

We're Not Just Talking to Ourselves – Others Find Us

Reasoning will never make a Man correct an ill Opinion, which by Reasoning he never acquired.

(Often rephrased as: "You cannot reason people out of something they were not reasoned into").

– [Jonathan Swift](#)

This site has attracted a large stable of writers; by and large, most of the time, generally speaking, we agree with each other pretty well. The point of view of most of the writers is counter Establishment. In today's frenzied Russophobia that opens us to the charges of being Putinbots but, in truth, we write against the prevailing WaPo/NYT/Economist/Guardian view on many subjects. The fact that that commentary is now penetrated with demented fears that Putin is [shaping minds](#) and [getting his stooges elected](#) and so on, means that any denial of that delusion makes them call us Putin apologists. Just as, to take another case, Tulsi Gabbard's condemnation of Washington's addiction to regime change wars makes her an [Assad apologist](#) and – insanity seeks out insanity – [Putin's favourite candidate](#). I have never had a word changed in anything I have written, but then what I write fits the editorial model of Strategic Culture Foundation. And so does what I read there.

On the other side of the divide are the writers and readers of the WaPo/NYT/Economist /Guardian established media. They also generally agree with what they read, approve of each other's writing and nod their heads in agreement. They are in their comfort zone.

Two solitudes – two bubbles. An agreeable agreement bubble for each: different bubbles to be sure but the same warm comfortable feeling of reassurance that they're well-informed.

So what's the point of writing? I already agree with you, you already agree with me. Our readers are here because they also agree. Writing becomes a mechanical operation, moving along a pre-determined course. No minds are changed, no minds are even engaged.

But there is one big and important difference between the two solitudes which leads us out of the my bubble/your bubble stalemate.

The well-informed person will be less often surprised than the poorly informed person.

There is an objective reality and people who actually do have a pretty good take on things, see that reality more clearly than those who don't. In short, those who actually are well-informed will be less often surprised than those who aren't. Surprise is the clue: it is both the *consequence* and the *evidence* of ignorance.

Surprise.

Here the difference between the two camps is very clear. We, over on our side of the great divide, were not surprised by what the leakers in the OPCW have to say. We were always sceptical of the proffered statements on Libya. We knew Trump's communications were being listened to. We were not surprised that Milosevic was found not responsible. We are not

surprised that the Russian economy is doing reasonably well. We already knew about Malaysia's scepticism about the JIT. We are not surprised that protests in Moscow have pretty well fizzled out. We are not surprised that Guaidó's coup is faltering. We comprehend the discontent in the Western World. We expect Beijing to be several steps ahead of Washington. We see through faked up colour revolutions. We weren't surprised that Mueller found no collusion. We knew Browder was making it up.

(Of course we were surprised but in a different way: leaks from the sewn-up OPCW? The stooge ICTY makes an objective ruling? ECHR actually considers evidence? The Mueller investigation stops? But it's a cynical – an *informed* – surprise.)

But the readers and writers of the WaPo/NYT/Economist/Guardian bloc were surprised. They are certain that [Assad gasses his own people](#) when there's no reason to; they believe that Qaddafi "[bombed his own people](#)"; they [laughed when Trump said he was taped](#); they called Milosevic the "[butcher of the Balkans](#)"; they expect the [Russian economy to collapse](#); they're confident that the [JIT is an honest investigation](#); they expect the [protests will weaken Putin](#); they believe the "[world community](#)" [recognises Guaidó](#); they are confident the West would be happy if [Putin weren't sowing discord](#); they expect that the next world problem will be [managing China's decline](#); they know where to find [democracy in Hong Kong](#). And, especially, they were confident that [Mueller will find a bombshell to blow up Trump](#). They [remain believers in Browder's story](#).

The devotees of the establishment media bloc are almost always surprised by the way things turn out. That, by itself, shows that they are poorly informed about reality. Everybody is surprised some of the time but the poorly informed are surprised all of the time.

