

Belief and Trust

by Bill Herbst

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These are very hard times for traditionalists. The medium-term status quo is getting the stuffing beaten out of it. This doesn't mean that conservatives are under assault and going down. No, they just have to reach further back in time. It's no longer good enough to yearn for the "good old days" of the 1950s or even the 1920s. Nope. These days, ethical and thoughtful conservatives must reach way back in time, further than before — hundreds or thousands or even tens of thousands of years ago to find their inspirations. On top of that, they have to stop trusting the majority of current "authorities" and stop believing in the status quo "wisdom."

The past hundred years are undergoing wholesale revisionism. The halcyon days when most of America trusted and believed in Walter Cronkite or Huntley and Brinkley are long gone and not coming back. The unmasking of half-truths and outright lies has been underway for some time now, and the process of chopping up the old sacred cows has now achieved full critical mass. Everything that was once taken for granted is up for review. Much of what was previously accepted as truth is being hauled into the harsh court of public opinion for interrogation and cross-examination.

Take food, for instance. There was a time, back toward the end of the 19th century, when the American farmer was considered the savior of humanity. We were the breadbasket of the world. What happened? Well, many things, but mainly agri-business — food as commodity. By the time the 1970s rolled around, Congress had adopted the "Food Pyramid," agri-business was in charge with near-total domination of the marketplace, and the grand experiment of the high-carbohydrate/low-fat diet was underway. The American public was enlisted en masse as test subjects, guinea pigs, and lab rats. The result? An entire country (and, to a slightly lesser extent, an entire world) riddled with obesity, diabetes, a myriad of auto-immune disorders, and diseases of premature aging. The winner of the experiment was Big Pharma, which makes the medicines that sick Americans are "encouraged" (a gentler synonym for "forced") to turn to. Some die early, most are sick, and many (although a smaller percentage) get rich. It's one hell of a racket.

This is, of course, the dragon eating its own tail. America has become very willing to cannibalize itself. Big tobacco is probably the most famous industry that exemplifies the nasty ways that business is conducted in this country. All the tobacco companies knew damned well that their product was toxic and deadly, yet they went right ahead producing and marketing cigarettes in as gung-ho

a manner as possible. Growing tobacco was a staple in the American South for two centuries. Early farmers did very well with the crop. Along the way, manufacturing and selling cigarettes became an uber-lucrative business that made company owners rich. Since money trumps every other consideration in America, those who profited did everything in their power and whatever was required (including bald-faced lies) to keep the gravy train chugging along.

The executives and their hired “scientists” and marketing firms consistently and vehemently denied being purveyors of Death Culture for as long as they could — in some ways even up to the present day. So what if their customers sickened and died? Those customers were considered Them, not Us, to the tobacco companies. Mere cannon fodder, like lambs ripe to be sacrificed at the altar of profits. Even as cigarette smoking was slowly being reduced in America, Big Tobacco looked for ways to replenish its customer base in foreign markets. Faced with the prospect of admitting that they were selling poison and death, Big Tobacco doubled down and headed out to conquer the world. Within just a couple decades, cigarette smoking had saturated China and Malaysia.

The hard truth is that business cannot be trusted. Authorities of all stripes are not dependably trustworthy — not in government, not in science, not in commerce, and sure as hell not in public relations, marketing, or advertising.

The mistrust within the public tends to crystallize in various ways, one of which is through what has come to be called “conspiracy theories.” Are there actually hidden conspiratorial groups that are secretly plotting to dupe the public by producing narratives designed to control and command public opinion in their favor? Well, duh! Of course there are. What is most amazing, however, is that many conspiracies are often visible and nearly transparent. They aren’t cloaked in veils of secrecy at all. Instead, they’re openly corrupt. (For instance, the fact that your medical doctor is likely to prescribe statins for a host of reasons is an example of an open conspiracy involving false and corrupted science that has come to dominate western medicine.)

The techniques of spreading narratives are now so sophisticated, well-organized, and widespread that the conspirators don’t even have to pretend. They simply put out a lie, support it with more lies, then say *“Believe what we’re telling you,”* and a majority of Americans will accept whatever toxic garbage they’re being spoon-fed.

That’s how ubiquitous marketing is in America. I’d wager that 60% of the public can be made to believe just about anything. Another 20% might be doubtful, but will go along to get along. The last 20% includes many different eccentrics — thoughtful, independent thinkers, willfully philosophical extremists, quiet refuseniks, and all sorts of crankier deviants.

This last group is where the conspiracy theorists congregate. The schemes and stories they come up with to counter or undermine the status-quo popular narratives (by presuming to reveal the harsher truths behind the comforting fictions) range from reasonably mild alternatives to utterly bizarre fantasies.

