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Chapter 7

‘Misinformation’ as Censorship Stratagem

by

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Abstract: In the absence of censorship, big lies will be torn to shreds. That’s why propaganda and censorship are two sides of one operation. Nowadays, to justify the censorship, anti-liberals use the verbalism “misinformation,” committing a category error. It is a category error because people do not argue fervently over mere information. That is especially plain when things are taken to the point of censorship, cancellation, or criminalization. The contention is over who is trustworthy, how to interpret things, and how to judge among interpretations. Those who represent vying interpretations as “misinformation” dodge accountability for how they judge among interpretations. The “misinformation” category error is here interpreted as a censorship stratagem: *Misinformation* is a word anti-liberals use to shut others up. The committing of the category error may not be conscious and deliberate, however. This chapter applies an interpretation of the nature of knowledge to current projects in censorship. It offers a spiral diagram to show the three chief facets of knowledge (information, interpretation, and judgment) plus a fourth facet, fact, which also deserves distinct conceptualization, even though the spiral reminds us: Facts are theory-laden.

Keywords: Disinformation, censorship, knowledge, interpretation, judgment, propaganda, dissent.

JEL codes: A12, A13, D63, D78, D8, K4

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‘Misinformation’ as Censorship Stratagem

Friedrich Hayek explained in *The Road to Serfdom*, written in the United Kingdom in 1944, that anti-liberal regimes rely on propaganda, and that propaganda relies on censorship. Propaganda and censorship travel together. The book’s lesson is that the National Socialists, with whom “we” in 1944 Britain are at war, are not so different from what socialist tendencies, if not stayed and reversed, will lead to. The book’s dedication reads: “To THE SOCIALISTS OF ALL PARTIES.”

Hayek (1944, 159–60) explains the need of censorship in the chapter “The End of Truth”: “Public criticism or even expressions of doubt must be suppressed.” Propaganda from the government is not sufficient: “[T]he minority who will retain an inclination to criticize must also be silenced.” “[T]he plan itself in every detail...must become sacrosanct and exempt from criticism.” Consider the following sentence in light of recent years: “The basis of unfavorable comparison, the knowledge of possible alternatives to the course actually taken, information which might suggest failure on the part of the government—all will be suppressed.”

Down the road to serfdom, in the sciences themselves, Hayek says, the “search for truth cannot be allowed...and vindication of the official views becomes the sole object.” In totalitarian countries, scientific disciplines “become the most fertile factories of the official myths which the rulers use to guide the minds and wills of their subjects.” In scholarly disciplines, “the pretense that they search for truth is abandoned and...the authorities decide what doctrines ought to be taught and published” (Ib., 161).

Hayek had seen how things unfolded on the European continent and was alarmed by what he saw in United Kingdom: “[C]ontempt for intellectual liberty is not a thing which arises only once the totalitarian system is established but one which can be found everywhere among intellectuals who have embraced a collectivist faith” (Ib., 163). The farther we go down the road to serfdom, the more fragile and vulnerable are official narratives to criticism. As a result, Hayek (p. 164) says, “intolerance...is openly extolled” by the mindguards and minions of official narratives.

Nowadays, the anti-liberal censors invoke “misinformation.” That word adds the prefix *mis-* to the word *information*. Accordingly, *misinformation* invokes the presuppositions invoked by *information*.

In using “information” as a censorship stratagem, anti-liberals commit a category error. It is a folly to speak of differences in interpretation and judgment as differences in information. Consider statements censored as “misinformation,” such as whether Covid-19 virus came from a lab, or concerning the value of Ivermectin, or the incidence of myocarditis. The censors have often invoked the opinions of certain organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO). But the matter of what sources are trustworthy is a matter of interpretation and judgment, not information. It would be a matter of information only if the censored voice had said, “The WHO said X” when the WHO had not said X. *That is not what the censored voice is censored for*. Rather, the censored voice is censored for rejecting the judgment that what WHO says should be taken as presumptive truth.

If the anti-liberals who are behind the censorship projects were to take one step toward truth, they would admit that the statements they censor are matters of interpretation and judgment. They would say: “We censor statements and voices we don’t like.” Or, as Martin Gurri (2023) puts it: “Disinformation Is the Word I Use When I Want You to Shut Up.” They would describe their projects as waging war on miscreancy, not misinformation. Then, the nature and character of their designs would then be clear.

Rather than platforming the testing and comparing of differing interpretations, anti-liberals stomp on that process to protect their own opinions, interests, and agendas. One may say that they themselves are the greatest purveyors of misinformation and practitioners of disinformation. But there is a traditional term for disinformation: lying. And there is a traditional term for programmatic lying: propaganda. Propaganda is big lies, told programmatically.

Without censorship, the big lies would be torn to shreds. Thus, big lying begets more falseness: To protect the big lies, they engage in stratagems against the critics of the big lies. This chapter is about the second sort of falseness, the category error used to rationalize censorship of contestation of the big lies.

Enormous censorship projects are afoot, from governments and allies in the private and non-governmental organizations. It is not hard to discern the political bent of such projectors. That bent is plain from their selection of statements to censor, from the dissenting character of

the platforms they wage war on, and from everything else known about those projectors (Select Subcommittee on Weaponization 2023, Taibbi 2023, Gutentag 2023c, [Glennon 2024](#)). The bent is also plain from where we find resistance to censorship. Connecting the dots takes virtue, not cleverness.

In this chapter I explore why the “misinformation” verbalism has been used. I do so in order that we may better repel it and reject the anti-liberalism it represents. As anti-liberals wield the term “misinformation,” the false presupposition in “misinformation” is in “information.” The prefix “mis-” is predicated on a concept involving the sort of accurateness in things where such accurateness is potentially operative. Because the tacit presupposing of accurateness is false, the ploy involves a category error: A proper category is capacious—interpretation, judgment, understanding, opinion—but they pretend it is information.

7.1 What this chapter is not about

This chapter is not about the big lies guarded by censorship. I am circumspect in identifying big lies.

Second, this chapter is not about the nature, structure, network, and apparatus of the anti-liberal censors. It is not about the projects in censorship now afoot—in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and elsewhere—and rationalized as combatting “misinformation” and “disinformation.” The array of such operations is hard to delineate and describe, not least because they are cloaked and morally confused. The array has been called the censorship-industrial complex (Shellenberger 2023). At the core, the array has government throwing its weight around, and its initiation of coercion. And, besides government coercion, there are allies. These allies often enjoy monopolistic positions, stemming from government handouts, privileges, and sweetheart deals, as with broadcasters, universities, NGOs, and pharmaceutical companies, or from having cornered certain network externalities, as with certain huge media platforms such as Facebook. They do the bidding of the anti-liberals in a variety of ways, from deplatforming, smearing, and waging lawfare. Banks and other large organizations often are themselves threatened and intimidated into doing the bidding of the anti-liberals.

