

G. Mettan¹**THE WESTERN NEW TONGUE MAKES ANY DIALOGUE OF CULTURE A DEAF TALK**

We know the power of words, we know less about the words of power. Words of power seek to harness the power of words. These words, so innocent and innocent in appearance, it is therefore essential to identify them, and to recognize them for what they are: tools of conquest and domination. Instruments of restraint on bodies and minds, means of shaping consent of citizens to unwanted morals and policies. And makes almost impossible any dialogue of cultures.

Very great authors have decoded and brought to light the springs of the language of tyranny.

During World War II, Victor Klemperer, a Jewish philology professor who married an “Aryan” and miraculously survived Nazism, picked up the day-to-day key words and phrases of Nazi language. He relentlessly watched the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, then its triumph and finally its fall. He masterfully demonstrated how the reinvention of German-language words by Hitler’s party and Goebbels greatly facilitated the seizure of power and the maintenance of the

Nazi dictatorship. In his masterful *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, the Language of the Third Empire, he recounts how this willful perversion of language led the Germans to almost absolute submission to the Nazi Party. Isn’t it Goebbels who wrote in his diary: “We don’t want to convince people of our ideas. We want to reduce the vocabulary so that it can only express our ideas.”

George Orwell denounced the language of the Stalinist dictatorship. In his novel *1984*, published in 1949, he stages the advent of a totalitarian regime which imposes a new ideology, Newspeak, or English socialism, and a new language, Newspeak, which creates and erases words according to Big Brother’s needs. A Police of the Thought, inspired by the practice of the Gestapo and the NKVD, but which today would evoke the religious police of Islamic regimes, the censorship by algorithms of the GAFAM or the mass surveillance of the NSA, ensures the dissemination of ideology and language control. She tracks down the slightest deeds, gestures and suspicious words of citizens by guessing with diabolical precision their intentions.

With a beautiful intuition, Orwell set his novel in 1984. It was well seen because the beginning of the years 1980 coincides with the takeover of the economy by the shareholders of the companies and the representatives of the high finance, and with the dissemination of a new ideo-

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logy, neoliberalism, which has today become globalitarian, both global and totalitarian, thanks to the generalization of a phraseology that has imposed itself in all areas of social and economic life. And that's also when another business of destructuring words and enslaving language, which is political correctness, began. The transformation of vocabulary, the change in the meaning of words, the creation of a new economically and politically correct language, of which we are both the actors and the victims, are the first signs of this general mystification.

But Orwell was wrong on the culprit. Contrary to what he thought, it was not from the English socialist dictatorship that the will to dominate the minds of the end of the 20th century would come, but from market totalitarianism, from the insatiable appetite for power of neoliberal capitalism, and the tyranny of racial and sexual minorities who aspire to impose their way of thinking on the whole of society.

A double matrix, technocratic and emotional

The new dominant language is the result of these two influences. Its matrix is therefore double. On the father's side (read parent 1), she manifests the omnipotence of technocracy, management and the market economy. On the maternal side (read parent 2), it is a reaction to the emotional and social flattening of which minorities feel they are forced to occupy a subordinate position in this same neoliberal society: feminist, LGBT and anti-racist movements and all the organizations of this that it is agreed civil society, humanitarian and human rights NGOs, activists and intersectional researchers. The Western New Tongue is the bastard product of the most icy technocratic ultra-liberalism and the most incandescent victim-soreness. This dual ancestry is the first characteristic of what, for lack of a better term, I call Softongue. Softongue is a "democratic" creation in the sense that it is not framed by a single party, an omnipotent dictator or an all-powerful police. It is simply fabricated, day by day, by two apparently opposing but in reality accomplices forces dominate the social sphere.

In the language of yesterday, we would have spoken of right and left. But it's not that simple anymore because the conservative/progressive divide blurs this distinction. In fact, there is both a conservative right-wing which fears and fights societal innovations and the language that expresses them, as well as left-wing conservatives who fight to maintain the old structures of social protection and the defense of the public service, as well as the neo-capitalists seek to dismantle. Likewise, there are progressives on both camps. Neoliberal capitalism, in its economist version, is supported by the most conservative, if not the most reactionary, fringes of the political spectrum, from the National Rally to Donald Trump's Republicans to all the populist right-wingers in Europe and Latin America. Moreover, the neoliberal right does not oppose the claims of gender and racial minorities either. When it serves her interests, she knows how to be avant-garde. Societal innovations suit him, as long as they offer economic opportunities. Every new societal niche is a potential business niche, whether it is selling creams for black women or operating a transgender club...