Another indicator of which bubble is better grounded in reality is that we know both bubbles – it's not possible for us in the alternative media not to know what the WaPo/NYT/Economist/Guardian bloc is saying (if for no other reason than we delight in searching for examples of their errors as I just did above). They, on the other hand, have been drilled to regard us as conspiracy theorists, fringe extremists or Putin/Assad/villain-of-the-moment bots: our opinions are doubleplusungood and must be prevented and the [Atlantic Council, Big Brother's ideal fact-checker](#), is [helping Facebook weed out crimethink](#). We have a very good idea of what they say; they have very little idea of what we say. In short, we've been there but they haven't been here.

Which brings me to my final point and the answer to the question of why do we in the [Strategic Culture Foundation stable](#) and the many other new media sources do it. Why do we spend hours obsessing, researching and writing if all we're doing is painting the inside of our bubble? It is very unlikely – we've all tried it and we've all failed – to reason the consumers of the establishment media out of their assumptions. These are typical responses: "How do you know these things?" "Why do you think your sources are always better than mine?" "Don't call me stupid". They weren't reasoned into their complacency and they won't be reasoned out of it. There is little chance that some conventional believer will stumble across some piece in any alternative source and change his mind.

But people do change and our audience is growing. How can that be happening if we change no minds?

Because the individual makes the first step on his own.

Phil Butler's 2017 book [Putin's Praetorians](#) has stories of how people came to change their views. What struck me was that, in almost every case, these people had found us, we hadn't found them. A very common cause of the conversion of Butler's individuals was the coverage of the Sochi Olympics three years earlier. It was so one-sided, so over-the-top, so meretricious that they couldn't believe it and went looking for alternate points of view. For Butler's people it was mostly Sochi; for [another](#) it was the "hysterical Russophobia of the MSM and the Democratic Party since the 2016 election" that sent him looking "for sources that would broaden and deepen my perspective. Indeed, I found an avalanche of web material that rarely makes it through the gatekeepers in the US". The triumphant success of

the Russian-hosted World Cup demolished the ranting of the Establishment (“[England football fans visiting Russia for the World Cup are at serious risk of homophobic, racist and anti-British attacks](#)”); it will surely lead more to conversions.

I use the word “conversion” because it is, like religious conversion, a life-changing revelation to realise that the WaPo/NYT/Economist/Guardian bloc, when it’s not careless with the facts or mindlessly re-typing official handouts, is just out and out lying. ([Paul Robinson points out a recent example from the WaPo.](#)) To understand that a great deal if not almost all that you have been told by “[trusted sources](#)” is false; that a great deal of what is in your head is just plain wrong; that much of what you thought was true is not, *is* a life-changing event. It’s frightening and disturbing but, once you have absorbed that into your belly-feel, there’s no going back. [This young man and his father will never again believe anything the conventional media tells them about Russia](#); and neither will this man – “[Everything they told us about this place was a lie.](#)” And not just everything “they” told you about Russia is a lie: the WaPo/NYT /Economist/Guardian bloc’s coverage of Iran, Syria and Ukraine is almost 100% lies, most of the coverage of China is ludicrously off-target, Venezuela is another subject of fake news, certain subjects are never mentioned, the Trump obsession is now as fact-free as the Putin obsession – indeed the two delusions merged long ago in a crescendo of craziness – [watch this video from the NYT](#). It’s like unravelling a sweater: once you pull on one thread, it all comes apart. Apart from sports coverage or the comics, what is there left to trust in the “trusted sources”? [Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus](#) is a fundamental legal principle for a good reason: liars lie.

So this is the reason why we write and speak and – religious allusion again – testify. People we’ve never heard of, disgusted by the strident one-sided nonsense, surprised by some unexpected reality they bump into, stop passively believing, begin to doubt, search around and find us. Our writings then show them they were right to doubt and lead them to a better appreciation of reality. We don’t persuade them, they persuade themselves; we don’t convert them, they convert themselves. But we reinforce their conversion and show them that there is more reality (less surprise) on our side. Once gained to our side, they won’t leave. It’s conversion.

It’s happening: we’re growing, [they’re shrinking](#). How fast I don’t know but I know it’s happening. And the attempts to regulate Twitter, Facebook and the others shows that they know it’s happening too.

So, it is worth the effort, even if we seldom hear of our successes.

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