

The Liberal Double-Talk & its Lexical and Legal Consequences

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Language is a potent weapon for legitimizing any political system. In many instances the language in the liberal West is reminiscent of the communist language of the old Soviet Union, although liberal media and politicians use words and phrases that are less abrasive and less value loaded than words used by the old communist officials and their state-run media. In Western academe, media, and public places, a level of communication has been reached which avoids confrontational discourse and which resorts to words devoid of substantive meaning. Generally speaking, the liberal system shuns negative hyperbolas and skirts around heavy-headed qualifiers that the state-run media of the Soviet Union once used in fostering its brand of conformity and its version of political correctness. By contrast, the media in the liberal system, very much in line with its ideology of historical optimism and progress, are enamored with the overkill of morally uplifting adjectives and adverbs, often displaying words and expressions such as “free speech,” “human rights,” “tolerance,” and “diversity.” There is a widespread assumption among modern citizens of the West that the concepts behind these flowery words must be taken as something self-evident.

There appears to be a contradiction. If free speech is something “self-evident” in liberal democracies, then the word “self-evidence” does not need to be repeated all the time; it can be uttered only once, or twice at the most. The very adjective “self-evident,” so frequent in the parlance of liberal politicians may in fact hide some uncertainties and even some self-doubt on the part of those who employ it. With constant hammering of these words and expressions, particularly words such as “human rights,” and “tolerance”, the liberal system may be hiding something; hiding, probably, the absence of genuine free speech. To illustrate this point more clearly it may be advisable for an average citizen living in the liberal system to look at the examples of the communist rhetoric which was once saturated with similar freedom-loving terms while, in reality, there was little of freedom and even less free-speech.

Verbal Mendacity

The postmodern liberal discourse has its own arsenal of words that one can dub with the adjective “Orwellian”, or better yet “double-talk”, or simply call it verbal mendacity. The French use the word “wooden language” (*la langue de bois*) and the German “cement” or “concrete” language (*Betonsprache*) for depicting an arcane bureaucratic and academic lingo that never reflects political reality and whose main purpose is to lead masses to flawed conceptualisation of political reality. Modern authors, however, tend to avoid the pejorative term “liberal double-talk,” preferring instead the arcane label of “the non-cognitive language which is used for manipulative or predictive analyses.” (1) Despite its softer and non abrasive version, liberal double-talk, very similar to the communist “wooden language,” has a very poor conceptual universe. Similar to the communist vernacular, it is marked by pathos and attempts to avoid the concrete. On the one hand, it tends to be aggressive and judgemental towards its critics yet, on the other, it is full of eulogies, especially regarding its multiracial experiments. It resorts to metaphors which are seldom based on real historical analogies and are often taken out of historical context, notably when depicting its opponents with generic “shut-up” words such as

“racists”, “anti-Semites”, or “fascists”.

The choice of grammatical embellishers is consistent with the all-prevailing, liberal free market which, as a rule, must employ superlative adjectives for the free commerce of its goods and services. Ironically, there was some advantage of living under the communist linguistic umbrella. Behind the communist semiotics in Eastern Europe, there always loomed popular doubt which greatly helped ordinary citizens to decipher the political lie, and distinguish between friend and foe. The communist meta-language could best be described as a reflection of a make-belief system in which citizens never really believed and of which everybody, including communist party dignitaries, made fun of in private. Eventually, verbal mendacity spelled the death of communism both in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

By contrast, in the liberal system, politicians and scholars, let alone the masses, still believe in every written word of the democratic discourse. (2) There seem to be far less heretics, or for that matter dissidents who dare critically examine the syntax and semantics of the liberal double-talk. Official communication in the West perfectly matches the rule of law and can, therefore, rarely trigger a violent or a negative response among citizens. Surely, the liberal system allows mass protests and public demonstrations; it allows its critics to openly voice their disapproval of some flawed foreign policy decision. Different political and infra-political groups, hostile to the liberal system, often attempt to publicly drum-up public support on behalf or against some issue – be it against American military involvement in the Middle East, or against the fraudulent behavior of a local political representative. But, as an unwritten rule, seldom can one see rallies or mass demonstrations in Australia, America, or in Europe that would challenge the substance of parliamentary democracy and liberalism, let alone discard the ceremonial language of the liberal ruling class. Staging open protests with banners “Down with liberal democracy!”, or “Parliamentary democracy sucks”!, would hardly be tolerated by the system. These verbal icons represent a “no entry zone” in liberalism.

