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Conspiracy Theories in a Nutshell

Or:

"What they won't teach you about it on Wikipedia"

TOC

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- What's told us to be cool
- The ideal Group Size for the Elite
- Lewin's Experiment on Society Forms

Definition

“A conspiracy theory is an explanation for an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy by sinister and powerful groups, often political in motivation, when other explanations are more probable. The term has a negative connotation, implying that the appeal to a conspiracy is based on prejudice or insufficient evidence.”[1]

Goals of this talk

Examples:

- QAnon
- US didn't prevent Pearl Harbor
- Moon Landing was faked

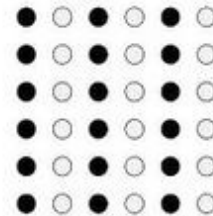
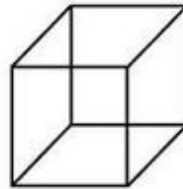
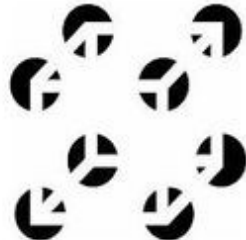
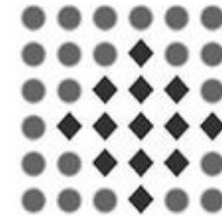
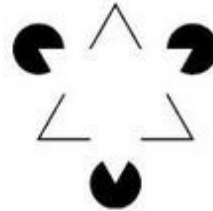
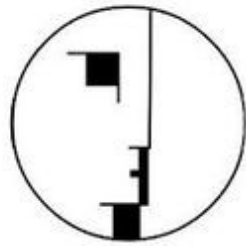
Goals of this talk

- But is it that irrational to believe, Jeffrey Epstein didn't kill himself?
- Common Criteria:
 - Impossible to falsify
 - Thought to be wrong by a Majority
 - Hardly to be altered by contradicting Evidence

Goals of this talk

- Explain different Approaches and how they Form the Wikipedia Articles
- Giving some own, plausible Theses that go a little beyond.
- Giving the Audience a Glimpse of Insight into their own Thinking
- DISCUSSION!!!

Gestalt Psychology



Gestalt Psychology

- Psychological Theory, originating from early 20th Century
- Human Mind is a cognitive Apparatus
- It sees Patterns, where there are none → “Gestaltwahrnehmung”
- Original Program:
 - To make an Inventory of those Acts of Interpretation
 - To explain human Thinking

A World full of Patterns



Gestalt Psychology

Illusionary Pattern Recognition

- We try to make sense of an complex world.
- Examples
 - Superstition in HCI (“Praying to Win 10 to boot up”)
 - Skinners Pigeon (basically Contiguity in both Cases)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7m8Krk2RKH0>

Evolutionary Psychology

- Psychological Theory, originating from early 20th Century
- Human Mind is a cognitive Apparatus
- It sees Patterns, where there are none → “Gestaltwahrnehmung”
- Original Program:
 - To make an Inventory of those Acts of Interpretation
 - To explain human Thinking

Evolutionary Psychology

- The human Thinking Apparatus adapts to and forms the environment to fulfill its goals.

What we are told to be cool

- Evolutionary old traits showing genetical fitness
- The rest is socially defined
- It's a spectrum!

Differential Psychology

- Psychology of differences in individuals
- There are traits promoting tendencies towards Conspiracy Theories
 - Anxiety
 - Paranoia
 - Authoritarian Beliefs

Social Psychology

- Psychology of perceived thinking of others
- Social Pressure
- Feeling of “belonging”
- Social repressions
- Cognitive Dissonance!!!!

Cognitive Dissonance

- It is possible that an individuals and thinking contradict each other
- The mind tries to resolve this conflict by:
 - Adding or removing cognitions
 - Changing behavior
- Adding cognitions is usually easier.
 - In most cases towards preservation of self esteem
- Eg. : Justification after buying a new car

What's told us to be cool

- Be stronger!
- Be smarter!
- Be better!
... than the rest

The ideal Group Size for the Elite

- Big enough to dominate
- Small enough to be exclusive
 - Holding up the concept of “the others”
- Eg. : social groups during puberty

Lewin's Experiment

Kurt Lewin [2]

- American social psychologist
- Wanted to prove the superiority of western, democratic societies
- Experiments with groups of children
 - “Democrats win in Science and Arts”.
 - “Fascists win, if effective Chain of Command is needed”
- Why does everybody crave for a strong leader in times of need?

My two Cents

- Everyone wants to be better than average.
- For that, everyone wants access to better information than average.
- The wish often forges the thought.
- Especially in times of need!

Thank you!

Bibliography

- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy_theory#Attractions_of_conspiracy_theory
- [2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Lewin