Given how internet-based social media works, the most extreme conspiracies often go viral. Is the earth flat? Did NASA and the U.S. government fake the Moon landings in 1969? Was Barack Obama born in the U.S.? These and other gonzo stories receive elaborate and passionate support, although the arguments are often illogical and easily debunked. Part of what keeps such wild scenarios alive is disillusionment and deep dissatisfaction with the standard institutional narratives, especially when hard digging reveals some of those to be fabricated.

Certain conspiracy theories are very well-founded. It has been demonstrated as undeniably true through factual documentation that the CIA has messed with individuals (including American citizens); infiltrated groups to falsely discredit them; and masterminded, funded, staged, or supported coups that overturned legitimately-elected national governments around the world (just a few examples include Iran in 1952, Chile in 1973, and the 2014 Maidan uprising in Ukraine that led to the current war, but many more have been revealed). America's spooks have been both well-funded and very busy.

Consider COVID-19. Despite truly draconian efforts to protect the prevailing mainstream narratives from any questioning, the entire history of the virus' creation, the pandemic that followed, and the vaccines that were supposed to save us is proving to have been falsified. The government's complete refusal to consider alternative treatments, misinformation about masks and social distancing, the devastating commercial lockdowns, and the authoritarian vaccine mandates are steadily debunked. This is slow going for numerous reasons — the complicity is institutionally so deep and widespread, relatively few authorities have thus far confessed their corruption, and a significant percentage of the American public remains hypnotized by the original fear-based story-telling. But it is steadily occurring, a little more with each passing month.

Along the way of those revelations, various wild conspiracy theories occasionally ignite and shoot off like firecrackers, burning brightly for a moment before they flame out — stuff like nanobots supposedly engineered into the mRNA vaccines that would presumably allow the deep state to track our every move. Hell, business and government already do that by recording what we watch, what we buy, and where we spend our time online. Although I have no doubt that someone, somewhere is working on the development of nano technologies of every sort, they're not commonplace yet, and the Monsters are doing fine without them.

The upshot to all this is that the authoritative structures of the institutional patriarchy are breaking down. Turns out the *"Father Does NOT know best."* The entire pecking order of society is already a mere shadow of its former self, and it may not be viable at all for much longer. The many inevitable manifestations of Civilizational Collapse are accumulating, contributing to the demise of our former and longstanding naïve trust and faith in authorities.

Is there a better way for civilization to be organized beyond socially enforced conformity, or is this the best we can do as humans? We don't yet know. We aren't likely to learn that before Collapse has hit full critical mass. Although a

broad spectrum of opinions are currently held by diverse individuals and groups about such a dire crossroads eventually being reached (presumably through natural disasters such as climate disruption or the sheer insane human folly of destructive politics or war), no trustworthy consensus exists about when Collapse will actually overtake us. Basically, we need to have already entered a Post-Collapse world before we can even begin to figure out what might be a better alternative to replace the current madness that made Collapse at first likely and then finally inevitable.

If any humans survive the coming travail (meaning that our species manages to not exterminate itself in total extinction), then the survivors will face the challenge of reconstituting society. We need to figure out a better way to live in groups of more than 75-150 people without inadvertently driving ourselves insane. In terms of evolutionary biology, we are hard-wired to do well in small kinship bands (that's the 75-150 people). More than that and our innate biology begins to work against us rather than for us. Thus, it remains uncertain that a large, relatively impersonal "mass society" (where any individual knows only a small number of people, while the great bulk of humanity remains distant) could ever work for human beings. We aren't suited to it, and we have no viable way to accelerate our evolution to harmonize with it.

The only thing I feel relatively certain about (and I'm pushing the envelope to assert even this) is that Modern Civilization as it exists currently cannot be saved or salvaged by reform from within. All our best, most well-intentioned efforts to correct what is wrong with society, culture, and civilization suffer one of two lousy fates. First, they may not get implemented at all, largely because we disagree amongst ourselves on what to spend our limited resources on. Second, even if such efforts to improve society are actually agreed on and attempted, they end up being corrupted so quickly and completely that they lose any viable possibility of helping to turn around the "ship" of civilization before it careens over the falls and crashes on the rocks below.

That "going over the falls" might be so slow and gradual that we don't fully realize it's happening. In many ways, that's what's occurring now — the slow decay that many of us notice but are unable to do anything about. Alternately, the crescendo of Collapse might eventually hit critical mass and skyrocket so suddenly, dramatically, and totally that it will take our breath away (literally). Between those two scenarios — *slow-slow-slow* and *slow-slow-fast* — I don't know which is more likely. Either way, though, there's going to be pain.

While I don't wish to lobby for mass suffering or death, I can't say for sure that it won't happen. There are eight billion of us now. How many present or future humans might inhabit a Post-Collapse world is far beyond my ability to know, speculate about, or even guess.