The shining examples of the double-talk in liberalism are expressions such as “political correctness”, “hate speech”, “diversity”, “market democracy”, “ethnic sensitivity training” among many, many others. It is often forgotten, though, that the coinage of these expressions is relatively recent and that their etymology remains of dubious origin. These expressions appeared in the modern liberal dictionary in the late 70s and early 80s and their architects are widely ignored. Seldom has a question been raised as to who had coined those words and given them their actual meaning. What strikes the eyes is the abstract nature of these expressions. The expression “political correctness” first appeared in the American language and had no explicit political meaning; it was, rather, a fun-related, derogatory expression designed for somebody who was not trendy, such as a person smoking cigarettes or having views considered not to be “in” or “cool.” Gradually, and particularly after the fall of communism, the conceptualization of political correctness, acquired a very serious and disciplinary meaning.

Examples of political eulogy and political vilification in liberalism are often couched in sentimentalist vs. animalistic words and syllabi, respectively. When the much vaunted free press in liberalism attempts to glorify some event or some personality that fits into the canons of political rectitude, it will generally use a neutral language with sparse superlatives, with the prime intention not to subvert its readers, such as: “The democratic circles in Ukraine, who have been subject to governmental harassment, are propping up their rank and file to enable them electoral success.” Such laudatory statements must be well-hidden behind neutral words. By

contrast when attempting to silence critics of the system who challenge the foundation of liberal democracy, the ruling elites and their frequently bankrolled journalists will use more direct words – something in the line of old Soviet stylistics, e.g.: “With their ultranationalist agenda and hate-mongering these rowdy individuals on the street of Sydney or Quebec showed once again their parentage in the monstrosity of the Nazi legacy.” Clearly, the goal is to disqualify the opponent by using an all-pervasive and hyperreal word “Nazism.” “A prominent American conservative author Paul Gottfried writes: “In fact, the European Left, like Canadian and Australian Left, pushes even further the trends adapted from American sources: It insists on criminalizing politically correct speech as an incitement to “fascists excess.” (3)

The first conclusion one can draw is that liberalism can better fool the masses than communism. Due to torrents of meaningless idioms, such as “human rights” and “democracy” on the one hand, and “Nazism” and “fascism” on the other, the thought control and intellectual repression in liberalism functions far better. Therefore, in the liberal “soft” system, a motive for a would-be heretic to overthrow the system is virtually excluded. The liberal system is posited on historical finitude simply because there is no longer the communist competitor who could come up with its own real or surreal “freedom narrative.” Thus, liberalism gives an impression of being the best system – simply because there are no other competing political narratives on the horizon.

What are the political implications of the liberal double-talk? It must be pointed out that liberal language is the reflection of the overall socio-demographic situation in the West. Over the last twenty years all Western states, including Australia, have undergone profound social and demographic changes; they have become “multicultural” systems. (multicultural being just a euphemism for a “multiracial” state). As a result of growing racial diversity the liberal elites are aware that in order to uphold social consensus and prevent the system from possible balkanization and civil war, new words and new syntax have to be invented. It was to be expected that these new words would soon find their way into modern legislations. More and more countries in the West are adopting laws that criminalize free speech and that make political communication difficult. In fact, liberalism, similar to its communist antecedents, it is an extremely fragile system. It excludes strong political beliefs by calling its critics “radicals,” which, as a result, inevitably leads to political conformity and intellectual duplicity. Modern public discourse in the West is teeming with abstract and unclear Soviet-style expressions such as “ethnic sensitivity training”, “affirmative action”, “antifascism”, “diversity”, and “holocaust studies”. In order to disqualify its critics the liberal system is resorting more and more to negative expression such as “anti-Semites”, or “neo-Nazi”, etc. This is best observed in Western higher education and the media which, over the last thirty years, have transformed themselves into places of high commissariats of political correctness, having on their board diverse “committees on preventing racial perjuries”, “ethnic diversity training programs”, and in which foreign racial awareness courses have become mandatory for the faculty staff and employees. No longer are professors required to demonstrate extra skills in their subject matters; instead, they must parade with sentimental and self-deprecatory statements which, as a rule, must denigrate the European cultural heritage.

