

Influenceza

A Language Guide for Creating and Understanding Influence

By

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This book is dedicated to Maa, Dad, Yashodhara, and Erik

Disclaimer:

Some of the content in this book is not safe for work (NSFW). You are responsible for how you use this book. The purpose of the book is to help you spread your influence through language and to comprehend how others are trying to influence you. Always use your influence for good.

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Introduction

Whether you realize it or not, someone is trying to influence you every day. Sometimes, it's for your betterment, and other times, to your detriment. Being aware of how influence operates through language is essential in today's world of 24/7 media and social media.

Whether you wish to influence others or understand how you're being influenced, you must understand how language works. There are no "ifs" or "buts" about it.

The average Joe, who communicates effectively, *will* soon overshadow the above-average Jack, who struggles to express himself in writing and speech. Writing is a valuable art form and is the best foundation for other media, such as audio and video.

Although extremely powerful mediums, watching a video or listening to audio doesn't necessarily mean you'll absorb the content. In contrast, reading text or speaking publicly is an active process; it requires you to think. The more you read intently, the better you'll recognize how you're being influenced. Additionally, video and audio content often begin with a script and extensive discussions with a team on how to create the content.

To become an effective and influential communicator, you must master both writing and speaking.

This book examines various works across different mediums to explore how they aim to influence an audience. By studying these works and understanding their effectiveness, you will develop into a more discerning writer, speaker, and listener.

Whether you want to influence your social circle, your colleagues, or employees, or if you aim to change minds, it all begins with this book. If you wish to think for yourself and avoid being overly susceptible to outside influence, this book is for you.

Raghav Suri

Chapter One: What's In A Word?

The right words attract, while the wrong words repulse. Becoming a master of using and understanding language comes with increasing your vocabulary, understanding definitions, and how words are used within a particular context.

Fake News

Undoubtedly, the country with the most entertaining show in recent times has been the United States. The election that shocked and divided Americans was the 2016 election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

What made this election stand out wasn't just the two candidates' attacks on each other but also an attack on specific groups in the country.

Trump would often attack the media and label their reporting and claims as "fake news." He certainly isn't the first to question the media's legitimacy and whether the news tells us the truth or shares a narrative to suit an agenda.

Nevertheless, by repeatedly using the words "fake news," Trump made many Americans question the media even more. This wasn't limited to the United States. People from all over the world are wondering if their country's media is the truth or merely fake news.

For those ordinary citizens who've always seen their media with skepticism or even deep suspicion, Trump's now-signature phrase (among many) of "fake news" resonated with them.

Deplorables

Hillary Clinton also used a phrase that struck a nerve. One wonders whether it was intended or just a slip of the tongue, but regardless, some argue that her use of the word "deplorable" had a huge influence on the election's outcome. She used the word to refer to a certain group of Americans who wanted Trump to become President.

This shaped how many people perceived the ideological divide within the U.S. populace. While Hillary Clinton had used the word "deplorable" in a speech or statement before, this was the first time she had used it to characterize an entire segment of the population. For many, this was the last straw, and it impacted their choice to vote against her.

The words we use can work for us or against us. In this day of constant scrutiny due to 24/7 media and social media, using the wrong word can make or break you.

Misinformation

Since the popularization of the phrase “fake news,” another word has become part of our everyday lexicon – “misinformation.” This is a powerful word used to make the public dismiss certain information.

Picture the scenario:

1. A government makes a statement.
2. Some sections of the established media, independent media, and the public question the statement or display healthy skepticism.
3. These sections openly question or challenge the statement.
4. The government labels these rebuttals as “misinformation.”
5. The result? Some question the government further. While most will now blindly accept the statement, dismiss the skepticism, and demonize the skeptics.

Think about just any rebuttal to an official statement in your country. Has it been branded as misinformation? It likely has, or there’s another euphemism to dismiss the rebuttal – such as “unverified.”

It’s crucial to acknowledge that fake news, misinformation, and unverified claims exist. However, these terms are also used to dismiss dissent, questioning, and skepticism. Not everything labeled as misinformation is actually misinformation. Conversely, just because something is labeled as true doesn’t mean it is necessarily true.

Accusations

One of the most cunning methods of influencing others is to accuse your opponents of something horrible or defame them. This approach is unethical and should not be employed in your writing or speaking. However, you must carefully scrutinize any speech or text for potential accusations.

Accusations are often used to dismiss opponents and their viewpoints. Although these tactics are low blows, they still hold significant sway. In an ideal world, we would easily brush off such petty jabs from any writer or speaker; however, in reality, accusations often and effectively stifle criticism, dissent, and intellectual diversity.

An obituary written in the New York *Evening Post* on June 10, 1809, described a man who died two days earlier as the following:

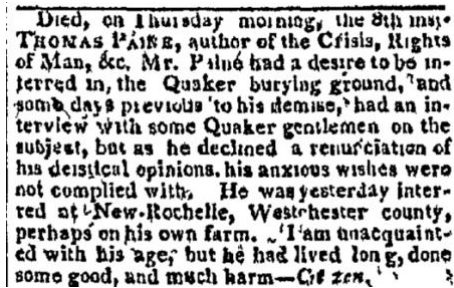
“He had lived long, done some good, and much harm.”

When you hear about someone who has done “much harm,” it’s unlikely that you would want to meet them. If you hear about their death, you may find yourself tempted to say, “Good riddance,” or at the very least, you’ll think of such a sentiment.

But who was this man, who apparently did “much harm” and whose obituary was published in the New York *Evening Post* on June 10, 1809? It was someone considered to be one of the additional Founding Fathers of what we now call the United States of America!

Thomas Paine was an English-American writer and political philosopher who relocated from England to colonial America, where he eventually died in the new nation, the United States of America. He authored influential works such as *The Age of Reason*, *Rights of Man*, and *Common Sense* and was among the earliest abolitionists in the country—condemning the atrocities of slavery and championing freedom and freethought.¹

Today, Thomas Paine is regarded as one of the heroes of the Enlightenment, which shaped Western Civilization and especially the ideas that have formed the culture, society, and vision of the United States of America. This begs the question: why was he described as someone who did much harm?



Thomas Paine's Obituary
Published in New York *Evening Post*
June 10, 1809

Among the many challenging ideas that Thomas Paine embraced, the one he discussed in *The Age of Reason* was deism. The first part was published in 1794, where Thomas Paine expressed his belief in God but rejected the teachings of Christian, Jewish, and Turkish churches. He argued that these institutions were man-made and, for him, were “set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.”

He did not intend to offend or attack any devoted believer of any faith; however, his views in *The Age of Reason*, coupled with the fact that it was released for the general public, upset the establishment.

¹ Foner, Philip S. “Thomas Paine.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 13 Feb. 2025, www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Paine/In-Europe-Rights-of-Man

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There were only six attendants at Thomas Paine's funeral, which is largely attributed to his criticism of religion, particularly Christianity, and his diatribes against public figures such as George Washington. Thomas Paine also believed in the right to overthrow a government, which led to Prime Minister William Pitt requesting his arrest in England. This caused Thomas Paine to flee to France, where he was eventually arrested and served time in prison after his political opponents saw him as a threat.

In other words, his ideas and writings won him enemies. These enemies likely played a significant role in shaping his public perception. Today, we acknowledge Thomas Paine's accomplishments and his contribution to the development of modern Western thought. However, we mustn't forget that at the time of his death, few wished to mourn him in person – and his good deeds were summarized with the word "some," while his harm was summarized with the word "much." This illustrates the power of accusation.

We must think carefully before using a word in our speech and writing. The right word can win us friends, while the wrong word can create enemies. A weak word doesn't emphasize our message, while powerful words can create entire movements. As you build your vocabulary, understand definitions, and decipher context, you'll be less susceptible to being easily influenced by others.

Chapter Two: Something To Declare

Many crowds can be swayed by powerful rhetoric. However, if you fail to provide data and statistics, you risk being accused of having style without substance. While your words may be praised for their entertainment value, they ultimately won't make an impact.

Dr. Shashi Tharoor at the Oxford Union

As I write this section on February 14, 2025, Dr. Shashi Tharoor's speech from a May 28, 2015, debate² remains one of the most popular videos on the Oxford Union YouTube channel, with over 11 million views. The proposition was whether Britain owed reparations to its former colonies. Dr. Tharoor argued in favor of the proposition, and his speech is arguably the most memorable.

What were the strengths of this speech, which has since gone viral on the internet? Several factors contributed to his speech's effectiveness, including references to historical events (e.g., discussing the Bengal Famine), quoting prominent figures (e.g., mentioning Churchill's remarks on the famine), and criticizing the British Empire—highlighted by his now-famous remark: “And no wonder that the sun never set on the British Empire, because even God couldn't trust the English in the dark!” This statement received thunderous applause.

But what makes this speech work isn't just powerful rhetoric. In addition to style, there's a lot of substance. This is because Dr. Tharoor uses **data and statistics**. His use of numbers emphasizes the horrors of British colonialism in India.

