

TITLE

SORRY REPORT 2ND ISSUE

IMG

IGNORANCE



To remain innocent may also be to remain ignorant. —John Berger



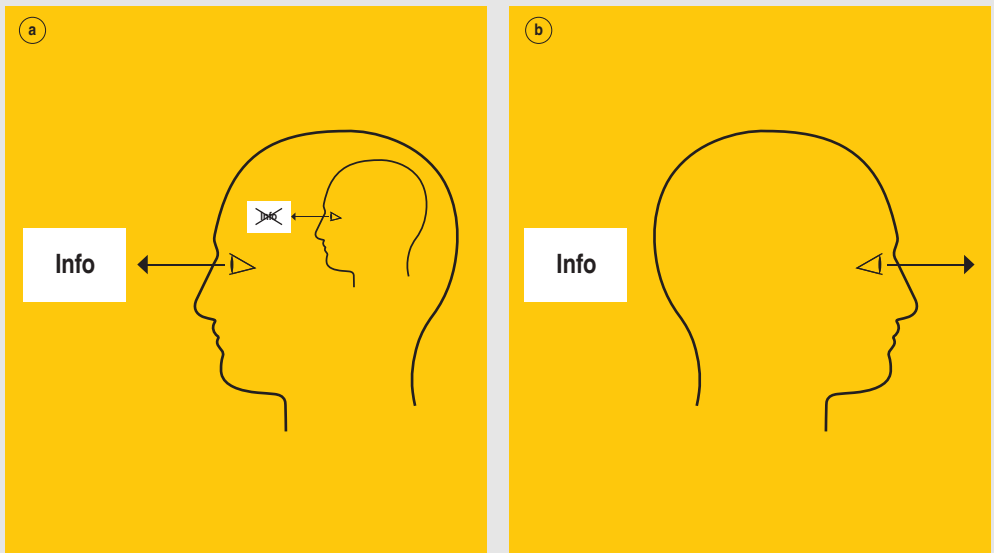
INNOCENT



IGNORANT

DEFINITION

IGNORANCE is a lack of knowledge / non-knowledge. The word ignorant describes a person in state of unawareness, and can entail (a) individuals who deliberately ignore or disregard important information or facts, or (b) individuals who are unaware of important information or facts.



AGNOTOLOGY is the study of ignorance or doubt that is intentionally induced or maintained by the government or influential business companies. The prime example is the ignorance brought about by the tobacco industry about the effects of smoking. Social forces and hermeneutical frameworks make certain interpretations of and by minority groups possible or impossible, and thereby leading people to remain ignorant.

CASES

EU Skepticism ¹ Smoking ²



¹ Three crises have hit the EU in the past decade; the economic and financial crisis, the migrant crisis, and Brexit. Each of these crises has offered opportunities for populist parties and lent credence to the various Eurosceptic arguments voiced by demagogues and waves of populism and Euroscepticism have been breaking together. These tendencies have manifested themselves in the recent EU elections. There is without doubt room for improvement in the EU system. Yet, EU skepticism is ambiguously ignorant, firstly, towards economic realities, thus the mutual benefits of members within the trade union and within the global economy, and secondly, towards our history of war-mongering nationalism which culminated in WWII and the Shoa.

² "Doubt is our product, because doubt is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy." Big Tobacco's mantra: keep the controversy alive.

Speed Limit Controversy in Germany ³

Gun Control in the US ⁴



³ In January 2019, a proposal by a government-commissioned taskforce calling for a top speed limit of 130 kph on the autobahn highway system went public. The taskforce said, it would be the easiest and least expensive way to reduce the carbon emissions that help cause climate change and stem the carnage of traffic accidents. The country's transport minister Andreas Scheuer, however, said the idea went "against all common sense." Chancellor Angela Merkel quickly consigned the proposal to bureaucratic death via "further study." Germany's unregulated highways might be the most irrational aspect of its modern identity. But you cannot blame it on the Führer. He introduced speed limits to stop the river of blood on the roads to save lives for the war machinery. The freedom to speed was reintroduced as an act of sovereignty of the new West German state and has been defended—from "Freie Fahrt für freie Bürger" ("Free Driving for Free Citizens") to the "Nation of drivers"—as a last resort in an otherwise tightly regulated society.

⁴ As far as quasi-religious national obsessions go, gun control in America is up there with the German aversion to speed limits. Freedom to drive for free citizens!—the equivalent of the car lobby's most powerful slogan is the unwritten second Amendment of the US Constitution, which reads: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." In the US, despite having a gun-murder rate 25 times higher than that of other developed countries, there is no serious political action on how to reduce the killing. Even though the statistics demonstrate a non-disputable truth, only a quarter of Republican voters accept that. Most say America would have less crime if only more Americans were armed. And so the deathly silence continues: what happened in Las Vegas (2017) stayed in Las Vegas.

