

How to Spot A BS Artist



By Steven Yates

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Someone Emotionally Wedded to an Official Narrative

A couple of weeks back, a commencement speech at Northwestern University by Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker went viral. Pritzker is a Democrat, of course. No one in his right mind thinks a Republican would be invited to speak at such an event. Well, on second thought, a RINO like Liz Cheney might be. Few others would.

Pritzker soft-pedals wokery without calling it that, of course. His wokesters are *kind*; anti-wokesters are *cruel*. He intimates that the former are “the smartest people in the room.” Those who wish to see and hear the entire speech can do so [here](#). Anyone wishing to read my commentary on his handling of *kindness* and *cruelty* as concepts can do so [here](#).

This article fries some different fish. I’m also interested in his claim to have an “idiot detection system,” something so-called pundits (example [here](#)) have picked up on.

He has his, and I have mine. I’d been thinking: mine is more of a BS detection system. I originally entitled this piece “How to Spot a BS Artist,” but then realized, there’s more to the story than that.

Philosopher Harry Frankfurt (who sadly just passed away at age 94) wrote the slim book *On Bullshit* (2005). It became a bestseller (I wonder why!). Frankfurt distinguished BS-ing

from lying. *Lying* tries to persuade you to believe something the speaker or author knows to be false, and so is indirectly concerned with truth and falsity. A *BS-artist* has no regard for truth. Many so-called pundits accuse Trump of being a BS-artist, which has to make us wonder if they've been paying attention to any of the country's political history preceding Trump.

But what of those cases, and there are many, where a speaker or author is convinced, beyond any shadow of doubt, that *what he is saying is proven truth*, and is completely oblivious to any and all evidence he might be wrong? Such a person is not lying as we defined it, nor is he/she a BS-artist.

This is the case with many defenders of official narratives.

As my thoughts evolved, they turned into something of a system for detecting when someone is tied mentally and emotionally to an official, dominant narrative, is in his/her comfort zone, not about to leave it voluntarily, and so has little or no patience with dissent. Some signs of such will be obvious; others, less so. I've singled out *three categories* that seem to me most telling, in the knowledge endeavors we'll all grapple with at some point. The first involves those who deflect criticisms of official narratives with accusations that the critic is a conspiracy theorist. The second poses as a voice of scientific reason while irrationally engaging in juvenile namecalling instead of honest engagement. The third, when it comes from the left, accuses critics of wokery of "making it all up," and when it sometimes comes from the right, accuses those who sees those talking about economic inequality as closet socialists.

Let's look at these, one by one.

(1) Those trained in the art of reciting official narratives harp incessantly about "conspiracy theories" (sometimes it's "*baseless* conspiracy theories"). This will be the case even if

the person accused isn't proposing a theory, just questioning the narrative. Mainstream corporate media loves this phrase. Its so-called pundits have no grasp of what I've pointed out so many times I've lost count: the CIA weaponized the phrase back in the 1960s. Purpose: circumventing allegations, increasingly widespread back then, that JFK was assassinated by "his" own government, most likely a small group of CIA and FBI insiders – the same group that murdered his brother five years later. RFK Sr. would likely have stopped the war in Vietnam which the Establishment of the day wanted badly – and possibly reopened the investigation into JFK's death.

There's a link to the CIA's own document [here](#).

These days, going through the two newsfeeds I typically look in the morning which pull "the best of the best" (ahem!) from mainstream sources, if an author uses any variant on *conspiracy theory*, I often stop reading at that point.

Life is too short.

Enough said about this category, therefore. There is plenty in my archive about "conspirators" who aren't really that at all, because as I've also often said many times, a real conspiracy would be hidden from you. Those trying to build "global governance" aren't hiding. They're just counting a public that is (a) inattentive, and (b) possibly too busy struggling to pay the rent or mortgage, keep the lights on, etc., to ponder what the Great Resetters might be planning for them.

(2) Then there are those who speak for The Science, whether in health and medicine, biology, history, origins, what-have-you. They will tell you they are speaking for "rationality," of course, but invariably begin [ad hominem attacks](#), often in their first sentence.

[This blog](#) is a literal *gold mine* of examples, starting with its title. Invariably, official narratives (usually those of leftists and global corporations, especially Big Pharma)

epitomize “rationality.” Dissidents are “loons.”

I’ve no idea who “G.D.” is, of course. What’s clear is that he (I’m assuming it’s a *he*) has every official line down pat and recites them like a playbook. He draws liberally from [this site](#), which has these same features. Originality is not his strength.

What his site communicates is that he doesn’t understand what reason and intellectual responsibility call for, including openness to the possibility that *one might be wrong* – including about one’s fundamentals.