Here are a few examples from the speech:

1. He mentions that India's share of the world economy before the British arrived was **23%**. In the next sentence, he mentions that it had dropped to **4%** by the time the British left. *This emphasizes the blow to India's economic output and wealth and highlights the tyranny of British colonial rule.*
2. He then mentions Britain's rise and the fact that Britain's rule in India lasted for **200 years**, *which makes the audience realize the length of the tyrannical rule.*
3. In discussing the famines in India, he mentions that between **15 and 29 million** Indians died of starvation due to them. He also specifically mentions that **4 million** Indians died due to the Bengal Famine. *Once again, these harrowing statistics are enough to showcase the evils of British rule and the results of their rule.*

² Oxford Union. “Dr Shashi Tharoor MP - Britain Does Owe Reparations.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 14 July 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7CW7S0zxv4

4. When discussing World War I, he presents several statistics to emphasize India's role in the conflict and its impact on the country and its people. He notes that **one-sixth** of the British Army fighting in the war comprised soldiers from India. He mentions that **54,000** Indian soldiers lost their lives in the conflict, while an additional **65,000 sustained** injuries. He continues to highlight the supplies India provided during the war—including **70 million** rounds of ammunition, **600,000** rifles and machine guns, and **42 million** garments. He doesn't stop there; he further states that **1.3 million** Indians participated in the war and that **173,000** animals, along with **370 million tons** of supplies, were contributed. He concludes by stating that at the end of World War I, India faced horrific poverty and recession, which would amount to **£8 billion** today.
5. He mentioned that **2.5 million** Indians served in the British Army during the Second World War and that Britain owed **£3 billion** in debt, **1.25 billion** of which was owed to India—and was never given. *This barrage of statistics emphasized the suffering that India and Indians endured during the two World Wars. This was one of the best ways to influence the audience's mind by making them understand how India benefited Britain, but Britain didn't benefit India.*

These are just a few examples of how Dr. Tharoor used data and statistics to influence the audience to vote for his side of the proposition. If you watch the entire speech, you will see many more. His speech clearly influenced the audience, as his side won the proposition with 185 votes to 56.

It had a global impact and was shared regularly by the Indian media. It also prompted Dr. Tharoor to write a book, *Inglorious Empire*, in which he expanded upon the impact of British colonialism in India.

His speech won praise and criticism, but regardless of one's views, he no doubt influenced others to think about the harm caused by the British Empire, particularly in India, a lot more.

The takeaway from this speech is that you can emphasize a point by backing it up with numbers. While words can sway the average audience, words combined with numbers capture the attention of a more discerning crowd. After all, in the introduction to this section, I mentioned that the speech has garnered over 11 million views on the Oxford Union YouTube channel. If you haven't watched the speech yet, this statistic likely convinced you to add it to your watchlist.

Live Aid

Between 1983 and 1985, Ethiopia experienced a devastating famine that affected one-fifth of its population, or about 7.75 million people. Up to 1.2 million Ethiopians lost their lives, 400,000 refugees sought safety in other countries, and nearly 200,000 children were left orphaned. Since this famine occurred during the Ethiopian Civil War, it has been linked to both the conflict and the drought.

Singers Bob Geldof and Midge Ure wanted to do something to help the victims of this famine. The result was a now-famous concert known as “Live Aid,” which took place on July 13, 1985, in London and Philadelphia.

Almost 40 years later, Live Aid remains one of the most popular concerts in history. Since then, many similar concerts have been held for charitable causes. This includes Live 8, another concert organized by Bob Geldof and Midge Ure. Charity concerts will undoubtedly continue to be a popular fundraising method.

But how do we assess Live Aid's success? Of course, it has received criticism, and observations on how foreign aid can benefit foreign dictators must be considered seriously. However, the general perception of Live Aid was that it was a success and a force for good. Once again, this is because of the data and statistics we've been presented with.

In her diaries, later used for her autobiography *Moving Mountains*, the British-Swiss nurse Claire Bertschinger discussed the shocking state of Ethiopia during the famine. She wrote about the difficult task of prioritizing which people needed her urgent attention—when, in fact, they *all* needed it. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to see everyone at once.

She wrote that she counted **10** rows of people with over **100** individuals per row. With more than **1,000** individuals needing her attention, she mentioned that she could only attend to **60 to 70** children each day. This meant that she had to turn away certain patients daily. It traumatized her so much that she expressed feeling like a “Nazi sending people to the death camps.”³ This was how horrible she felt, even though she was there to save lives, which she did. When we look back at her experiences, we realize the scale of the suffering during the famine.

Journalist Michael Buerk also played a key role in influencing the West to act and do something about the famine. His reporting exposed the gravity of the prevalent misery during the famine. Of course, video footage of malnourished people, particularly children, was one of the most effective ways to bring attention to the reality of the famine. But, like Claire Bertschinger, Michael Buerk also used numbers to get his point across.

³ Elliott, Jane. “Health | The Nurse Who Inspired Live Aid.” *BBC News*, BBC, 1 July 2005, [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4640255.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-4640255)

He said it would be “**nearly a year** until Ethiopians can expect proper rains again.” He then stated that **thousands** and possibly **millions** of people may die by that time.⁴

This report played a crucial role in raising awareness about the situation. Today, we recognize the tragedy thanks to the reporting of Claire Bertschinger and Michael Buerk. We also acknowledge Live Aid’s success because it was publicly reported that it raised **£40 million** for the famine.⁵ By disclosing the monetary outcome of the concert, it communicated to concerned citizens that it was a success. Undoubtedly, this boosted public confidence in future fundraising concerts.

Statistics Tell a Story

There are moments when you must painfully accept that your words may fall on deaf ears. You might not always be able to influence those in power. However, if you have something valuable to share with the world, you should express your thoughts.

Many American economists, from Milton Friedman to Walter Williams to Thomas Sowell to Art Laffer, have warned against government policies that create more poverty rather than alleviate it. Such policies are still in effect in the United States today, so their warnings have not been heeded. Nevertheless, they’ve played an essential role in educating the public on economics.

This section will explore how statistics can help explain cause and effect and influence an audience's understanding of a particular subject—in this case, the American economy.

As of February 19, 2025, the United States has a federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, and each state has its own minimum wage.⁶ Many states have a higher minimum wage than the federal wage—for example, Florida’s minimum wage is currently \$13 per hour and will increase to \$14 per hour on September 30, 2025.

The minimum wage in the United States was one of many policies of the “War on Poverty.” This “war” was intended to reduce poverty and help many poor Americans rise to the middle class.

In the documentary *Good Intentions*, which originally aired in 1985, economist Dr. Walter Williams examines the effects of these policies.⁷ To illustrate how the government’s good

⁴ British Pathé. “Ethiopian Famine (1984) | A Day That Shook the World.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 13 Apr. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kc6gtWp8EM

⁵ “BBC on This Day | 13 | 1985: Live Aid Makes Millions for Africa.” *BBC News*, BBC, 13 July 1985, news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/13/newsid_2502000/2502735.stm

⁶ “Minimum Wage.” *USAGov*, United States Government, www.usa.gov/minimum-wage Accessed 19 Feb. 2025.

⁷ Free To Choose Network. “‘Good Intentions’ - A Personal Statement by Walter Williams.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 1985 (original airing); 16 Apr. 2013 (electronically published), www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5TS8QUJWxo

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intentions with the War on Poverty have failed and caused harm—particularly to Black Americans—Dr. Williams often uses numbers and quantification. He and the interviewees use statistics to inform the audience about the increase in poverty among Black Americans resulting from these policies.

In the opening segment of the documentary, George Gilder, author of the book *Wealth and Poverty*, reveals a startling statistic: that nearly 55% of Black children in the United States today are born out of wedlock! The documentary then cuts to archive footage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. giving his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Dr. Walter Williams then uses another numerical strategy – he takes us back to 1963, during the Civil Rights Movement.

This is another excellent strategy when using numbers to influence others. Dr. Williams tells us that for three decades – the mid-1960s, the 1970s, and the early 1980s, federal and state governments spent over **a trillion dollars** in this “War on Poverty.” He describes these efforts as a failure and states that “**more** black teenagers and young adults are unemployed. **More** black families depend on welfare.” (2:12)

Dr. Williams uses numbers and quantification to alert the viewer of the failure and urgency of this matter. He mentions that during **three** different decades spending has been incredibly high and that the results have led to an increase in unemployment and welfare dependency. In other words, the “War on Poverty” has failed.

There are many examples of using quantification and statistics in the documentary to emphasize the failure of government policies toward the black community.

Here are a few examples, along with the timestamps from the documentary:

1. A statistic shows that in **1974**, black arrests were **6%**. This rose to **10%** in **1982** (2:27)
2. The next statistic shows that black victims were **2.6%** in **1965**, and this rose to **5%** in 1981 (2:29)
3. A private school, Ivy Leaf School, spends “**far less,**” but **80%** of the students score **higher** than the national norm on reading and mathematics tests (6:03)
4. During Dr. Williams’ childhood, growing up in North Philadelphia, **just about any kid** could find a job. In the present time of the **mid-1980s**, he states that **70%** of black children in similar ghettos won’t find a job (9:07)
5. Dr. Williams discusses how minimum wage **increases** have led to a **reduction** of available jobs – that he worked for **\$1** per hour and that the current minimum wage of **almost \$4** per hour is often **too expensive** for an employer to hire an inexperienced worker (9:55)
6. A grocer is interviewed and states that if the minimum wage was **lower**, he could hire **two or three** more workers (10:13)
7. Later, Dr. Williams discusses how mandatory licensing has made it harder for blacks to enter specific industries. He states that it costs **\$20,000** to receive a license to own a cab in Philadelphia. He contrasts this with Washington D.C., where the cost is

only **\$50**; therefore, **90%** of cab drivers own their cabs, whereas in Philadelphia, only **50%** do. He states that there are **10,000** cabs in Washington D.C., of which **over 70%** are owned by blacks. In New York and Philadelphia, where licenses are costlier, they own **less than 20%** (12:22)

8. To emphasize the severity of licensing and excessive regulation, Dr. Williams notes that **nearly 1,000** occupations in the country require a license (13:16)
9. The Davis Bacon Act, which was **50 years old** at the time of the documentary's production, is mentioned as a law that favors union construction workers for government contracts – which excludes **most** black workers as they aren't members of a union (16:12)
10. Dr. Williams mentions that between **1960 and 1980**, the government spent **almost \$90 billion** to train **30 million** people for jobs, which resulted in unemployment going **up!** (17:06)

The documentary provides even more examples than those previously mentioned. This demonstrates how numbers and quantities can be used to make a case and influence an audience's perspective on a specific subject.