By constantly resorting to the generic word “Nazism” and by using the prefix “anti”, the system actually shows its negative legitimacy. One can conclude that even if all anti-Semites and all fascists were to disappear, most likely the system would invent them by creating and recreating these words. These words have become symbols of absolute evil.

The third point about the liberal discourse that needs to be stressed is its constant recourse to the imagery of hyperreality. By using the referent of “diversity”, diverse liberal groups and infra-political tribes prove in fact their sameness, making dispassionate observers easily bored and tired. Nowhere is this sign of verbal hyperreality more visible than in the constant verbal and visual featuring of Jewish Holocaust symbolism which, ironically, is creating the same saturation process among the audience as was once the case with communist victimhood. The rhetoric and imagery of Holocaust no longer function “as a site of annihilation but a medium of dissuasion.”(4).

The Legal Trap

Other than as a simple part of daily jargon the expression “hate speech” does not exist in any European or American legislation. Once again the distinction needs to be made between the legal field and lexical field, as different penal codes of different Western countries are framed in a far more sophisticated language. For instance, criminal codes in continental Europe have all introduced laws that punish individuals uttering critical remarks against the founding myths of the liberal system. The best example is Germany, a country which often brags itself to be the most eloquent and most democratic Constitution on Earth. This is at least what the German ruling elites say about their judiciary, and which does not depart much from what Stalin himself said about the Soviet Constitution of 1936. The Constitution of Germany is truly superb, yet in order to get the whole idea of freedom of speech in Germany one needs to examine the country’s Criminal Code and its numerous agencies that are in charge of its implementation. Thus, Article 5 of the German Constitution (The Basic Law) guarantees “freedom of speech.” However, Germany’s Criminal Code, Section 130, and Subsection 3, appear to be in stark contradiction to the German Basic Law. Under Section 130, of the German criminal code a German citizen, but also a non-German citizen, may be convicted, if found guilty, of breaching the law of “agitation of the people” (sedition laws). It is a similar case with Austria. It must be emphasized that there is no mention in the Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Germany of the Holocaust or the Nazi extermination of the Jews. But based on the context of the Criminal Code this Section can arbitrarily be applied when sentencing somebody who belittles or denies National-Socialist crimes or voices critical views of the modern historiography. Moreover a critical examination of the role of the Allies during World War may also bring some ardent historian into legal troubles.

The German language is a highly inflected language as opposed to French and English which are contextual languages and do not allow deliberate tinkering with prefixes or suffixes, or the creation of arbitrary compound words. By contrast, one can always create new words in the German language, a language often awash with a mass of neologisms. Thus, the title of the Article 130 of the German Criminal Code *Volksverhetzung* is a bizarre neologism and very difficult compound word which is hard to translate into English, and which on top, can be conceptualized in many opposing ways. (Popular taunting, baiting, bullying of the people, public incitement etc..). Its Subsection 3, though is stern and quite explicit and reads in English as follows:

“Whoever publicly or in a meeting approves of, denies or renders harmless an act committed under the rule of National Socialism... shall be punished with imprisonment for not more than five years or a fine.”

If by contrast the plight of German civilians after World War II is openly discussed by a German

academic or simply by some free spirit, he may run the risk of being accused of trivializing the official assumption of sole German guilt during World War II. Depending on a local legislation of some federal state in Germany an academic, although not belittling National Socialist crimes may, by inversion, fall under suspicion of “downplaying” or “trivializing” Nazi crimes – and may be fined or, worse, land in prison. Any speech or article, for instance, that may be related to events surrounding World War may have a negative anticipatory value in the eyes of the liberal inquisitors, that is to say in the eyes of the all prevailing Agency for the protection of the German Constitution (*Verfassungschutz*). Someone’s words, as in the old Soviet system, can be easily misconstrued and interpreted as an indirect belittlement of crimes committed by National-Socialists.

