

“Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth” – Albert Einstein¹

The above quote distills in just ten words a powerful truth that *should* be a fundamental tenet of our society but one that seems to have been forgotten by our politicians and bureaucrats.

In the decades post the end of the Cold War, it has been generally understood in the modern West that free speech trumps censorship, the latter being seen as the domain of authoritarian regimes such as the Soviet Union, enforced via intimidation, coercion and political violence. Free speech *should* therefore be a celebrated bastion of liberal western democracies, a concept to undergird our public discourse, media landscape and academic endeavour.

I start with these points as the stated purpose of this new ACMA ‘Online Safety’ bill is said to be to oblige online platforms to implement:

“[...] stronger tools to empower users to identify and report misinformation and disinformation, ensure more robust complaints handling, and enable more extensive use of fact checkers”²,

none of which is remotely conducive to an environment championing free speech when only certain people get to define what those concepts mean.

In the past few years in particular, Western politicians, media entities and others who *consider* themselves thought leaders have increasingly deemed it necessary to deconstruct the concept of free speech itself, determining that in our modern social media era, a select few gatekeepers in official positions should determine what is or isn’t “inappropriate”, what is or isn’t accurate “information”, what is or isn’t a “fact” and what is or isn’t “harmful”, that a nebulous network of nitpickers should be engaged to police the online marketplace of ideas.

What makes it worse however is that speech is adjacent to thought, and what is increasingly obvious these days is that thinking for oneself is increasingly considered “problematic” by those who most wish to control the flow of ideas.

Multiple credentialed news sites and media platforms since 2020 have broadcast segments, published articles or even cited academic studies decrying the dangers of “thinking for oneself”, a great example being [this](#) pearler from Australia’s “The Conversation” from August 2022, aptly titled:

“Vaccine hesitancy: Why ‘doing your own research’ doesn’t work, but reason alone won’t change minds”³,

¹ Letter to Jost Winteler (1901), quoted in The Private Lives of Albert Einstein by Roger Highfield and Paul Carter (1993)

² <https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/consultation-opens-new-laws-tackle-online-misinformation-and-disinformation>

³ <https://theconversation.com/vaccine-hesitancy-why-doing-your-own-research-doesnt-work-but-reason-alone-wont-change-minds-169814>

snidely implying both that Covid vaccine hesitancy is anathema to reason, and that blind trust in “experts” is the only appropriate response to a complex issue such as the Covid vaccines because the average human is apparently deemed too much of a cretin to understand basic scientific concepts.⁴

Contrary to that author’s opinion, the importance of thinking critically, healthy skepticism and good old-fashioned orneriness is vital to knowledge-seeking, the great irony being that those in authority who arrogated themselves unique foresight and “expert” knowledge were the ones who made uniquely poor decisions throughout the pandemic⁵.

By August 2022 it was perfectly obvious to anyone with functioning critical faculties (even if they had initially been discombobulated during the initial waves of pandemic-laced hysteria) that practically every aspect of the official Covid narrative and the Covid vaccine rollout in this country and elsewhere was founded on a combination of incompetence, panic, greed, lies and corruption; at best a calamitous miscalculation by honest actors and at worst a gigantic racket perpetrated by our governments, partnering as they had with select pharmaceutical interests that profited financially to the tune of tens of billions of dollars in the process⁶.

Heck, as early as February 2021 it was apparent to anyone who had read it that the *Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA)* for ██████ Covid jab granted by Australia’s Therapeutic Goods Administration was an exercise in wishful thinking, clinical deception and data manipulation.⁷ The TGA’s report quite literally admits that its authors had no real idea about the efficacy of the jabs, acknowledging not just massive gaps in the rushed trial data, but that ██████ clinical findings (which were accepted at face value) wouldn’t necessarily translate to material real-world efficacy in the medium to long term, if at all⁸.

