

Notes on the Psychology of Deniers, Contrarians, and other Conspiracy Theorists:

1) **There are 4 main common aspects**, viz, what the erroneous information is, and, who swallows it, v. who thinks up such rumours, and, their motives. Plus, origination may be a matter of wanton mischief, spite, gossip, vested interest, end justifying means, or, even sincere belief. Motives may be the same for originators as well as disseminators, but, the overwhelming majority of the theories and rumours are pernicious in nature. In addition, numbers are important....**the more people who perpetuate and/or 'believe', the more it must be 'true.'** Human herd instinct thus also plays a part.

Safety in numbers erroneously translates to validity in numbers, adding to credulity, plus the need to opt for direction and leadership, and also, peer pressure increases as numbers of followers increases. Power trips characterise both parties...originators re mischief, anonymity, etc., recipients re 'superior' knowledge, pattern anxiety quelled, etc. Both polar options are the reasons why Conspiracy Theories and related rumours (**CTRs**) of any kind are so hard to stamp out....plus, logically contrasting original v merely different also breeds self-protective aggression..? Quasi-logic, scapegoating and finger-pointing, bias and prejudice, plus, us versus them all play a part in strengthening the impetus and fall-out of conspiracy theories...

Above all, the inconvenience of gaining any appropriate formal comparative education is not required, if one is only tuned to many loud voices telling what is 'fact', and/or, all one needs to know to know, and on on a limitless scale..? The mobile phone is a significant part of the weaponising.....the actual screen size reflects, and/or necessitates, by default, a small view of the world...so handy for low attention spans, quick superficial messaging, reactive priorities... Add this to the clamour of social media, and very bad emergent social behaviour manifests. <https://unherd.com/newsroom/google-declares-the-end-of-the-world-wide-web/> **Plus, misuse of AI is definitely making matters worse...**

Some useful and relevant terms that apply, with help from Google:

Pareidolia, apophenia, paracusia, pattern anxiety...In more detail:

Pareidolia: the imagined perception of a pattern or meaning where it does not actually exist, as in considering the moon to have human features.

Apophenia: The tendency to perceive meaningful connections between unrelated things.

Paracusia: A form of hallucination that involves perceiving sounds without auditory stimulus. **Also:**

Pattern recognition is a sign of emergent intelligence, but, may result in looking and seeing for what is wanted, but not present. **Active pattern-discernment** is part of higher intelligence, but, a complex brain means there can be poor connections, using the complex 'switchboard' metaphor, and **pattern faults** emerge. **Pattern anxiety** may thus be manifested in individuals who cannot cope with an open-ended world, or incomplete knowledge, hence a cognitive void results due to the clash of **cognitive consistency v. cognitive dissonance**.

Pattern Anxiety: Caused by inability to maintain a stable view of the world in familiar terms, inability to live with open-ended view of the world...need for a 'pattern' that conveniently explains all, giving comfort, and/or satisfies a need to always be 'right.' **Also, providing opportunity for a self-written licence/justification, not to think, a typical human 'mental homeostasis'.** Being on the fringe is 'rebellious', education, and lack of worldly experience, are not an issue. When personally acceptable explanations sought in the real world, if not present, those of unreal worlds are substituted..? A human characteristic of pattern seeking and understanding, gone badly wrong, pattern anxiety expresses need for explanations, however weird or bigoted, or misplaced, by those who cannot live with open-ended questions and/or knowledge. Again, **cognitive consistency v. cognitive dissonance**.

Plus, some other related common factors:

Casuistry: The false application of general principles to particular instances, especially with regard to morals or law.

Sophistry: Seemingly true but falsely subtle reassuring argumentation.

Spin: To draw out of, and twist; to plunge helplessly out of control; to deviate from a straight line. Also, rhetoric, stage managing, posturing techniques. **Qv Frances Haugen re Facebook algorithms...**the more hate, the more clicks! Engendering hatred, for this reason, used by click-conscious social media profiteers.?

Belief: An acceptance that something exists or is true, especially one without proof. 'Think Not, But Believe...', and, What is Believed or Believable, must be Truth....proof and facts are thus much lesser

considerations, once again conveniently invoking the self-written licence not to think. Advertising, propaganda, conspiracy theories, gossip/social media mischief, and religion, all are fostered by belief, however misplaced and/or false. For perpetrators of 'belief', the end easily justifies the means.

Faith: Complete trust or confidence in someone or something. **Confusion of knowledge v. belief, especially if seeming validity in numbers is a factor. Also, confusing being original, with merely being different, or contrary.** 'Power' derivation, from making and/or promoting conspiracy theories/rumours, as well as supporting and perpetuating them. Plus, mistaking original thinking or action for merely being different, also breeds self-protective aggression..? For perpetrators, end justifying means...the most pernicious product of CTR mischief, invoking a simplistic attitude of 'us versus them', plus, a licence not to think, and, actually detracting from legitimate issues, including by machinations of social media platforms.