The best way to learn about the array of nefarious operations is to read those who combat them. I am aware of some of the leading organs based in the United States, including *Racket News* (Matt Taibbi and colleagues) and *Public* (Michael Shellenberger, Alex Gutentag, and colleagues), and Lee Fang, and, in video on Rumble, X, and other platforms, Glenn Greenwald, Redacted (Clayton Morris), and Tucker Carlson. I am not endorsing things they say, but if one wants to learn about the nefarious projects afoot, they report on developments, offering their own interpretations and judgments.

Before moving on to what this chapter is about, let me say two more things about what it is not about. First, to support governmental policing against miscreancy is to flaunt one's anti-liberalism and illiberality. The motive sometimes is to signal commitment to anti-liberalism, in a manner parallel to how religious cults sets up rituals and practices for signaling commitments (Iannaccone 1992). Vice signals vice, the ticket in some spheres to promotion and advancement. And acting viciously spurs the evildoer to act viciously again, to defend against exposé and accountability for their own earlier viciousness. In protecting their rackets, they verge upon a downward spiral. Second, methods that have been used by government actors to manipulate affairs in other countries are now aggressively used to manipulate affairs within the domestic polity. Government actors are warring on their domestic adversaries using methods they use on foreign adversaries (Malone 2023; Gutentag 2023a, [2023b](#)). They protect democracy, they say, abroad and at home.

7.2. What this chapter is about

Let's say that one of the censors is named Mr. Green and a person he censors is Mr Orange. Mr. Green reads and dislikes a piece of discourse by Mr. Orange, and labels it "misinformation" or "disinformation." This chapter is about the folly that inheres in Mr. Green's verbalism. We might say that Mr. Green regards Mr. Orange's discourse as miscreancy. This chapter is a conceptual investigation of Mr. Green's treating a matter of supposed miscreancy as a matter of information. I argue that Mr. Green engages in intellectual folly in doing so.

I say "miscreancy" to ascribe to the anti-liberals a quasi-religion and then ironically call "miscreancy" what they regard to be miscreancy. I use "miscreancy" as a truthful parody of their character. The medieval fanatics who persecuted and censored supposed miscreants likewise

pretended to a false accurateness to their religious creed, an accurateness implied by the prefix “mis-”.

“Misinformation” is not the only verbal device or stratagem used by anti-liberal projectors. They deploy a panoply of bad verbalisms, such as “fact-checker.” A verbal falsehood often involves a false presupposition. The presupposition is left unsaid. Victims are then burdened with articulating the presupposition. They attempt to articulate those presuppositions as they scramble to defend themselves. Only by articulating the presupposition can they expose its falseness. For the anti-liberals, the confusion is a feature, not a bug.

7.3 Knowledge’s richness

In Klein (2012) I say that knowledge involves three chief facets. Those facets help us see why “misinformation” and “disinformation” (as used in censorious verbalisms) involve a category error. Later in the paper, a fourth facet—*fact*—is incorporated into the theory of knowledge offered here.

The three chief facets are information, interpretation, and judgment:

- *Information*: The word comes from the Latin *forma* for “form.” A piece of information is *in form*, or in the pertinent format. A bit or element of information implies a format, a set, an array, of possible elements, a format within which the actual element is realized. If I tell the group: “The dinner will be at P.J. Skidoos,” it is apt to call the communication information because that particular location is a realization within the array of possible local venues for the dinner.

The “format” within which a bit or element of information exists can be thought of as *a working interpretation*, natural to the context of the matter under discussion (“Where will we meet for dinner?”). A working interpretation has been *working*, by definition. The definitional features suggest a certain precision and accuracy, a cut-and-driedness. (The word *precise* from Latin suggests pre-cut.) The cut-and-driedness stems partly from the nature of the working interpretation itself (e.g., locations in our locale). In my youth, we pick up the phone and called up “Information” to be informed of someone’s phone number. And the cut-and-driedness

stems partly from the fact that it is an established *working* interpretation, so practices and expectations have settled over time on certain conventions and rules. Adam Smith likened a system of relatively precise and accurate rules to grammar, whereas the rules of aesthetics, like those of the pursuit of happiness, and virtue, are “loose, vague, and indeterminate” (Smith [1790] 175, 327).

I should add that a communication of any kind might be said to have an informational aspect in the actuality of the event of communicating. That is, if Kent tweets “God exists!,” we might say that the cosmos metaphorically informs us: *Kent tweeted “God exists!”* In this sense, when it rains the cosmos metaphorically informs us: *It rains*. But the information (or *fact*, if you prefer, in this case) *Kent tweeted “God exists!”* is different from saying that “God exists” is itself information. There is, after all, only one cosmos, and that aspect of the cosmos, God’s existence, calls upon one to interpret and judge understandings of the cosmos; God’s existence is not a matter of mere information. The same can be said of other aspects of our singular cosmos, such as whether Ivermectin can prevent hospitalization and death, whether Covid came from a lab, and other claims that the “misinformation” stratagem is deployed against.

- *Interpretation*: This facet of knowledge takes us beyond the working interpretation. It creatively presents other formulations—wholly distinct “forms”—within which facts are interpreted. It opens things up to the generation and multiplying of interpretations; you now face a portfolio or menu of interpretations, and it is a portfolio that can always grow yet another interpretation.
- *Judgment* is the action facet of knowledge. It involves the estimating of interpretations and taking stock in interpretations estimated highly. Judgment involves a degree of commitment—belief, creed, credence—which propels you to act on the interpretations you take stock in. If you do not actually act on the interpretation you purport to take stock in, you are a hypocrite and a quack. If you are aware of your hypocrisy, you are a liar of sorts; if you are not aware of it, you are in denial, self-deluded. Lying, denialism, self-delusion, and cynicism are features of moral baseness.

When anti-liberals label opposition “misinformation” or “disinformation” they invoke presuppositions built into the word *information*, presuppositions that are false. When anti-liberals label opposition “mis-” or “disinformation,” they are, at best, objecting in the interpretation and judgment dimensions of knowledge, or, at worst, they are speaking in a way that has abandoned civil engagement, using words as instruments of wickedness. Proceeding upon a false presupposition, they commit a category error.

Usually, what people argue fervently over is not information, but interpretations and judgments as to which interpretations to act on. What is being labeled and attacked as “misinformation” is not a matter of true or false information, but of true or false *knowledge*.

The question of whether a movie is in black-and-white or in color can almost always be readily decided, because we basically share an interpretation of “black-and-white” and “in color,” making the question a matter of information. Within the information dimension of knowledge, variance is resolved in a straightforward manner. Very little interpretative engagement and dialogue are called for.

If interpretative effort is called for, the matter is no longer within the information dimension. Films that depart from the usual standards, such as *Pleasantville*, in which certain characters come to see “in-color,” make us reconsider or refine our interpretation of a film being “in black-and-white” or “in-color.”

More broadly, the interpretative dimension is where we roam when we ask whether *Citizen Kane* is a better movie than *Roman Holiday*. Only to be ironic would someone say: Dad misinforms you when he says that *Citizen Kane* is better than *Roman Holiday*. The irony there would be in the implied high self-estimation, as the speaker sets up his own aesthetic sensibilities in judging movies as a standard so precise and accurate as to warrant “misinform” when Dad deviates from that standard.

