

# Morten Tolboll



## A Dictionary of Thought Distortions

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Dedication:

Soli Deo Gloria

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## **Introduction**

Thought distortions are “techniques”, that, unconscious or conscious, are used from an interest in finding ways of getting on in the world, rather than an interest in finding ways of discovering the truth. Thought distortions are the background for poor reasoning, diversionary ploys, seductive reasoning errors, techniques of persuasion and avoidance, psychological factors, which can be obstacles to clear thought.

Critical thinking, or philosophy, is in opposition to thought distortions. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions, and examining them by presenting reasons and evidence in support of conclusions. Critical thinking is the only tool you can use in order to explore, change and restructure thought distortions. It is not

something psychotherapy should take care of. A central thought distortion in connection with that is **Subjective validation**. Philosophical counseling (true spiritual counseling) claims that our problems are due to a separation of the observer and the observed. In its practice it directs itself away from the observed, towards the observer himself. Psychotherapy directs itself towards the observed, and therefore tends to overlook the observer, and therefore the producer of thought distortions (read more under the thought distortion **Subjective validation**).

The difference between the use of thought distortions and the use of critical thinking is very shortly said, that those who use thought distortions are in the control of the thought distortion **Magical thinking**, which is active when you don't discriminate between image and reality, while critical thinking is active, when you do make this discrimination.

The difference can further be clarified by comparing the so-called Sophists with the philosopher Socrates:

After centuries of successful trading, the local gods and festivals could no longer satisfy the religious needs of the ancient Athenians. Their spiritual hunger was exacerbated by the stress of city life, by the constant threat of destruction, and by the grim vision of totalitarian Sparta: the vision of Greeks living without light or grace or humour, as though the gods had withdrawn from their world.

Into the crowded space of Periclean Athens came the wandering teachers, selling their "wisdom" to the bewildered populace. Any charlatan could make a killing, if enough people believed in him. Men like Gorgias and Protagoras, who wandered from house to house demanding fees for their instruction, preyed on the gullibility of a people made anxious by war.

To the young Plato, who observed their antics with outrage, these "Sophists" were a threat to the very soul of Athens. One alone among them seemed worthy of attention, and that one, the great Socrates whom Plato immortalised in his dialogues, was not a Sophist, but a true philosopher.

The philosopher, in Plato's characterisation, awakens the spirit of inquiry. He helps his listeners to discover the truth, and it is they who bring forth, under his catalysing influence, the answer to life's riddles. The philosopher is the midwife, and his duty is to help us to what we are – free and rational beings, who lack nothing that is required to understand our condition. The Sophist, by contrast, misleads us with cunning fallacies, takes advantage of our weakness, and offers himself as the solution to problems of which he himself is the cause.

There are many signs of the Sophists, but principal among these is that they are subjectivists and relativists. Their teachings are about how to get on in the world, and not about how to find the truth. Anything goes: not facts, but the best story wins. And the result is mumbo-jumbo, condescension and the taking of fees. The philosopher uses plain language, does not talk down to his audience, and never asks for payment. Such was Socrates, and in proposing him as an ideal, Plato defined the social status of the philosopher for centuries to come.

No one should doubt that sophistry is alive and well. My concept of *The Matrix Conspiracy* is permeated with it (see my article *The Matrix Conspiracy*). We see it in the mix of postmodern intellectualism (constructivism), management culture, self-help and New Age – and in the two main methods of this mix: psychotherapy and coaching (in the thought distortion **Four philosophical hindrances** I give a short introduction to the thoughts behind the Matrix Conspiracy).

The Sophists are back with a vengeance, and are all the more to be feared, in that they come disguised as philosophers and scientists. For, in this time of helpless relativism and subjectivity, philosophy and science alone have stood against the tide, reminding us that those crucial distinctions on which life depends – between true and false, good and evil, right and wrong – are objective and binding. Philosophy and science have until now spoken with the accents of the academy and laboratory, and not with the voice of the fortune teller.

When Plato founded the first academy, and placed philosophy at the heart of it, he did so in order to protect the precious store of wisdom from the assaults of charlatans, to create a kind of temple to truth in the midst of falsehood, and to marginalise the Sophists who preyed on human confusion.

The Sophists were teachers of rhetoric, who against a fee, taught people how to persuade other people about their “truths”. Rhetoric, or sophistry, is the art of persuasion. Rather than giving reasons and presenting arguments to support conclusions, as Socrates did, then those who use sophistry are employing a battery of techniques, such as emphatic assertion, persuader words and emotive language, to convince the listener, or reader, that what they say or imply is true.