In December 2020, the preeminent New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) had laid the groundwork for this internationally by publishing its own “independent” study, ‘*Safety and Efficacy of the BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 Vaccine*’⁹, heralding ██████ Covid jab as safe and highly effective. This became the official position of the WHO, leading governments, and global health “experts”, despite ██████ having a hand in the study design, the data analysis, and the drafting of the manuscript, and its business partner,

⁴ At no stage were the Covid-19 vaccines tested for, or proven to prevent, the transmission of the virus, and yet the media and government trumpeted the 95% effective narrative continuously. At best they are a therapy, with the only publicly stated benefit now being that they reduce the risk of severe symptoms for those at risk of serious infection.

⁵ Of course, they have investigated themselves and found that they did an amazing job

⁶ ██████ profits *doubled* from 2020 to 2022 from USD\$30 to USD\$60 billion. It helps when the WHO and national governments monolithically advertise your medical products as mandatory, agreeing punitive, liability-free sweetheart deals to buy 100’s of millions of doses of your products on the taxpayers’ dollar.

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⁸ Of all the tacit mea culpas to emerge from the health establishment during the Covid era, the redefining of the acceptable vaccine narrative from “2 doses will end the pandemic” in 2020 to “get a vaccine booster every 3-6 months because we actually know they don’t work very well” remains my favourite. How those who dutifully lined up to receive their *first* Covid booster and then their *next* etc managed to reconcile the fact that they kept catching Covid regardless remains a mystery to me. Purely by coincidence, the trusted authorities have now redefined the covid vaccines as being an annual thing, shifting the goalposts yet again despite their being no long-term safety or efficacy data proving that multiple repeated doses of an mRNA injection are appropriate. Who needs safety data though when there’s vaccines to sell.

⁹ <https://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMoa2034577>

██████, providing the funding. Despite independent analysis of the vaccine trials being critical of its study design and the published findings¹⁰ – not to mention the obvious conflicts of interest on display – “official” sources declared it to be proof that ██████ vaccine was a pandemic panacea. Publicly it became heretical to state anything else, and the silencing of any rational critique as dangerous “disinformation” became instrumental to the canonisation of the “no one is safe until we all get jabbed” mantra.

Leaving this one example of many aside, it is alarming to consider the consequences for our polity should censorious officials be allowed to legislate themselves ever more powers to compel dogmatic belief in certain narratives, especially when promulgated under the guise of legislation purported to “combat misinformation and disinformation”; among the greatest perpetrators of misinformation, disinformation, subterfuge, gaslighting and outright lies in this country *is* the Australian government in its various guises, departments, and affiliates, aided and abetted by numerous legacy media entities that disseminate its messaging, not least the ABC, its chief enabler.

Why on earth should I trust the Communications Minister Michelle Rowland then when she states that this legislation will be balanced against freedom of expression which is, in her words, “*at the heart of democracy*”?

The government portrays itself as *the* bastion of truth and integrity, yet it has failed so often in recent times to display the least semblance of transparency and impartiality that I find the prospect of this legislation hypocritical and duplicitous in the extreme.

Numerous of our political leaders for example spent the better part of 2021 and 2022 making frequent false and slanderous remarks about the “unvaccinated”, fueling apartheid-style rhetoric online and the implementation of draconian measures to coerce Covid “vaccine” uptake, yet managed to convince themselves and the media that none of their words or deeds could be construed as “harmful” because the unvaccinated somehow deserved the vitriol politicians were spewing, merely for being circumspect, thinking critically or not blindly doing as they were told. So much for freedom of expression.