The anti-liberals are without irony. They dodge interpretive engagement by labeling dissenting statements “mis-” or “disinformation.” They are bullying and intimidating their opponents.

We notice that sometimes, as in an announcement of BBC Verify, the anti-liberals use the novel term “mistruth,” which was scarcely ever used prior to a several decades ago. The “mis-” prefix does not well fit on the word *truth*, which pervades knowledge river-deep, mountain-high. Think of *mistake*, *misspeak*, *misremember*, *misplace*, *mislay*, *misquote*, *misdirect*, and so on. The

prefix “mis-” is proper when the betterness of a readily identifiable alternative—the accurate quotation, for example—is hardly a matter of dispute. I doubt that much time will be spent by BBC Verify on correcting misquotations.

7.4 Misinformed by the supermarket clerk

I enter a supermarket and ask a clerk where the peanut butter is, and he responds, “Aisle 6.” I go to Aisle 6 but don’t find it there. I wander around the store and find the peanut butter in Aisle 9.

The clerk was mistaken. He gave me false or bad information. The idea *Peanut butter is in Aisle 6* is a matter of information, an idea sitting within a set of working interpretations. The working interpretations include those of ordinary human purpose and of ordinary trust and common decency. The clerk and I were *not* playing a game, nor was it April Fools’ Day. Importantly, the working interpretations include those of plain English—the semantic conventions of “peanut butter” and “6,” the syntactical conventions of English, and so on.

On April Fools’ Day, working interpretations are what we depart from when we play tricks on one another. The tricks create an unexpected asymmetry between the interpretation of the targeted person—who wishes to add a dash of salt to his soup—and the trickster—who unscrewed the top of the saltshaker. The target interpreted the world as presenting a saltshaker with top screwed on as usual (the working interpretation). The trickster relished her anticipation of the target’s shock and surprise in discovering the faultiness of his interpretation of the world.

Asymmetric interpretation is essential to humor. Another form of humor is the put-on, as when the trickster feigns his own frustrations, and we enter into the asymmetric interpretations of the amused target of the trick, as in Buster Keaton put-ons from *Candid Camera*.

Likewise, humor often plays upon departures from semantic conventions, as in punning “Knock, knock” jokes and “Who’s on First” by Abbot and Costello. A precondition of humor is a certain trust and joint interest in the truths that humor gets at. Without those preconditions, there is no humor.

Despotism conceals its designs. It conceals its true beliefs and intentions. By its nature, it abuses working interpretations. Despotism is untrustworthy. Its relationship with ordinary organic interpretation is never playful. That is why despotism is incapable of being humorous. It cannot make a joke, and it cannot take a joke. Adam Smith wrote:

Reserve and concealment...call forth diffidence. We are afraid to follow the man who is going we do not know where. (Smith [1790], 337)

Afraid, we attend the despot with diffidence. Despotism is grim.

While despotism is humorless, it can be the butt of humor. In 1625, Hugo Grotius noted: “Stratocles was laughed at in Athens for proposing a law that whatever was thought good by Demetrius, should be reckoned right and pious” (Grotius [1625], 290). Today, humorists such as J.P. Sears, Greg Gutfeld, Jesse Watters, Gad Saad, and Alex Christoforou help us chuckle at despots.

I take my peanut butter to the check-out line where the same clerk is working, and say, “I found it—but in Aisle 9!,” trying to be humorous as though a joke had been played on me. The clerk responds, “Ah?! Sorry about that!” Being a mere matter of information, the mistake *is readily accepted*. That ready acceptance is the hallmark of the information dimension of knowledge. Mistakes happen, but, provided we keep within that dimension, the mistakes are readily accepted. “Sorry about that!” is the hallmark of informational slip-ups.

7.5 Kids jumping out of windows

The aisle for peanut butter is a matter of information. Now let’s turn to an example that is not. During oral arguments in *Murthy v. Missouri*, 2024, Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson posited a “hypothetical”:

Suppose someone started posting about a new teen challenge that involved teens jumping out of windows at increasing elevations... And kids all over the country start doing this. There is an epidemic. Children are seriously injuring or even killing themselves in situations. Is it your view that government authorities could not declare those circumstances a public emergency and encourage social media platforms to take down *the information* that is instigating this problem?... Can the government call the platforms and say?: ‘*This information* that you are putting up on your platform is creating a serious public health emergency. We are encouraging you to take it down.’ (Jackson as transcribed by the present author, Forbes 2024 (video); italics added)

Justice Jackson would have spoken more justly if she had talked about the platforms being advised to take down the content, the material, the videos, the postings, or the communications. Instead, she says “the information.” Let’s continue with the hypothetical aired in this historic case. Suppose a nefarious video valorizes someone jumping out of a third-floor window: “This dude WALKS OFF CALMLY after a third-floor jump!” What is the informational nature of the posting?

Whether government authorities should alert the platform of such videos is an important question. But to address that question we should not treat the issue in terms of misinformation or disinformation. We do not discuss such disturbing videos in terms of misinformation. The same goes for good content. To return to the example of *Citizen Kane* versus *Rear Window*, it would be absurd to suggest that *Citizen Kane* is the lesser movie because it contains more misinformation and that its maker, Orson Welles, engaged in disinformation.

When I told the supermarket clerk that the peanut butter was in Aisle 9, he readily accepted the correction. For the window-jumping material, the actual cause for concern is swaying kids to jump out of windows. What would be correct information? If we rendered the video as a statement susceptible to true-or-false assessment, it would be something like: *It is cool to jump out of third-floor windows*. The statement is foolish, wrongheaded, false. But “misinformation”? That is a category error.

The matter of what it is that confused kids, in their personal situations, find cool is not one of sufficient accuracy or concreteness to warrant couching a discussion of it in terms of ‘information.’ What kids find cool is very much a matter of interpretation and judgment. The governmental activities that are on trial in *Missouri v. Murthy*, however, are defended in terms of combatting misinformation and disinformation. By using “misinformation,” the defendants—and their censorious allies—are pretending that they are merely protecting the public from cut-and-dried falsehoods. In doing so, they misrepresent their doings and slip responsibility for arrogating to themselves decision as to what is safe and sound for people to see or hear. Furthermore, the free-speech advocates are then portrayed as proponents of speaking cut-and-dried falsehoods. The stratagem kneecaps them by trapping their objections in the limited dimension of information, forcing them to epistemologize so as to fight off censorship. The “misinformation” stratagem is attractive to the censorious because it flatters their vanity, chicanes so as to slip responsibility, and kneecaps their opponents. Hubris built the Tower of

Babel and the result was semantic chaos. Today we see both hubris and semantic chaos in censorship operations that assert themselves as combatting misinformation.

7.6 Unintentional and intentional

When one person, Bob, misinforms another, Jim, without realizing that the information is false, the mistake is amendable to ready correction, without fuss, assuming the falseness is realized by Jim or Bob. Such misinformation events are trifling; we don't debate them or dwell on them. Misinformation is rather like a typo, corrected by a proof-reader.

