I. The Social Construction of “Truth”

A. Modernity

1. world view

a. reason

i. free people from oppression

ii. free people to collectively shape their destiny

iii. free individuals to shape their own lives

iv. subject all phenomena to rational critique

b. science

i. by means of method lead to Truth about natural and social world (assumption: Facts)

ii. lead to technological development

iii. give human beings power over nature

c. progress

2. institutions

a. free market

i. natural phenomenon governed by laws

ii. realm of freedom

iii. increase social wealth

b. liberal democracy

i. form of government that allows people to collectively shape their world

ii. presupposes a rational (see reason) and informed public

(assumes that there are facts and a public sphere to discuss debate facts and issues, and make decisions)

3. ideas

a. individualism

b. freedom

4. contradictions

a. democracy for the few

b. free market for the bourgeoisie/unfreedom for wage laborer

c. empires: racism, genocide, slavery

5. conflict

a. workers movements

i. Paris Commune

ii. industrial world: strikes, boycotts, governments overthrown

iii. U.S.: labor movement, labor unions and populism

iv. Great Uprising, Populist Movement, IWW

1877, 1882, 1884-85, 1886, 1892, 1896, 1905, 1914

b. political movements: expand rights, incl franchise

c. WWI

6. U.S. and emerging middle class (early 20th Century)

a. public opinion: too much power to rich “robber barons”

b. fear of the “Other”

i. immigrants

ii. ideas

c. retreat to safe havens where they became spectator culture

7. Rise of corporate and highly concentrated mass media

a. newspapers

i. national

ii. standardized

iii. advertising supported

b. magazines

B. Social Control and the “Truth”

1. Fear of the people: How to control them?

2. Le Bon: “The Crowd”

a. masses have upset natural order: crowd rules

b. definition

i. spatially proximate

ii. interactions: face to face

iii. composed of lower classes, “dregs”

c. psychology

i. emotional

ii. irrational

iii. governed by law of mental unity

iv. suggestible

v. French Revolution and Paris Commune

d. crowd goals

i. no legitimate goals

ii. acting out

e. easily manipulated

i. charismatic leaders

ii. appeals to emotions

iii. images, affirmation and repetition

3. Tarde: “The Public”

a. new phenomena: the “public”

b. definition

i. millions of people

ii. spatially dispersed

iii. gesellschaft: atomized/isolated

iv. interactions: mediated

c. psychology of public

i. passive

ii. alienated

iii. confused, “bewildered herd”

d. manipulation+social order

i. appeals to unconscious and emotions

ii. images and fantasies

iii. mass media

4. Goals

a. public mind could be manipulated

b. manufacturing public mind is necessary to control the masses

c. means: mass media

i. symbols of persuasion

ii. appeal to unconscious

C. Proof: WWI and the House of Truth

* 1. WWI: background
  2. U.S. Public Opinion

3. The House of Truth

1. Fear

i. spies

ii. defeat: Heineapolis, Denverburg, Gulf of Hate

1. good vs evil

i. demonization

ii. “they kill and eat children”

c. patriotism

1. CPI or Creel Commission
   1. Division of News

i. “Official War News”

ii. newspaper Official Bulletin

b. Division of Advertising

i. advertisements, billboards.

ii. graphic art: posters

c. Division of Films

1. power of film: Birth of a Nation

ii. Hollywood: Pershing’s Crusaders

d. Division of Four Minute Men

i. 75,000/ 150,000

ii. Four Minute Man Bulletin: “appeal to unconscious”

iii. Junior Four Minute Men, Colored Four Minute Men

iv. National School Service Bulletin

v. Why We Are Fighting, Unmasking German Propaganda

D. Walter Lippmann: Public Opinion vs “Public Opinion” (Democratic Realist)

“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an indispensable feature of democratic society.”

1. Mass democracy

a. average individual

i. thought process: common fictions

ii. content: euphemisms, platitudes

iii. “bewildered herd”

b. governance

i. scientific elite

ii. “bureau of experts”

iii. make policy decisions

2. social control

a. “manufacture consent”

b. “understanding and controlling subjective life

of the public”

i. Freud: unconscious or id

ii. individual, crowd or public same: influenced by unconscious or irrational

c. mass media

E. Propaganda and Public Relations

a. Edward Bernays: “Propaganda” “The Engineering of Consent”

i. Father of public relations

ii. Le Bon

b. Truth becomes the “truth”

“The truth is not a thing to be discovered but a thing to be created through artful word choices and careful arrangement of appearances.”

“Reason” “Science” “Freedom” “Truth” “Facts”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4gVcHE2HcU>

It Can’t Happen Here, Sinclair Lewis.