Throughout 2021 and 2022, the Australian government (much like its counterparts in the US, UK, New Zealand and Canada) relied heavily on a network of fact-checkers¹¹, the state broadcaster, academic institutions, “nudge” units¹² and a panoply of tame media and social-media entities¹³ to make sure that the public was deliberately *uninformed* about practically all aspects of the Covid pandemic. The public would not be allowed to make up their own minds about ongoing Covid developments, trends, statistics

¹⁰ <https://www.bmj.com/content/371/bmj.m4037#T1>

¹¹ Anyone looking to understand the insidious nature of the “fact-checking” industry could do worse than review Matt Taibbi’s expose on the Censorship Industrial Complex at <https://www.racket.news/p/report-on-the-censorship-industrial-74b>

¹² That this was valorised by establishment scientific publications such as Nature says a lot. Deliberately manipulating public perception by weaponising behavioural psychology at a societal level to coerce certain behaviour *is not OK*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-03843-2>

¹³ The amount of government money paid to media entities in this country and elsewhere throughout the Covid pandemic to promote the official government line remains rather nebulous. Perhaps there will be an accounting one day of just how many tens of millions were spent selling fear and paranoia under the guise of PING grants and other “relief” programs launched by the government to support media during this period.

and data but were instead told what (and how) to think about events from the official perspective, no matter how incoherent the message¹⁴.

The public had to *believe* for example that Covid was an existential risk to everyone regardless of age or underlying health¹⁵, or that Covid “vaccines” were not just effective at stopping transmission but the only path to pandemic salvation¹⁶ (fueling the quixotic ‘Zero Covid’ policy so beloved of certain Australian premiers). That the perfectly healthy should be locked down, or that natural immunity after recovering from the illness suddenly ceased to be a scientific reality¹⁷. Let’s just say that these “official” narratives, deemed monolithically irrefutable by the entire health establishment and repeated relentlessly by the media for months on end, have thankfully been shown to be rather more than slightly inaccurate since then.

One of the more egregious utterances by a government leader in this context was the example of ex-New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, who saw fit to publicise her authoritarian tendencies by professing in 2020 when discussing her government’s Covid planning: ¹⁸

“You can trust us as a source of that information. You can also trust the Director General of Health and the Ministry of Health. [...] Otherwise, dismiss anything else. We will continue to be your single source of truth. [...] Everything else you see [regard with] a grain of salt.”

In what sane world would any informed citizen choose to suspend their critical thinking and submit themselves myopically to the dictates of their government being their single source of Truth? Did Ardern really think so little of her citizens’ discernment or cognitive abilities? Should the public all just deny their own minds and submit to authority?

Like Ardern, Australia’s eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, is a proud member¹⁹ of that globalist, elitist home of policy wonkery, the Davos-based *World Economic Forum (WEF)*, the secretive

¹⁴ The “Pandemic of the Unvaccinated” myth is a great example, a catchphrase coined by Joe Biden and his CDC director, Rochelle Walensky, designed not just to elicit a visceral fear response, but to provide a target of peoples’ frustrations, a group of scapegoats to blame for the continuation of government lockdowns. What had seemingly been overlooked of course by bloviating journalists was the fact that the various data and reports alleging this claim were premature, temporal artifacts of the staggered vaccine rollouts and arbitrary public health definitions of who was considered vaccinated and who was considered a “case”, and ignored the fact that the underlying data for cases, hospital admissions and deaths according to publicly-available reporting from various jurisdictions within a few months of the vaccine rollouts very quickly showed the exact opposite. It was however politically incorrect to suggest otherwise, and of course served as a very useful propaganda tool for the public health establishment.

¹⁵ It wasn’t. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33716331/>

¹⁶ Weird how *the* experts at the US CDC now officially declare what was considered conspiracy theory through 2021 and 2022 under their latest advice for *Managing COVID-19 Symptoms*, namely “Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home. You can treat symptoms with over-the-counter medicines [...] to help you feel better.”

¹⁷ Reports like this were laughable at best but were published to persuade a gullible public that “vaccine” immunity was magically far superior to that offered by natural immunity.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid-natural-immunity-what-you-need-to-know>

¹⁸ <https://www.spectator.com.au/2022/07/government-is-not-the-divine-source-of-truth/>

¹⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/people/julie-inman-grant>

organisation whose primary mission seems to be to foster some sort of pseudo-philosophical societal revolution whereby unelected (but well-connected) technocrats aim to “re-shape” society into a digital, green, collectivist utopia²⁰, one overseen by an amalgam of supranational corporate and government benevolence.