2) **CTRs** play into poor education, gullibility, pattern anxiety and general cognitive dissonance, boosted by propensities for 'religious' tendencies such as unquestioning following due to faith/belief, the 'power' of unique knowledge that majority supposedly do not have access to, same as for formal religious following, plus, casuistry and sophistry, all being intertwined in presentation, which will be quickly absorbed by vulnerable. **When 'believers' outnumber analytical thinkers, and, comparative education declines, or is even banned....what remains as knowledge is then indistinguishable from common or garden conspiracy theories.** Plus, all this begins with, and is perpetuated by, the systematic generational brainwashing of children. Group identity, especially 'us versus them', and 'belongingness' are important factors as well. Any tendency to look for 'enlightenment', or 'leadership' adds to individual vulnerability.

3) Possibly **narcissistic, and/or, with feelings of inadequacy, poorly educated, sensitive to criticism, inferiority, and/or, narcissism, superiority complex, hall-of-mirrors syndrome, mistaking lying/cunning as being a substitute for, or, superior to normal intelligence, gossip as a weapon of social bullying..the weaponising of gossip...again, ref. Haugen, et al. Addiction to the mental state of self-righteousness is a common concomitant.** Investment in marvellous new 'knowledge' that sets them apart, however ill-founded, and just plain being wrong, means reluctance to accept a real-world reasoning or answer. Thus, 'knowledge' without an appropriate systematic and comparative education, and encouraging a child-like, simplistic view of the world. Eg, **Quiz shows and superficial knowledge versus the application of concentrated factual knowledge.**

Followers of **smarter influencers/narcissists** are attracted by their seeming independence and self-confidence, rather like the attraction of cats, whose aloofness prompts vulnerable people into trying to ingratiate themselves with the animal. The attraction of *human* narcissists is their seeming boundless confidence, emotional aloofness, and telling people what they want to hear. However, narcissists, in particular, despite their seeming confidence, tend to suffer arrested development, a pre-pubertal mindset that meant strong reactions to unfamiliar knowledge and conflicting circumstances, outside their 'control'. They never do grow up, retaining childish self-centredness and immediacy of self-gratification. **Also, their personal cunning is mistaken for actual intelligence, by themselves, and by others.**

This can be extrapolated to also include leadership and directions of human society... the licence not to think, and the desire to be led, manifested in the majority of the population, means that the narcissists are more likely to occupy leadership positions. The more knee-jerk, and simplistic, way their minds work is reflected in simplistic solutions, and, all too often, violent outcomes. 'The Master and His Emissary', the latest cult text about the human mind, has missed this point about human intelligence and destiny...?

4) **Deniers in particular, (aka Contrarians), eg, re Global Warming,** tend be narcissistic personalities, conservative in outlook, probably religious, more comfortable with a fixed and markedly subjective world view, live in a Hall of Mirrors, follow CTRs they approve of, often scorn formal education, and, things do not change without their 'permission'. 'Business as Usual' is strong within their ranks, as is tendency for involvement in taking control of actual business, economics, and institutions. Managing Denier misinformation is similar to CTR tactics. Making their own rules is important, and, they do not like being questioned as to motives, and/or held to account.

5) **R. Dawkins** has shown, inadvertently, that legitimate causes may be diminished by direct confrontation, even if this is based on reason and logic, because the fixed mental wiring of the opposing party does not work that way. Conflation of knowledge with belief, especially at a mass scale, further reinforces inherent striving for mass cognitive consistency...and one of the strength of a higher intelligence, that of pattern recognition, is derailed by inability to accommodate cognitive dissonance, manifesting as pattern anxiety.

Casuistry and Pathological/Deluded Science, plus, popular mass-media, potentiate toxic disinformation combinations..? **When the majority can be easily persuaded, reason is easily overcome. Conspiracy Theories can thus be identified as rumours on steroids.** Legitimate concerns are ridiculed, distorted,

with the stronger the individual self-righteousness of the participants. Gossip and rumour precede conspiracy theories...one easily evolving into the other..? **Again, just being different is not to be confused with being original, and, is dangerous if manifesting with poorly reasoned, and, poorly informed/educated self-righteous mass-followings.**

6) **Religion** in general is the oldest and most pervasive conspiracy theory, exploiting human vulnerability and pattern anxiety...plus, ensuring early conditioning of children's minds, so that, as adults, they are never grown up, cosy in a mental situation of not asking questions, nor ever feeling the need to, thus, ensuring **the ideal compartmentalisation of mind that forestalls the stress of cognitive dissonance.** Again, group identity, especially 'us versus them', and 'belongingness', are important factors as well, plus, being 'chosen people' is an added bonus for believers. **Education should enlarge perspective, especially emphasising that the more that is known, the realisation will follow that the more there is to know, antithetical to the propagation of religious dogma, as well as CTRs.**

Belief, especially mass-belief, is not knowledge, education, or, direct experience. Thus, lack of comparative education is ideal for pre-conditioning the vulnerable and/or co-dependent population from an early age, with a contrived and carefully orchestrated body of dogma, that actually protects and strengthens a minority power base, whilst fostering a false mass cognitive consistency, thus forestalling any pattern anxiety, and consequent cognitive dissonance.