As for the progressive, feminist, LGBT and racist "left," it has placed its societal struggles far ahead of the struggle against the excesses of capitalism. The commitment to the disadvantaged classes now comes far behind the fight in favor of "minorities," especially when these same

classes are critical of societal innovations as we saw during the crisis of the French Yellow Jackets. Admittedly, a sometimes very lively competition, brutal conflicts, spectacular turf struggles occur between the two factions, as was the case between Democrats and Republicans in the United States. But once in power, the two groups pursue the same policies favorable to the ultra-rich and apply the same principles of "governance." Basically, there is convergence, congruence, cooptation between the two groups rather than irreducible opposition. The accents change but the language of domination remains the same. New language of wood, the Softongue is the fruit of this double obedience. It is the product of a duopoly rather than a monopoly, of a two-party system rather than a single party. It may be a marriage of convenience, but it is solid and its hiccups, even as sensational as the savage occupation of the Capitol in January 2021, do not call it into question.

You only have to look at things from a little distance to be convinced. Between Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" and Joe Biden's "Restoring The American Leadership," is there a real discrepancy? Between defeated billionaire Donald Trump and elected billionaire Joe Biden who raised \$ 1.5 billion from big business to run his campaign, is the gap so big? Do they not both draw from the coffers of the richest to come to power and stay there? The quarrels between the candidates of the two parties are all the more acute as they relate to marginal issues and not to the substance. The same is true in our European democracies.

In France, for example, we liked to highlight the opposition between Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande. But didn't they both rule by claiming the same neoliberalism, the same Atlanticism and the same Europeanism, before a third thief, Emmanuel Macron, sent them back to their studies by replaying the same cards in another order? Depending on their interests and the force fields that cross them, some will focus on the economy and others on socialism. Some will privilege the client-consumer-saver and others will exalt a right to be different for the noisiest minorities. But the two camps will pamper the same individuals in a hurry to cry out in the face of the world their uniqueness and their singularity, and shamelessly share the spoils of power.

Softongue, realm of understatement

The second characteristic of Softongue, which earned it its name, is sweetness. Both its strategy and its practice are based on understatement and periphrasis. It does it like the food industry: it adds sugar everywhere. Unlike Newspeak and the language of dictatorships, Softongue does not seek so much to exalt words as to soften them, to tone them down. The Nazi language electrified words, galvanized them, doped them, heated them white. The word Volk, German people, the adjective *völkisch* were carried to the pinnacle. Or on the contrary, she belittled them, humiliated them, vilified them. The word Jewish was swallowed up below the pork. She made words rise and fall to extremes, to the peaks of the heavens and to the abysses of hell. Stalin's language did the same: it praised the worker, the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and stigmatized the kulaks and the bourgeoisie. Softongue does the opposite. It sweetens, sanitizes, softens, weakens until erasing all relief, all roughness, all materiality, to take its speakers

into an unreal world, cut off from all roots, from all history, from all emotional and fraternal attachment.

We immediately think of neoliberal managerial language. Euphemism and positivity are in the spotlight. The economically correct language of economists and managers is watered down to better hide the deleterious effects of their theories. We must at all costs avoid calling things by their names and relating the effects to their causes. Above all, it is about being constructive. Look at the word “potential,” used in all sauces. Goodbye hope, expectations, ability, talent, daring, aptitude, gift, promise, favorable circumstances, long live the potential! Likewise, expressions such as social charges, which associate the word social with a charge, with an additional cost, when it is only part of the legitimate salary of employees, will be abused.