Whilst one can understand the eSafety Commissioner tackling her core missions (cyber bullying, explicit online content aimed at minors etc)²¹, Inman Grant has publicly stated that she regards “online invective” as being akin to launching a ballistic missile laden with toxins²², such is its threat. Of course, hyperbole of this nature is utter nonsense, but it feeds the modern industry of confected online moral panic, driven cynically by modern media for clicks, mostly seized upon by the politically motivated to leverage attention for ideological and political points-scoring under the banner of Political Correctness²³. This is typical of those who operate in these circles, who engage in a sort of hate-baiting to manipulate public perception by labelling opinions or statements they disagree with as “harmful” or “hateful”, thus ensuring dissenting voices are pressured to conform to a prevailing acceptable narrative²⁴.

According to Inman Grant, the public must be offered carefully curated *versions* of events only and barred from expressing (or spared exposure to) “harmful” ideas and thoughts that don’t conform to a particular version of reality. Rather than permit the free flow of news, opinion and information from a variety of perspectives to stimulate lively public debate, those who desire to throttle the flow seemingly believe that *their* viewpoints are the only ones that matter, that too much of the wrong *sort* of opinion is harmful. But harmful to who exactly? And who defines “harmful”?

Should we blindly believe Inman Grant’s opinions about each, simply because of her title or her Davos connections? Alternately, would it make more sense to be skeptical of her views, considering her former ties to Microsoft and Twitter and her WEF affiliation? Of course, she is absolutely entitled to those views *and* to air them publicly as she sees fit; all opinions are valid. But therein lies the central issue – her very public views *should* be open to scrutiny or challenge. *That* is the point of debate. Her views on the subject, or those of Michelle Rowland, are no more relevant than mine, yours or any other voter in this country. Inman Grant perhaps has noble intentions but likely doesn’t realise that perhaps something is amiss, that she may inadvertently be sowing the seeds of genuine division.

Would it be “harmful” to express this view online according to the legislation under consideration or ACMA’s remit? Would I be guilty of “misinformation” if I suggest that there might be a *soupcon* of nefarious intent behind a sovereign government enacting legislation promoted by the UN and conceived by the WEF’s “Global Coalition for Digital Safety”, that might seek to criminalise online speech, restrict debate or otherwise re-define fact or fiction according to its own self-interest?

²⁰ In which you will “Own Nothing and Be Happy” according to WEF member, Danish MP, Ida Auken
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/worldeconomicforum/2016/11/10/shopping-i-cant-really-remember-what-that-is-or-how-differently-well-live-in-2030/?sh=55cd4d5f1735>

²¹ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

²² <https://techpolicy.press/twitter-must-come-clean-on-how-it-is-tackling-online-hate/>

²³ George Carlin famously once quipped, “Political Correctness is fascism pretending to be manners.”

²⁴ A classic example of this is the modern obsession from within certain activist circles to label criticism of the actions or words of anyone even remotely connected to Judaism or the state of Israel as “antisemitic”, notwithstanding the veracity of the original criticism.

I am referring to the fact that the United Nations published its *“Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 8 - Information Integrity on Digital Platforms”*²⁵ in June 2023 as part of its Agenda 2030 updates leading up to their “Summit of the Future” in 2024, in which it purports to uphold the concept of “Information Integrity”, with its central thesis being that this is:

“[...] threatened by disinformation, misinformation and hate speech.”

The document defines misinformation as:

“[...] the unintentional spread of inaccurate information shared in good faith by those unaware that they are passing on falsehoods”,

and further asserts that misinformation, along with disinformation and hate speech:

“[...] pollute(s) the information ecosystem and threaten(s) human progress.”

What an amazing coincidence.

