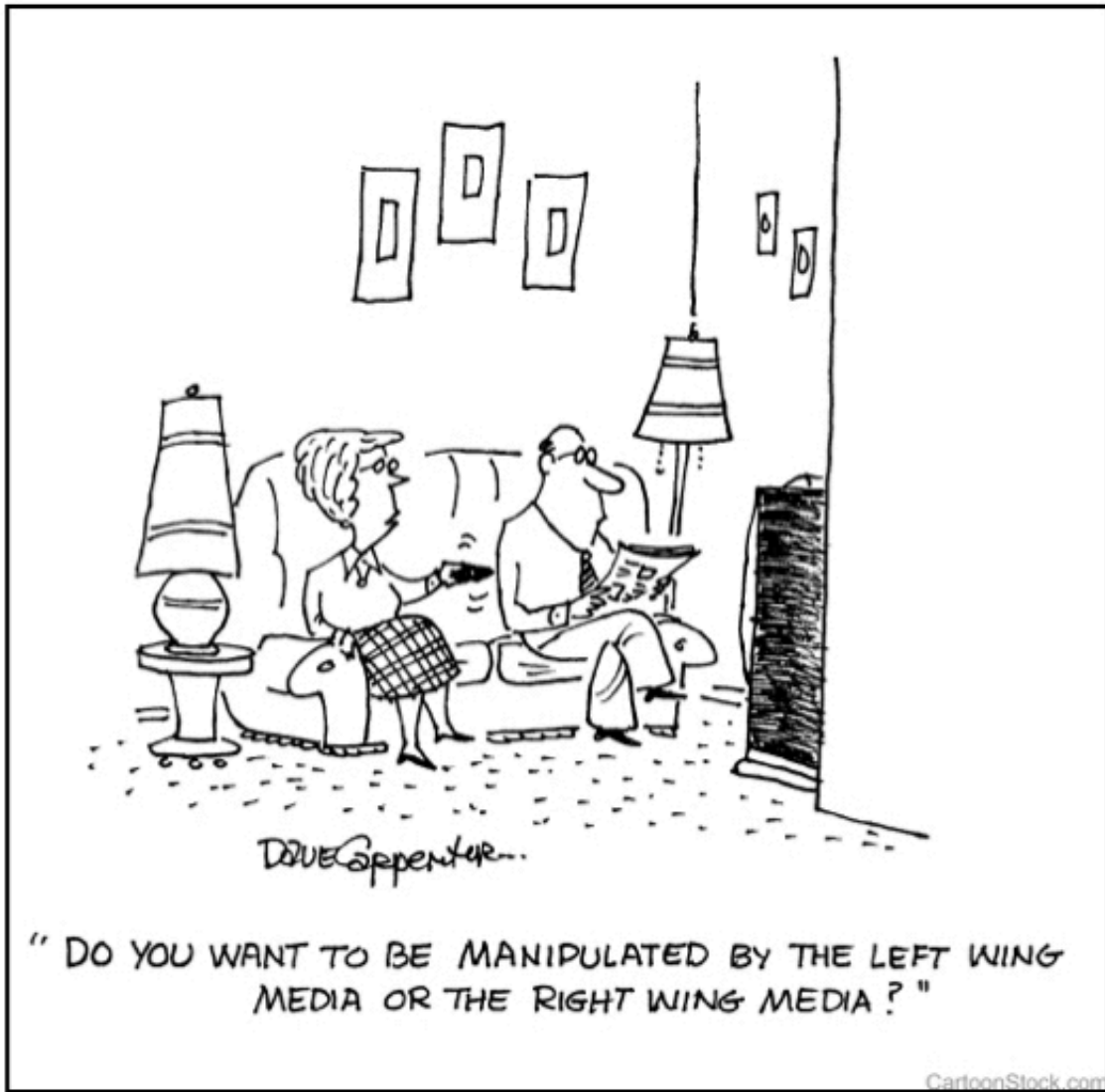


## Was this manipulation or motivation?



My granddaughter, Marin, recently graduated from high school. At her commencement I heard the following story. I'm not sure what to think of it. What do you think?

During a momentous battle, a Japanese general decided to attack the enemy even though his army was greatly outnumbered. He was confident they could win, but his men were filled with doubt. On the way to the battle, they stopped at a religious shrine. After praying to the gods, the general took out a coin and said, "I will now toss this coin. If it is heads, we will win. If tails, we will lose. Destiny will now reveal itself."

He threw the coin into the air and all watched intently as it landed. It was heads. The soldiers were so overjoyed and filled with confidence that they vigorously attacked the enemy and were victorious. After the battle, a lieutenant remarked to the general, "It is true; no one can change destiny."

"Quite right," the general replied as he showed the lieutenant the coin, which had heads on both sides.

We can put a positive spin on this story:

- It's important to be optimistic and confident in life.
- If you believe in yourself, you can accomplish great things.
- If you believe that a higher power is on your side, you can accomplish anything.
- Leaders must engender faith and hope among followers.
- Manipulating people for a good cause is acceptable.

Or we can consider the downside:

- This story is about a charismatic leader manipulating the emotions of his followers. That's unacceptable.
- The general won the battle, but he lied to his men in the process. That's unacceptable.
- If the soldiers discovered the general's trick, would they ever trust him again?
- How many leaders are just tricking us into doing what they want us to do?

I would enjoy hearing your thoughts.

For sure, if I'm ever asked to give a commencement speech, I won't use this illustration.