We will talk about public debt (to make people forget the private debt, point the finger at the state and divert the public’s attention away from those who benefit from this debt, the bankers and the financiers). Words like flexibility will be revered, which instills the idea that adaptation is an enduring imperative that cannot be discussed. Or on the contrary, we will avoid expressions like price increases (this is only a readjustment) and words like dismissal. Layoffs? You do not believe it! It is a social plan, a cyclical adjustment measure, restructuring and, frankly, a gain in productivity. Along with the curves of supply and demand, students of management and economics are therefore urged to learn the captious jargon of their science if they want to succeed in their exams and in their careers. They will quickly know what it costs to talk about recession rather than negative growth, lower wages rather than competitive devaluation, job cuts rather than a stimulus plan, plant closures rather than relocation, social dismantling rather than reform, labor forces rather than human capital. Ban this word work which stains and reminds too much that the capital of some is the fruit of the sweat of others. This modeling of language by economics obviously goes much further than these little semantic make-ups. Thus, we will not be surprised to learn that modern management has adapted the Nazi principles of the management of men to capitalist enterprise, as evidenced by the brilliant career of Reinhard Höhn, theorist of the Nazi organization of work, who became after-war the director of the largest German management school in Bad Harzburg.

The goal? To transform the worker, the employee, into an agent of his own subjection by making him both a boss (of himself) and an employee (of his owner-shareholders). In a language that speaks true, you would call it slavery. In soft language, this is called a “responsible” job. This is how the large American distributor Walmart calls its cashiers “managers” while the hamburger makers at McDonald become “associates,” in the same way (but not for the benefit of the same dividends) as the co-owners of a bank, or the partners of a large law firm. What good is a salary increase when a good semantic bonus does the trick... This is how managerial language succeeded in successfully applying the theories of the Soviet linguist Nicolas Marr who flourished in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Marr claimed that each social class had its own language, whatever the original language of its speakers, and that, under the enlightened impetus of the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat, modern societies would soon merge their particular idioms into the single language of communist so-

ciety. Neocapitalism is therefore succeeding where communism failed.

Managers, partners and shareholders from all countries, unite, agree your words, unify your language and your reign will come! Marx just got the wrong actors. He believed that the revolution would be made by the proletarians while it was being made by the bosses. From economic correctness to political correctness Economically correct has become so pervasive that it goes almost unnoticed, unlike political correctness, which is more visible because it is more dissenting and more in the minority. Yet both use the same strategy of euphemism and shape Softongue with equal effectiveness. In many ways, political correctness is even more obsessed with understatement than economically correct. The concern not to offend minorities by using vocabulary considered discriminatory or demeaning is its hallmark. Its multiple conquests, or its many misdeeds, have been described many times since its appearance on American campuses in the early 1980s. It is thanks to him that we have seen the proliferation of the visually impaired instead of the blind, the hard of hearing instead of the deaf, people with disabilities instead of the disabled, people with reduced mobility instead of the disabled, people with disabilities. color instead of negroes, blacks or blacks, homosexuals instead of pederasts, migrants instead of refugees and illegal immigrants. In the same fashion, the new pedagogy taught us that a pencil is said to be a writing object and that the blackboard should be banned because it can “underlie schemes of actions liable to hinder the learning process” of students. students. For their part, after having imposed the epicene language (which is positive), the feminist and LGBT movements have thrown themselves headlong into inclusive writing and gender-based gibberish.

At first, this desire to do well and to speak well had seemed kind and legitimate: isn’t the duty of a modern language, after all, to constantly adapt to the needs and aspirations of its speakers? But very quickly the phenomenon took off. Recently, with the MeToo waves, and the neofeminist and anti-racist mobilizations coming from the United States, the eradicating euphemism has raged, if we dare say it. The wave turned into a tsunami. The verbal guillotine is running at full speed. Inclusive writing, with its syntactic hideousness (Tou.te.X.s), spreads like leprosy in educational institutions and progressive prose, outraging common sense, ear and etymology. The obsessed with gender and race as well as the activists of NGOs supporting minorities “offended” by binary and racialized language track down and denounce offenders on social networks with incredible harshness and violence, forcing teachers and journalists to resign, researchers to cancel their lectures and authors to censor their plays. The spirit of the purge seems to be taking hold on campuses, in schools and in newspaper offices, with the complicity of editors, professors and cultural directors terrified of the prospect of being targeted. We have brought back the fireworks and symbolic lynchings. Most recently, this passion for understatement has turned into ruthless censorship. Like any revolution, this one tends to get carried away and drift into sectarianism and a new form of Terror. From vocabulary, the euphemism has spread to statues, museums and street names, attacking entire swathes of history and culture. In order to erase the inexpiable stain of slavery, it is now an entire part of European and American history that efforts are made to root out of libraries and public plac-

es. With the culture of cancellation, the cleansing moved out of the realm of words and into the streets.