Using Statistics for an Agenda

Numbers, data, and statistics are perfect ways to influence another person to align with an agenda. The episode “The Smoke Screen”⁸ from the classic British sitcom *Yes, Prime Minister* illustrates this phenomenon perfectly.

In the episode, Dr. Peter Thorn seeks to reduce smoking and ultimately ban it by confronting the major tobacco companies. Prime Minister Jim Hacker backs the proposal, while Cabinet Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby tries to hinder it, adhering to tradition.

The two men meet in the Prime Minister's office to discuss Dr. Thorn's research paper. Hacker is appalled by the statistics cited in the paper and declares his support for Dr. Thorn.

Sir Humphrey retorts that the “tax on tobacco is a major source of revenue for the government.” (10:53)

Hacker then asserts that tobacco causes killer diseases that lead to death. Humphrey is dismissive, stating that “no definitive causative link has ever been proved...”

Hacker starts by saying, “The statistics...” but is interrupted by Sir Humphrey, who remarks, “You can prove anything with statistics.” Then Hacker replies by saying, “Even the truth.”

⁸ Jay, Antony, and Jonathan Lynn. “The Smoke Screen.” *Yes, Prime Minister*, season 1, episode 3, 23 Jan. 1986.

The two men then engage in a statistical battle. Hacker attempts to use statistics to support Dr. Thorn's proposal, while Sir Humphrey argues against it.

Here is a transcript of the conversation, with a few lines removed for the sake of brevity:

Hacker: "Smoking-related diseases cost the NHS £165 million a year."

Humphrey: "...It has been shown that if those extra 100,000 people had lived to a ripe old age, they have cost us even more in pensions and social security than they did in medical treatment. So financially speaking, it's unquestionably better that they continue to die at about the present rate."

Hacker: "When cholera killed 30,000 people in 1833, we got the Public Health Act. When smog killed two-and-a-half thousand people in 1952, we got the Clean Air Act. A commercial drug kills half a dozen people, and we get it withdrawn from sale. Cigarettes kill 100,000 people a year, and what do we get?"

Humphrey: "£4 billion a year. 25,000 jobs in the tobacco industry... 250,000 jobs related to tobacco..."

Hacker: "These figures are just guesses."

Humphrey: "No, they're government stat – they're facts."

Hacker: "I see. So, your statistics are facts, and my facts are merely statistics?"

Many of the stories in *Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister* were inspired by the writers' conversations with government personnel. Unsurprisingly, fans of these shows often refer to them as "documentaries" rather than "sitcoms."

It must also be noted that statistics can manipulate an audience and influence them to think in a particular manner. As a result, statistics should be questioned and scrutinized.

Darrell Huff's book *How to Lie with Statistics* discusses this in detail.⁹ For example, he writes that when one sees a conclusion that reads, "Sixty-seven percent of the American people are against" (Huff, 24), one should question who these sixty-seven percent are among the American people.

This simple idea should be considered the next time you encounter statistics. Don't dismiss statistics, but don't always take them as fact or unbiased.

Words, often, aren't enough to stir up emotions and influence an audience. A lot of the time, you'll have to include a quantity to get your point across. You'll have to discuss a range of dates to show how things have changed. You'll need to back up your claims with data to influence the most discerning and skeptical audiences.

⁹ Huff, Darrell, and Irving Geis. *How to Lie with Statistics* by Darrell Huff; Illustrated by Irving Geis. Norton, 1993.

Chapter Three: What Happened?

People respond to stories. Whether these are tales about what’s been happening or reminders of what happened in the past, recalling events is one of the best ways to attract an audience. To influence an audience, you must be well-versed in both current events and history. At times, even inventing possible events and scenarios can be effective.

A Plea for Freedom of Speech in Boston

On December 9, 1860, Frederick Douglass gave his famous speech at Boston’s Music Hall. It had been 22 years since he had escaped slavery in Maryland, and he had already published two books on the abolition of slavery: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, and *My Bondage and My Freedom*.

His books and speeches played a crucial role in raising national awareness of an America where slavery would be abolished. However, he was only able to speak and write because of the freedom of speech upheld in the country—both enshrined in the Constitution and rooted in the nation’s culture. Nevertheless, there were regions of the country that were hostile to free speech, particularly when it supported the abolition of slavery.

In his speech, Frederick Douglass asserted the need for free speech and the dangers of censorship. To highlight the urgency of the matter, he recalled an incident that occurred six days earlier.¹⁰

He notes that on December 3, 1860, he and several other abolitionists gathered at a public hall to discuss the question, “How Can American Slavery Be Abolished?” He refers to this meeting and how a mob interrupted it. He adds that the mayor ordered the meeting to disperse rather than protect the group’s freedom of assembly and speech.

After discussing a recent incident, he referenced history, reminding the audience of the Founding Fathers and their vision for America. He emphasized how they viewed the right to free speech as sacred. He reflected on how the American lawyer and statesman Daniel Webster described free speech as a “homebred right.” Daniel Webster passed away in 1852, eight years before Frederick Douglass delivered this speech. It’s likely that the memory of Daniel Webster and his views were still fresh in the audience’s minds.

Frederick Douglass contrasts history and current events once more near the end of his speech. He recalls the disruption of the meeting on December 3, 1860, and mentions

¹⁰ Douglass, Frederick, and Kurt Lash. “Frederick Douglass’s ‘Plea for Freedom of Speech in Boston.’” *Law & Liberty*, Liberty Fund, 21 Aug. 2019, [lawliberty.org/frederick-douglass-plea-for-freedom-of-speech-in-boston/](https://www.libertyfund.org/articles/frederick-douglass-plea-for-freedom-of-speech-in-boston/)

another group that criticized it and advised against holding it. He reminds the audience that arguments favoring liberty have resonated in Boston for over a quarter of a century. By referencing history, he helps the audience realize that Boston is, as Douglass stated, “a great city” that has embraced the principles of liberty—which can only thrive where there is freedom of speech.

A Challenge to Political Correctness

On May 18, 2018, a debate was held in the Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Canada. Organized by The Munk Debates, the proposition was, “**Be it resolved, what you call political correctness, I call progress...**”¹¹

Overall, the debate wasn’t particularly great. As Stephen Fry pointed out, it often devolved into a discussion about politics rather than political correctness and free speech.

However, Stephen Fry’s segments in the debate are worth watching. He beautifully uses language to convince the audience that political correctness is *not* progress. At the start of the debate, 61% of the audience was against the motion. At the end of the debate, this increased to 70%.

After his introduction, Stephen Fry rebuts Dr. Michael Eric Dyson and Michelle Goldberg, who both argued in favor of the proposition. He starts by recalling events in his life when he was met with political correctness.

He starts by referencing the political correctness in Russia, which he classifies as being based on right-wing morality. He mentions an encounter with a homophobic man while visiting the country (Fry, 62).

By briefly mentioning this event, he asserts that political correctness is an issue for both the left and the right – and that both must be challenged and questioned. He then recalls some of the political correctness that he grew up with in the UK – mentioning that one couldn’t say the word “fuck” on television, as an example.

Later in the debate, he responds to Michelle Goldberg’s reference to the #MeToo movement (Fry, 80). He alludes to the political correctness that emerged in the movement’s aftermath. He notes that people are self-censoring and that they “can’t actually speak to the true nuance, the true depth of sexual romantic feeling between men and women” (Fry, 82).

During this debate, the #MeToo movement and the apprehension about discussing sexual issues between men and women were very real. The audience watching Stephen Fry recount these incidents and conversations likely connected with his message.

¹¹ Fry, Stephen, et al. *Political Correctness: The Munk Debates*. House of Anansi Press, 2018.

Stephen Fry's statements during his portion of the debate made him the best speaker of the quartet. Apart from his wonderfully poetic rhetoric and quoting figures such as Bertrand Russell and G.K. Chesterton, his mention of specific events that showcased political correctness and its effects surely made an impression on the audience.

In Defense of Free Speech

The actor Rowan Atkinson delivered two notable speeches defending free speech, which I will discuss in this section. The first incident involved challenging aspects of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 in England and Wales.¹² Mr. Atkinson's challenge was to the religious portion of the bill, which he felt would stifle speech critical of religion.

So far, we've examined the effectiveness of recalling historical and current events to influence an audience. Rowan Atkinson's challenge to the bill was influential because he discussed potential future incidents.

He asserted that while all religions have the right to be practiced, none should be shielded from criticism.¹³ He presented hypothetical yet challenging scenarios to warn of the bill's consequences.

He asks us to imagine a scenario in which a 19-year-old police constable attends a theater after receiving a complaint that a play is offensive to a particular religion. In this situation, the constable examines the details of the bill.

The bill states that a person is not guilty if he is reckless as to whether his act could stir religious hatred. However, he is "not also reckless as to whether hatred would be stirred up against a group of people defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief."

This is an absurd and confusing statement. In such a situation, the police constable would err on the side of caution and shut down the performance to avoid inciting religious hatred. While the speech continues, this portrayal of a fictional event highlights the bill's absurdity and its threat to free speech.