Scarcely ever do we speak of the mistake with the five-syllable Latinate word *misinformation*. Heavy usage of the word *misinformation* often occurs in connection with “anti-misinformation” projects, usage by the perpetrators and cheerleaders or by those who fend off threats from the perps.

When Bob misinforms Jim intentionally, however, information mistakes are dishonest. They are lies. We dwell on them as lies, not as matters of misinformation. The misinformer is a liar. Some now promulgate the word *disinformation*.

In distinguishing *misinformation* from *disinformation*, Dictionary.com explains “the critical distinction between these confusable words: intent” ([link](#)). Wikipedia says the same. Its entry on Disinformation begins: “Disinformation is false information deliberately spread to deceive people” ([link](#)). According to those sources, then, disinformation is lying. It is false information spread by those who know that it is false information. To disinform is to lie.

The distinction based on intent is not sharp. Is the following misinformer a *disinformer*? He does *not* know that the information he spreads is false but he fails in performing basic due diligence against its falsity.

In as much as discourse carries with it a claim to having done such due diligence, the claim would be false. And if he knows he has not done due diligence, he is a liar, though the lie is about having performed due diligence, not about his knowing that the information is false.

Out-and-out lying travels with a vast entourage of shabby norms and shabby understandings of the duties of due diligence. Related here would be the large topics of denialism, self-deceit, self-delusion, and hypocrisy (for Adam Smith's treatment of self-deceit, see in Klein 2023, ch. 20). The terminus is cynicism, baseness, and miserableness.

The word *lying* is itself polysemous. Let's distinguish between stiff and loose. Stiff lying is speaking falsehoods that the speaker knows to be false. Loose lying are falsehoods that involve on the part of the speaker some kind of deception, but "deception" here is used loosely, so as to include self-deceit and self-delusion. I have called the "misinformation" stratagem a category error. Instead, we are tempted to call it a lie. That might work if we understand it as loose lying, not stiff lying. The category error involves taking stock in interpretations of the nature of knowledge, interpretations that are bad. It involves, at minimum, self-deceit and self-delusions—specifically, delusions that allow one to persist in committing the category error—and thus are instances of loose lying. Instead of calling the erring a sort of lying, we are tempted to use such words as *sham*, *travesty*, *quackery*, or *folly*, but those words connote an inconsequentialness; it is like calling Jacobinism, Bolshevism, Naziism, or Maoism a *sham*, *fraud*, *travesty*, *quackery*, or *folly*. Those terms do not seem to accommodate the heinousness of such movements.

In ordinary private-sector affairs, outside of politics and outside of heavily governmentalized affairs, shams and frauds usually do not persist. Lying at the level of information is naturally checked and counteracted. Again, "information" implies reference to working interpretations. Getting things right should not be difficult or tricky—issues there are all *within* the *working* interpretation. Sure, mistakes are made; but such mistakes are readily and easily corrected.

Liars who lie about information lose the trust of their voluntary associates, whether those voluntary associates are friends, customers, trading partners, or employees. If liars lie about simple features of their products or their services, they could be subject to law suits from their trading partners, to public criticism, and to rival exposé by competitors. In ordinary private-sector affairs, everyone has reputational incentives not to lie systematically about information. Again, the concept of information presupposes a basic working interpretation, akin to a grammar. The thing about grammar, and this is something that makes it different from aesthetics, is that feedback on one's grammar is only negative (beyond grammar school, anyway). That is, when you make grammatical mistakes, you get criticism, but when you get your grammar right, you do not get praise. Putting out false information, is similar. When crooked people falsify records or statistics, they might try to cover it up by making the primitives behind the records unavailable. We might call that misinformation, because we have norms that say that such primitives should be disclosed and honestly reported. So misinformation happens, sometimes by innocent mistake

(the supermarket-aisle example) or by fraud. But when it is fraud, it risks very serious reputational and legal repercussions. It also risks jeopardizing functionality within one's relationship, within the organization, and within one's own habits of personal management. "You see, Pinocchio, a lie keeps growing and growing, until it's as plain as the nose on your face." Most of us have strong moral incentives within ourselves against lying, especially about cut-and-dried things. We dread the disapproval of "the man within the breast"—an expression Adam Smith used for the conscience.

So, you might ask: If private actors without government privileges and immunities scarcely spread false information dishonestly and programmatically, is disinformation really a thing? Before addressing that question directly, let's turn to the Godzilla of programmatic lying.

7.7 Propaganda: Government's programmatic lies

It is government, especially, that lies programmatically. The lying can be at the level of information, but it usually makes more sense to say that its lying is at the level of interpretation: The government promotes *interpretations*—for example, *The Covid virus came from nature*—, interpretations that it, the government, itself does not particularly believe. It lies about the virus having come from nature, as it lies about many other big interpretations. It propagates big lies.

And it lies with confidence. Government is the only player in society that initiates coercion in an institutionalized way. Its coercion is overt. What's more, it does so on a colossal scale. That is the most essential feature of government. Every government is a Godzilla, and we must learn to live with our Godzilla and mitigate the destruction it wreaks.

The traditional term for government's programmatic lying is propaganda—a word that once did not necessarily imply falseness (instead signifying simply the propagation of ideas or the ideas so propagated, [link](#)), but is now generally used in that necessarily-pejorative sense, and that is how I use it here. The falsehoods of propaganda are typically stiff lies, in that the propagandizers usually do not particularly believe the claims they propagate, but sometimes they are only loose lies.

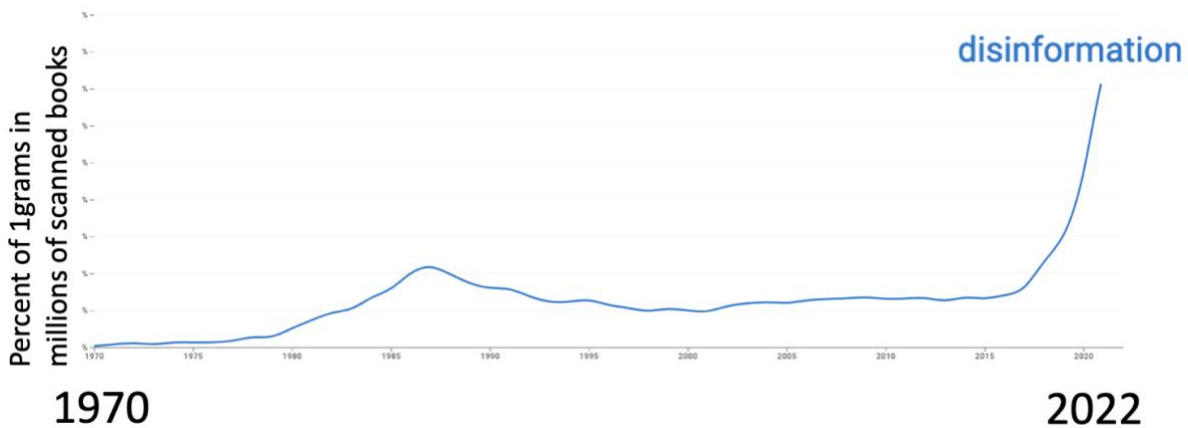
Government can lie programmatically because it does not depend on voluntary participation for its support. It subsists on coercion, including restrictions on competitors and opponents, and takings from taxpayers. Organizations in heavily governmentalized settings can

also lie programmatically. Crony private organizations sustain large programmatic lying only when they enjoy privileges, immunities, and protections from the government.