Softongue is a FrenGLISH or a RusGLISH

As its name suggests, the Softongue is a FrenGLISH or a Germenglish or a Spanenglish. Its speakers, necessarily open, cosmopolitan, liberal, technophile, sensitive to the “sufferings” of the world, cannot limit themselves to a national idiom. The mother tongue? The language of the native country? French for Francophones? It is no longer enough, it smacks of ethnic reductions too much. Softongue is therefore characterized by permeability, porosity, capillarity, an almost ontological connivance for the language of the dominant technical, economic and ideological power, Anglo-American. A subordinate, slave language, Softongue is the new pidgin of the globalized upper classes, which attests to their submission to the empire and guarantees their membership in the circle of elected officials of globalization.

The French Softongue version has no qualms about allowing itself to be colonized by English, on the contrary. This voluntary submission to the standardized Anglo-American is to culture what the dollar is to the economy and to trade, a recognition of the omnipotence of the masters of the empire, the United States, of which it is advisable to be inspired in every way. Of course, we will not deny that in its time, French transfused a lot into English, nor that the globalization of trade made the use of English necessary. A simple language, practical for both business and technical purposes, English has many virtues. But why would it be necessary that, in addition to being the default language of communication, English creeps into French without any particular need? Out of laziness, out of snobbery, we behave with English as with these exogenous species that we allow to take root in an ecosystem to the detriment of native species.

Because the generalization of English as a vehicular language and its percolation into French (or Spanish, or German...) vocabulary are not trivial. Frantz Fanon has shown that to adopt the language of the colonizer is to place oneself in an attitude of voluntary servitude, it is to adopt the codes and the thinking of the dominant. The Americanization of language accompanies and promotes the Americanization of mores, economics and politics. A taboo subject, which immediately unleashes the vindictiveness of the Atlanticists and worshipers of the United States. The sin of anti-Americanism deserves neither indulgence nor absolution. And yet, it is time to make it a virtue because the trend, far from fading, is on the contrary accelerating. We are a long way from the beginnings of the 20th century, when we were content to import from America production methods, Taylorism and Fordism, or musical productions and silent films. Very soon, Americanization was forced by measures of political coercion. The invasion quickly took an imperial turn, thanks to the two world wars. Formal blackmail was exercised in 1947 when the United States imposed on Europe the distribution of American films in exchange for funds from the Marshall Plan, and at the same time imposed on Europeans the techniques and vocabulary of management, entrepreneurial in Anglo-Saxon fashion.

Anglomania accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s with rock music and in the 1980s with the importation of “New Public Management” concepts into public administrations, quickly followed by uninterrupted waves of lexical innova-

tion. by the computer revolution, new information technologies, and finally the digital revolution. In 2020, with the help of the COVID-19 crisis, the proliferation of Anglosolalia has spread to health language: “clusters” are multiplying at the same rate as the virus while “lockdowns” keep coming. This exponential invasion has led to the gradual relegation of all national languages to English, which the French cultural exception has not been able to stop. French, a diplomatic language until the 1920s, suffered particularly from this, to the point that, at the turn of the 2000s, it practically disappeared from the international scene. At the United Nations, in diplomacy and in international organizations, it no longer plays a nominal role, as we can see every day in the headquarters of New York, Vienna or Geneva. In higher education, management schools, and faculties of science, economics and politics, it is being eradicated, with most classes now being taught in English. Scientific literature has not used French for a long time.

Quebec, Africa, certain islands of speaking well like France Culture are still resisting, by keeping a popular language which a more sought after language, and by taking the trouble to properly translate English words, however technical they may be. But everywhere else the dikes gave way. On some radio stations and in the reference press, one word in ten is in English. And we can no longer imagine opening a bar or creating an “event” without giving it an English surname: access to “rooftops,” “awards” and “football cups” are at this level price. For each object, however, there is a perfectly adapted French word. French Canadians are well aware of this, who systematically uncover unjustified Anglicisms.

