A Few Words for the Hyper-Conspiratorial and Devotees of The Science

By Steven Yates

I was saddened to learn recently that a former high school classmate of mine had Covid and passed away.

Out of empathy for her relatives and close friends, I did not ask whether she died *from* Covid or *with* Covid. Such queries seemed out of place. Nor did I say that if she'd only taken hydroxychloroquine orivermectin….

What one of her friends posted on Facebook: "I wish people would understand that Covid is real…." You can guess the rest. It ended with an appeal to "get vaccinated."

I sighed.

Because this person means well. I know her. She'd deviate from her path on a sidewalk to avoid stepping on a bug.

Some are urging these vaccines who sincerely believe in them (including at least one other contributor to this site).

I've waged my own war here, on my blog, and elsewhere, against this 18-month long psyop based on fear. But I've never said Covid wasn't real.

I know people who have had it.

I keep hearing claims that the whole thing is a hoax from top to bottom, no one's isolated *the* virus, etc., etc. This

includes a few others in here, and acquaintances of mine – who also mean well.

Or that the vaccines contain microchips programmed by Bill Gates, or represent the Mark of the Beast….

Hyper-Conspiratorialists, I've started calling them.

For them, everything is part of The Conspiracy. Because they've (we've) been lied to *so much*, they don't believe *anything* from *any* decision-makers or *anyone* making truth claims.

This didn't start last March.

Two years ago I penned a piece on the moon landings on the occasion of their 50th anniversary. I heard from over a dozen Hyper-Conspiratorial moon landing skeptics. A follow-up article appeared on my blog.

I argued that the moonshots preceded public education falling completely off a cliff. I noted that people had more fortitude then than they do now (they weren't "snowflakes"). The culture was forward-looking and overall healthier.

Back then, we used *physical technology* to go into space. Today, we use *digital apps* for mindless chit-chat and selfies. Everything I've seen on TikTok screams "*Look at me, look at me, look at me!!*"

I asked readers to ask themselves how hard it would be to fool tens of thousands of superbly-educated engineers both in and outside NASA with a caper of that magnitude – not once but *seven times!*

So I find the idea that we never went to the moon highly implausible.

It gets worse!

A woman I used to interact with now says the Earth is flat.

“Prove that it’s round!” she said recently.

Doesn’t the Bible mention “four corners of the Earth? How can a globe have four corners?”

In my last article I mentioned how Christians hurt their credibility misreading their Bibles. They believe in a “rapture” that won’t happen because it isn’t biblical. It’s a product of the *very* modern Darby-Scofield axis. (Here is the best book I’ve seen on Scofieldism and its disastrous influence!)

There are people who misread Romans 13 and claim *we must obey all political authority however are insane*.

For the Hyper-Conspiratorial, *everything* manifests The Conspiracy. Even things easily attributable to lower-level greed.

Freud is quoted as having once quipped, “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.” (Probably apocryphal.)

Hanlon’s Razor counsels, “Never attribute to malice what is explainable through stupidity.” There’s plenty of stupidity, especially in government, at every level. Look at Congress. Or your local school board.

To the Hyper-Conspiratorial, Satan is so powerful, he’s blinded not just thousands of engineers but *the whole scientific community to the world’s flatness!*

Holy Hypnotism, Batman! We might as well give up on our intellects!

So how do we figure out what might be true, versus what surely isn’t???

This is a problem I devoted a good portion of my life to

studying, so I hope readers will indulge me now.

I think we've been lied to about the virus's level of lethality outside certain populations – *not to be confused with the idea that if you're outside those populations you can't get it*.

Sensible ways of protecting yourself and your loved ones include cleanliness, obviously. Nutritious food. Supplements to strengthen your immune system. Avoiding things that weaken it.

Our immune systems are our greatest God-given protections against most illness!

I'm *not* against vaccines *generally*. Traditional vaccines communicated information to our immune systems about what they were fighting.

I *am* skeptical of something that (1) doesn't do that, but rather contains a previously untested technology never before used in a vaccine; (2) was rushed out in months,when normally it takes years to test and vet a new vaccine for effectiveness and *long-term* safety; (3) and whose makers are *legally indemnified* from any and all harm done by their products.

Some scientists are challenging the idea that these *are* vaccines that meet the scientific and legal definitions of that term. If more people understood that these are *gene therapy shots* being *called* vaccines, there would be *far* more "hesitancy"!