Brief 8 proceeds to argue for a multilateral governmental agreement to tackle the issue, to control digital content and ensure that online platforms don’t promote so-called misinformation, disinformation and hate speech²⁶, to limit the online “harms” that these may cause. Lucky then that those who participate in the drafting of UN policy documents such as this to police the world’s online content are those most likely to benefit from said policing as governments like ours apparently operate in lockstep with them.

Sarcasm aside, who benefits? Unless us plebians are being kept in the dark about a series of sinister global catastrophes unfolding that will disrupt the very fabric of the universe itself if the powers that be don’t engage in online censorship, we all know the answer to that.

There are already too many special interest groups, corporations and individuals who both benefit from and unduly influence government decisions, said influence often supplanting the will of the voting public, or usurping the direction in which a country is taken politically or culturally. This is the “unwarranted influence” mentioned in the famous speech by outgoing US president, Dwight D Eisenhower, in 1961²⁷ when he warned about outside parties to the US government usurping unearned authority over government decision-making. We are living this reality now, and it is not only fraught with danger, but quite literally exists to further the interests of unaccountable, unelected, UN-aligned, Davos-attending bodies and individuals at the expense of the Australian voting public. It was there for all paying attention to see during the Covid pandemic, a vast coterie of pharma enablers and influence peddlers, profiting from their ability to influence government legislation and shape public opinion.

The Australian government at various levels spent the years of the Covid pandemic spreading enough genuine mis- and disinformation to last the beleaguered citizens of this country a lifetime, engaging in industrial quantities of gaslighting and fearmongering in the process. There was an astonishing amount

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-information-integrity-en.pdf>

²⁶ It would be fine if so-called “hate speech” was an objective concept or adjudicated impartially. Too often however “hate speech” at best reflects a misattribution of intent, or at worst a cynical attempt to launder media attention because our modern culture elevates victims and offence-taking. Polarising, divisive media headlines designed to inflame tensions between groups have become the order of the day.

²⁷ <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-dwight-d-eisenhowers-farewell-address>

of misleading and downright false information emitted by “authoritative” sources throughout, most notably from public health authorities, health ministers, pharma executives and legacy media, demonstrating a concerted effort to ensure that the public acted a certain way, and believed certain facts as irrefutable. A huge amount of this took place online, via platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Anyone challenging so-called authoritative sources, whether presenting data and expertise from reputable independent sources, pointing out scientific absurdities, blatant contradictions or logical fallacies²⁸, arguing for caution, or those simply expressing concern at the knee-jerk authoritarian excesses of the official Covid response – regardless of their intellectual or professional bona fides – was met with derision and hostility, deemed “dangerous”, “selfish”, “irresponsible”, a “conspiracy theorist”. And that’s *before* they were censored on, or de-platformed from, Facebook or Twitter. One was apparently not allowed to question *any* aspect of the official Covid narrative *and* remain a citizen in good standing.

And ACMA sits in the middle of this advocating for more of the same, declaring without a hint of irony that:

“The online propagation of disinformation and misinformation presents an increasing threat to Australians ... [that there is a] ‘infodemic’ of online disinformation and misinformation, particularly in relation to the real-world impacts of COVID-19 [...]”²⁹

in its June 2021 report to government, the progenitor of this proposed legislation. The 150-page report lists no individual authors and presents as a monolithic treatise implying that anyone or anything that dissents from a particular orthodoxy must either be conspiracy-based or the outcome of misinformation. It repeatedly employs the old chestnut of conflating genuine sentiment, say the informed or conscientious opposition to Covid lockdowns, with the idea that thoughts like these *must* be the result of exposure to misinformation or conspiratorial thinking because “authoritative sources” disagreed.

Given the pandemic had been announced 6-months prior, it is understandable that Covid was a central facet of the report. It cites numerous academic and media Covid “experts” as categorical, irrefutable evidence to stifle the murmurings of those nutty online Covid conspiracy theorist groups³⁰, the only problem being that with the passing of time, we find that (through the occasional grudging admission or tacet shifting of the goalposts) most of these expert citations from 2021 should be deemed “disinformation” today.