Thus he conflates actual science, to the extent it still exists, with The Science; rejects religious belief in all forms, and embraces woke fashionability.

Decades ago, long before the Internet, it had begun to dawn on me that virtually all the theories we have about how the universe originated, how life originated, where we came from, how civilization originated – and how old they are – are seriously flawed. How do we know this? Because of *scientific anomalies*: well-authenticated findings of things that wouldn’t exist if the dominant consensus on all the above (“big bang” cosmology, abiogenesis, human evolution from an “apelike ancestor,” no civilizations before Sumeria, etc.) were true.

Examples: fossilized footprints, sometimes sandalprints, in layers of rock geologists insist is not mere millions but sometimes *hundreds* of millions of years old.

More examples: out-of-place artifacts (*ooparts*, the colorful designation) suggesting that someone, or some group, long before the civilizations we know, had technologies “stone age men” weren’t supposed to have had!

Final *big* example: astronomer Halton Arp’s documented problems with the “red shift,” without which present-day dominant ideas about the age and size of the universe fail to work. (If this

is new to you, start [here](#).)

If we had a mere handful of these things, we could probably discount them as mistakes and hoaxes. But there are hundreds, possibly thousands, dogging every scientific and social-scientific discipline. A renegade physicist named [William R. Corliss](#) began collecting them back in the 1970s. He compiled a series of *Sourcebooks*, he called them. Sadly, he passed away in 2011. His collections have gone out of print. Used copies are floating around on, e.g., [eBay](#), although they're rather pricey!

What we can say: we're talking about phenomena uncovered, apparently by accident, by very different people in different parts of the world, almost none of whom with anything to gain by perpetuating a hoax – more to lose, actually – sometimes in circumstances where doing so would have been physically impossible, as when an object clearly of intelligent origin is found partly encased in rock or even petrified wood.

What Corliss reproduced, limiting his own commentary, were academic-quality accounts when he could obtain them.

What tactic does The Science employ?

Putting such things in the backrooms of museum basements and forgetting about them.

Or destroying the careers of those who won't shut up about them.

Halton Arp found his access to the equipment necessary to continue his work as an astronomer increasingly unavailable to him when he kept insisting that a “red shifted” spectrum did not indicate that an object was moving away from us.

Christians have a ready explanation for anomalous fossils, footprints, and artifacts: the Great Flood, before which there existed a possibly relatively advanced worldwide civilization,

probably as depraved as ours if not worse.

Ancient-astronaut types of a more secular bent have had field days with such things, writing books aimed at convincing readers that our ancestors were visited by extraterrestrials who became the “gods” of old. Such authors make bushels of assumptions for which there is no evidence (some discussed [last week](#)): that extraterrestrials exist, and could get here if they did.

I’ve maintained complete agnosticism on both. For other reasons too lengthy to go into here, I think the Erich von Dänikens of the world sell our ancestors short. Their theories strike me as weaker than the official ones.

I’m not sure why it’s so difficult for people to realize: there are things in this world we simply don’t know, and might never know. They are *mysteries*, because actual empirical evidence is insufficient to allow us to reach any decisive judgments about them.

The point I’m making: a sign you are dealing with someone emotionally bonded to an official narrative of The Science, whether about human origins or the origin of civilization or about alternative medicine or about astronomy, is that they dismiss all this out of hand. If they’ve examined it at all, their examination is so cursory as to be useless. Their judgment: scientific anomalies are fake (because they conflict with the official consensus) and the study of them is a “pseudoscientific” waste of time.

(3) The third category is more complex and takes more than one form. It can occur among writers and supposed pundits on the right as well as on the left. Given our present situation, I’m most concerned about this category. So I’m going to say more about it than I did the others. It definitely affects more people, usually against their will.

There are writers and commentators who dichotomize “cultural”

issues (abortion, gay marriage, gender-fluidity, critical race theory, immigration, free speech, parental oversight of K-12 education, etc.) from issues such as economic inequality, what I've described as the redistribution of wealth upwards (welfare-statism in reverse, if you will), wage stagnation, inflation, the growing homelessness crisis, and so on.

Some on the left – Robert Reich is an [example](#) – contend that the former are distractions from the latter, and that the latter are the fault of Republicans, or of conservatives generally. Conservatives, Reich charges, harp about, e.g., wokery, so they don't have to talk about the people struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

Reich actually accuses Ron DeSantis of “making up” wokery in corporations like Disney!

Some on the right, however, so-called free-marketers, indeed largely ignore economic matters such as the growing concentration of wealth at the top. They seem to believe that if you're homeless, it's because you're on drugs, not because your part-time job was no longer sufficient to pay your escalating rent. Such so-called pundits appear to think the 21st century U.S. economy really is a meritocracy, that the billionaire class actually worked for all that money and didn't just work the financial system.