Masks have been overplayed, as have "social distancing," PCR tests, etc.

Fear has been used to the max, as I've been writing for 18 months now.

All that aside, I need to emphasize: there's clearly something out there making people sick, and is potentially deadly for

some!

Total Covid denial, therefore,is no more responsible than rabid fearmongering!

Returning to: how do we distinguish truth from BS???

What this comes down to: how does *real* science work? As opposed to The Science (Fauci and his cronies, or anyone using such phrases equivalent to postmodern incantations)?

Start with Ockham's Razor: "The structurally simplest explanation of any set of phenomena tends to be the right one."

What do we mean, 'structurally simplest'?

Given a set of facts to be explained, if we have a loose and messy disarray of logically independent claims about them, versus *a single, elegant principle* that unites them all in a single system, that's the principle to pursue!

Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727) gave us universal gravitation – unifying two bodies of observations: the motions of the moon and planets, *and* falling objects and the behavior of projectiles. Mathematically: F=ma (force equals mass times acceleration).

Einstein (1879 – 1955) did the same when special relativity proposed to unify space and time and general relativity then unified gravitation and geometry.

A good theory makes predictions we can test against observation. Observations either corroborate or dis confirm it. (They *don't prove it absolutely true.* I'll return to this point.) These theories have been corroborated with many observations, such as starlight "bent" when passing through the sun's gravity field.

Real science unites observation, experiment, logical

inferences, critical thinking, and heuristic devices (heuristics are guidelines rather than fixed rules) – sometimes over long periods of time. The process is messier than most images we have of 'scientific method,' but by and large it works.

Those who worship The Science are not critical thinkers. They are bowing before authority, not logic and experimental results.

The American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1839 – 1914) also wrote of a procedure he called *abduction*. It goes like this:

A curious and perhaps unexpected set of facts is observed. Call this P. Think imaginatively. If some hypothesis, let's call it H, were true, P would follow as a matter of course.

Conclusion: there is some (not decisive!) reason for thinking H might be true, or is at least worth pursuing further.

There are constraints on H. Ockham's Razor, for example.

Intelligent thinking about conspiracies follows the same scientific protocols as any other investigation (here is an example).

It tries to stay inside the bounds of what evidence we have, and simple logic.

If *dozens* of policy decisions by *many* administrations have *all* taken the world in essentially *the same direction* to a degree far greater than would be expected from mere chance and misfortune, we ought to take notice.

This is our P.

If there really is a super-elite, or a GloboCorp of some kind, that's our H.

Assume it true, and P follows as a matter of course.

What strengthens H? Remarks by the "directors of history" themselves, *if they can be validated*. (I spent a full day in a university library back in 2011 validating citations to writings by Woodrow Wilson, H.G. Wells, Charles Lindbergh, and others, prior to sending *Four Cardinal Errors* to the publisher.)

Real science works under the assumption, however derived, that the world we wish to understand contains more order than chaos, and that behind apparent chaos lies order we haven't explained yet.

A second assumption is that the human mind can comprehend this order to increasing degrees of specification, in multiple domains of investigation (physics, biology, human affairs).

Have we made real progress in learning how the universe works – however incomplete, and however much we still have to learn?

That our ideas have been so effective in various technologies: engineering, propulsion – first on water, then on land, and then in the air – surely supports that we have.

Voyages into space are just an extension of what our minds are capable of, grasping intellectually how physical systems work and using them to achieve increasingly ambitious goals.

A third prerequisite for sound and trustworthy science might go something like this: the individual human mind, in the company of like-minded others, *unfettered by political mandates (or blind loyalties), corporate demands, or bureaucratic encumbrances,* is best suited to carrying it forward.

Or for conducting any other inquiry or creative work.

The fewer outside interventions and distractions, the better!

A fourth is to avoid *fallacies* – errors in reasoning. These include:

Misusing authority. Appeals to authority are acceptable, given the *right* authorities with the *right* information at the *right* time. We can then draw on the results of others, "stand on the shoulders of giants" as it were, and not have to start every investigation from scratch.

Appeals to emotion of various sorts. Fear, for example, short-circuits sound judgment.Do the past 18 months leave us with any grounds for doubting this?