A few years later, Rowan Atkinson delivered another speech opposing a bill that would endanger free speech. He advocated for the Reform Section 5 campaign, which The Christian Institute initiated. A true believer in free speech, Mr. Atkinson was willing to support a campaign run by a religious organization just a few years after defending the right

¹² UK Public General Acts. "Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006." *Legislation.Gov.Uk*, Statute Law Database (UK), www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1/contents Accessed 16 Feb. 2025.

¹³ Atkinson, Rowan. "Every Joke Has a Victim." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 30 Jan. 2006, www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/jan/30/immigrationpolicy.religion

to criticize all religions. The campaign aimed to remove the word ‘insulting’ from Section 5 of the Public Order Act.¹⁴

In his speech, Mr. Atkinson draws on recent events to illustrate the absurdity and danger of criminalizing speech. He mentions three incidents that led to arrests – in all cases, this was due to supposed “offensive” speech.

He recalls that a man in Oxford was arrested because he called a police horse “gay.” He mentions that a teenager was arrested because he called the Church of Scientology a “cult.” He also mentions that a café owner was arrested because the TV screen in the café displayed verses from The Bible.

Before elaborating further on these incidents and how they reflect an increasingly authoritarian state, he mentions a few fictional events based on his work in the sketch comedy series *Not The Nine O’clock News*.

He discussed the fictional police officer from the show, Constable Savage, and how he would frequently arrest Mr. Winston Kodogo on absurd charges. He likened the arrests of the Oxford man, the teenager, and the café owner to what the character Mr. Winston Kodogo had to go through.

This is a clever and effective choice by Mr. Atkinson. In the earlier speech I referenced, he gives us a fictional scenario to illustrate the dangers of censorship. In this speech, he shows how real-life incidents have become as absurd as a scenario from a sketch comedy series.

After discussing Constable Savage, he returns to the three real-life incidents and informs the audience that the charges were dropped because of the publicity surrounding these cases.

However, he warns that society must be vigilant in defending free speech. He then references possible scenarios, such as someone writing something insulting on Twitter and the police getting involved. While this is a hypothetical scenario, it’s plausible to the audience now that they’ve been told about the country’s creeping censorship. He ends by expressing his support for the campaign.

¹⁴ “Public Order Act 1986.” *Legislation.Gov.Uk*, Statute Law Database (UK), 7 Nov. 1986, www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64

The Culture War

One of the most famous speeches in 20th-century American political history was undoubtedly the “Cultural War” speech by Pat Buchanan.¹⁵ It was delivered on August 17, 1992, at the Republican National Convention, held at the Astrodome in Houston, Texas.

The speech was prophetic, as Pat Buchanan identified many emerging cultural issues that divide American society. More than thirty years later, these divisions have intensified, and the discussion of the culture war has spread from the Astrodome in Houston to living rooms across the nation.

Like the other speeches discussed in this chapter, Buchanan’s speech was strengthened by historical references and commentary on current events. He had just been defeated by incumbent President George H.W. Bush, who secured the Republican Presidential Nomination. He thanked those who voted for him, expressed his support for President Bush, and wished to see him re-elected.

He then challenged the Democrats and their vision for America’s future. Three minutes into his speech, he started to mention history. He expressed disdain for the 1960s and 1970s, labeling these decades as having “discredited liberalism” and “failed liberalism,” respectively.

He declared the 1980s a great decade and praised Ronald Reagan for improving the country after “Jimmy Carter’s days of malaise...”

He reminded the audience of America’s achievements during the Reagan Administration. These included:

1. Weaking Communism – leading to the fall of the Soviet Union
2. The liberation of Grenada from a communist coup thanks to the U.S. Military
3. The Soviet Army was expelled from Afghanistan thanks to the might of the U.S. Military
4. Reagan’s support of the Contras in Nicaragua and how they drove out the communists, ensuring that elections would be held in the country
5. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Europe
6. Winning the Cold War

After listing the achievements and major events of the 1980s, Buchanan proclaimed that President Reagan made Americans feel proud to be Americans once again.

¹⁵ Buchanan, Pat. “Pat Buchanan Cultural War.” C-SPAN, C-SPAN, 17 Aug. 1992 (original speech); 9 June 2015 (electronically published), www.c-span.org/clip/historic-convention-speeches/pat-buchanan-cultural-war/4540423

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Buchanan returned to discussing President Bush and advocating for his re-election. He recalls previous roles that made President Bush suitable for the job, including his positions as the UN Ambassador, Director of the CIA, envoy to China, and Vice President. Later in the speech, he discussed President Bush's military record and asserted that between Bush and Bill Clinton, he was the one who possessed the moral authority to be America's Commander in Chief.

Furthermore, Pat Buchanan recalled recent events to discredit Bill Clinton and emphasized why he would be the worst choice for President. He mentioned that Clinton was in Oxford, England, during the Vietnam War to dodge the military draft.

He pointed out that an Irish Catholic Governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Casey, wanted to speak at a Clinton convention to address the high abortion rate in the country. He reminded the audience that Governor Casey was prohibited from speaking at the convention. In contrast, Pat Buchanan highlighted how a "militant leader of the homosexual rights movement" spoke at the convention and conveyed how supportive Bill Clinton and Al Gore were of lesbian and gay rights. This reminder elicited boos from the audience.

The nearly half-hour speech is a true masterclass in speechwriting and delivery. Pat Buchanan employed various rhetorical techniques, which are discussed in this book. He used data and statistics, referenced history and current events, and used diverse rhetorical styles. At times, he expressed his disapproval of Bill Clinton. At other moments, he spoke in a gentle, almost somber tone to address the challenges faced by working-class Americans and the horrors of the Los Angeles Riots.

However, the part of the speech that remains widely remembered and frequently discussed is when he refers to the culture war, characterizing it as a "religious war."¹⁶ To illustrate and persuade voters of the gravity of the culture war, Buchanan once again recalled both historical and contemporary events.

After using the term "cultural war" for the first and only time in the speech, he referenced the Cold War once more. By mentioning the Cold War era again, he emphasized that the cultural war is just as significant and poses a similar threat to America.

His tone softened as he shared a story about his visit to Groveton, New Hampshire. He recalled meeting workers at a paper mill who were worried about losing their jobs. He told the audience that on Christmas Day, a woman approached him at Manchester Airport in New Hampshire. He shared that she broke down, revealing that she had lost her job and

¹⁶ Carson, Dan. "How the 1992 RNC in Houston Started the 'Culture War' Politics We Know Now." *Chron*, Hearst Newspapers, 25 Dec. 2022, www.chron.com/politics/article/1992-rnc-houston-culture-war-17487677.php

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feared losing custody of her daughter. He mentioned a California town called Hayfork, which was under threat because a federal judge set aside 9 million acres of land to serve as a habitat for the spotted owl—further demonstrating that the care for animals and the environment has overshadowed the concerns of ordinary citizens.

He concluded by discussing one of the most harrowing events in 20th-century America: the Los Angeles Riots, which frightened Americans throughout the country.

He briefly mentioned the Koreatown incident¹⁷ and referred to the Korean-American community as “brave people.” He discussed how a mob burned and looted every building on a block – and that they were planning on looting apartments that were part of a convalescent home for the elderly.

He ended by discussing meeting deployed members of the 18th Cavalry. After recalling this incident, he urged Americans to take back their cities, culture, and country. He ended the speech with “God Bless You and God Bless America” and received applause and cheers from the audience.

These speeches are all great examples of using history and current events to influence an audience. Stating factual incidents, whether they happened last month or last century, can profoundly convince an audience to align with your worldview or support your cause.

¹⁷ Lah, Kyung. “The LA Riots Were a Rude Awakening for Korean-Americans.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 29 Apr. 2017, edition.cnn.com/2017/04/28/us/la-riots-korean-americans/index.html

Chapter Four: Get It In Your Head

What’s the one phrase that a Bitcoin advocate says to encourage more people to buy Bitcoin? The phrase “Bitcoin fixes this” has been ingrained in the minds of newcomers to Bitcoin and those who purchased a whole Bitcoin when it was just \$100. Repetition and elaboration are great ways to influence an audience and ingrain an idea in their heads. They’re also powerful methods for influencing behavior and perception.

Repeat and Elaborate

Consider all the times you’ve heard a phrase or topic discussed so frequently that it feels like an annoying song stuck in your head—one you can’t help but sing in the shower, much to your dismay!

When most countries attempted to curb COVID-19, they introduced a range of suggested measures and, in many instances, imposed them on the population. One phrase that was frequently repeated was “flatten the curve.” The repetition of this phrase, especially “two weeks to flatten the curve”—used throughout the Anglosphere—led many people to significantly change their behavior, hoping that everything would return to normal in a fortnight.

“Flatten the curve” wasn’t the only three-word phrase repeatedly heard throughout the Anglosphere. “Wear a mask” or “Wear your mask” were other phrases ingrained in the population. The idea that one must wear a mask to flatten the curve created a sense of fear among many people, which even led to hysteria and aggression.¹⁸

Elaboration also influences others. Simply telling people to “wear your mask,” “wash your hands,” and “keep your distance” with the hope that together, we’ll “flatten the curve” is not sufficient. The media needed to elaborate on the effects of COVID-19, share stories of those infected by the virus and provide regular updates on the number of cases and deaths officially attributed to it.

While this did not affect everyone, it influenced a segment of the population in nearly every country, instilling fear and prompting behavioral changes to avoid contracting the virus. At the extreme end, this even led to the end of friendships.¹⁹

¹⁸ Tierney, John. “Lockdown Hysteria Did More Harm than Covid-19.” *New York Post*, New York Post, 20 July 2021, nypost.com/2021/07/20/lockdown-hysteria-did-more-harm-than-covid-19/

¹⁹ Breen, Kerry. “1 in 7 People Ended Friendships over COVID-19 Vaccine Stance, Survey Finds.” *TODAY.Com*, TODAY, 16 Sept. 2021, www.today.com/health/1-7-people-have-ended-friendships-over-covid-19-vaccine-t231279

Our discourse, interpersonal relationships, and society drastically changed during the global lockdowns. This is a perfect example of how easily we can be influenced.