One of the interesting paragraphs can be found on page 46, citing a survey study out of the UK that declares Covid vaccine “hesitancy” to be higher among people using online search engines other than Google, implying as early as January 2021 that people who exhibited Covid vaccine “hesitancy” were more likely to believe in conspiracies. This is so emblematic of the mindset of the authors of the study and the information environment created by the pandemic that continues to this day – frame the

²⁸ “You need to take *your* Covid vaccine because if *you* don’t, *mine* won’t work.” Science.

²⁹ A report to government on the adequacy of digital platforms’ disinformation and news quality measures, ACMA, June 2021.

³⁰ Apparently concerned citizens voicing their displeasure online at repeated footage of police brutality and shutting down peaceful Covid lockdown protests in Melbourne is *conspiratorial* and *dangerous* behaviour.

scenario in which any and all dissent from an official narrative, regardless of how informed, is seen as emblematic of conspiracy³¹, and simply exclude any refutations from those who would challenge the assertion. And then frame the conspiracy as dangerous. Job done.

Thinking is dangerous. Don't think for yourself. Google it.

Does ACMA truly believe its own report still holds water in August 2023? Does it stand by its position statements regarding Covid-19 misinformation and disinformation circa June 2021 today? Is the undermining of trust in “authoritative sources” as the June 2021 report suggests *really* the consequence of online “misinformation”, or is it the consequence of those “authoritative sources” acting in bad faith, being proven time and again to have been dishonest? How is “undermining official health advice” a real-world consequence of so-called misinformation when so much of that “official health advice” during the Covid era has been shown to have been nothing more than a collectivist, one-size-fits-all orthodoxy in which the vast differences in potential health outcomes between individuals, based on their underlying health, medical history, age, fitness, lifestyle, diet, pre-existing comorbidities and general susceptibility to a novel respiratory virus were simply ignored? The “official health advice” may have been official, and it may have been advice, but it had nothing to do with health.

So as millions of Australians emerge blinking from their collective government-prescribed, media-driven Covid stupor, the truth slowly emerges that the very “expert” class that implemented Australia’s lockdowns-mandates-masking³² response in lockstep with global orthodoxy, that suspended common sense, ignored established pre-pandemic medical science and public health protocols³³, denied the concepts of privacy, freedom and dignity, shuttered economies and small businesses, racked up trillions of dollars in unnecessary government debt, broke global supply chains, and hampered the lives of so many for so long, did so through a combination of incompetence, arrogance, self-interest and rigid conformity to “authoritative” voices. The situation was only made possible through a coordinated campaign of government-initiated, media-facilitated, “fact-checked” online censorship, but apparently the public need not worry, because it was all done with best endeavours and for the *greater good*.

No thanks. No more.

While I have no great expectations of this process, I put it to those tasked with assessing the public’s feedback to this proposed legislation that what we need in this country is *less* censorship and *fewer* censors, *fewer* fact checkers³⁴, *less* blind adherence to narrative, and *more* open and honest dialogue both online and in the legacy media about what decisions are in the best interest of all Australians. The past few years have shown this to be necessary.

³¹ The survey in question of ~5,000 UK residents implicitly frames the questioning of official covid narrative as conspiratorial, defining “mild” conspiracy thinking as those suggesting people should be “*asking more questions*”, and of course linking said conspiracy thinking to vaccine hesitancy.

³² <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/scottish-news/no-evidence-support-covid-lockdowns-30470038>

Belated official reports are being released elsewhere noting there is no evidence that lockdowns (or facemasks outside of clinical settings) were effective in improving Covid outcomes. A more honest telling would acknowledge that there never was any authentic scientific basis to implement lockdowns (or facemasks outside of clinical settings) in the first place.

³³ Such as the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza (AHMPPI) published in October 2019 (just months before the pandemic)

³⁴ Perhaps the public may be afforded a citizens’ fact-checking agency to fact-check the ABC’s reporting?