Improper *ad hominem* arguments. I say *improper* because some time ago it dawned on me that properly crafted *ad hominem* reasoning isn't always fallacious. It is reasonable to ask, for example, of a purported scientific study of some drug, *Who funded it?* It is reasonable to "go to motive" (as a lawyer might say) if your nose is telling you something is amiss. There are enough people with money and ulterior motives that such matters can't be left to chance. This opens the door to two often-handy heuristics: asking *cui bono* and following the money.

Hasty generalization: reasoning to a universal conclusion on the basis of a few and possibly atypical cases.

False analogy. Like comparing seat belt laws to the Covid vaccines.

Red herring: raising a different subject to purposefully distract from the issue at hand.

Circular reasoning: using a premise that only works if your conclusion is already established.

Equivocation: using a term ambiguously or changing its meaning. Those in mass media who use *conspiracy theory* pejoratively commit this fallacy. They use *theory* in the sense of *careless* or *irresponsible surmise*. Scientists do not use the term that way. They use it to mean *cognitive achievement* and *established line of research*. E.g., theory of evolution,

theory of relativity. My point isn't that I think these are established certainties (I don't), but they are *not* careless surmises.

And speaking of certainty: demanding *absolute certainty* is usually a bad idea.A variant is *moving the goalposts*. You've made the best case you can for your hypothesis H. Someone raises objections not originally in evidence, claims "you haven't considered *this*, or *this*, or *this*,"taken to a point where it becomes clear, the other's purpose is obstruction, not truth.

I hope this clarifies how *real* science differs from The Science, and how valid investigations into conspiracies differ from Hyper-Conspiratorialism? In the first case, the latter is authoritarian, even dictatorial. Its purveyors see their judgments as certain and are willing to impose them on entire populations,even against those populations' wills.

The latter generalizes hastily from the many lies we have been told by political-economic authorities to the paralyzing idea that *everything* told to us is a lie.

Behind both is the demand for certainty, a psychological state often having nothing to do with reality.

I think it wise to give the idea up. Rarely do we find it in investigations of the world, any more than in planning our personal lives.

Back in the 1800s on both sides of the Atlantic were philosophers who urged relinquishing what John Dewey (1859 – 1952) called "the quest for certainty." One of the few things Dewey got right. Too bad he got everything else wrong, especially as one of the (Rockefeller-bankrolled) architects of twentieth century schooling.

Most schooling (I've stopped calling it *education*) works *against* what I presented above. It is based on authority and

conformity. It stresses memorization, not critical thinking. It stifles, rather than encourages, curiosity and the will to explore outside bureaucratically-specified parameters.

Its purpose was to train children of the masses for futures in business or government, integrating them into a society build on encirclements and controls, *not* giving them a great deal of knowledge beyond what was necessary to follow directions. It discouraged self-study stemming from intellectual curiosity.

Some, obviously smarter than the mass, could be allowed to indulge the creativity and cleverness that sometimes leads to money-making enterprises. But not *too* many!

This became the dominant model of modern schooling, fundamentally destructive of *real* critical thinking. And this was before political correctness and critical race theory reared their ugly heads!

Thus the confusion: generalizing from the ubiquity of lies from political authorities to Hyper-Conspiratorialism, and the confusion of real science with The Science.

Today our dominant institutions are more likely to interfere with, even *block outright*, learning and disseminating important truths, whether about the world or about history or about our present converging crises.

Including about Covid. Which is why we have a purposeful blurring between dying *from* Covid and dying *with* Covid plus comorbidities. (I say *purposeful* because trained scientists know better!)

I'm angry, because it is clear that the allegedly 630,000 deaths in the U.S. attributed to Covid *did not have to happen!* Including, perchance, that of my former classmate! If Covid-sufferers had had ready access to HCQ and ivermectin, available in world markets known on the basis of decades of experience to be safe, most would still be alive!

We do not *need* these experimental and probably dangerous jabs!

Let me end by noting that with unsubstantiated claims about microchips and the Mark of the Beast, Hyper-Conspiratorialists are not helping.

What we must do is encourage critical thinking skills—outside schools and an academia that dropped this ball decades ago. Dominant — well-moneyed! — institutions have become *barriers* to knowledge, rational thought, and communication, instead of *conduits* of truthful information, learning, and understanding. This may be the *real* crisis of these Twilight Zone times we've entered.

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Steven Yates's new book *What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory* (Wipf and Stock, 2021) is available here and here.