One person may have never hesitated to receive a vaccination, but if they felt that a COVID-19 vaccination wasn't necessary, they were often labeled "anti-vax"—as if they automatically disbelieved in the very concept of vaccination!²⁰

Read, Listen, Speak, and You'll Believe

It has long been a tradition in American public schools, in most states, for children to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at least once a day. It is also a tradition to sing the American national anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner, during major sporting events.

This ritual aims to foster a sense of patriotism and belonging to the country among children. For some, it will be effective, while for others, it may feel like an unappealing chore. However, we must not underestimate how these affirmations can influence our behavior.²¹

Grilling a belief through words can either make or break a person. A child who receives regular encouragement is likely to strive for excellence²², whereas a child who is frequently put down and criticized can often have damaged self-esteem.²³

Beliefs can influence children and adults, but they impact children the most, as they are more vulnerable and open to different opinions. In other words, it is easier to indoctrinate a child than to indoctrinate an adult who is more steadfast in his or her beliefs. This can be used for good as well as for evil.

On February 2, 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay presented a memorandum called the "Minute on Education."²⁴ This document stated his intentions to create an education

²⁰ Senger, Michael P. "A Look Back at the Demonization of the Unvaccinated." *A Look Back at the Demonization of the Unvaccinated*, The New Normal, 13 Oct. 2022, www.michaelpsenger.com/p/a-look-back-at-the-demonization-of

²¹ Koosis, Lisa A. (author), and Dr. Brindusa Vanta (medical reviewer). "The Science of Affirmations: The Brain's Response to Positive Thinking." *MentalHealth.Com*, MentalHealth.com, LLC, 30 Sept. 2024, www.mentalhealth.com/tools/science-of-affirmations

²² Robertson, Abby Jo, and Christina Pay. "The Positive Impact of Parental Encouragement." *USU*, Utah State University, extension.usu.edu/relationships/faq/the-positive-impact-of-parental-encouragement. Accessed 24 Feb. 2025.

²³ Bernstein, Jeffrey. "4 Ways Parents Can Damage Children's Self-Esteem." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 4 July 2023, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/liking-the-child-you-love/202307/4-ways-parents-can-damage-childrens-self-esteem

²⁴ Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Minute on Education." 2 Feb. 1835. <https://home.iitk.ac.in/~hcverma/Article/Macaulay-Minutes.pdf>

system that would brainwash the Indian people and make them subservient to the desires of the British Empire.

This English Education Act didn't merely introduce the English language to the Indian population; it aimed to make them second-class Englishmen and women.

The *Minute on Education* was influential enough to help pass the English Education Act of 1935.²⁵ Yet, even 90 years after the Act's repeal, English-language education has continued to shape the minds of young Indians in the way Macaulay envisioned. In other words, thanks to his influence, his "children" continue to be born almost 166 years after his death.²⁶

In other words, Macaulay's bigoted views toward the Indian people, the Hindu religion, and the civilization of the Indian subcontinent influenced one of the most harmful acts that affected generations of Indians – whose aftereffects continue to linger today.

However, just like reading, listening to, and speaking negative thoughts can influence your sense of self-worth, the same holds true for engaging with positive thoughts.

Just as the English language was used to instill a sense of self-hatred and shame in the people of India, today, that same English language is being employed by Indians to assert themselves.

Palki Sharma reports and responds to the West²⁷ in English, Dr. Shashi Tharoor delivered his speech, in English, at the Oxford Union, and Ram Swarup and Sita Ram Goel wrote about India's history, the horrors of invasions, and the beauty of Indic civilization and Hinduism, in English.²⁸

Just as American children are required to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to instill patriotism, language was weaponized to teach generations of Indian children to feel disdainful toward their country and civilization.

²⁵ Murthy, Dr. N.S.R. "The History of English Education in India: A Brief Study." *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching*, Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching, Nov. 2018, www.jrspelt.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Murthy-Education-in-India.pdf

²⁶ Ramanan, Mohan. "Revisiting Macaulay's Children." *Outlook India*, Outlook Publishing India Pvt Ltd., 2 July 2021, www.outlookindia.com/national/opinion-revisiting-macaulays-children-news-386783

²⁷ Sharma, Palki. "Why Is the West Questioning India's Achievements?" *YouTube*, YouTube, 25 Aug. 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hy329D0qkas

²⁸ Saran, Shankar. "Ram Swarup and Sita Ram Goel: Intellectual Kshatriyas Who Wielded the Pen like a Sabre." *The Dharma Dispatch*, The Dharma Dispatch, 24 Apr. 2019, <http://www.dharmadispatch.in/commentary/ram-swarup-and-sita-ram-goel-intellectual-kshatriyas-who-wielded-the-pen-like-a-sabre>

An influential person should become a master of at least one language. However, they shouldn't let language constrain their worldview. English has been employed to create, in Macaulay's words: "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."

The same English language is now being used to challenge the Macaulays of the world and assert the beauty of Indic civilization. Language can be used to indoctrinate someone and make them subservient, but it can also empower them. A master of the English language will understand the Anglo-Saxon worldview but shouldn't solely view the world through that lens.

Mental Gymnastics Wins Medals

At times, one can be so open-minded that one's brain falls out. However, it is also possible to be indoctrinated by repeatedly hearing absurd thoughts masquerading as truths. If an elaboration, no matter how convoluted, is given, it is possible to brainwash an entire group of people into believing absolute nonsense.

The "woke" culture that pervaded much of the West, particularly the Anglosphere, might be laughed at several decades from now – but a lot of its effects in recent times are no laughing matter. The totalitarian power of wokeness has been compared to "medieval madness" by the writer Dominic Frisby.²⁹

Medieval Europe had its witch hunts where labeling one as a "witch" was often enough for them to be punished. The person defending an alleged "witch" was assumed to be a witch – leading to a culture of silence for fear of persecution. Frisby writes about how priests would be the judges and that various groups would face targeted persecution.

Meanwhile, in the present day, the American football player Colin Kaepernick decided to kneel rather than stand during the singing of The Star Spangled Banner during football matches. This was his way of making a statement against police brutality, particularly against black Americans.

Yet, this act of kneeling, which Kaepernick voluntarily performed, became almost forced on others. It wasn't a law, of course, but people were made to feel like outcasts if they didn't kneel, making it a *de facto* law.

Frisby further writes that the Church clergy opposed translating the Bible into vernacular Latin that was widely understood by the masses. Without the translation, the priests could

²⁹ Frisby, Dominic. "Wokeness: The Return of Medieval Madness." *Spiked*, Spiked Ltd., 29 June 2020, www.spiked-online.com/2020/06/29/woke-ness-the-return-of-medieval-madness/

interpret the scriptures in a manner that would suit their or the church's interests—often at the expense of the general populace.

Logic and common sense suggest that there should be women-only spaces where men are not allowed. Similarly, it is understood that countries have borders, and if a foreigner wishes to immigrate, they must apply for residency according to the country's laws. We understand that men cannot get pregnant. We recognize that one can be a 'he' or a 'she' but cannot be a 'they.'

Nevertheless, there has been enough messaging through politics, media, entertainment, and academia that has influenced members of the public to advocate and propagate ridiculous ideas. The list of "woke" ideas is endless – so I'll focus on three for this section:

1. Mass immigration and illegal immigration
2. Demanding punctuality can be culturally insensitive and even bigoted
3. Mathematics is racist and white supremacist

These are all absurdist ideas, yet they have been seriously discussed throughout the Anglosphere in recent years. It goes without saying that using your influence to propagate lies is both immoral and evil. However, one must understand how bad actors succeed in doing so.

This type of indoctrination often combines emotion with a mild dose of logic. It can be argued that some immigration is necessary for economic growth and to fill skills shortages. It's also true that a country like the United States was built by one group of people fighting against another. Additionally, people were trafficked to the United States and enslaved for centuries on its soil.

One could argue that the United States is stolen land. One could also appeal to emotion by discussing how the United States consistently provides opportunities for the poorest people to improve their lives. Numerous examples can be given to show how well the average American lives compared to individuals in poorer nations.

By invoking emotion, individuals may be swayed not to oppose mass immigration, fearing they might appear insensitive to immigrants seeking a better life in a new country. By appealing to emotion and attempting to 'cancel' the term 'illegal immigrant,' one might be convinced to overlook illegal immigration and fail to distinguish between legal and illegal immigration.³⁰

³⁰ Gambino, Lauren. "No Human Being Is Illegal': Linguists Argue against Mislabeled of Immigrants." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 6 Dec. 2015, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/06/illegal-immigrant-label-offensive-wrong-activists-say

People have also been indoctrinated by repeatedly learning about the patterns of other groups and hearing absurd elaborations on how all behaviors should be respected and not interfered with.

For instance, it's true that some cultures value punctuality more than others and that some groups demonstrate higher rates of punctuality. But does this imply that requiring all children and staff to arrive on time at school could be considered racist? As absurd as it may sound, there have been school leaders who worry that insisting on punctuality is discriminatory!³¹

Likewise, there are even beliefs that mathematics is a racist subject that perpetuates white supremacy and oppresses racial minorities in the United States! As ludicrous and comical an idea as this is, a wealth of literature has been produced that attempts to push this worldview.³²

Myths Become True

In the 1960s, American nutritionist Adelle Davis advised, “Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper” to reduce the likelihood of obesity. This led to the belief, which many studies have since substantiated, that breakfast is the day's most important meal.³³

You've probably heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and because of this, you strive never to skip it, no matter how hectic your morning may be. If you happen to skip breakfast, you might feel anxious about how the rest of your day will unfold.

