

Sharpening the Propaganda Struggle by Understanding How the Brain Works (interpreted by Claude)

By Brian Green, March 17, 2026 (Condensed to ~750 words)

Marx wrote that “the ruling ideas of society are the ideas of the ruling class.” Capitalist control depends not only on economics but also on the biological and psychological mechanisms that shape human behavior. Modern neuroscience helps explain how the capitalist system exploits evolutionary traits—habits, fear, and survival instincts—to maintain power.

The brain evolved as a defensive organ focused on external threats. Pain and discomfort fade so that attention can return to the environment. Emotionally, this mechanism produces numbness and resignation when people feel helpless—habits of submission that mirror exploitation. Evolution also favored energy efficiency: though only 2% of body mass, the brain consumes about 20% of the body’s energy. To conserve energy, it automates repeated actions. Habit, therefore, is not moral weakness but neurological economy. Breaking habits requires conscious effort and energy, making social or political change cognitively costly.

Habits can, however, be rewired through “extinction” or relearning—a fact athletes demonstrate when training motor responses until they become automatic. In politics, transforming consciousness likewise demands repetition and reinforcement. Revolutionary ideas rarely spark instant conversions; they plant seeds. People exhausted by work resist energy-expensive reflection. Only when objective conditions—economic crises, worsening insecurity—make inaction feel like loss does change become probable.

Conditioning, the external shaping of habits, is central to capitalist control. From childhood, people are trained to conform: waking early for school, graded competition, solitary exams—all foreshadow the routines of wage labor. This is less brainwashing than *brainforming*: habits of obedience ingrained through daily structure and fear of sanction. The habit of subordination thus becomes an evolutionary advantage converted into a social weapon. Breaking it requires both material experience and collective action—the essence of the United Front tactic, which tests theory through struggle and unity.

Prejudice, another product of evolution, arises from the brain’s need to categorize. The amygdala and medial prefrontal cortex help form rapid judgments once crucial for survival. These same mechanisms now underpin social bias. Poverty and limited experience intensify this process: when horizons narrow, propaganda fills the gaps. Communities isolated from diversity are most prone to racism because misinformation goes unchallenged. In contrast, shared struggle—such as solidarity between miners and the LGBTQ+ movement at strikes in the 1970s and 1980s—demonstrates that cooperative action can dissolve prejudice.

Fear remains the foundation of bias and submission. Capitalism manufactures insecurity—through job precarity, competition, and debt—then channels fear sideways against scapegoats rather than upwards at those in power. Disempowerment feeds obedience; empowerment and solidarity erode it.

Diet adds another layer. The human brain evolved on nutrient-rich foods; today’s processed diets and obesity physically impair cognition. Studies from Warwick University show that poor nutrition reduces gray matter, memory, and mood—factors crucial for critical thought. Omega-6 fats and refined sugars inflame the gut and brain, disrupting neurotransmitters and dulling cognitive function. The result is not stupidity but physiological handicap. The capitalist food industry, driven by profit, contributes to this cognitive weakening and then exploits it with simplified, emotive propaganda spread rapidly online.

Capitalist control, therefore, operates on multiple fronts—economic, neurological, and nutritional. The ruling class employs teams of psychologists and sociologists to craft strategies that exploit disempowerment and fear, targeting populations already worn down by poverty and poor health. Their aim is to divert anger from the powerful to the weak, pitting the poor against each other.

Liberation depends on overturning the root of this disempowerment: capitalist ownership of the means of life. When workers collectively control production, they regain not only material security but psychological freedom—the space to think, question, and act cooperatively rather than defensively. Only when cooperation replaces competition can humanity’s evolutionary traits—habit formation, categorization, and predictive thinking—be redirected from survival to creativity, freeing the vast potential of the human brain.

Neuroscience cannot substitute for political theory, but it deepens it. Understanding how the brain forms habits, fears, and biases helps revolutionaries refine propaganda, develop patience, and organize more effectively. It reminds us that workers are not ignorant but conditioned by a system that exploits biology for profit. Knowing how the brain works is therefore not a diversion from revolution; it is part of making revolutionary ideas *stick*—by aligning them with both reason and the wiring of human nature.

(Approx. 745 words)