

Gaslighting: The Psychology of Shaping Another's Reality

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*"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.
"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."*

– Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

We are living in a world where the degree of disinformation and outright lying has reached such a state of affairs that, possibly for the first time ever, we see the majority of the western world starting to question their own and surrounding level of sanity. The increasing frenzied distrust in everything "authoritative" mixed with the desperate incredulity that "everybody couldn't possibly be in on it!" is slowly rocking many back and forth into a tighter and tighter straight jacket. "Question everything" has become the new motto, but are we capable of answering those questions?

Presently the answer is a resounding no.

The social behaviourist sick joke of having made everyone obsessed with toilet paper of all things during the start of what was believed to be a time of crisis, is an example of how

much control they have over that red button labelled “commence initiation of level 4 mass panic”.

And can the people be blamed? After all, if we are being lied to, how can we possibly rally together and point the finger at the root of this tyranny, aren't we at the point where it is *everywhere*?

As Goebbels infamously stated,

*“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, **for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State** [under fascism].”*

And here we find ourselves today, at the brink of fascism. However, we have to first agree to forfeit our civil rights as a collective before fascism can completely dominate. That is, the big lie can only succeed if the majority fails to call it out, for if the majority were to recognise it for what it is, it would truly hold no power.

The Battle for Your Mind

“Politicians, Priests, and psychiatrists often face the same problem: how to find the most rapid and permanent means of changing a man's belief...The problem of the doctor and his nervously ill patient, and that of the religious leader who sets out to gain and hold new converts, has now become the problem of whole groups of nations, who wish not only to confirm certain political beliefs within their boundaries, but to proselytize the outside world.”

– William Sargant “Battle of the Mind”

It had been commonly thought in the past, and not without basis, that tyranny could only exist on the condition that the people were kept illiterate and ignorant of their oppression. To recognise that one was “oppressed” meant they must first have an idea of what was “freedom”, and if one were allowed the “privilege” to learn how to read, this discovery was inevitable.

If education of the masses could turn the majority of a population literate, it was thought that the higher ideas, the sort of “dangerous ideas” that Mustapha Mond for instance expresses in “The Brave New World”, would quickly organise the masses and revolution against their “controllers” would be inevitable. In other words, knowledge is freedom, and you cannot enslave those who learn how to “think”.

However, it hasn't exactly played out that way has it?

The greater majority of us are free to read whatever we wish to, in terms of the once “forbidden books”, such as those listed by *The Index Librorum Prohibitorum*[\[1\]](#). We can read any of the writings that were banned in “The Brave New World”, notably the works of Shakespeare which were named as absolutely dangerous forms of “knowledge”.

We are now very much free to “educate” ourselves on the very “ideas” that were recognised by tyrants of the past as the “antidote” to a life of slavery. And yet, today, the majority choose not to...

It is recognised, albeit superficially, that who controls the past, controls the present and thereby the future. George Orwell's book “1984”, hammers this as the essential feature that allows the Big Brother apparatus to maintain absolute control over fear, perception and loyalty to the Party cause, and yet despite its popularity, there still remains a lack of interest in actually informing oneself about the past.

What does it matter anyway, if the past is controlled and

rewritten to suit the present? As the Big Brother interrogator O'Brien states to Winston, *"We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not? [And thus, are free to rewrite it as we choose...]"*

Of course, we are not in the same situation as Winston...we are much better off. We can study and learn about the "past" if we so desire, unfortunately, it is a choice that many take for granted.

In fact, many are probably not fully aware that presently there is a battle waging for who will "control the past" in a manner that is closely resembling a form of "memory wipe".

William Sargant was a British psychiatrist and, one could say, effectively the Father of "mind control" in the West, with connections to British Intelligence and the Tavistock Institute, which would influence the CIA and American military via the program MK Ultra. Sargant was also an advisor for Ewen Cameron's LSD "blank slate" work at McGill University, funded by the CIA.

Sargant accounts for his reason in studying and using forms of "mind control" on his patients, which were primarily British soldiers that were sent back from the battlefield during WWII with various forms of "psychosis", as the only way to rehabilitate extreme forms of PTSD.