Step into any coffee shop in a major American city on a weekday morning (or any day, really), and you'll find long lines of professionals across various industries eager to grab their “morning coffee” as quickly as possible. Conventional wisdom suggests that without this coffee boost, their productivity will suffer, potentially leading to an economic crisis that could reduce the most powerful nation to a failed state!

Of course, this is an exaggeration. But we give so much importance to the first meal of the day, and it's likely due to the belief that it's the most important. The fact that there are several studies to back up these claims add to our urgency for enjoying a great breakfast.

³¹ Hess, Rick. “It Isn't White Supremacy for Principals to Expect Staff to Be on Time (Opinion).” *Education Week*, Education Week, 6 Dec. 2021, www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-ask-rick-is-it-racist-for-principals-to-expect-staff-to-be-on-time/2021/12

³² Fontanilla, Kali. “Math Lessons Are Racist, as per the Gates Foundation.” *Capital Research Center*, Capital Research Center, 9 Apr. 2024, capitalresearch.org/article/math-lessons-are-racist-as-per-the-gates-foundation/

³³ Spence, Charles. “Breakfast: The Most Important Meal of the Day?” *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, Elsevier B.V., July 2017
www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1878450X17300045#bib68

However, some studies suggest that breakfast isn't as crucial as we believe. Additionally, research indicates that it depends on individual dietary needs – there isn't a strict rule regarding how much breakfast each person should eat.³⁴

If something is repeated and elaborated on sufficiently, it is often perceived as true. One of the most powerful ways to influence someone is by repeating and expanding on an idea – until they accept it as if it were a religious conviction.

³⁴ DeSoto , Lindsey (author), and Hilary Guite (fact-checker). "Is Breakfast Really the Most Important Meal of the Day?" *Medical News Today*, Healthline Media UK Ltd, 30 Apr. 2022, www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/is-breakfast-really-the-most-important-meal-of-the-day

Chapter Five: Think As I Do

Manipulation and shaping narratives are some of the most sinister ways to influence someone. However, if you don't want to be susceptible to being easily influenced, you must understand how this works. It is often employed to create a sense of order – by making one group subservient to another group or even to a single individual.

Why the Hooked Cross Is Often Called a Swastika

Chances are, if I ask you to name the emblem of the Nazi Party, you'll refer to it as a *Swastika*. Even if you're from a Hindu background or follow any other path in the Dharmic fold, you may still inadvertently call it a Swastika or perhaps a Nazi Swastika.

The correct name for the emblem is *Hakenkreuz* in German, which translates to “Hooked Cross” in English.



Swastika (left)
Hakenkreuz/Hooked Cross: Official Flag of Nazi Germany (right)

So why is it that throughout the Western World, we refer to this symbol of hate, this symbol of one of the most hateful ideologies in existence, as a Swastika? This is because we have been manipulated to do so. Mistranslations are so influential that they control how we speak and associate symbols with ideas.

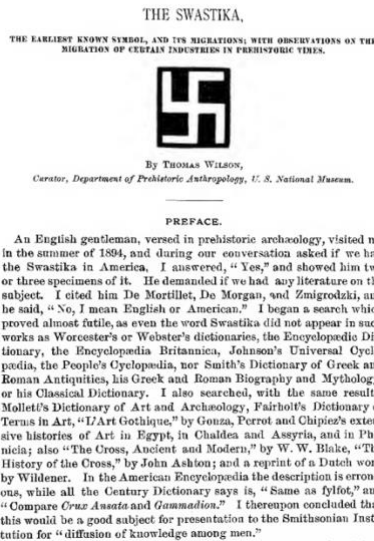
Swastikas have overwhelmingly positive meanings in various religions. In Hinduism, the right-facing Swastika symbolizes prosperity and luck.

A cross is, of course, associated with Christianity and symbolizes the cross that Jesus was crucified on. For Christians, a cross or crucifix is a symbol of Jesus dying for their sins, and

it's certainly not a symbol of hate – though, of course, the Ku Klux Klan would burn crosses to express their racial hatred.³⁵

In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler discussed his life, Nazi ideology, and his vision for Germany and Europe. He mentions that the flag of the Nazi Party will feature a *Hakenkreuz*. In the original German text, he does not mention the word ‘Swastika’ even once. It is clear that he referred to what is now the Nazi symbol as the *Hakenkreuz*.³⁶

The first volume of *Mein Kampf* was published in 1925, and the second volume followed a year later. The first English translation, an abridged version of the book, appeared in 1931 by E.T.S. Dugdale. Dugdale translated *Hakenkreuz* as “hooked cross” throughout the text, correctly avoiding the use of the word “Swastika” as its translation.



Before 1894, there was no known mention of the Swastika found in English dictionaries and encyclopedias.
From *The Swastika* by Thomas Wilson.

For whatever reason, Dugdale's 1931 English translation of *Mein Kampf* did not become the standard or most recognized version. In 1939, an unabridged English translation of *Mein Kampf* was published. James Vincent Murphy, a journalist who briefly served as a Catholic priest, translated this version.

In this translation, Murphy intentionally left a few German words in their original form – opting not to translate them to English. However, he did decide to translate *Hakenkreuz*,

³⁵ Dundon, Rian. "Why Does the Ku Klux Klan Burn Crosses? They Got the Idea from a Movie." *Timeline*, Timeline, 16 Mar. 2017, medium.com/timeline/why-does-the-ku-klux-klan-burn-crosses-they-got-the-idea-from-a-movie-75a70f7ab135

³⁶ Trivedi, Nikunj. "Wrongfully Accused: The Swastika Is Not Hitler's Hakenkreuz." *Coalition of Hindus of North America*, CoHNA Inc., 4 Sept. 2024, cohna.org/swastika-is-not-hakenkreuz/

and rather than translate it to “hooked cross,” as Dugdale had done, he translated it to “Swastika.”

Referring to the Nazi Hooked Cross as a Swastika has since become the norm throughout the West, almost 90 years after Murphy’s translation of *Mein Kampf* was published.

One may presume that Hitler knew about the word “Swastika” since he knew about another Sanskrit word, “Aryan,” – which he mentioned in *Mein Kampf*. However, there is no evidence of this – and it should be noted that the Hooked Cross had existed in Christian culture well before the establishment of the Nazi Party.

The Hooked Cross can be found in ancient Christian artwork, gravestones, churches, and more. This symbol was familiar to Western European Christians for generations³⁷, making it one they could resonate with when the flag of Nazi Germany was designed.

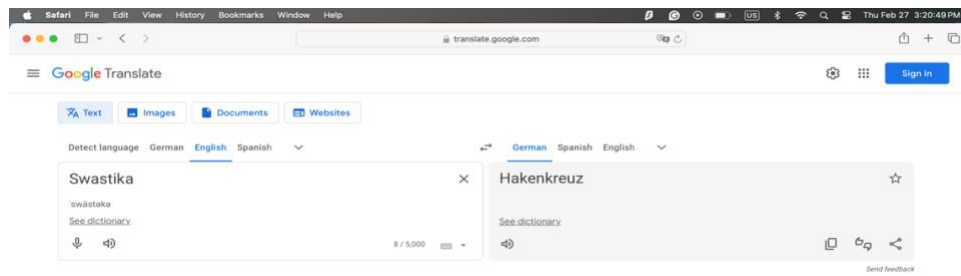
The mistranslation of *Hakenkreuz* to *Swastika*, has played a part in whitewashing the uncomfortable history of how Christian churches supported the Nazi Party. For Hitler to inspire the German people, he was able to invigorate a sense of Jew-hatred that had long been a part of Christian societies.

Nevertheless, we continue to call the Nazi Hooked Cross a Swastika, and this has been done deliberately to water down the influence that Christian Socialism has had on National Socialism. It’s not just in official translations where we see the word ‘Swastika’ where ‘Hooked Cross’ belongs. It’s the default to refer to the Nazi Hooked Cross as a Swastika.

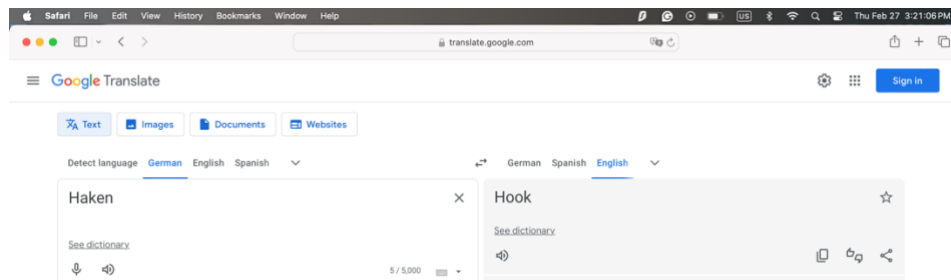
³⁷ Indology, True. “Hitler Never Used Swastika: Evangelical Defamation of Hindu Symbol .” *Swarajya*, Kovai Media Private Limited, 1 Aug. 2018, [swarajyamag.com/ideas/swastika-is-hindu-and-the-hooked-cross-is-nazi-the-rest-is-conspiracy](https://www.swarajyamag.com/ideas/swastika-is-hindu-and-the-hooked-cross-is-nazi-the-rest-is-conspiracy)

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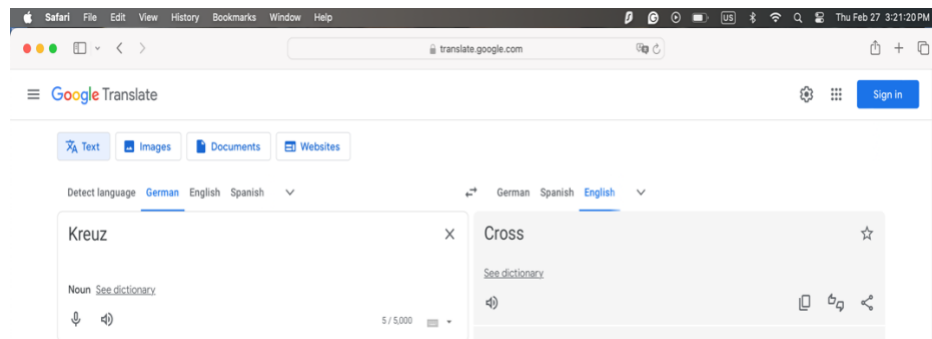
Even if you use a machine translation tool such as Google Translate, you can expect *Hakenkreuz* to be translated to “Nazi Swastika.”