Populism ⁵ ⁶



5 Booming populism and political ignorance are two sides of the same coin. Around the world, voters seem to believe the craziest things. In the past presidential elections in the US, polls showed that more than a third of the public believed that Barack Obama was born in Kenya and that Hillary Clinton was involved with a satanic pedophilia ring (“Pizzagate”). In Europe, populists have been waltzing into the mainstream for years. Anti-intellectualism is their trademark and they harvest the instigated ignorance and fear of the receptive electorate. “The euro is a failed currency, a wrong currency, a failed experiment.”—Matteo Salvini; “The EU is like the Soviet Union”—Le Pen.

6 Recently, the Austrian government came under fire from an unexpected direction and the Ibizagate has led to a political earthquake. It exposed former FPÖ leader Strache’s true nature. His apparent eagerness to embrace corruption is in stark contrast to the “drain the swamp” rhetoric, which populists across Europe routinely deploy in their attempts to portray politics as a battle by decent ordinary people against a venal elite. In Ibizata, a honey trap lured him into talking to an unidentified woman purporting to be the niece of a Russian oligarch. When the woman expressed an interest in gaining control of the country’s largest-circulation tabloid, Kronen Zeitung, a chain-smoking Strache suggested he could offer inflated public contracts in exchange for campaign support. Chancellor Kurz, quite a demagogue himself, had to announce the end of the coalition. “Enough is enough”, he said as protesters gathered outside his chancellery and chanted the Vengaboys’ 1999 hit “We’re Going to Ibiza!”. Strache commented “It was just a drunk story”. However, the unmasking of the true nature of the FPÖ has not harmed their subsequent success in the EU elections. The following day, the Kurz government was impeached. The Austrian lesson shows that revealing falsehood and moral shortcomings only help to foster the populistist ongoing siege of minds and war against reason.

The Brexit Baloney ^{7 8 9}

BJ: LET MY PEOPLE GO YOU:



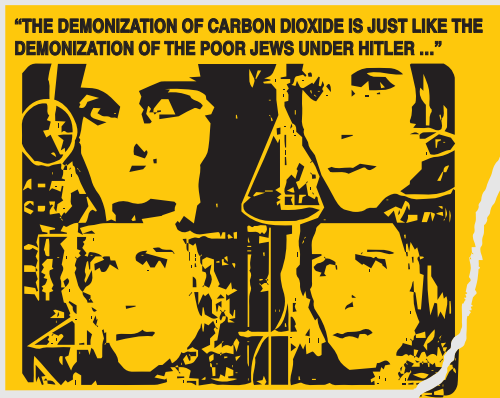
7 In the UK's EU referendum, the Leave side pushed the false claim that the UK sent £350m a week to the EU. It is hard to think of a previous example in modern western politics of a campaign leading with a transparent untruth, maintaining it when refuted by independent experts, and going on to triumph anyway. The UK Statistics Authority declared itself "Disappointed to note that there continue to be suggestions that the UK contributes £350m to the EU each week, and that this full amount could be spent elsewhere". Four days after the referendum, Chris Grayling, the then leader of the House of Commons, downgraded the promise to "an aspiration". Dominic Cummings, the campaign's director, has admitted: "Would we have won without £350m/NHS? All our research and the close result strongly suggests no."

8 "It is time for the PM to channel the spirit of Moses in Exodus, and say to Pharaoh in Brussels—let my people go."
—Boris Johnson (Former Foreign Secretary, March 2019)

9 "The madder Hulk gets, the stronger Hulk gets."
—Boris Johnson (UK Prime Minister, September 2019)

Climate Change ^{10 11 12}

Racism ^{13 14}



10 Climate Change? It's a hoax. Not only Ernesto Araújo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs appointed by Brazil's newly elected president, Jair Bolsonaro, thinks so. He has called global warming a plot by "cultural Marxists" and has eliminated the Climate Change Division of the Ministry. Climate change denial has become as necessary to one's right-wing identity as aversion to immigration, opposition to most abortions and a disbelief that sexual harassment and assault are widespread. They seek refuge in the fantasy that there is reasonable doubt as to the existence of climate change or the severity of the problem. Ideology has won out over empirical reality.

11 In the EU alone, air traffic generated 152 million tons of greenhouse gases per year in 2015. And it's an upward trend. So as long as individual ignorance remains selective and is picked to suit the chosen lifestyle—driving a big SUV to go to spinning class to get in shape for the next plane trip to the Azores, for instance—it doesn't take climate change deniers to wreck our planet.

12 "The demonization of carbon dioxide is just like the demonization of the poor Jews under Hitler," said the physicist, William Happer, who serves on the National Security Council as the president's deputy assistant for emerging technologies in the US.

13 Today, the everyday mechanisms of white ignorance are colour-blind. The sociological concept operates under the assumption that we are living in a world that is "post-race", where race no longer matters. This results in four beliefs: 1. racial groups receive merit-based privileges, 2. most people do not notice nor are they concerned about race, 3. social inequality today is due to "cultural deficits" of individual people or racial or ethnic groups, and 4. therefore, there is no need to pay "systematic attention" to any current inequities. In sum, ignoring real racism today, is useful for cloaking and re-producing the contemporary structural mechanics of a white supremacy.

