

Doublethink in the Time of Societal Upheaval

In his classic essay "[Politics and the English Language](#)," George Orwell describes how politicians hide their actions beneath generous helpings of words chosen to mislead.

Today's media-saturated environment has supersized the high-calorie, low-nutrition verbiage. The twin crises of the China virus and George Floyd unrest provide a virtual all-you-can-eat buffet.

"Social Distancing"

Why "social" distancing? Standing six feet apart is *physical* distancing. There's nothing social about locking yourself at home and not seeing other people.

Meanwhile, we're communicating via "social" media, making us more physically distant than ever. It's a safe bet our health – mental and physical – would be in a better state if we did actually socially distance, that is, distance ourselves from Facebook and Twitter.

While physical distancing more accurately describes what's being prescribed, it sounds anti-social. No one wants to be accused of being anti-social, though social media have made an entire generation anti-social if not downright sociopathic. Many young people are more comfortable with hundreds of "friends" they've never met than they are with interacting face-to-face with any one actual human being.

Indeed, physical distancing (a.k.a. social distancing) promises to shred whatever remnant of social fabric hasn't already been ripped apart by social media. "Social distancing" and social media are working hand-in-glove to acclimate the

populace to near-total daily physical isolation.

The locution “social distancing” also obscures this inconvenient reality: Government-ordered “physical distancing” may be infringing on the First Amendment’s guarantee of the freedom of assembly.

“The New Normal”

“New normal” is a perfect example of doublethink. “Normal” is what we are used to. If it’s new, we’re not used to it – it’s different. Don’t tell us we will have a “new normal” when what you actually mean is that things are going to be *different*.

And this is precisely what politicians don’t want to say. The power of the concept of “normal” is its utility for weasel politicians. “Normal” is something invisible. We don’t think about it; we consider it metaphysically preordained, something we have no control over; it’s just, well, *normal*.

The verbal construction “new normal” leads us unconsciously to accept as inevitable a radically different society crafted by the powers-that-be – there’s nothing to see here; accept it, that’s just the way it is – it’s “normal.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt at least was honest about what he was doing. He said his New Deal would be a big change. New York’s Emperor Cuomo and the mad Mayor de Blasio smuggle in their change schemes as an innocuous “new normal.”

China Virus Hits the Achilles Heel

The China virus has struck us in our Achilles heel.

I refer not just to our manufacturing supply chains, our healthcare system, or our bureaucratic CDC – though the virus certainly has exposed weaknesses in all of these.

It's also exposed a dangerous ideology infecting our society – safetyism.

Safetyism tells us that with the right technology, the right upbringing, and the right experts in charge we can have a perfectly risk-free society – and that this is not only achievable it's *desirable*.

Rather than seeing risk as an inevitable *feature* of life, something that helps us grow stronger in the overcoming, safetyism tells us risk is a bug that can (and should) be eradicated entirely.

As a corollary of this, the ideology of safetyism holds that the existence of any risk is a failure of someone (Trump, parents, young kids tired of being cooped up) or some system or human agency (the government) that could have anticipated and prevented it.

Like socialism, safetyism is yet another product of high-modernism, the creed that teaches scientific expertise, industrial technology, centralization, and social engineering will bring about heaven on earth and the universal salvation of humanity.

Jonathan Haidt and Gregory Lukianoff describe safetyism and its discontents in their article (and later [book](#)) "[The Coddling of the American Mind](#)."

Haidt and Lukianoff contend that safetyism and a learned affinity for authority are stronger among the professional upper-middle-class. These parents, obsessed with ensuring their children gain admission to elite universities, have structured every moment of their children's day from preschool onward. It is from these classes – social and university – that the managers of our technocratic society come.

Haidt and Lukianoff posit that by depriving our children of unsupervised play we have inadvertently taught them to expect

an authority to resolve any and all conflict. Left alone in the sandbox, children will learn to sort things out on their own and figure out how to share the shovels and pails without asking mama. Everyone remembers the kid who went crying to his mother to tell the rest of us what to do. No one was more unlikable.

And yet we have raised a generation of mama's boys who see any conflict as "violence" and who cry for an authority – an act of Congress, a judge, the administrative state – to make it go away.

"There ought to be a law" used to be a joke; now it's the go-to solution in our manically legalistic society.

Lawmakers, bureaucrats, and judges from the safetyism-infected professional class make the rules. Denizens of the corporate media, themselves offspring of the professional class, propagate the rules, and determine acceptable discourse. Social justice warrior media mobs, trained in academia, enforce the rules with shaming, deplatforming, and secondary boycotts.

Thus we have the psychological and economic foundations for an authoritarian society: Safetyism tells us all risks *can* be eliminated. Corporatism and socialism tell us a centrally managed economy *will* provide all our needs.

Ironically, we have come full circle as the generation that loves authority demands we abolish that most visible agency of authority: the police.

And we have another helping of word salad.

When the police defunders say they seek to "reimagine policing," do not take them at their word. Their words hide their true intent.

Consider: police departments are drawn primarily from the

working classes, a cohort not trained in the orthodoxy of safetyism.

“Reimagine” means “replace” – replace blue-collar cops with white-collar social workers.

The liberal creed believes social engineering, counseling, and government jobs programs can eliminate not just inequality, poverty, scraped knees, and crabgrass, but crime itself. And it can be done without pain, conflict, or the policeman’s baton.

Such will be our socially distanced, new normal, reimagined future.

As Yogi Berra said, the future ain’t what it used to be.

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