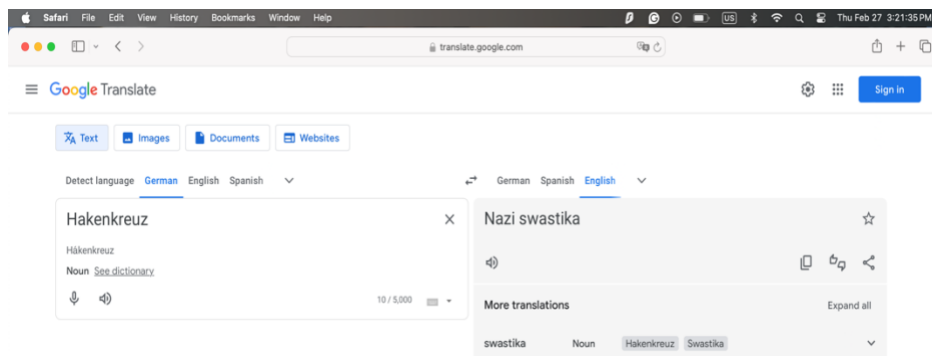
“Swastika” is machine-translated to “Hakenkreuz”



“Haken,” by itself, machine-translates to “Hook”



“Kreuz,” by itself, machine-translates to “Cross”



“Hakenkreuz” machine-translates to “Nazi Swastika”

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Searching for “Hakenkreuz” on Wikipedia directs to “Swastika”

One may wonder whether conflating the Swastika with the Nazi Hooked Cross has had serious consequences or if it is merely a nuisance for any Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain who is tired of hearing a symbol of hate referred to as a “Swastika.”

You might wonder whether this is a big deal or if it’s worth exploring further or discussing constantly. The influence of the Evangelical movement to whitewash the Christian support for the Nazis and the deliberate mistranslation of *Hakenkreuz* to Swastika have led to the symbol being universally demonized in the West. Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains have often had to explain the difference between the Swastika and the Nazi Hooked Cross – and the symbolism that the Swastika holds for them.

There are movements in the West to ban public displays of the Nazi Hooked Cross. Often, the symbol is referred to as a Swastika, and there are many cases where proposed legislation doesn’t distinguish between the Nazi Hooked Cross and a Swastika.³⁸

Another group of people who used the Swastika as a sacred symbol were Native Americans. However, in 1940, many Native American leaders from various tribes decided to formally disassociate themselves from the symbol, feeling that it had been co-opted as a symbol of hate and that they couldn’t “reclaim it.”

³⁸ OpIndia Staff. “Swastika and Hakenkreuz Are Different’: Indian Origin Canadian MP Calls Parliament to Distinguish between the Two.” *OpIndia*, Aadhyaasi Media And Content Services Private Limited, 1 Mar. 2022, www.opindia.com/2022/03/indian-origin-mp-chandra-arya-canadian-parliament-distinguish-between-hindu-swastika-nazi-hakenkreuz/



Native American leaders signed a petition to support the ban of the Swastika in their artworks.

Source: [Trove.NLA.AU.Gov](https://trove.nla.gov); *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW); Published May 2, 1940

The constant manipulation of referring to the Nazi Hooked Cross as a Swastika, and having it viewed as a “universal” symbol of hate, caused four tribes of Native Americans to abandon its use altogether. The symbol was sacred to them and an integral part of their culture, yet they relinquished it.

Followers of Dharmic religions, particularly in the West, are engaged in a struggle to ensure clear distinctions are made between the Nazi symbol of hate and the Swastika. This effort aims to prevent them and future generations from having to relinquish a sacred part of their culture, religion, civilization, and identity. To this end, they are utilizing their influence to promote a deeper understanding of what the Swastika truly represents and the authentic history of the Nazi Hooked Cross.

Forced Universalism

The previous example of how the Nazi Hooked Cross has been rebranded as the Swastika and that the default position in the West is that the “Swastika” is a symbol of hate is an example of forced universalism. This is one of the most powerful methods of influencing how we view the world.

Cultures wielding significant *hard power* often possess considerable soft power as *well*. Hard power encompasses economic, political, and military might, whereas soft power involves cultural influence.

Undoubtedly, the United States and the West, particularly the Anglosphere, still wield a soft power influencing much of the world. This is why people watch Hollywood films even if they aren't fluent in English, why The Beatles were popular worldwide, and why the American election is scrutinized worldwide.

But aside from spending A Hard Day's Night watching Trump and Clinton shout at each other and then deciding to wind down with a bucket of KFC chicken strips and a can of Coca-Cola while watching the latest Marvel movie, what are the implications of soft power? Soft power represents a form of cultural imperialism that can influence how others perceive themselves.

For example, Samyak Dixit, in his newsletter *Gazing at Gandhara*, has compiled lists of what the West has read about India.³⁹⁴⁰

In this series, he shares articles about India from prominent Western publications. The articles typically present a negative perspective of India, its democracy, Hinduism, and Hindu Nationalism. As he introduces the first series and provides context on the types of articles he will share, he states something profound:

“WHAT the media chooses to report on is an editorial act, and a political statement.”
(Dixit)

If there's one thought that I want to leave you with before we get to the actual articles, it is this - India is a massive country, with a scale of human life that is almost incomprehensible to most people who live in other countries. In any single day across this country, you will find incredibly happy events taking place, and incredibly sad events taking place, with a large number of both taking place overall, just due to the sheer numbers involved. So in this context, the editorial power of the media is often not what it says about a topic, but it is often more about the topics they choose to speak about in the first place. It is the power to drive conversation, and making people value the importance of one event over another. **WHAT the media chooses to report on is an editorial act, and a political statement.** And that is something we should keep in mind as we get to these next section of this article.

From #1: What the West Read about India (Sept-Oct 2022) – *Gazing at Gandhara* by Samyak Dixit

³⁹ Dixit, Samyak. “#1: What the West Read about India (Sept-Oct 2022).” *Gazing at Gandhara*, Gazing at Gandhara, 25 Oct. 2022, samyakdixit.substack.com/p/what-the-west-read-about-india-sept

⁴⁰ Dixit, Samyak. “#2: What the West Read about India (Oct-Nov 2022).” *Gazing at Gandhara*, Gazing at Gandhara, 8 Jan. 2023, samyakdixit.substack.com/p/2-what-the-west-read-about-india

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If you browse the articles that Dixit shares, you will notice a common theme among many of them – similar to what you would find in mainstream Western publications about India. Some notable words, phrases, and themes you may encounter include:

1. Right-wing Hindu
2. Far-right Hindu nationalism
3. Creeping Hindutva
4. Democracy in danger
5. Secularism in danger
6. Bigotry toward religious minorities
7. Misogyny and Patriarchy

These examples illustrate how language shapes a Western narrative about daily life in India and the beliefs of the Indian diaspora, particularly in the West. Language is often weaponized to depict the country negatively, frequently exaggerating these aspects and even fabricating incidents.

Often, articles present a one-sided view of India and intentionally omit details to craft a narrative. This is a continuation of what Macaulay envisioned, influencing how others think of Indians—and even how Indians think of themselves!

A person of Indian origin growing up in the West may encounter such articles and develop a negative perception of their homeland, civilizational heritage, and Hinduism.

Similarly, an Indian growing up in India, who has been deracinated and might be viewed as one of “Macaulay’s children,” can regard the Western narrative of India as gospel – even while living in India! They may place more trust in what a Westerner, including one of Indian heritage residing in the West, says and writes about India than in their own experiences and observations!

When a powerful culture, such as the West, is dominant, language is used to shape narratives about other cultures and countries. This can have significant implications for foreign policy and relations between different cultural groups, including those in the diaspora. If India, particularly Hindus, is viewed negatively, it can influence how Westerners interact with them.

It was precisely this negative view of India that encouraged and empowered Thomas Macaulay and others like him. This negative perception of India and Hinduism also serves as an obstacle for Hindus and other Dharmic followers when it comes to asserting the difference between the Swastika and the Hooked Cross.

However, emerging and re-emerging civilizations, cultures, and countries can also use language to shape narratives and respond to dominant powers when necessary. Dixit wrote

another article⁴¹ discussing how Indians will use the internet to assert their narrative, as India is set to have the largest English-speaking population in the world. This is something already happening and is expected to continue as more Indians become fluent in English and have internet access.