Softongue therefore participates in the impoverishment of national languages and cultures, in the reduction of their diversity (it is estimated that nearly half of the 5,000 current languages will have disappeared by the end of the century), in a loss of autonomy and in the narrowing of the horizon of thought. If multilingualism is an asset, monolanguage is a misery, because it kills poetry, aesthetic emotion, creativity. But maybe this is the goal? A very effective propaganda tool Fourth characteristic, Softongue is the privileged communication tool of the technocratic class, to whom it serves as an instrument of propaganda. Its mission is to promote its strategies for conquering and maintaining power. Just as capitalism ignores free lunches, so Softongue knows no neutral words. Each of its words must be effective and have a defined function. It is used either to erase a relationship of subjection or to ratify a relationship of power.

Thanks to its infinite resources, its malleability, its plasticity, softlanguage therefore tends to establish itself as the ideal language of lies and manipulation, the language of the new emerging empire, the LTI of our time. The privileged language of Good Any lie, to be believed, must be considered true. But the True does not impose itself. The true lie is much more convincing if it can be associated with the Good. The True, especially if it is false, and the Good are therefore linked, in democracy as in dictatorship. Propaganda, to be effective, must therefore always be done in the name of Good. Any power that intends to expand or subjugate must therefore begin by convincing that it is acting in the name of Good, whether it is a social class, a government or a company. We can even say that the goal of any Power, whatever it is, is to claim the monopoly of the Good. Good therefore does not go without evil, in both senses of

the term, especially when this Good serves as a cover-up for Evil ...

Claiming to act in the name of Good is therefore a work of Sisyphus, which requires a lot of constancy and application, and requires considerable expenditure because the power which claims it must be considered as blameless as possible. It must not only work downstream, towards the future, to justify its questionable actions but also upstream, in the past, to shine its image and rewrite its history if necessary. Take the example of concentration camps and mass deportations. Most people believe that the concentration camps were created by the Nazis. Or by Stalin for the right-wing liberals. It's wrong. It was the British, during the Boer War in South Africa in 1899, who invented the first concentration camps. The Nazis only adapted the concept when they opened the first camp, in 1933 in Dachau, before developing it into an extermination camp, while Stalinism made it a technique of economic exploitation, the gulag, a vast network of forced labor camps to which all enemies, real or supposed, of the regime were condemned. The same goes for mass deportation and genocide. We learn from the textbooks that the mass deportations were committed by Stalin while the first genocide by ethnic cleansing of a territory was allegedly committed by the Turks against the Armenians. It's just as wrong. The first mass deportations and the first genocidal ethnic cleansing were implemented in the United States in the 1830s to displace and liquidate through hunger, alcohol and disease almost all of the Indian peoples who occupied the country. North American continent... Or we see, by the way, that dictatorships do not have a monopoly of Evil, any more than democracies have a monopoly of Good...

Softongue is therefore the language of Good. By the magic of euphemism, it smooths everything, erases roughness, erases resistance, dissolves disputes. It is secular, multicultural, open, without borders. It also connects, expresses the sacred, allows the communion of souls. "At the same time" as Emmanuel Macron would say. She has her pontiffs, her high priestesses, her devotees and her admirers, her zealots and her fanatics. Freedom, democracy, human rights, tolerance, respect, living together, free market, it expresses the avatars of Good in all their forms, as in the old ancient religions, without distinction of race, religion or class. Already in 1991, the very caustic Philippe Muray had guessed that, under the foam of a conquering irenism, the French in the process of soft language was beginning to lend itself to the worship of disturbing idols. "The Empire of Good is spreading its tentacles everywhere: the hold of good-thinking and false otherness continues to grow, the dictatorship of pretense and the tyranny of benevolence are beginning to grow. poison our lives," he warned. Seven years later, in his preface to a new edition of his book, he noted with derision and annoyance that the "good had gotten even worse." Disappeared in 2006, today he would have been horrified to see to what extent the Good has become totalitarian. It is therefore in the name of Good, Liberty, Justice.