The Sophists taught their pupils how to win arguments by any means available; they were supposedly more interested in teaching ways of getting on in the world than ways of finding the truth, as Socrates did. Therefore any charlatan is welcome. And the use of thought distortions is seen as the best tool, when practising the mantra of the management culture: “It is not facts, but the best story, that wins!”

So, this book is a “mini-dictionary” of the most common thought distortions. You can also see it as a “mini-course” in philosophy, or a manual in the Socratic way of life.

The book is a follow-up to the first three books on my teaching *Meditation as an Art of Life*:

- 1) Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader (2008)
- 2) Dream Yoga (2009)
- 3) A Portrait of a Lifeartist (2010).

It is also a reference book to my two books on the Matrix Conspiracy (The Matrix Conspiracy – part 1 and 2).

As a reference book and a textbook I have provided it with a great deal of references to articles and books. All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: [www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com](http://www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com)

Concepts that are explained elsewhere in the dictionary are marked in bold type.

## A

### **Ad hoc clauses**

Clauses added to a hypothesis to make the hypothesis consistent with some new observation or discovered fact. If your hypothesis is threatened by some inconvenient fact, which it is incapable of explaining, you have two options: you can either abandon your hypothesis and seek a new one which *is* capable of explaining this new fact; or else you can add a special clause to your general hypothesis, an *ad hoc* clause. Patching up a hypothesis is a move, which can be acceptable, but often it is not. Most often it is just a way of explaining away the inconvenient fact. Related to **Rationalization** and **Ignoring alternative explanations**.

### **Ad hominem move**

Ad hominem move is a Latin phrase meaning “to the person”. The devious move in debate, where you shift attention from the point in question to some non-relevant aspect of the person making it.

Calling someone's statement *ad hominem* is always a reproach. This reproach involves the claim that the aspects of the arguer's personality or behaviour, which have become the focus of discussion, are irrelevant to the point being discussed. Often ad hominem move is simply based on **Prejudice**. It can also be a **Rhetorical** move, for example setting up a **Straw man**.

Ad hominem move is a very widespread, and problematic, move among psychologists and psychotherapists, and in the whole of the New Age environment and the self-help industry, where they can't limit their theories to clients, wherefore it can be very difficult to have a normal discussion/relationship with these people (read more about the Ad Hominem Move in my articles *The Hermeneutics of suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry)* and *why I am an apostle of loafing* and *The Sokal Hoax*).

Ad hominem move is related to **Good Intentions Bias**, and **Hermeneutics of Suspicion**

### **Affect bias**

The affect bias refers to our tendency to make judgments based on feelings of liking or disliking with little input from deliberative reasoning.

The affect bias hinders our ability to see the potential negative consequences of our own position and the potential positive consequences of an opponent's position.

Related to **Prejudice**, **Persuader words**, **Rhetoric**, and **Sophistry**.

### **Anecdotal evidence**

Evidence which comes from selected stories either of what has happened to you or to someone you know. In many cases this is very weak evidence and typically involves generalizing from a particular case. Often anecdotal evidence is clouded by **Wishful thinking**. Related to **Testimonials**, **Selective thinking** and **Subjective validation**

### **Apophenia and pareidolia**

Apophenia is the spontaneous perception of connections and meaningfulness of unrelated phenomena. The term was coined by German neurologist and psychiatrist Klaus Conrad (1905-1961). Conrad focused on the finding of abnormal meaning or significance in random experiences by psychotic people. The term has found a place outside of psychiatry and is used to describe the natural tendency of human beings to

find meaning and significance in random, coincidental, or impersonal data. Apophenia may be described as the tendency to find personal information in noise, e.g., happening upon an open safety pin and seeing the arms as a sign indicating the time your son committed suicide.

Pareidolia is a type of illusion or misperception involving a vague or obscure stimulus being perceived as something clear and distinct. For example, in the discolorations of a burnt tortilla one sees the face of Jesus. Or one sees the image of Mother Teresa in the folds of a cinnamon bun or Vladimir Lenin in the soap scum of a shower curtain.

Apophenia and pareidolia can occur simultaneously as in the case of seeing a birthmark pattern on a goat as the Arabic word for Allah and thinking you've received a message from God. Likewise, not only seeing the Virgin Mary in tree bark but believing the appearance is a divine sign brings together apophenia and pareidolia. Seeing an alien spaceship in a pattern of lights in the sky is an example of pareidolia, but it becomes apophenia if you believe the aliens have picked you as their special envoy. Seeing Satan in the smoke of a burning building slips from pareidolia to apophenia when the viewer start thinking that Satan is giving the world a sign that he is alive and well.