In his essay, *The West and the Rest*, Samuel Huntington discusses how, as non-Western nations modernize and gain power, they assert their identities, highlight their differences from the West, and challenge Western dominance.⁴²

An example he mentions in the essay is when former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad addressed the heads of European governments in 1996 and asserted:

“European values are European values; Asian values are universal values.”

The belief that non-western peoples should adopt western values is, if taken seriously, immoral in its implications. The almost universal reach of European power in the late 19th century and the global dominance of the US in the latter half of the 20th century spread many aspects of western civilisation across the world. But European globalism is no more, and US hegemony is receding, if only because it is no longer needed against a Soviet threat. Culture follows power. If non-western societies are once again shaped by western culture, it will happen only as a result of the expansion of western power. Imperialism is the necessary consequence of universalism, yet few proponents of universalism support the militarisation that would be necessary to achieve their goal. Furthermore, as a maturing civilisation, the west no longer has the economic or demographic dynamism required to impose its will on others. Any effort to do so also runs contrary to western values of self-determination and democracy.

As Asian and Muslim civilisations begin to assert the universal relevance of their cultures, westerners will see the connection between universalism and imperialism and appreciate the virtues of a pluralistic world. This reversal is already happening. In March 1996 Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia told the assembled heads of European governments: "European values are European values; Asian values are universal values."

Excerpt from *The West and the Rest* by Samuel Huntington

⁴¹ Dixit, Samyak. "Indians Will One Day Be the Largest English-Speaking Population on the Internet. What Will We Have to Say to the World?" *Gazing at Gandhara*, Gazing at Gandhara, 23 Sept. 2022, samyakdixit.substack.com/p/indians-will-one-day-be-the-largest

⁴² Huntington, Samuel. "The West and the Rest." *Prospect Magazine - Britain's Leading Monthly Current Affairs Magazine*, Prospect Publishing Limited, Feb. 1997, www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/essays/55236/the-west-and-the-rest

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Dominant powers use language to shape narratives. Emerging powers also use language to offer counter-narratives. Both powers use language to influence how to look at the world, history, culture, politics, civilizations, religions, and countries.

Language is a powerful tool for manipulating others and shaping our perception of the world. It has influenced people to believe horrific things and to demonize entire cultures along with their religions. Conversely, it can also help individuals to assert themselves and stand up against false narratives and imperialism.

Chapter Six: Tailor-Made

You must tailor your language to suit your intended audience when seeking to influence others. At times, there is a need for the inspiring rhetoric of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which called for integration, and at other times for the assertive rhetoric of Malcolm X, which advocated for self-reliance and challenged the dominant group. A key factor both orators used is that their language was easy to understand.

The Language of Politics

In his 1946 essay “*Politics and the English Language*”⁴³, George Orwell lamented the poor use of the English language in popular writing at the time.

1. I am not, indeed, sure whether it is not true to say that the Milton who once seemed not unlike a seventeenth-century Shelley had not become, out of an experience ever more bitter in each year, more alien [*sic*] to the founder of that Jesuit sect which nothing could induce him to tolerate.

Professor Harold Laski (Essay in Freedom of Expression)

2. Above all, we cannot play ducks and drakes with a native battery of idioms which prescribes egregious collocations of vocables as the Basic *put up with* for *tolerate*, or *put at a loss* for *bewilder*.

Professor Lancelot Hogben (Interglossia)

3. On the one side we have the free personality: by definition it is not neurotic, for it has neither conflict nor dream. Its desires, such as they are, are transparent, for they are just what institutional approval keeps in the forefront of consciousness; another institutional pattern would alter their number and intensity; there is little in them that is natural, irreducible, or culturally dangerous. But *on the other side*, the social bond itself is nothing but the mutual reflection of these self-secure integrities. Recall the definition of love. Is not this the very picture of a small academic? Where is there a place in this hall of mirrors for either personality or fraternity?

Essay on psychology in Politics (New York)

4. All the ‘best people’ from the gentlemen’s clubs, and all the frantic fascist captains, united in common hatred of Socialism and bestial horror at the rising tide of the mass revolutionary movement, have turned to acts of provocation, to foul incendiaryism, to medieval legends of poisoned wells, to legalize their own destruction of proletarian organizations, and rouse the agitated petty-bourgeoisie to chauvinistic fervor on behalf of the fight against the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

Communist pamphlet

5. If a new spirit is to be infused into this old country, there is one thorny and contentious reform which must be tackled, and that is the humanization and galvanization of the B.B.C. Timidity here will bespeak canker and atrophy of the soul. The heart of Britain may be sound and of strong beat, for instance, but the British lion’s roar at present is like that of Bottom in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – as gentle as any sucking dove. A virile new Britain cannot continue indefinitely to be traduced in the eyes or rather ears, of the world by the effete languors of Langham Place, brazenly masquerading as ‘standard English’. When the Voice of Britain is heard at nine o’clock, better far and infinitely less ludicrous to hear itches honestly dropped than the present priggish, inflated, inhibited, school-ma’amish arch braying of blameless bashful mewling maidens!

Letter in Tribune

Examples of poor writing that Orwell shares in the essay

Orwell discussed how outdated metaphors (e.g., “Achilles heel,” “hotbed”), verbal false limbs (e.g., “make contact with,” “give rise to”), pretentious diction (e.g., “utilize,” “inexorable”), and meaningless words (e.g., “progressive,” “equality”) were used in various contexts to make political language vague and unintelligible to the average person.

Orwell advocated for clear language that wouldn’t hide the writer’s aims. For example, imagine if you read a political manifesto that read:

“We aim to give rise to a progressive future where equality will become an inexorable right, and we shall move beyond the hotbed of bigotry, which is the current Achilles heel of our democracy!”

⁴³ Orwell, George. “Politics and the English Language.” *The Orwell Foundation*, The Orwell Foundation, Apr. 1946 (original publication), www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/

You'd be so exhausted reading such an absurd statement that you'd think about trying anarchy!

What does a “progressive” future entail? What policies and beliefs are considered “progressive.” What about “equality?” Does this mean equal under the law, equal opportunities, equal outcomes, equal salaries, equal taxation, etc.? Such verbiage is what Orwell warns against in his essay.

Instead, he recommended using short words when long ones are unnecessary. To communicate effectively with a broad audience, there's no need to flaunt one's vocabulary. Similarly, your writing should be concise. There are moments to elaborate and moments to be direct.

He also recommended avoiding jargon, scientific terms, or foreign phrases when plain English will do. While English, like many other languages, has adopted words from others, it is preferable to use terms that the average person in your target audience understands.

The most influential texts and speeches appeal to the masses because they're understandable and clear. This is why Orwell's writing lives on to this day, and why when we feel the world is becoming more totalitarian, we always seem to reference *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In Plain English

The American economist Dr. Thomas Sowell has also advocated for using plain English to reach the masses. In his numerous writings, he effectively breaks down complex subjects related to economics, politics, policies, history, immigration, race, disparities, and medical conditions in a simple manner.

A layman who finds it difficult to grasp how the economy works can read any of his books to gain a clearer understanding – without being overwhelmed by technical jargon that only an economist would know.

In his essay *Some Thoughts About Writing*⁴⁴, he writes about how academic writers “write as if plain English is beneath their dignity, and some seem to regard logic as an unconstitutional infringement of their freedom of speech.” (Sowell, 6)

He recounted his brief and regretful experience as an editor. He realized that many academic writers wrote as if readers were obliged to decipher the text rather than writing in plain, easily understood English.

⁴⁴ Sowell, Thomas. “Some Thoughts About Writing.” *Hoover Essays No. 24*, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, 2001. https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/he_24.pdf

He stated that using “jaw-breaking” words were often used to mask “sloppy thinking.” This might have worked in academic circles but won’t work if you wish to influence an audience. The audience is smarter than many academics would like to think. If you use excessive jargon and poetic language, they’ll realize that even you aren’t clear in your thoughts.

However, while Sowell emphasizes the importance of plain English, he doesn’t forgo style. He explains that copyeditors are often regimented in their thinking. In an effort to conform to a particular style, they make the text harder to understand and less enjoyable.

But these are just two kinds of absurdities from the rich spectrum of the absurdities of copy-editors. Where Shakespeare wrote, “To be or not to be, that is the question,” a copy-editor would substitute: “The issue is one of existence versus non-existence.” Where Lincoln said, “Fourscore and seven years ago,” a copy-editor would change that to: “It has been 87 years since . . .” Where the Bible said, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” a copy-editor would run a blue pencil through the first three words as redundant.

An example of what copy-editors would do! (Sowell, 9)

Style shouldn’t be a substitute for substance. But substance can be understood if presented stylishly. However, no matter how much style or substance a text has, it won’t have any influence unless it has clarity.

Whether you want to influence others through writing, speeches, or both, you must find a way to express your ideas simply. Aim to reach the average person before you approach an expert. Address the masses before trying to influence the “elites.”

Conclusion

Language influences us in many ways, shaping our thinking – sometimes to our advantage and other times to our detriment. I hope this book has provided you with a basic understanding of the various methods employed to create influence.

Whether you're a professional seeking more opportunities in your industry, an entrepreneur aiming to disrupt your field, or simply someone wanting to be more aware of how others are trying to influence you, be sure to apply the lessons in this book to assist you.

Thanks for reading!

I'd appreciate it if you took a few minutes to [leave a review of the book](#).

About The Author



Raghav Suri is a content strategist with a global perspective. He brings years of experience in writing, publishing, and multimedia production.

His career has taken him across India, the United States, and Serbia, where he has worked in various roles, including content writing, copywriting, press release writing, ghostwriting, publishing, translation, and video and audio production.

Beyond content creation, Raghav offers consultation to professionals and organizations aiming to strengthen their brand presence through high-quality content.

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