



## Radical Conservatism, False Dilemma, Racism, and COVID-19: The Wuhan Lab and Bat Eating Conspiracy Theories

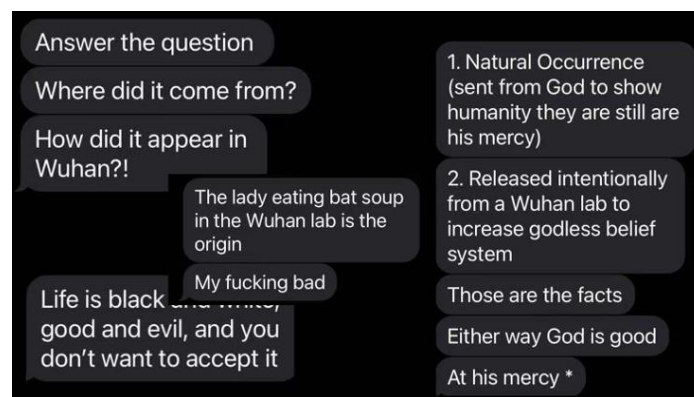
*“In face of racism, covered or uncovered, call it out as it is!”*

Li Zhaozhi

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Yesterday, I had a conversation with one of my friends at college. As we ran into some disagreements, the conversation turned toxic. He initiated an assault on my home country, China, and its respected civilization. He talked about COVID-19 and was heavily biased towards two conspiracy theories mainly fuelled by conservatives in the United States of America – the Wuhan lab leak and bat soup.

As our conflict intensified, he started spewing hate on me with intrusive comments and became transparent about his hyper-nationalistic conservative view of the world. Below is a screenshot of his comments. You can clearly see his stance on this issue.



No matter how hard he tried to clarify his identity as a non-racist person, I called it out as it is – he made an *ignorant*, *racist*, and *irresponsible* comment on an ethnic group and its culture. While he calls himself a “progressive conservative”. I say, he was moving backwards without acknowledging it.

At the centre of the spirit of science are the will to seek facts, the courage to acknowledge ignorance, and the appreciation of nature. Progression is possible *only if* we acknowledge our ignorance and have the courage to say, “I don’t know yet”. A conclusion should never come easy without *supporting facts and repeated testing of hypotheses* because concluding what we do not *truly* know is no different from tricking ourselves. This type of conclusion makes what is

possible impossible and holds us back from becoming intelligent and searching for our appropriate spot in this world. It is also what lazy, usually unaccomplished, people do – to avoid necessary work that requires effort.

Obviously, this world is not black or white, good or evil – like it or not, it is full of unknowns and complexity. We are still on the journey of exploring this world and ourselves. We should always seek facts and leave no stone unturned. Otherwise, we will fall into *false dilemmas* – basing ourselves on premises that erroneously limit what options are available.

*“To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.”*

Confucius

As the Chinese master Confucius said that “To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is *true knowledge*.” Similarly, the Greek philosopher Socrates also believed that “To know, is to know you know nothing. That is the meaning of *true knowledge*.” There is no coincidence that these two philosophers, coming out from entirely different cultural backgrounds, would make these comments with such a high degree of similarity; therefore, we can reasonably say that this is the definition of *true knowledge* that most people would agree on.

*“To know, is to know you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge.”*

Socrates

Some people say philosophy offers no answer. It is not entirely true because this world is philosophical by nature. Whether you study God or mathematics, the highest degree you can ever earn is a PhD (DPhil or Doctor of *Philosophy*) in which the “Ph” stands for *philosophy*. Philosophy offers a way of thinking, and this way of thinking will lead us to the answers that we seek so desperately. It is perfectly fine and natural that we are more comfortable with knowns and definitive answers; however, progression will come only if we start challenging ourselves and the premises we made. This is how we moved from Flat Earth to Round Earth, Geocentrism to Heliocentrism, and so on.

Moving back to this conversation between me and my friend, I was shocked and utterly disappointed at his disrespect for science, nature, progression, and my culture. While we came over many challenges together as friends, this is by far the worst challenge we have ever faced. I do not believe I should get over this challenge easily because it is irresponsible to lie to myself and him as a friend.

I tricked myself many times that he would change and become less hostile to people around. In midst of the *#BlackLivesBetter* movement in 2020, his intrusive comments blended with some “unpopular” views sparked anger from some college students and was reported to the university’s administration. His comments were made public on [Instagram](#).

When he was at the risk of expulsion and the lowest point in his four years of undergraduate education, I tried to calm him down with care. I trusted him that he is not a racist. However, after this conversation, I started to doubt myself. I started to ask myself if he is a racist, and if so, what my *moral standard* should be if I continue my connection with this person.

I respect the power of nature, and I acknowledge that I do not know where this virus came from. I cannot approve or disapprove these theories, but I believe it is simply *irresponsible* to get conclusive that these theories are the only possible answers.

Hence, reluctantly, I decided to cut off our friendship. I believe this is the best for both of us.