokeness or wokery, which I've explained [here](#));
- *official narratives* (stories promoted by dominant media, dominant academia, etc., the ultimate purpose of which is to keep our minds from straying from the approved paths whether the subject is science, history, religion, or political economy);
- *grooming* (I've not used this term much that I recall, but is rooted in realizing that gays, lesbians, etc., *cannot have kids*, suggesting a choice between recruitment or their dying out in one generation, *duh*);
- *Trump Derangement Syndrome* (an obvious one for the hysterics that came not just from the left but from worthless "movement conservatives" with Trump's assent in 2015-17 and beyond, applying ever since);
- *Make America Great Again (MAGA)* (implies that America was great once, isn't great at present; but that America's greatness can be restored – admittedly increasingly dubious);
- *"America First"* (the view that American policy should place American interests ahead of the entire world's interests, which is just George Washington's original recommendation of "peaceful trade with all without interference in their internal affairs"; implied is that every other nation should do the same);
- *red-pilled* (the metaphor introduced in *The Matrix* which dropped the scales from our eyes about how dominant institutions, especially media but not excluding

academia, have created a fabricated, artificial reality; with *blue-pilled* being those – sadly, the majority – remaining in the cognitive catatonia of official narratives);

- *left-liberal* (present-day Democrats as opposed to *classical liberals* who followed utilitarian philosophers such as John Stuart Mill or Austrian school economists such as Ludwig von Mises; *liberalism* as a whole is a deeply flawed political philosophy, but this is not the place to pursue the fact);
- *pro-life* (again not a term I use much but others do; it just gives expression to the realization that the abortion issue is about whether to sustain a defenseless human life or to kill it);
- *original intent* (the school of thought in constitutional law arguing that in deciding cases and situations today we should stick as closely to what the Founders believed as recorded in their writings as we can; again, they were imperfect, but if this is again a matter of degree, there is far more wisdom in, say, James Madison than you'll find in the average university professor—even of law!—today);
- *corporatocracy* (used by John Perkins in his *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* books and referring to corporate domination using loans, etc.)
- *techno-feudalism* (which I used in a now-lost essay back in 2015, and have discovered leftist Greek author and economist Yanis Varoufakis using it in [a new book](#) coming out early next year – suggesting that issues central to current political-economic domination transcend easy left/right dichotomization).

This, too, is not an exhaustive list, although I've avoided terms pretty much unique to myself (e.g., GloboCorp). Would it matter to include those? My audience is fairly small, and people aren't exactly banging my door down. So I often have the sense of banging my head against the wall, knowing that

providing a list of words and phrases used propagandistically, as would-be mind control, on an obscure Substack page, isn't going to change a thing.

If anyone at *The Washington Post* chanced to run across my list, he or she would dismiss it out of hand.

And it's hardly news that corporate media, collectively, is a propaganda machine in the business of conditioning and controlling the "public mind." There are countless expositions on this, sometimes by their own purveyors, e.g., Edward Louis Bernays who wrote his slim volume *Propaganda* back in the 1920s. As Sigmund Freud's nephew, Bernays was drawn into elite circles with both his uncle's and Gustave le Bon's ideas about crowd control in the latter's tract *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* published back in 1895.

How large tax-exempt foundations supported social controls of various sorts, including media, is ably documented in René Wormser's *Foundations: Their Power and Influence* (late 1950s; the same decade C. Wright Mills published his pathbreaking *The Power Elite*).

More recently, of course is Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media* published in the mid-1980s, Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* written around the same time, and the Mitroff-Bennis volume *The Unreality Industry: The Deliberate Manufacture of Falsehood and What It Is Doing to Our Lives* published in 1989. The latter introduced the concept of *boundary warping*: everything – broadcast news, education, etc. – becomes a *de facto* branch of the entertainment industry, so that even documentaries must be entertaining to keep audience attention ("infotainment"), considered a necessity in an attention economy in which we're all supposed to be busy, busy, busy, in a society in which you can graduate from a university unable to find, say, Ukraine, on a world map.

The above are just a few. One of my personal favorites is *Into the Buzzsaw: Leading Journalists Expose the Myth of a Free Press* (2002) edited by Kristina Borjesson and sporting a forward by Gore Vidal. The book does just that. And this was before Julian Assange came along with WikiLeaks which exposed the lies of the U.S. war machine.

Assange's fate shows the price sometimes paid by uncompromising entrepreneurial truth-tellers. Which is probably why there are so few such people.

The point is, nothing here is new. All that is new is the way I've organized it, bringing in philosophy of language as part of the background. With an implication that the study of how language has been used to mislead, misdirect, and confuse is important to a people who wants any semblance of freedom.

But that said, I'm just one voice – one of probably tens of thousands out here laboring away in obscurity, the bane of our existences being low visibility (and *very* low income), because I'm a *much* better writer than I am a salesman or marketer. I'm quite sure that *nothing* I write qualifies as "infotainment." I've not set out to entertain. I'm here to offer information and ideas.

What all this boils down to:

We now live within the most powerful information distribution and control machine in human history, if only because communications technology is everywhere – all around us, day and night. Its influence begins in public grade schools, years ago designed to produce controlled children who would grow up into mostly controllable adults. This influence only grows, in an environment they will never think to question. Most people are now plugged into the digital world virtually from childhood, having grown up in front of screens, tied to the smartphone we all carry in our pocket or purse, or which sits on our desks at work and next to our bed on the nightstand at

night within easy reach so we can be available 24/7. Social media has billions of users worldwide; with Facebook euphemistically calling your contacts *friends* even if you've never met most of them and wouldn't know them if you passed on a sidewalk.

This technology has become necessary for living a functional life in the 21st century.

We're now in an environment, moreover, in which, as I've also noted previously, a single public *faux pas* – the product of a bad day, for all anybody knows (and we all have them) – can be filmed and uploaded to Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) or TikTok, where being viewed by thousands of strangers will alter the person's life forever before he/she can say *boo*.

This is not good, and I suspect we'll someday see studies of how social media not just drove us apart but ruined a lot of lives.

In this environment, the above terms are used, and I've no doubt, will continue to be used. It is unfortunate that any well-organized (and sufficiently well-funded) questioning of these usages is beyond us right now. Terms ranging from *homophobic slur* to *January 6 insurrection* have overwhelming *cultural* power right now – an entirely different animal from *political* power as it doesn't rely on law or force, only on the power of propaganda delivered staccato-fashion in mass media with repetition, conditioning specific responses in the "mass mind."

What makes this especially bad is that the repeated use of *January 6 insurrection* without any actual analysis could conceivably result in *the leading candidate of a major party* in what we'll doubtless continue to be told is a *democracy* being removed from Election 2024 ballots because of a selective reading of the Constitution by the courts. (I am at work on an article specifically addressing this danger.)

Is it possible to thwart the power of this information-control machine, by exposing what it is and what it is doing to us all?

This is one of the greatest challenges of our strange moment in time. Especially for writers such as myself who are not famous: who are basically nobodies and likely to remain such if we are ruthlessly honest about it. I may have a doctorate in my field, moreover, but so do thousands of others with a much better situation (they might have academic positions, for one thing) who wouldn't agree with a single line I've written on this site and won't hesitate to use many of the terms or phrases I've listed above no matter how often they've been exposed as propaganda.

[Author's note: this article previously appeared on Substack.]

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In 2021 I published my book [What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory](#). Here, in three parts, are reasons you should think about reading the book if you've interest in the role *worldviews* play in civilization, and in shaping our lives:

[Part I.](#) [Part II.](#) [Part III.](#)

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