7.8 “Misinformation” and “disinformation” as censorious stratagems

Gurri (2023) suggested that, so often, “disinformation” “means, ‘Shut up, peasant.’ It’s a bullet aimed at killing the conversation.” The term “disinformation” scarcely existed before 1980, as shown in Figure 1. The figure contains data through 2019, and it is likely that the recent surge has continued.

Figure 1: “disinformation” as percent of all 1grams, 1970–2022



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer <http://books.google.com/ngrams> (fig.-specific [link](#))

Gilbert Doctorow writes of “the introduction of the word ‘disinformation’ into common parlance.” Doctorow writes:

The word “disinformation” has a specific context in time and intent: it is used by the powers that be and by the mainstream media they control to denigrate, marginalize and suppress sources of military, political, economic and other information that might contradict the official government narrative and so dilute the control exercised by those in power over the general population. (Doctorow 2023)

Gurri and Doctorow are describing what is now the main way, or at least the most troubling and most terrible way, that “disinformation” is used. It must be noted, however, that the word has also been used simply as a synonym of propaganda—and thus something that governments, too, perpetrate. But, now, “misinformation” and “disinformation” are most conspicuously a propagandistic term—a loose lie, and, again, a category error—used in the manner described by Gurri and Doctorow. In that sense, “disinformation” is not a general synonym for propaganda, but is, rather, a word that propagandists use to smear and persecute miscreants.

In fighting against propaganda-plus-censorship, honest people, too, now resort to using “disinformation,” as a synonym for propaganda, to fling that specific word back onto the propagandists. Doctorow exemplifies what I mean. He justly writes:

In reality, it is these censorious states and the mass media that carry their messages with stenographic precision into print and electronic dissemination who are the ones that day after day feed *disinformation* to the public. It is cynically composed and consists of a toxic blend of ‘spin,’ by which is meant misleading interpretation of events, and outright lies. (Doctorow 2023)

Time and again we find ourselves having to use the degraded verbalisms of the anti-liberals to address and combat their abuses. Sometimes it seems like our civilization revolves around trying to keep the anti-liberals from burning down the house.

7.9 Base humans tend to weaponize things

But aren’t governments accountable to checks and balance, divisions of power, and the rule of law? Haven’t we learned to tame Godzilla, to chain down Leviathan?

It is true that the government of a rule-of-law republic, checked by an honest media, might be quite limited in its programmatic lying and censorship. But that’s not how it is today, where the legacy media is morally base in the extreme and dissent is being tarred as “mis-” and “disinformation”. Today, regimes are increasingly despotic, and despotic regimes are much less checked and limited.

The rule of law means, first and foremost, the government even-handedly applying the rules posted on its own website. Governments today don't do that. Law is applied politically, that is, with extreme partiality, upon a double-standard. Laws are selectively enforced and punishments are selectively meted out. Moreover, rule-making around censorship grows vague and arbitrary—to the effect of, 'Something is misinformation if we or our allies say it is.' Anti-liberals avail themselves of show trials, kangaroo bodies, and galleries filled with stooges. The “anti-misinformation” agenda is misrule.

Despotism despoils checks and balances. Despotism centralizes power formerly divided. It destroys the independency and autonomy that, theoretically, branches and units, divided and balanced, had once enjoyed. Despotism usurps powers once distributed and balanced. Despotism is unbalanced power.

Under an anti-liberal regime, the coercive institutions unique to government become weaponized by the anti-liberals and their allies. They turn them against their opponents. But weaponization is itself always somewhat constrained by cultural norms. The existence of government implies the existence of a governed society, and the existence of society implies the existence of some basic norms, for example against theft, murder, and lying. David Hume famously pointed out that the governed always vastly outnumber the governors, and hence government depends on “opinion”—if only the opinion to acquiesce to those governors:

Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular. (Hume 1994, 32)

I wonder whether the shut-them-up projects of Naziism, Stalinism, and Maoism tarred their opponents with labels akin to “misinformation” and “disinformation.” Even National Socialists and Communists gave some lip service to social norms, with their show trials and righteous objections to “the lying press” (*Lügenpresse*). But did their languages, at those times, have words that corresponded to the English words *information*, *interpretation*, and *judgment*, along the lines of the distinctions made here? Was their vocabulary for knowledge like that of

English, and did they abuse the presuppositions involved in those distinctions the way that “anti-misinformation” projects do today?

7.10 The contested claims go far beyond information

Disagreement usually arises over interpretations and judgments as to which interpretations to take stock in or believe. We make judgments, “good” and “bad,” “wise” and “foolish,” about interpretations, “true” and “false.”

Again, “anti-misinformation” projects presuppose the information dimension where such a presupposition is inapt. When anti-liberals declare something to be “misinformation,” the discourser—say, John Campbell, Peter McCullough, Robert Malone—unlike the clerk in the supermarket example—does *not* readily accept the supposed correction. That is proof that presuppositions of the information dimension do not apply. The matter is clearly beyond information.

The anti-liberals tend to invoke certain organizations as the definitive, authoritative sources of “information.” They say, in effect: “The CDC, the WHO, the FDA says the mRNA injections are safe and effective, so anything that suggests otherwise is misinformation.” The farce here is pretending that everyone’s working interpretation consists of the dicta of some such particular organization. Never has an organization or agency had such a Mount-Olympus status for determining, throughout society, working interpretations of complex matters. And to suggest such a Mount-Olympus status for an organization with the foul characters and track-records of the CDC, WHO, FDA makes plain what is afoot. The similitude to the Soviet Union under Stalin is obvious.

To be worth a damn, estimations of wisdom and virtue must emerge from arrangements not heavily governmentalized, liberal arrangements, in society, in science, and in public discourse. We shall look not to Godzilla but to certain among the human beings who check Godzilla. A big part of the interpretation dimension is the estimation of the wisdom and virtue of those who contend for authority. Government is a Godzilla; it is not a validator of an organization’s wisdom and virtue.

7.11 What the sincere human looks like

I wrote above of “quite decisive proof that presuppositions of the information dimension do not apply,” in noting that Peter McCullough does not readily accept the supposed correction. But what if McCullough is a liar? Then it would be no surprise that he does not readily accept the purported correction. What, in other words, about the possibility of *disinformation*? An insincere disinformationist would stand by his informational statements and persist in misinforming his listeners.

What does sincere engagement look like?

Sincere engagement is sincere in the desire to become better aligned with the larger good, which would correspond to a universally benevolent beholder. The sincere human does not claim to be universally benevolent. He does not even claim to be more benevolent than the average person. But, compared to the average person, the sincere human scrupulously strives to align his conduct with universal benevolence.

The sincere human *wants* to be corrected. He *welcomes* correction. Sincerity is evident in the human’s openness to engagement. The sincere human welcomes deep-dive conversation, debate, and challenge. He is eager to learn.