I sometimes feel like shouting it from my rooftop: ***IT'S NOT EITHER-OR, PEOPLE! IT'S BOTH-AND!***

That wokery doesn't really exist (or is harmless if it does) is an official narrative of many on the left. That economic inequality doesn't matter, or that one's status as a “99.99 percenter” is exclusively a matter of one's own bad choices, is the official narrative of some on the right.

Both are real, and both are existential threats to Western civilization as we know it.

Left-wing billionaires fund cultural confrontations. Their neoliberal equivalents help undermine the middle class with class warfare.

Class warfare? Isn't that a Marxist-type notion?

Warren Buffett once observed, "There's class warfare alright, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning."

He probably knows what he's talking about!

Fortunately, *some* conservatives are paying attention to the worsening predicament of working people. Leftists kicked them to the curb as too white, too straight, and above all, too Christian.

The right that began to rise after the financial meltdown of 2008 is thus less prone to ignore economic and "structural" issues.

This has led to an internecine struggle between two groups with very different philosophies, both of whom claim to be *conservative*. ([Here.](#))

One group, remnant "movement conservatives" of old for whom Ronald Reagan was the idol, gave us the Bushes, Romney, McCain, Kemp, etc.; in media, George Will among others. This group insists on all those things that have aggravated the redistribution of wealth upwards – what biologist turned macrohistorian Peter Turchin, in his fascinating book [End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites, and the Path of Political Disintegration](#) (2023) calls a *wealth pump*.

These include so-called free trade, immigration (which drives down everybody's wages by oversupplying labor), and in general whatever enables global corporations to make money: "globalization" generally. Neoliberalism is their economic theory, and if it results in once-thriving communities going

into tailspins when employers move jobs overseas, leaving only Walmart which had already forced all the mom-and-pop stores to close (and then the Walmart closes!), so be it.

Reinvent yourselves, peasants! (That's the 21st century equivalent of "Let them eat cake!")

I've described the narratives that led to such results as having collapsed, lost their credibility with voters of various stripes. That is how Donald Trump was able to win the presidency, never having held public office. It had brought about Occupy Wall Street and fueled the Bernie Sanders movement among younger leftists. The DNC, being far more Machiavellian than the RNC, was able to stop left-populism. Hence the Bidenista catastrophe.

The *second group* consists of those who supported Trump whether they liked him personally or not: the "nationalist conservatives" who voted for him twice and who listen to Steve Bannon and Tucker Carlson. These folks, *counter-elites* in Turchin's jargon, are deeply suspicious of so-called free trade, open borders, and too-big-to-fail corporate leviathans.

The "nationalists" understand that a problem exists when corporations' loyalty to the almighty dollar trumps their loyalty to the country, and are even more destructive when they go woke.

This second group thus favors what academically-trained economists (most of whom are globalists in a loose sense) disdain as "protectionism": government builds, or rebuilds, and supports a country's manufacturing base against outsiders – especially China!

These two areas, the cultural and the economic, are *both* important, in other words.

It would be nice if the two groups could talk to each other, but I fear that without realizing it, they harbor different

worldviews. The purveyors of globalized “free trade,” etc., are *de facto* materialists, for whom money and power get the last word even if they don’t put it so bluntly. The cultural conservatives tend to be Christians, for whom not everything is subject to “the market” because God gets the final say and His Word is not for sale!

Thus my concern is to prompt more discussion of *worldviews* (see links below), which orient our thought about what kind of world this is, how we fit into it and how we came to be, and help us lay out for ourselves and our progeny what is of value in life and how to go about pursuing it: in the end, how to build, strengthen, and sustain healthy families, and communities that allow genuine human interaction on its own terms.

If, as some conservatives say, economics is downstream from culture, then culture and community are downstream from worldview.

Summing up: doubtless some so-called pundits have what they call idiot-detection systems, or BS-exposing devices. These do not do the right things. The above three categories, to my mind, help us single out those whose interest is in furthering agendas and perpetuating positions whatever the consequences, not in seeking truth.

What matters, of course, is what helps us live fulfilled lives surrounded by loved ones, adding genuine value to our communities – lives of some self-chosen combination of learning, loving, productive work, and exploration – lives not dictated by tyrants or buffeted about by forces only power elites can control. Many of us would put Christ at the center, agreeing with real pundits who have said that if men do not bow before Him they will find themselves forced to bow before tyrants and dictators.

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In 2021 I published my book [*What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory*](#). Here, in three parts, are reasons you should think about reading the book if you've interest in the role *worldviews* play in civilization, and in shaping our lives:

[Part I.](#) [Part II.](#) [Part III.](#)

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