Religion may enfranchise elites, and/or the masses, although, in both cases, **protecting an elite power base is the main concern, regardless of the details of religious involvement.** Vicarious power is enjoyed by followers. Ideal power base for narcissists, not necessary to make sense as long as it exploits and manipulates, human psychology. Thus, faith, belief, rather like a bad investment, time wasted or not...? To question dogma is also to question the fact that observance has been a waste of time and resources, difficult to face up to...? Thus, knowing when to move on, is hard for people who want a fixed, sure world view, ie prone to pattern anxiety, and, fearful of cognitive dissonance. Plus, invalidation of belief means acknowledging all the time wasted, expended on a fantasy that is contrived and perpetuated by vested interests, taking advantage of flaws in human psychology, to protect a controlling power base..?

Mass belief does not mean actual and verifiable mass knowledge or education. Discouraging of informed self-analysis also maintains a false cognitive consistency. Herd Instinct, co-dependency, mob instinct, gang instinct, us-versus-them, plus, a licence not to think, all are most conveniently exploited. Cf Orwell's **1984** warning.

<https://www.futurity.org/brain-pathway-neurons-addiction-3213952-2/> <https://unherd.com/newsroom/google-declares-the-end-of-the-world-wide-web/>

<https://scitechdaily.com/innovative-study-reveals-how-addiction-hijacks-brain-functions/>

Question is, extrapolating the points made of these links, does addiction, and thus over-exposure to, 'natural' human physiological chemicals, like endorphins and adrenalin, also have the same type of result, and consequent pathological effect...? Gambling, risk-taking, ideological extremism, or just addicted to self-righteousness, et al...? 'Idiopathic addictions', or whatever...?

Pattern Anxiety in detail: Keywords are pattern anxiety, pattern fulfillment, co-dependency, cognitive consistency and dissonance.

The greatest strengths of human intelligence are pattern recognition, and, pattern application, but sadly, these talents are too easily subverted to base means by those who cannot live with the fact that all of human knowledge, at any one time, will never be subsumed within one system of expeditious answers and explanations, thus suffering what could only be described as 'pattern anxiety', certainly a most disastrous personality trait when manifested by those in positions of responsibility or leadership. Again, **cognitive consistency v. cognitive dissonance** clashing.

Concept of key-in-lock applies here, same as for drug dependency, the subject gains such a 'reward' from psychological pattern fulfillment that they are 'hooked' on the mental state that they have self-initiated. Religion replacing drug dependency for some cases, one 'dependency' replaces another..? After all, people will read love stories, base-jump, and go to horror movies to initiate a mood, or desired neurological/biochemical state, so, why should not pattern fulfillment have a marked affect on the psyche, and continuing reasoning powers..? **Hence an incipient addiction to self-righteousness..?**

Headiest of all with pattern fulfillment, especially with religious intensity, and regardless of the nature of the 'fulfillment', is the ongoing personal 'licence not to think', a most desirable mental homeostasis for the susceptible subject to enjoy, literally! So, obsessive religious/belief pattern fulfillment is actually a mental state that could easily be classed as a psychosis, and so common, especially among the severely afflicted, that it is an easily discernible syndrome, complete with non-existent entities to talk to, (such fancies should

have been left behind in childhood..?), as imaginary friends for adults, plus, a general lack of logic and commonsense that can be dangerously bizarre. The co-dependency aspect is manifested in validity of, and safety in, numbers likewise affected. Again, humans, like other animals, have a 'herd' instinct, also involved.

Even the better-educated can be afflicted, especially with any psychological pre-disposition, as evidenced by cults and their followers, who seem to extend so readily the personally-issued 'licence not to think' to a group, and/or manifest collective acceptance, of the obviously irrational. 'Hard wiring' these patterns also applies! Indeed, wars and other dark human actions, including for the unscrupulous pursuit of vested interests, are often justified by enforcing this pattern anxiety upon others, individually, collectively, and culturally, and then offering a spurious cognitive consistency, masquerading as a new direction. Plus, the continuing subsistence of such anti-intellectual ideas and motives still remain major obstacles to coherent human social and intellectual development. **IE, always the same shit, just different brands of shovel?**