14 Chancellor Merkel does acknowledge the migration issue to be the "mother of all political problems" in Germany. The mother of all problems are ignorance and racism, according to Göring-Eckardt.

Vaccination ¹⁵

Alternative Facts ¹⁶

HIGHLIGHTING AREAS WHERE PEOPLE WERE NOT STANDING, WHILE IN YEARS PAST, THE GRASS ELIMINATED THIS VISUAL.



15 This isn't just a public health crisis. It's a public sanity one. How many studies do you have to throw at hysterics before they quit? How much of a scientific consensus and how many unimpeachable experts must you present? The World Health Organization lists "vaccine hesitancy" among 10 global health threats in 2019. Unfortunately, Anti Vaxxers are only immune against rational arguments. Despite all scientific facts, the paranoia movement continues to influence parents. These groups built bubble momentum without the opportunity for any form of meaningful evidence-based rebuttal. Their recklessness and the attendant re-emergence of measles aren't just a public health crisis. They are emblematic of too many people's willful disregard of evidence, proud suspicion of expertise and estrangement from reason. Because it would be too simple: vaccinations are safe, effective and essential to safeguarding our health and that of our children.

16 On the morning after Donald Trump's inauguration in January, Sean Spicer, the new White House press secretary, called a special press conference and insisted belligerently that "this was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe". The crowd in photographs of Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration looked larger, he claimed, because of new white floor coverings laid on the National Mall that had the effect of "highlighting areas where people were not standing, while in years past, the grass eliminated this visual". Their position was hilariously unsustainable, yet Kellyanne Conway, senior aide to the president found some way of reconciling the bogus claim with photographic evidence: "Don't be so overly dramatic about it. You're saying it's a falsehood [...] Sean Spicer, our press secretary, gave alternative facts to that." $2 + 2 = 5$.

Ignorance is a bliss! ¹⁷

Love ¹⁸



17 The advantage of being ignorant has many faces. Philip Kitcher (Columbia University) systematized them. The knowledge of the limits of one's own knowledge, which drives researchers to extend them, is just as useful as the one that results from cognitive division of labor. In addition, to leave a question open is always better than believing in something wrong.

18 Love is blind. And ignorant. How little do we have to know to fall in love with another person? The question sounds strange, but if you look at the story of love, it is central. In 1274 Dante Alighieri met Beatrice, he was nine, she eight years old. Dante hardly spoke to her, yet he fell in love immediately. Although both married other partners, almost never met again and Beatrice died relatively early, she remained the great love of his life, immortalized in his poetry. 1327 the poet Francesco Petrarca met the young Laura in a church in Avignon. Laura was 17 and already married. Petrarca did not know her, but one glance at her was enough to perpetuate his love for her in his poems and to treat her as his guardian angel for a lifetime. Their love took the form of what the cultural scientist Andreas Bernard would call "non-knowledge". As Bernard describes, non-knowledge is also productive. It creates culture, long-lasting beliefs, feelings, powerful rituals and practices. Non-knowledge is not the absence of knowledge. The power of not knowing is strong, but in our information-saturated society, knowledge has become such a central part of the economy, technology and culture that we have begun to ignore its power. With the dawn of the digital age, the history of love as a history of non-knowledge has disappeared: meeting through Internet dating platforms or on Facebook has become a matter of pure information gathering. Profiles contain unequivocal knowledge ("I'm single, I like haute cuisine and I'm looking for a 30-to-40-year-old woman who travels with me to concerts and restaurants"). This is a drastic difference to falling in love, which is an unconscious reaction to another person. Love can hijack our reason, it can cause us to deviate from our social habits, precisely because the unconscious is part of their game.

The Veil of Ignorance ¹⁹



19 If you must swallow poison, drink the whole cup: The theorist John Rawls introduced the idea of a “veil of ignorance” into the philosophical discourse. Under a “veil of ignorance”, people of a fictional primeval state have to decide in which social order they want to live—without knowing what place they will have in the new order. The “veil of ignorance” is a method of determining the morality of issues. It asks a decision-maker to make a choice about a social or moral issue, and assumes that they have enough information to know the consequences of their possible decisions for everyone but would not know, or would not take into account, which person he or she is. As Rawls put it, “no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like”. The idea of the thought experiment is to render obsolete those personal considerations that are morally irrelevant to the justice or injustice of principles meant to allocate the benefits of social cooperation. Not knowing one’s ultimate position in society leads to the creation of a just system, as the decision-maker would not want to make decisions which benefit a certain group at the expense of another, because the decision-maker could theoretically end up in either group. In sum, radical ignorance enables a social contract that suddenly guarantees fairness. By maximising the minimum. Sorry.

APPENDIX

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