The other reason, was because the Soviets had apparently become "experts" in the field, and out of a need for national security, the British would thus in turn have to become experts as well...as a matter of self-defence of course.

The work of Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist, had succeeded in producing some disturbingly interesting insights into four primary forms of nervous systems in dogs, that were

combinations of inhibitory and excitatory temperaments; "strong excitatory", "balanced", "passive" and "calm imperturbable". Pavlov found that depending on the category of nervous system temperament the dog had, this in turn would dictate the form of "conditioning" that would work best to "reprogram behaviour". The relevance to "human conditioning" was not lost on anyone.

It was feared in the West, that such techniques would not only be used against their soldiers to invoke free-flowing uninhibited confessions to the enemy but that these soldiers could be sent back to their home countries, as zombified assassins and spies that could be set off with a simple code word. At least, these were the thriller stories and movies that were pumped into the population. How horrific indeed! That the enemy could apparently enter what was thought the only sacred ground to be our own...our very "minds"!

However, for those who were actually leading the field in mind control research, such as William Sargant, it was understood that this was not exactly how mind control worked.

For one thing, *the issue of "free will" was getting in the way.*

No matter the length or degree of electro-shock, insulin "therapy", tranquilizer cocktails, induced comas, sleep deprivation, starvation etc induced, it was discovered that if the subject had a "strong conviction" and "strong belief" in something, this could not be simply erased, it could not be written over with any arbitrary thing. Rather, the subject would have to have the illusion that their "conditioning" was in fact a "choice". This was an extremely challenging task, and long term conversions (months to years) were rare.

However, Sargant saw an opening. It was understood that one could not create a new individual from scratch, however, with the right conditioning that was meant to lead to a physical

breakdown using abnormal stress (effectively a reboot of the nervous system), one could increase the “suggestibility” markedly in their subjects.

Sargant wrote in his “Battle of the Mind”: *“Pavlov’s clinical descriptions of the ‘experimental neuroses’ which he could induce in dogs proved, in fact, to have a close correspondence with those war-neuroses which we were investigating at the time.”*

In addition, Sargant found that a falsely implanted memory could help induce abnormal stress leading to emotional exhaustion and physical breakdown to invoke “suggestibility”. That is, one didn’t even need to have a “real stress” but an “imagined stress” would work just as effectively.

Sargant goes on to state in his book:

“It is not surprising that the ordinary person, in general, is much more easily indoctrinated than the abnormal...A person is considered ‘ordinary’ or ‘normal’ by the community simply because he accepts most of its social standards and behavioural patterns; which means, in fact, that he is susceptible to suggestion and has been persuaded to go with the majority on most ordinary or extraordinary occasions.”

Sargant then goes over the phenomenon of the London Blitz, which was an eight month period of heavy bombing of London during WWII. During this period, in order to cope and stay “sane”, people rapidly became accustomed to the idea that their neighbours could be and were buried alive in bombed houses around them. The thought was “If I can’t do anything about it what use is it that I trouble myself over it?” The best “coping” was thus found to be those who accepted the new “environment” and just focused on “surviving”, and did not try to resist it.

Sargant remarks that it is this “adaptability” to a changing

environment which is part of the "survival" instinct and is very strong in the "healthy" and "normal" individual who can learn to cope and thus continues to be "functional" despite an ever changing environment.

It was thus our deeply programmed "survival instinct" that was found to be the key to the suggestibility of our minds. That the best "survivors" made for the best "brain-washing" in a sense.

Sargant quotes Hecker's work, who was studying the dancing mania phenomenon that occurred during the Black Death, where Hecker observed that heightened suggestibility had the capability to cause a person to **"embrace with equal force, reason and folly, good and evil, diminish the praise of virtue as well as the criminality of vice."**

And that such a state of mind was likened to the first efforts of the infant mind *"this **instinct of imitation** when it exists in its highest degree, is also **united a loss of all power over the will**, which occurs as soon as the impression on the senses has become firmly established, producing a condition like that of small animals when they are fascinated by the look of a serpent."*

I wonder if Sargant imagined himself the serpent...