10 Problems of Knowledge

- 1) Concerning human limitations and frailty; all possible knowledge will not fit in one small head, plus, age overtakes, and memory fails, thus, knowledge acquisition is an exercise that must be practiced from an early age, so that the mind is always ready, and, the brain is always optimally operational, regardless of age. Being born into a house full of useful books is an advantage. Healthy living definitely helps, and, that begins in the womb, given sensible parents, plus, fortuitously appropriate genes for both intelligence and longevity as well.
- 2) It is always necessary to deal with bad news as well as good, thus, the continual quest for comparative education and knowledge can, or should, only be optimally practiced by those best able to deal with this reality. Note that compartmentalised minds are seldom troubled by these considerations.
- 3) Acquisition of knowledge is not always easy, nor does it always confer pleasure or satisfaction, and, personal limitations of understanding should always be accommodated. Accordingly, that which must be learned is often not as enjoyable as that which is voluntarily and willingly learned. Also, there must always be a basic core of expedient knowledge maintained to support mundane and routine activities, plus, personal interactions, in everyday life. Inconvenient, certainly, nevertheless mostly necessary.
- 4) Ideally, knowledge should always be sought, gained, and utilized, without fear or favour. Naturally, caution and commonsense should be practiced in this regard, so, in given problematical circumstances, be sure to always survive to learn, inform, and/or teach, another day. Accordingly, time and place are always important considerations. Note that stress diminution and/or stress avoidance are also part of healthy living and learning.
- 5) The more one knows, the more there is to know, and, a balanced mind is also necessary to deal with this reality. Knowledge is infinite, thus, the capacity for objectively processing facts must be matched by the ability to search constructively and comparatively, as well as accommodating potential need for the change and enlargement of a personal knowledge base. Scheduled rest periods, with some physical exercise, are advisable, during such sustained sedentary learning activities.
- 6) There is a difference between truth and fact, and, objective knowledge is ultimately the most valuable. All knowledge is relative as regards rating of usefulness and validity, and, self-knowledge should be included in this description. Thus, self-introspection should also be regularly practiced, as well as maintaining the ongoing mental agility required for rigorous intellectual self-adjustment.
- 7) Not everyone is truly curious, not everyone can cope with changing reality, not everyone wants to share knowledge, so, beware wasting of time on unreasoned arguments, willful obfuscation, or, just countering pattern anxieties. Thus, careful choices of questions, as well as of intellectual company, including that of intellectual adversaries, are all strongly advised. Most people react more positively to questions if you appear less intellectually able than they are, and, will usually speak more slowly and clearly as a result.
- 8) If you really want to know the extent of your own knowledge and understanding of any topic, then, try teaching someone else. Teaching thus maintains personal understanding, and knowledge base, in an optimal condition. Problem-solving is a useful and necessary form of self-teaching, which combines both knowledge acquisition and application concurrently, and, should always be actively practiced. Note that advocating this type of mental exercise is never universally popular.
- 9) The brain is a biochemical entity, not a computer, so, to keep the mind fresh and flexible in the quest for knowledge, select and change extra learning topics as required. Intelligence is also wasted if not used optimally, plus, any brain used optimally is potentially more useful in the search for, and application of, useful

knowledge than a better brain used lazily and/or badly. Thus, always seek out intellectually honest peers, or better, whenever practicable. Time and place, once again, are also important considerations.

10) Human affairs are ephemeral at best, and, the only knowledge that will still be relevant, and constant, beyond inevitable mass human demise, is that portion of human inquiry relating to the knowledge of the workings of the physical and natural worlds, and, of the Universe itself, which will still endlessly cycle on when all humans are gone. Note also, that this is never a universally popular consideration.

NB, the term 'mind' herein is not used in any metaphysical sense, rather, that the brain, beyond autonomic mediation, is the active means to think, whereas the mind is then the actual collective process of doing so.

The Flynn Effect states that human IQs are rising, although, as the old adage says, psychological tests are only a measure what they are testing for, so, if facts are tested for, then perhaps this reflects proliferation of quiz shows on mainstream media, or, some mental technical flexibility having been gained by familiarity with computers, laptops, and mobile phones. One significant factor, that that Flynn himself conceded, is that his perceived Effect does not reflect any increase in common sense, or, commonsense thinking....

'Nothingness will save or destroy those who face it, but, those who do not face it are condemned to unreality.' *Anon.*

Substitute 'nothingness' for 'infinity', and you have the **Conundrum of Education**, in that, the more you know, the realization dawns that the more there is to know, a definite precursor of pattern anxiety and cognitive dissonance....and, for the susceptible, a mental petri dish of unreality, escapism, phony knowledge, paranoia, CTRs, et al, ensues...?

Many humans cannot face this fact of infinite knowledge, they would rather have a self-written licence not to think....?

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/44584488-the-irrational-ape>

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