

Daily Meditation 3-9-26

Oligarchs & MAGA Minions Busy Emasculating American Media

Good morning.

This morning, I took up the important topic of the means by which we get our news and information. Obviously, the news is very dire these days. It's dire about climate change, fossil fuels, the future of the planet, the melting of icebergs and continents, and all the rest. It's dire about wars: this incredible, unchecked, explosive war going on in the Middle East, a war of choice. And of course, the war in Ukraine: Russia invading Ukraine four years ago, it's still going on. And the threats of war, and the rise of fascism and authoritarianism, autocracy around the world and certainly in America.

But again, the news is bad. But what about the bearer of the news? Our news media? And I'm just trying to say that the news media is in incredible crisis in the United States. And we can miss this, because the news itself is so on fire, and captures so much of our imagination and our outrage and our deep feelings, and our wonderment as to whether we can survive as a nation, or whether we can survive as a species.

On the other hand, all these are big questions, and they elicit depth from ourselves. They elicit our values, and our willingness to sacrifice and to give, and to stand up for our values. In other words, to live out of conscience.

What I would like to do is to share with you a few more observations about this news crisis: the ownership of news in our capitalist society. And our capitalism today is being seized by those who have been very successful in the system, by billionaires, many of whom are running off with wanting to destroy democracy.

And I'm not making that up. They have said that. Peter Thiel and Elon Musk, they have each said that democracy is dead. They have a new version of things, which is to let the billionaires run the world, and certainly to run the media. Because if the media is not hog-tied, if the media is not owned by the primary owners of things, they feel that democracy might creep back, might creep in.

So here are some comments from others. This is from the organization called The Intercept:

Last year, CBS was taken over by pro-Trump billionaires Larry and David Ellison, and they immediately installed a MAGA-friendly editor to turn CBS News into another Fox News.

So that's the fact, that's the news: that CBS News, which used to be so inspiring and caring — Walter Cronkite was an example of that — is now being turned into another Fox News. Do we need another Fox News? I guess some people think so. They go on: *Now they are on the verge of taking over the entire Warner Brothers Discovery media empire, including CNN, HBO Max, nearly two dozen other cable TV channels and more.*

So they not only seized CBS to turn it into a second Fox News. They've got CNN, HBO, Max, two dozen other cable TV channels and more. *Let's not mince words, they say. What we are witnessing is a complete collapse of anything remotely resembling a free press in America. I'll say it again: complete collapse of anything remotely resembling free press in America. With Trump and his billionaire friends, one by one, seizing control of the media platforms that determine what Americans see and read every day.*

To me, this is a five-alarm fire, a five-alarm fire. *Most people are too busy surviving to have to research the news organizations that they're hearing, and getting information from. Musk bought Twitter; Bezos bought the Washington Post. Zuckerberg has Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Now the Ellisons have Paramount, and are about to get Warner Brothers. And of course, they put in the pitch to support nonprofit, independent journalism like The Intercept.*

Here's an article from CNN Business, titled *With Trump's apparent blessing, the Ellisons are amassing a media empire.* Now this is CNN, which is on the verge of being bought, to be part of that media empire. *Less than a year ago, David Ellison was the head of a small production company. Now he's on the verge of becoming king of Hollywood. The king of Hollywood. The Paramount Skydance CEO emerged victorious in a bidding war for Warner Brothers Discovery. It was a prize Paramount desperately needed to survive.*

Now it's not a done deal yet, but it's close to it. *The battle pitted Ellison against Netflix. President Trump injected himself into the sweepstakes. So did the Saudis. He asked the Saudis from Arabia. And at one point the bidding war involved a hostile takeover threat, but Ellison won. If the deal is completed, pending shareholder approval and a potentially difficult regulatory review, it will run one of the media industry's largest movie studios, streaming platforms and television networks.*

That's what's going on in the media empire world we are living in currently.

Freedom Democrats sent a letter to Bari Weiss, who is the new head of CBS News. She began by cutting the 60 Minutes segment that told about Trump and the El Salvador prisons. And Donald Trump has come out and called MS-Now illegal, and he's attacking it continually. So they're pointing out that this is a time for courage to stand up to these attacks on the media.

And The Courier,, another alternative news source writes this: *The Trump-aligned billionaire Larry Ellison is spearheading a bid to acquire a media conglomerate that includes CNN. Ellison isn't just some rich guy, he's one of the Republican Party's largest donors, a longtime supporter of Donald Trump. Right-wing billionaires are buying up and hollowing out legacy media. One example is the current CBS nightly news anchor Tony Dokoupil, who described Trump's lie-a-minute fever dream of the State of the Union as extraordinary and vintage Trump.*

So those of us who suffered through that, the lie-a-minute State of the Union, might have other language for it, other than “extraordinary and vintage Trump.”

Normalization is how authoritarian movements win. When billionaires who support Trump take control of major outlets, coverage changes. Not overnight: punches get pulled, lies get softened, extremism gets framed as strategy. The Washington Post has gutted staff and signaled it won't confront Trump the way it once did. Trump meanwhile is talking openly about retribution, loyalty tests, and expanding executive power. The right is consolidating media power, while Trump consolidates political power. That's not an accident: that is strategic alignment. Trump-aligned billionaires are consolidating.

And from The Daily Beast, they did a piece on the title, “Trump-approved CBS boss going full propaganda-palooza.” And this new head of CBS News is standing behind the war on Iran, very strongly. Bari Weiss has a reputation for being very, very pro-Israel, pro-Netanyahu.

She is abandoning that network's standards of objectivity to go all-in on promoting President Donald Trump's deadly war against Iran. And a CBS News staffer — someone who works under her — said, Buckle up, propaganda-palooza is happening. Another insider at CBS said, the war is Bari's hard-line Zionist wet dream come true. This is someone who works there.

So we're talking about Truth. Truth. Truth. The opposite of truth is lies. The opposite of truth is a quest for power, for money that's so unlimited that lies build up. And truth is not anymore part of the agenda for journalism, for media, for the valued and spiritual vocation, to bring news, to bring the truth, to bring the facts of what's going on in the world, to the general public. It is time for deep resistance and deep prayer.

Thank you. We'll see you in a week.