If the sincere human rejects a purported correction, he is eager to explain the interpretations and judgments that motivate his rejection of the purported correction. He explains why he rejects it. And he welcomes a response to his explanation. He is agreeable to continuing the engagement.

The sincere human wants to sit down, human-to-human, and hash things out. He wants to enter into the mind of his intellectual adversary and see why the adversary says what he says. The sincere human wants to hear about the adversary’s portfolio of possible interpretations. The sincere human is eager to compare the adversary’s portfolio to his own portfolio of interpretations.

In comparing the portfolios, the sincere human may see some interpretations that are not in his own portfolio, and wish to consider those as candidates for incorporation into his own. The sincere human wants to probe their soundness, their worthiness. The sincere human may also see that the adversary’s portfolio lacks certain interpretations that are in his own, and will want to understand why those are lacking from the adversary’s portfolio.

By hashing things out, the two prattlers should aim to get the contents of their respective portfolios onto the table, making a larger union of the contents of the two portfolios of possible

interpretations. They can then explore together the reasons, or causes, for their difference in how they judge among the possible interpretations. They try to dwell in one another's mind, sympathetically, to get a feeling for the ways of the other's judgment. After doing so, each can then make a moment in the other's judgment into an object up for examination, an object for interpretation and estimation. "But why do you draw *that* conclusion?"

The sincere human is frank and open about the calls of his own judgment. He invites the other human to ask, "But why do you draw *that* conclusion?" Adam Smith ([1790], 337) wrote: "Frankness and openness conciliate confidence."

When two sincere humans disagree, it is as if they say to one another:

We both purport to orient ourselves upward, toward alignment with the good of the whole. We both understand that our thinking must focus on the most important things in the issue at hand. We both look at the same world—our interpretations are, as it were, interpretations of the signals presented to us in the book of nature. And yet we draw different conclusions. Let us explore the sources of that difference, in the hope that as a result there will be an improvement, for the good of the whole, in the joint effect of (your revised outlook and my revised outlook), after your outlook and my outlook have been revised by virtue of our conversation.

That is what the sincere human looks like. He is open, frank, and eager to participate in conversation and debate with adversaries. He is eager to sit down and hash things out. He is eager to delve into the fine points, to nail down the details, to respond to challenges, to document the evidence, to continue the conversation. He relishes engagement as a sort of adventure of the mind. He takes joy in argumentation and scholarship, as actualization of the human potentiality for virtue—of serving a benevolent beholder, as it were.

The sincere human looks like—from what I can tell—Peter McCullough.

I single out Peter McCullough as exemplar simply to single out someone. All of those who are eager to engage adversaries illustrate the most salient feature of the sincere human, and the more that that eagerness fits the rest of my description above, the more sincere that human likely is.

The sincere human loves life, and hence loves the most rewarding, most sublime of life's experiences. For scholars, researchers, thinkers, and indeed for *Man Thinking* everywhere, as humans in continual discourse about our duties to the good and our dependence on interpreting

the book of nature, one of the most rewarding, sublime experiences is the sort of civil engagement described above. The sincere human, then, holds the norms, practices, and institutions that foster and safeguard that sort of civil engagement to be sacred. The sincere human, therefore, is not only a liberal in the pre-political senses of the word, but also in the political sense christened “liberal” around the 1770s by Adam Smith and other Britons (Klein, forthcoming). That is the political outlook that best sacralizes the norms, practices, and institutions of sincere engagement.

7.12 What the unsincere human looks like

We now turn to characters opposite of the sincere human. One would be insincere, but I wonder whether another is the human without either sincerity or insincerity. I will use “unsincere.”

The features of the unsincere human are generally the opposite of the just-described ways of the sincere human. The unsincere human is not open. He is averse to sitting and hashing out differences with adversaries. He may issue brief, peremptory messages. He avoids challenges. He ignores criticism. He does not explain. He refuses engagement.

The most vicious humans hate to see adversaries finding platforms and channels to challenge their projects; they work to shut them up. Other humans fall in with, or at least stays silent about, the assaults on liberal norms and institutions, such as “anti-misinformation” projects.

7.13 Freedom beats unfreedom

I have asserted that for matters of mere information, voluntary, private-sector affairs—without contaminants of governmentalization—have natural incentives to communicate information accurately and to correct mistakes in information. I have asserted that information tends to be autocorrecting under liberal arrangements.

But what about the higher (or deeper) realms of knowledge, of interpretation and judgment? Are they autocorrecting? Do liberal institutions—free speech, free markets, limited government—handle those nicely, as though the system were guided by an invisible hand?

The present paper is not about that. But, briefly, certainly one could make a strong case that, under liberal institutions and liberal attitudes, interpretation and judgment tend to be autocorrecting. Those arrangements allow people to criticize and challenge bad interpretations and bad judgments.

Big lies need to be torn to shreds, and a free marketplace of ideas allows people to do that. Freedom means that critics of big lies will be safe from being coerced by government for their speech acts. And the less that social affairs are governmentalized, the less weight will the government have to pressure its satellites to shut down speech it does not like.

The free marketplace of ideas is far from perfect. Indeed, Adam Smith suggested that few individuals ascend to higher wisdom and virtue. But the question is always: Compared to what? The more the marketplace of ideas is governmentalized, the more that certain interpretations and judgments will be privileged and protected—by largesse and favor, by prestige, and by coercion. Does government handle interpretation and judgment as though it were guided by the invisible hand of a universally benevolent conductor of the cosmos? What possible theory could maintain that such an invisible hand has the upper hand?

More important than imagining *the best* that a system might achieve is to ponder *the worst*. I think it is clear that heavy governmentalization can enforce outcomes far worse than anything we could have to fear from a free marketplace of ideas.

7.14 Fact

Earlier in this essay I theorized the three chief facets of knowledge (information, interpretation, and judgment). Now I add *fact* and offer a spiral diagram. I think that getting the understanding across can be useful to sincere efforts to advance the good. (At the end of this paper is an Appendix listing of a few philosophers whose thinking my thinking dovetails with.)

Consider the saying, *Facts are theory-laden*, a saying that [got started in the 1960s](#). To relate that saying to my terminology, think of “theory” as *interpretation judged worthy or superior*. Theory, then, refers to the dimensions of interpretation and of judgment.