Democracy, Human Rights and the Responsibility to protect that we invade and bombard innocent populations and that we condemn to the stake. heretics who have the misfortune to doubt. The millions of victims of the wars in the Gulf, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen are no longer there to testify, they who have been reduced to the state of "col-

lateral damage" before being condemned to death by starvation. deadly economic sanctions. They can die, they who are under the thumb of odious "autocratic regimes" when we are fortunate to be ruled by democratic governments respectful of the rule of law. The belligerents that we are supporting? They are valiant "freedom fighters" who fight for justice and women's freedom. The belligerents that "them," the wicked Russians and Iranians support? They are blood-thirsty killers who do not hesitate to violate the Geneva Conventions by using chemical weapons. The ruthless economic wars we are waging against recalcitrant peoples, Cubans, Venezuelans, Palestinians? These are just "sanctions," as if punishing unruly schoolchildren. Everything is in order. On the domestic front, we will declare that the war against COVID-19 has been declared for our Good, in the name of Health. And too bad for the freedoms and the bankruptcy of the restaurant owners. Closing factories is also for the good of workers, because it is about improving "competitiveness." And if the dividends of shareholders and the salaries of big bosses are exploding, it is to better "trickle down" their good fortune to the poorest. The Bible had warned us, however, that it drew the attention of men – and women – to the dangerous power of words. Genesis opens with a dizzying intuition: the Word became flesh, she says, suggesting that speech alone can generate reality. Without Word, there is no Creation. Without words, no reality, or in any case, no intelligible reality.

In Genesis, Adam and Eve are cast out of the earthly paradise because they stole the forbidden fruit from the tree of Good and Evil. God knew perfectly well what he was doing by forbidding them to touch the Tree of Ultimate Knowledge. Not because of Evil, which every conscious human being can grasp. But because of Good, which can do much more harm than Evil when misused. The passion for Good is therefore poised to subjugate the entire planet, from the depths of the forests of Siberia to the heart of the jungles of Borneo. Everyone is struck by this furious benevolence, the rich as well as the poor, the learned as well as the ignorant, the majorities as well as the minorities. No people or individual can escape its ax. The rebels, the factions, the refractory, the disobedient, the heretics are immediately stigmatized, vilified, bombarded, brought before the courts of opinion for immediate execution.

Softongue admirably carries the cause of Good, since the time it has been refining its lexicon. Who today in the West would dare to oppose Freedom (of the richest), Rights (of the strongest), Responsibility (of the fittest)? These absolutes are not open to discussion, although they place their servants above the law, beyond the reach of critics, beyond accountability. Good has the advantage of being non-negotiable and non-measurable. Who can dispute the amount of? Although a humanitarian "intervention," a government policy, a factory relocation has achieved? By exalting the Good, Softongue allows above all to evade the notion of the common good and to spare oneself from tedious discussions about what it should be. By helping to place the good above the common good, Softongue has become the language of a new cult that is worse than the old one.

The language of technocratic religion

Softongu is therefore the jargon of the new priestly caste. It disseminates the dogmas of the Brahmins of economics, politics, science and the media. It is not a language of po-

ets and writers, nor a language of workers and peasants. It is the language of CEOs, economists, lawyers, academics, journalists, communicators, scientists and experts specializing in all areas of human activity. It is by no means a language of knowledge, it is a language of know-how. Infused with good feelings, stereotypes, tricks and ready-made expressions, it does not aim for knowledge or culture. Especially not ! It is a language of power in the service of power. It has its gurus who handle its concepts with virtuosity, like Klaus Schwab and Mark Zuckerberg; his inspired mystics, such as Elon Musk, a character who looks straight out of a 1940s comic book; his philanthropic monk-soldiers, such as Bill Gates and Georges Soros; its licensed theologians such as Bernard-Henri Lévy, Mathieu Ricard and Alexan-

dre Jollien; its regular choristers, who sing the Good Word by millions of copies in dozens of languages, such as Joël Dicker, J.K Rowling or Barack Obama; his inspired prophets like Yuval Noah Harari, Jeremy Rifkin or Judith Butler. It can also count on fanaticized grammarians, transhumanists ready to have nanografts implanted in the brain while waiting to be cryogenized for their future resurrection, or followers of gender and decolonial studies obsessed with the construction-deconstruction of their sexual and racial identity.

In such a world, using such a language, any attempt of dialogue would be very difficult because all the members of another culture would be considered as a Barbarian to be convert to the New Faith.