Under ordinary circumstances, apophenia provides a psychological explanation for many delusions based on sense perception. For example, it explains many UFO sightings, as well as the hearing of sinister messages on records played backwards. Pareidolia explains Elvis, Bigfoot, and Loch Ness Monster sightings. Pareidolia and apophenia explain numerous religious apparitions and visions. And they explain why some people see a face or a building in a photograph of the Cydonia region of Mars.

But they don't explain all paranormal phenomena in relation to sense perception. Paranormal phenomena in relation to sense perception also have to be seen in relation to spiritual crises and mystical experiences (see my articles *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena* and *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with mystical experiences*).

Apophenia and pareidolia are related to **Arbitrary inference**, **Magical thinking** and **Wishful thinking**.

### **Arbitrary inference**

Arbitrary inference means that you make a causal linking of factors which is accidental and misleading. Is closely related to **Magical thinking**.

Arbitrary inference is also called the *post hoc fallacy*. For example: You can't start your car, wherefore you miss your airplane. A few hours later you hear that the plane has crashed and everybody on board have been killed. You think an angel was the cause of that your car couldn't start. Though it is true that the fact that you couldn't start your car, was the cause of that you saved your life, then it is an arbitrary inference to assume that an angel was the cause of that your car couldn't start.

The *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this therefore because of this) fallacy is based on the mistaken notion that because one thing happens after another, the first event was a cause of the second event. Post hoc reasoning is the basis for many superstitions and erroneous beliefs. Poor causal reasoning is combined with preconceived ideas about such things as a causal connection between astronomical events and tsunamis, dowsing and finding things, superstitious actions and outcomes on dice or cards, vaccines and autism or other disorders, acupuncture and pain relief, and homeopathy and headaches.

Arbitrary inference is one of the most common cognitive biases and one of the more difficult to overcome because the personal experience of immediacy seems to intuitively justify the making of a causal connection.

### **Argumentum ad populum**

In logic, an *argumentum ad populum* (Latin for “appeal to the people”) is a fallacious argument that concludes a proposition to be true because many or most people believe it; it alleges: “*if many believe so, it is so.*”

This type of argument is known by several names, including *appeal to the masses*, *appeal to belief*, *appeal to the majority*, *argumentum by consensus*, *authority of the many*, and bandwagon fallacy, and in Latin as *argumentum ad numerum* (“appeal to the number”), and *consensus gentium* (“agreement of the clans”). It is also the basis of a number of social phenomena, including **communal reinforcement** and the **bandwagon effect**, the Chinese proverb “three men make a tiger” concerns the same idea.

### **Attribution**

Attribution is a misleading way to explain incidents, for example one-sided ascribing the reason for, or the responsibility for, negative incidents, to yourself, or to other people or circumstances, without including other elements in the situation. Is closely connected with sense of guilt or anger. Also related to **Arbitrary inference** and **Projection**.

## **Availability bias**

The availability bias is a cognitive bias involving making quick judgments based on the speed with which memories are aroused and become available to the conscious mind. The main factors influencing the speed with which memories present themselves are recent frequency of similar experiences or messages, or the salient, dramatic, or personal nature of experiences.

In our culture, the mass media plays an important role in affecting what comes to mind quickly when we think of the frequency, importance, or causes of things. Rational judgments should be made on the basis of a consideration of all the relevant evidence, but many judgments we consider rational are made based on the ease with which they come to us. For example, a person might decide not to take a cruise to Alaska that she was about to book when she heard about the cruise ship Costa Concordia striking a reef near the Tuscan island of Giglio, killing more than 20 passengers. The safety of a cruise to Alaska has not diminished because of what happened off the coast of Italy, but the news report and videos immediately bring to the mind the horror of dying on a captized cruise ship. The decision not to take the planned cruise has been biased by the news of the Costa Concordia. Likewise, many people refuse to fly on a commercial airliner because someone they love died in an airplane crash, yet these same people will drive thousands of miles every year rather than fly, even though they are more likely to be killed in an automobile crash than in an airliner crash.

When asked for your opinion on teenage drug use, premarital sex, morals of politicians, good stocks to invest in, the incidence of violent crime, or any other subject that mass media outlets are likely to cover, the odds are that your answer will be based on what comes immediately to mind and that will be heavily influenced by what you've read, seen, or heard recently in the mass media. Or, your answer will be heavily influenced by personal experience. What is unlikely is that your opinion will be based on objective or scientific knowledge of the subject. This tendency to make judgments by the ease with which ideas come to mind is called the availability heuristic.

Scientific studies have shown that certain kinds of personality traits make one more susceptible to the availability bias. Schwartz et al. found that people who have great faith in intuition and people who are powerful (or made to feel powerful) tend to be affected more strongly by ease of retrieval than by the content they retrieve, if indeed they even bother with much content.