Sargant does finally admit:

"This does not mean that all persons can be genuinely indoctrinated by such means. Some will give only temporary submission to the demands made on them, and fight again when strength of body and mind returns. Others are saved by the supervention of madness. Or the will to resist may give way, but not the intellect itself."

But he comforts himself as a response to this stubborn resistance that *"As mentioned in a previous context, the*

stake, the gallows, the firing squad, the prison, or the madhouse, are usually available for the failures."

How to Resist the Deconstruction of Your Mind

"He whom the gods wish to destroy, they first of all drive mad."

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow "The Masque of Pandora"

For those who have not seen the 1944 psychological thriller "Gaslight" directed by George Cukor, I would highly recommend you do so since there is an invaluable lesson contained within, that is especially applicable to what I suspect many of us are experiencing nowadays.

The story starts with a 14 year old Paula (played by Ingrid Bergman) who is being taken to Italy after her Aunt Alice Alquist, a famous opera singer and caretaker of Paula, is found murdered in her home in London. Paula is the one who found the body, and horror stricken is never her old self again. Her Aunt was the only family Paula had left in her life. The decision is made to send her away from London to Italy to continue her studies to become a world-renowned opera singer like her Aunt Alice.

Years go by, Paula lives a very sheltered life and a heavy somberness is always present within her, she can never seem to feel any kind of happiness. During her singing studies she meets a mysterious man (her piano accompanist during her lessons) and falls deeply in love with him. However, she knows hardly anything about the man named Gregory.

Paula agrees to marry Gregory after a two week romance and is quickly convinced to move back into her Aunt's house in London that was left abandoned all these years. As soon as she enters the house, the haunting of the night of the murder revisits her and she is consumed with panic and fear. Gregory tries to calm her and talks about the house needing just a little bit

of air and sun, and then Paula comes across a letter written to her Aunt from a Sergis Bauer which confirms that he was in contact with Alice just a few days before her murder. At this finding, Gregory becomes bizarrely agitated and grabs the letter from Paula. He quickly tries to justify his anger blaming the letter for upsetting her. Gregory then decides to lock all of her Aunt's belongings in the attic, to apparently spare Paula any further anguish.

It is at this point that Gregory starts to change his behaviour dramatically. Always under the pretext for "Paula's sake", everything that is considered "upsetting" to Paula must be removed from her presence. And thus quickly the house is turned into a form of prison. Paula is told it is for her best not to leave the house unaccompanied, not to have visitors and that self-isolation is the best remedy for her "anxieties" which are getting worst. Paula is never strictly forbidden at the beginning but rather is told that she should obey these restrictions for her own good.

Before a walk, he gives as a gift a beautiful heirloom brooch that belonged to his mother. Because the pin needs replacing, he instructs Paula to keep it in her handbag, and then says rather out of context, "Don't forget where you put it now Paula, I don't want you losing it." Paula remarks thinking the warning absurd, "Of course I won't forget!" When they return from their walk, Gregory asks for the brooch, Paula searches in her handbag but it is not there.

It continues on like this, with Gregory giving warnings and reminders, seemingly to help Paula with her "forgetfulness" and "anxieties". Paula starts to question her own judgement and sanity as these events become more and more frequent. She has no one else to talk to but Gregory, who is the only witness to these apparent mishaps. It gets to a point where completely nonsensical behaviour is being attributed to Paula by Gregory. A painting is found missing on the wall one night. Gregory talks to Paula like she is a 5 year child and asks her

to put it back. Paula insists she does not know who took it down. After her persistent passionate insistence that it was not her, she walks up the stairs almost like she were in a dream state and pulls the painting from behind a statue. Gregory asks why she lied, but Paula insists that she only thought to look there because that is where it was found the last two times this occurred.

For weeks now, Paula thinks she has been seeing things, the gas lights of the house dimming for no reason, she also hears footsteps above her bedroom. No one else seems to take notice. Paula is also told by Gregory that he found out that her mother, who passed away when she was very young, had actually gone insane and died in an asylum.

