If you haven’t noticed, my father’s kind of a history geek. Must be where I get it from. Anyhow, we were talking about how much of a circus this presidential election is and he mentioned a concept that a man named Joseph Goebbels came up with in the ‘30s. Pretty much the idea is that if you lie copiously and vary the lies every time, then the fact-checkers can’t keep up.

Something we might’ve noticed from climate change deniers and rumors about My Chemical Romance getting back together is that it takes more time to debunk a lie than to make one up.

As my old man put it:

“For every lie exposed, you just crank out four or six new ones. You win based on the numbers."

“I have seen this technique used by both sides of the political aisle. The tobacco industry used it. Creation ‘scientists’ use it. The no-nukes crowd still uses it. The hysterics campaigning against genetic modification of crops and livestock use it. PETA uses it. Supply-side capitalists use it.

“Find a political or philosophical purist, and you’ll find Goebbels lurking around somewhere.”

This is why both of us are leery about anyone who has unshakable ideas, even if those ideas are well founded. It sets you up for extremism and being deceived.

What we see as the greatest gift of a liberal education—the greatest gift that UMass could give us—is that it can nullify our ability to have such unshakable opinions.
What you’re learning here isn’t a whole bunch of facts. Those are just a part of the package. What you’re learning is how to think for yourself and to think critically. Don’t let that go to waste.

Song of the Week: “It’s All In The Mind” by Baha Men.

Chances are you only know these guys for “Who Let The Dogs Out?” I used to listen to this album all the time as a kid. Still got some stuff worth holding onto. Enjoy!

Blog Column:
Love, The Old Man

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