Facts are theory-laden is a useful saying, for it reminds us that what one person calls “fact” can be opened up to examination and challenge by another person—or even by the same

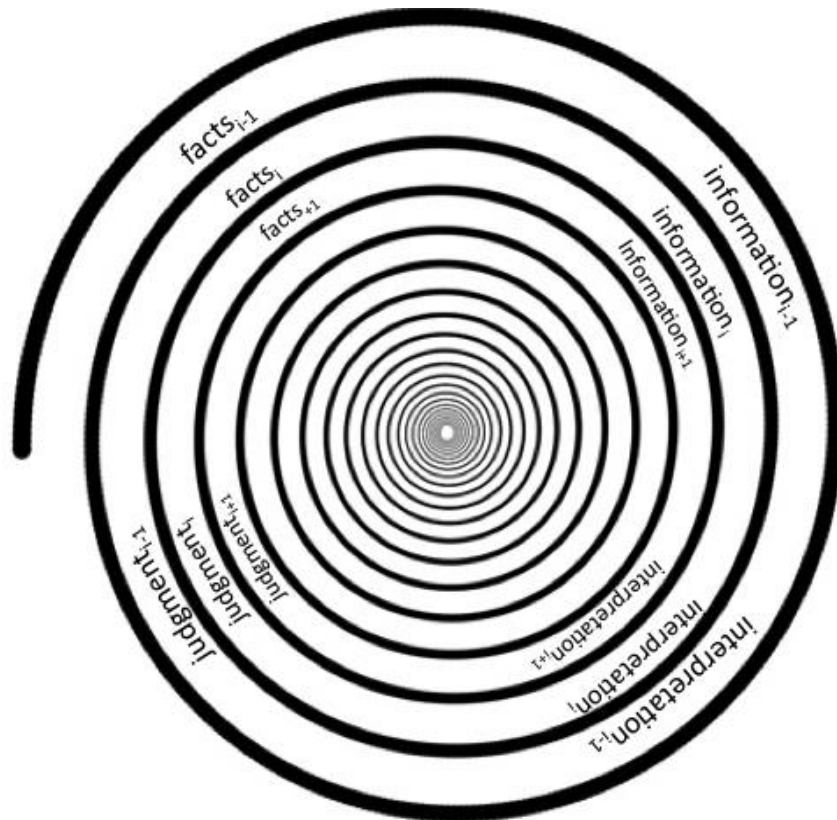
person, a moment later, after having called it “fact.” The simple truth is that we could, if we had cause to, dig interpretation and judgment out from underneath any of our facts.

Facts are theory-laden, but when “we” all embrace the laden theory, we call the statements fact. To call something fact is to declare that the laden theory is *not* the matter under discussion. Fact, then, is a facet of knowledge, but not a chief one. Fact designates statements that no one among “us” wishes at all to take issue with. Facts are noncontroversial, at least for the discussion within which they are treated as facts.

A diagram may be helpful.

Communication picks up midstream of human experience. We proceed upon working interpretations. “Information” is what we call the facts as seen within the working interpretation.

Figure 2: The spiral of knowledge, with four phases: fact, information, interpretation, and judgment



Source: The author’s creation

Figure 2 offers four phases (or facets) of knowledge, shown in each loop of the spiral. “Facts” reside in a more basic interpretive frame—more basic than what I have called “the

working interpretation”—in which “factual” statements are presumed acceptable to all parties of the communication. When Jane and Amy “argue over the facts,” they are, as it were, revisiting what is to be treated as factual.

The loops flow one into the next, through time, from outer loops to inner loops. We travel in the clockwise direction. The spiral image on your screen is two-dimensional, but imagine a third. We hope that the spiral winds upward in wisdom and virtue, such that the inner loops are higher than the outer loops.

Suppose we sit down together with a telephone book. We call the ink markings “the facts.” Neither of us thinks to dispute statements about the printed numbers on the pages. We then proceed to talk plainly of them as *phone numbers*. We often forget this working lens—interpreting the facts as phone numbers—because we see through it.

One of us, however, may propose another interpretation: Might the list of “phone numbers” contain secret knowledge encoded by spies?

Thus, we have multiple interpretations of the ink markings that some understand as “phone numbers.” Those quotation marks signal: what the facts are called when they are seen through the working interpretation. But we may more directly speak of *multiple interpretations of the information*, as opposed to multiple interpretations of the facts. Thus, rather than interpretively pivoting off the “fact”-level interpretation—that the line reads 678-3554—let’s pivot interpretively off of what I have called “the working interpretation”—that 678-3554 is a phone number—a level *up* from the factual, and there the pivot then turns to open up the interpretation dimension: “Maybe the phone number is a secret encoded message?” Again, universal acceptance among the “we” is built into “the facts”: None of us disputes that the line says 678-3554. Wherever you want to accommodate interpretive pivoting, move “factual” to somewhere *down* from there.

Meanwhile, life rolls on, and we are called to act. The pitch races toward the plate. If the batter waits for a better interpretation, he may be called out on strikes. Again, the action facet of knowledge is judgment. As speaker, we judge of judgments—those of our interlocutors and of agents existing within the descriptions we give of things. We convey our judgments of their judgments using judgmental terms.

If, among our circle of “we,” judgment is shared, then those judgments may now predicate a further conversation among us, and, thusly, those judgments present statements now

treated as fact. Thus, we have completed the phases of the spiral and have moved from one loop to the next, where the sequence of phases may recur.

7.15 Anti-liberal contempt for our circle of “we”

Again, what is labeled and attacked as “misinformation” or “disinformation” is not a matter of true or false information, but of true or false *knowledge*. Recognizing that knowledge, not merely information, is at issue is a matter of common decency.

The dignity of sincere discourse involves an openness, in principle a universal openness, to other human “we’s” and their pursuits upward in wisdom and virtue. As we can see, the chief facets of knowledge—information, interpretation, and judgment—operate both behind and ahead of our current position in the spiral. Trying to shut us up is to show a despotic contempt for our way of weaving through the phases of knowledge. It is contemptuous toward the development of the *many loops* within which our sense-making has made a home and now operates.

By weighing interpretations and making judgments, we settle certain beliefs as fact, to predicate our further conversation. Those beliefs reflect a “we” with those beliefs. Meanwhile, in the wider world, different “we’s” are forming and are addressing the public at large, representing different sets of belief, different ways of making sense of the world. We might call a “we” a distinct *sense-making community*.

The sincere human of any one of these communities is eager to learn from other communities. The sincere human has certain commitments which make it belong to the sense-making community it belongs to, but it is not wedded to that community. In fact, the entire population of that community—that is, the set of people who currently share that way of sense-making—may remake their community’s way of sense-making. Those who learn from other communities may become leaders of intellectual change within their own community.

Sincere humans favor the freedom of speech and the norms of frank and open discourse *for all communities*. Besides favoring that freedom, they welcome engagement across communities, for all the reasons given earlier.

The “anti-misinformation” despots show contempt for communities at odds with their dicta and diktats. Not only are the members of the “anti-misinformation” community unwilling to engage in civil debate, but they promulgate “anti-misinformation” propaganda so as to intimidate their adversaries, to crush dissent.

I have explained that the “misinformation” characterization of the disagreement is false. The anti-liberals are presupposing that it is a matter within the information dimension of knowledge, when clearly the disagreement involves contentions in the interpretation and judgment dimensions. Under pretense of combatting misinformation, they are really just stomping on adversaries. It is akin to Naziism, Stalinism, and Maoism, regimes that likewise showed despotic contempt for sense-making communities at odds with their own. “Anti-misinformation” projects are a sham, just as “anti-racism” projects are a sham.