Despite Paula being reduced to a condition of an ongoing stupor, she decides one night to make a stand and regain control over her life. Paula is invited, by one of her Aunt Alice's close friends Lady Dalroy, to attend a high society evening with musical performances. Recall that Paula's life gravitated around music before her encounter with Gregory. Music was her life. Paula gets magnificently dressed up for the evening and on her way out tells Gregory that she is going to this event. Gregory tries to convince her that she is not well enough to attend such a social gathering, when Paula calmly insists that she is going and that this woman was a dear friend of her Aunt, Gregory answers that he refuses to accompany her (in those days that was a big deal). Paula accepts this and walks with a solid dignity, undeterred towards the horse carriage. *In a very telling scene*, Gregory is left momentarily by himself and panic stricken, his eyes bulging he snaps his cigar case shut and runs after Paula. He laughingly calls to her, "Paula, you did not think I was serious? I had no idea that this party meant so much to you. Wait, I will get ready." As he is getting ready in front of the mirror, a devilish smirk appears.

Paula and Gregory show up to Lady Dalroy's house late, the

pianist is in the middle of the 1st movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata #8 in C minor. They quickly are escorted to two empty seats. Paula is immediately immersed in the piece, and Gregory can see his control is slipping. After only a few minutes, he goes to look at his pocket watch but it is not in his pocket. He whispers into Paula's ear, "My watch is missing". Immediately, Paula looks like she is going to be sick. Gregory takes her handbag and Paula looks in horror as he pulls out his pocket watch, insinuating that Paula had put it there. She immediately starts losing control and has a very public emotional breakdown. Gregory takes her away, as he remarks to Lady Dalroy that this is why he didn't want Paula coming in the first place.

When they arrive home, Paula has by now completely succumbed to the thought that she is indeed completely insane. Gregory says that it would be best if they go away somewhere for an indefinite period of time. We later find out that Gregory is intending on committing her to an asylum. Paula agrees to leave London with Gregory and leaves her fate entirely in his hands.

In the case of Paula it is clear. She has been suspecting that Gregory has something to do with her "situation" but he has very artfully created an environment where Paula herself doubts whether this is a matter of unfathomable villainy or whether she is indeed going mad.

It is rather *because she is not mad that she doubts herself*, because there is seemingly no reason for why Gregory would put so much time and energy into making it look like she were mad, or at least so it first appears. ***But what if the purpose to her believing in her madness was simply a matter of who is in control?***

Paula almost succeeds in gaining the upper-hand in this power-struggle, the evening she decided to go out on her own no matter what Gregory insisted was in her best interest. If she

would have held her ground at Lady Dalroy's house and simply replied, "I have no idea why your stupid watch ended up in my handbag and I could care less. Now stop interrupting this performance, *you* are making a scene!" Gregory's spell would have been broken as simple as that. If he were to complain to others about the situation, they would also respond, "Who cares man, why are you so obsessed about your damn watch?"

We find ourselves today in a very similar situation to Paula. And the voice of Gregory is represented by the narrative of false news and the apocalyptic social behaviourist programming in our forms of entertainment. The things most people ***voluntarily subject themselves to*** on a daily, if not hourly, basis. Socially conditioning them, like a pack of salivating Pavlovian dogs, to think it is just a matter of time before the world ends and with a ring of their master's bell...be at each other's throats.

Paula ends up being saved in the end by a man named Joseph Cotten (a detective), who took notice and quickly discerned that something was amiss. In the end Gregory is arrested. It is revealed that Gregory is in fact Sergis Bauer. That he killed Alice Alquist and that he has returned to the scene of the crime after all these years in search for the famous jewels of the opera singer. The jewels were in fact rather worthless from the standpoint that they were too famous to be sold, however, Gregory never intended on selling these jewels but rather had become obsessed with the desire to merely possess them.

That is, *it is Gregory who has been **entirely mad** all this time.*

A Gregory is absolutely dangerous. He would have been the end of Paula if nothing had intervened. However, the power that Gregory held was conditional to the degree that Paula allowed it to control her. Paula's extreme deconstruction was thus entirely dependent on her choice to let the voice of Gregory

in. That is, a Gregory is only dangerous if we allow ourselves to sleep walk into the nightmare he has constructed for us.

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone,

“it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – – that’s all.”

– Lewis Carroll’s “Through the Looking Glass”

This article was originally published on [The Saker](#).

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