Germany is a half-sovereign country still legally at war with the USA, and whose Constitution was written under the auspices of the Allies. Yet unlike other countries in the European Union, Germany has something unprecedented. Both on the state and federal levels it has that special government agency in charge of the surveillance of the Constitution. i.e., and whose sole purpose is to keep track of journalists, academics and right-wing politicians and observe the purity of their parlance and prose. The famed “Office for the Protection of the Constitution” (“*Verfassungschutz*”), as the German legal scholar Josef Schüsselburner writes, “is basically an internal secret service with seventeen branch agencies (one on the level of the federation and sixteen others for each constituent federal state). In the last analysis, this boils down to saying that only the internal secret service is competent to declare a person an internal enemy of the state.” (5)

In terms of free speech, contemporary France is not much better. In 1990 a law was passed on the initiative of the socialist deputy Laurent Fabius and the communist deputy Jean-Claude Gayssot. That law made it a criminal offence, punishable by a fine of up to 40,000 euros, or one year in prison, or both, to contest the truth of any of the “crimes against humanity” with which the German National Socialist leaders were charged by the London Agreement of 1945, and which was drafted for the Nuremberg Trials. (6) Similar to the German Criminal Code Section 130, there is no reference to the Holocaust or Jews in this portion of the French legislation. But at least the wording of the French so-called Fabius-Gayssot law is more explicit than the fluid German word “*Volksverhetzung*.” It clearly states that any Neo-Nazi activity having as a result the belittling of Nazi crimes is a criminal offence. With France and German, being the main pillars of the European Union these laws have already given extraordinary power to local judges of EU member countries when pronouncing verdicts against anti-liberal heretics.

For fear of being called confrontational or racist, or an anti-Semite, a European politician or academic is more and more forced to exercise self-censorship. The role of intellectual elites in Europe has never been a shining one. However, with the passage of these “hate laws” into the European legislations, the cultural and academic ambiance in Europe has become sterile. Aside from a few individuals, European academics and journalists, let alone politicians, must be the masters of self-censorship and self-delusion, as well as great impresarios of their own postmodern mimicry. As seen in the case of the former communist apparatchiks in Eastern Europe, they are likely to discard their ideas as soon as these cease to be trendy, or when another political double-talk becomes fashionable.

The modern politically-correct language, or liberal double-talk, is often used for separating the ignorant grass-roots masses from the upper level classes; it is the superb path to cultural and

social ascension. The censorial intellectual climate in the Western media, so similar to the old Soviet propaganda, bears witness that liberal elites, at the beginning of the third millennium, are increasingly worried about the future identity of the countries in which they rule. For sure, the liberal system doesn't yet need truncheons or police force in order to enforce its truth. It can remove rebels, heretics, or simply academics, by using smear campaigns, or accusing them of "guilt by association," and by removing them from important places of decision – be it in academia, the political arena, or the media. Once the spirit of the age changes, the high priests of this new postmodern inquisition will likely be the first to dump their current truths and replace them with other voguish "self-evident" truths. This was the case with the communist ruling class, which after the break down of communism quickly recycled itself into fervent apostles of liberalism. This will again be the case with modern liberal elites, who will not hesitate to turn into rabid racists and anti-Semites, as soon as new "self evident" truths appear on the horizon.

Notes:

1. A. James Gregor, *Metascience and Politics* (1971 London: Transaction, 2004), p.318.
2. Alan Charles Kors, "Thought Reform: The Orwellian Implications of Today's College Orientation," in *Reasononline*, (March 2000). See the link: <http://reason.com/0003/fe.ak.thought.shtml>
3. Paul Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2005), p.13.
4. Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demons of Images* (University of Sydney: The Power Inst. of Fine Arts, 1988), p.24.
5. Josef Schüsslburner, *Demokratie-Sonderweg Bundesrepublik* (Lindenblatt Media Verlag. Künzell, 2004), p. 233.
6. See *Journal officiel de la République française*, (14 juillet 1990), page 8333loi n° 90-615.

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