It doesn't really matter whether those at ACMA who draft legislation of this nature do so with all the best intentions in the world³⁵, whether they truly believe in the power of a benevolent state to protect its citizens from what it deems as harmful, whether they truly believe in the idea that an expert consensus *must* curate online information because the expert consensus is entirely beyond reproach or that corporations that benefit from the consensus never seek unjust enrichment; it *never* ends that way.

There is no monopoly on consensus *or* the truth, as much as some would wish otherwise.

There's a name for the system emerging here that gained popularity in pre-WW2 Italy, a marriage of massive multi-national corporate interests and the State, and watching our erstwhile political leaders set out to find ways to cede control of thought, word and deed to a select few appointed corporate gatekeepers under the guise of "preventing harms" fills me with dread. Should we desire a future wherein unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats dictate what we can or cannot say, think, read or write?

HL Mencken famously wrote³⁶ decades ago that:

"The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by an endless series of hobgoblins",

meaning of course that governments habitually create, propagate and inflate problems and crises in order to keep the populace obedient, confused, despondent and afraid. This is true currently of:

- the Covid "crisis",
- climate alarmism in all its guises³⁷,
- Russia!!! Russia!!! Russia!!!
- the incessant ululation about "far right extremism" or the bogeyman of fascism lurking around every corner,
- the elevation of gender ideology into every facet of existence,
- and every other -phobia and -ism going.

Every day the public is confronted with a cacophony of politically motivated, blatantly propagandistic edicts, reports, media stories and opinion pieces about some imagined hobgoblin emerging out of one or other of these alleged emergencies, all broadcast widely on social media and yet almost none of it is ever particularly relevant, salient, immediate, threatening, or even remotely accurate. Very few of these official reports are, or would ever be, deemed "misinformation" by their originators; at best any factual

³⁵ We all know what the road to Hell is paved with.

³⁶ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/34764-the-whole-aim-of-practical-politics-is-to-keep-the>

³⁷ Refutations of the climate alarmism racket are many and varied, from the hopelessly inaccurate prognostications of doom to the manipulation of historical climate records and the reality that the underlying data and science *never* matches the hysterical media headlines. These are typically drowned out by the sheer volume of the megaphones afforded the prophets of doom and celebrity climate activists like Greta Thunberg and Al Gore by *The Guardian*, *BBC*, and *ABC* et al. Anyone looking for a sane explanation of the central conceit underpinning the climate-industrial complex and its many corporatized, unscientific, ideological, misanthropic, nihilistic and cultish patterns of behaviour need look no further than the work by renowned British journalist, Christopher Booker, in his book '*Groupthink: A Study in Self Delusion*' published posthumously in 2020.

irregularities or obvious lies and distortions are shortly thereafter forgotten by the public or retracted, buried in the flood of new alarmist stories that invariably emerge in a subsequent 24-hour media cycle³⁸.

Whatever societal harms government fears will emerge from online “misinformation” cannot be worse than the spurious and mendacious hobgoblins that the government and thinking classes propagate for their own selfish interests, from which the public need always be “clamorous to be led to safety”. The resulting damage from “misinformation” would be inconsequential when measured against the harms that will follow if genuine dissent, disagreement, conscientious objection or other forms of online thought and speech critical of the government or otherwise at odds with a particular consensus are essentially criminalized because legislation arbitrarily deems them dangerous, inappropriate or harmful.

We lived through 3 years of the Covid pandemic witnessing what happens when a government and a cabal of unelected “experts” determine that all manner of deprivation becomes necessary in order to keep the public safe from harm “for the greater good”, when dissent is crushed and protest criminalised, and no legislation should ever be contemplated again that would exacerbate those conditions, notwithstanding the government’s empty assurances to the contrary.

³⁸ According to multiple media studies, 6 out of 10 adults online look no further than the headline of a news article, and of those who click it, most do not look past the opening paragraph.