

Today's communication produces an incredible amount of what could be described as 'semantic perversion'. Moreover, it seems that the critical faculties of too many people have been dulled, dried up, and withered. These conditions make people particularly susceptible to demagoguery, to enslavement by perverse power. The discussion, based on the book *Rhetoric of Manipulation* by Robert Harvey, centres on a frank exposure of vicious discursive practices and the gullibility that accompanies them; it aims to address the damage already done, to help reverse the trend and improve the current situation in view of a far more ethical immediate future.

Robert Harvey is Distinguished Professor Emeritus (Stony Brook University) and former Program Director at the Collège International de Philosophie. His research explores the interpenetrations of literary and philosophical discourse, the relations between art and philosophy, and how both dynamics may inform ethics. Author of many books, his latest are *Parmi les gisants: penser le cimetière* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2024), which visits burial grounds and explores what the living think they can learn from the dead; and *The Rhetoric of Manipulation*, which has just appeared with Bloomsbury Press (2025).

Sverre Raffnsøe is Professor of Philosophy at Copenhagen Business School. Author of the following monographs: *A History of the Humanities in the Modern Universities: A Productive Crisis* (Palgrave, 2024); *Philosophy of the Anthropocene: The Human Turn* (Palgrave, 2016); *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion. Philosophy as Diagnosis of the Present* (Palgrave, 2016); *History, Diagnostics and Metaphysics in Nietzsche's 'On the Genealogy of Morality'* (Palgrave, 2025); *Aestheticizing Society: A Philosophical History of Sensory Experience and Art* (Bloomsbury, 2025). He has contributed to the fields of philosophical aesthetics, social philosophy, management philosophy and recent French and German philosophy.



Image credit: *Flag Face*, Circa 1890. American Flag (Infamous), 2019. Courtesy of Andres Serrano and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

What Can Be Done about Semantic Perversion?

With Robert Harvey
and Sverre Raffnsøe