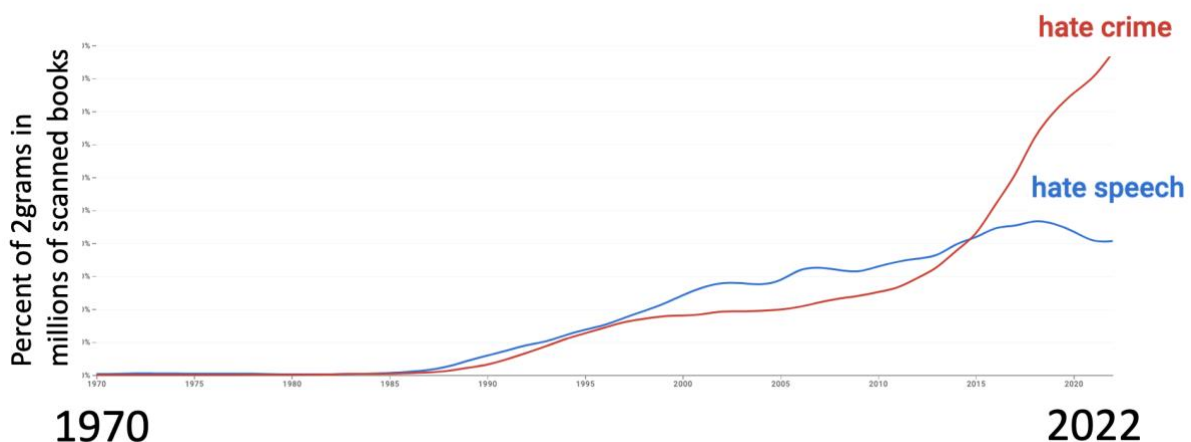
7.16 A few words about “hate”

“We’re a hate group... We hate hate.”

— *Get Smart*

Just as “anti-misinformation” projects are anti-liberal, so too are “anti-hate-speech” projects (Holden 2023). The failure is again one of bad semantics and false presuppositions. “Anti-misinformation” despots tar their opponents with “misinformation,” making an “information” category error based on a false presupposition. “Anti-hate speech” projects tar their opponents with “hate,” again making a category error, for they treat hatred as necessarily hateful—that is, improper. Figure 3 shows the recent onset of “hate speech” and “hate crime.”

Figure 3: “hate speech” and “hate crime” are new.



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer <http://books.google.com/ngrams> (figure-specific [link](#))

But hatred is a necessary and organic part of any coherent system of morals. A coherent system of morals holds love and hate to be counterparts to one another. In a coherent system of morals, love is to be felt toward objects that are lovable, and hatred is to be felt toward objects that are hateful, although the bounds of propriety for the intensity and expression of the two respective feelings are importantly different, as Adam Smith explained (see esp. [1790] Part I, Sect. II, Chaps. 3 & 4 on the “unsocial” and “social” passions).

The two respective sets of objects bear a counterpart relation to one another, for that which works systematically against the lovable is hateful. As Edmund Burke (2022, 150) wrote: “They will never love where they ought to love, who do not hate where they ought to hate.”

The implicit denial by anti-liberals that hatred is necessary and organic is parallel to their implicit denial, in treating interpretive matters as informational matters, that asymmetric interpretation is necessary and organic. Just as “mis-” and “disinformation” are words they use to shut you up, “hate speech,” “hate group,” and “hate crime” are words they use to shut you up, ratified by show trials and kangaroo bodies. A proper court of hate would presuppose a distinction between proper hate and improper hate, just hate and unjust hate. In a liberal civilization such “courts” are not governmental. Rather, they remain in the judgment and interpretation of the individual’s own being. If hate is policed in the manner that outward action is policed by governments,

we should feel all the furies of that passion against any person in whose breast we suspected or believed such designs or affections were harboured, though they had never broken out into any actions. Sentiments, thoughts, intentions, would become the objects of punishment; and if the indignation of mankind run as high against them as against actions; if the baseness of the thought which had given birth to no action, seemed in the eyes of the world as much to call aloud for vengeance as the baseness of the action, *every court of judicature would become a real inquisition.* (Smith [1790], 105 italics added)

7.17 Concluding remarks

In 1787, James Madison wrote: “As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed.” Differences in interpretation and judgment are what our civilization has striven to accommodate and keep peaceful. Censoring those differences is untrue to who we are as a civilization.

At the opening of this chapter, I quoted Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*, in particular the chapter “The End of Truth.” Hayek explained that propaganda relies on censorship, lest big lies be ripped to shreds. To get back to truth, politics must reverse course.

In this chapter I have argued that knowledge cannot be flattened down to information. In seeing that interpretation and judgment operate beyond information, that knowledge is richer than information, we see that counter-narrative claims attacked as “misinformation” are far beyond the information dimension. The attackers commit a category error. We expose their “anti-misinformation” projects for what they are, namely, censorship. And we expose the verbalisms “misinformation” and “disinformation” as a stratagem in service to that evil.

Seeing the richness of knowledge, we see that the “anti-misinformation” projects are miscarriages of civility, decency, and the rule of law. We must rediscover the norms of openness, tolerance, and free speech that dignify humankind. Science depends on confidence, and confidence depends on those liberal norms. Those norms are the parents of good science, healthy sense-making, and civil tranquility. There are two roads. The virtuous road is that of freedom, openness, confidence, truth-tracking, dignity. The vicious road is that of despotism, concealment, diffidence, bad science, serfdom and servility. Let’s get back to the right road.

Appendix: Philosophical affinities

FWIW: My take on knowledge has affinities to the philosophizing of David Hume, Adam Smith, Friedrich Hayek, Michael Polanyi, Thomas Kuhn, Iain McGilchrist, and many others. It also has affinities to the pragmatists William James and Richard Rorty, but I regard pragmatism—seeing one’s belief as the product of one’s choosing an idea among alternative ideas, and seeing the chosen idea’s betterness (better, that is, compared to actual future-oriented alternative ideas, *not* to past days of innocence, which wisdom might have made unrecoverable) as necessarily the chief basis for what one shall count as true—as a phase situated on one side of a spiral,

counterposed, on the other side of the spiral, by an phase that we may call Humean natural belief. Humean natural belief is belief that has emerged from depths beyond the loop in which we pass between the two phases; Humean natural belief is, within that loop, not to be treated in terms of choice; it is what we would call, as we dwell within that loop, brute reality. I think of Hume saying: I am not prepared to affirm that God exists, but I believe that backgammon with my friends exists and in a way that I could scarcely believe otherwise and, so, the belief is scarcely a product of past choice nor an object of future choice. To open such a part of reality up to the pragmatist phase—Does backgammon with my friends exist?—would mean acceding to another loop of the spiral. We have, then, within a loop two phases: (1) belief, and (2) pragmatist revisiting and possible revision of belief. Within a loop they bear a subscript corresponding to that loop. Now, it is important to understand that in the theory of knowledge offered here there is no first (or lower-most) loop and no final (or upper-most) loop. The spiral is indefinite. Hence, certain realities at some loop remain brutish, certain beliefs remain natural (in a sense of primitive), for any finite conversation. And, in this world, all conversations are finite, even when produced in a spirit of the eternal.

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