The way to mitigate the availability bias is to be aware of it and to take the necessary steps to get good data before making a judgment. For example, try to be aware that

when the first thing evoked in memory is a stereotype (see **Representativeness bias**) or is accompanied by very pleasant feelings, it becomes more difficult to overcome the availability bias.

The availability bias is a central issue in my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist*.

## **B**

### **Backfire effect**

The backfire effect is a curious response many people have to evidence that conflicts with their beliefs: instead of becoming open to possibility that the evidence might be correct and one might have to change one's mind, many people become more convinced that they were right in the first place. Yes, that's right. Some people's beliefs get *stronger* when evidence *against* their belief is presented to them. You would think that a rational person would base his beliefs on the strength of the evidence and that evidence against his belief should weaken rather than strengthen his belief, but there is a growing body of scientific evidence that has found most of us are not that rational when it comes to dealing with evidence that conflicts with beliefs we already hold.

I think, that the cause of backfire effect is because a belief has become an ideology. Ideologies are more interested in finding ways of getting on in the world, rather than in finding ways of finding the truth. Ideologies also seem to think black and white. Ideologies always have an anti-ideology, and enemy image, which they attribute on to everyone, who don't agree. An ideology is therefore characterized by, that it is not able to contain, or direct refuses, rationality and critical thinking. This will of course result in some kind of hostility toward the truth.

Backfire effect is related to **Motivated reasoning, Ideology, Cognitive dissonance** and **Politician's answer**.

Also read my articles *The difference between philosophical education and ideological education*, and *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing*.

### **Bandwagon effect**

The bandwagon effect, closely related to *opportunism*, is a phenomenon - observed primarily within the fields of microeconomics, political science, and behaviorism –

that people often do and believe things merely because many other people do and believe the same things. The effect is often called herd instinct, though strictly speaking, this effect is not a result of herd instinct. The bandwagon effect is the reason for the bandwagon's fallacy (see **Argumentum ad populum**).

As more people come to believe in something, others also "hop on the bandwagon" regardless of the underlying evidence.

The bandwagon effect occurs in voting: some people vote for those candidates or parties who are likely to succeed (or are proclaimed as such by the media), hoping to be on the "winner's side" in the end.

In microeconomics, bandwagon effect describes interactions of demand and preference. The bandwagon effect arises when people's preference for a commodity increases as the number of people buying it increases.

### **Begging the question**

Assuming the very point that is at issue. Sometimes this involves incorporating the conclusion of the argument into one of the premises.

For example, in a law case, if someone is being tried on an accusation of murder, and has pleaded not guilty, it would be begging the question to refer to them as "the murderer" rather than "the accused" until their guilt had been established.

Some forms of begging the question occur in the way questions are asked. Complex questions are often question-begging in this way. For instance, the question "When did you start beating your husband?" might be question-begging if the fact that you did beat your husband had yet to be established.

### **Black and white thinking**

Black and white thinking is to classify all situations, incidents or things, as an example of one of two extremes, when the facts actual are, that there between the two extremes exists a complete spectrum of other possible viewpoints.

Black and white thinking is a variation of **False dichotomy**.

Black and white thinking arises when you try to get the world to fit into very simple prejudiced categories. Words characterized by black and white thinking are words such as *must*, *shall*, *never*, *always*, as for example "all of it is hopeless", "it cannot possibly succeed", "I have to be better than the others", "nobody likes me".

Often the most basic assumptions about yourself and the world, are based on black and white thinking. Black and white thinking is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life. You come to live on postulates, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

## C

### **Catastrophe-thinking**

Catastrophe-thinking is unrealistic thoughts that are being connected with a harmless fact. For example when you under a dizziness-attack think: "I am going to die", "I am going mad". Or when you receive a bill a bit larger than expected and you think: "Everything is lost".

Catastrophe-thinking is out of proportions with reality, and you don't ask, or seek for contra-conceptions and alternatives. Follows often from **Black and white thinking**, and is closely connected with anxiety-development.

### **Classical conditioning and placebo effects**

Classical conditioning is a form of learning or physiological change. It is based on forming an association between a stimulus and a response. The association is remembered and affects future similar experiences. Some physiological responses to stimuli are unconditioned: they happen naturally and involuntary, like blinking, flinching, or the salivation response to the taste or odor of food. Other physiological responses are conditioned: for example, a dog can be conditioned to salivate when a bell is rung because the dog has been taught to associate the bell with food (Pavlov's famous experiment). Dogs injected with morphine begin to salivate and can be conditioned to salivate from any injection, whether with morphine or not.

Relief from pain is often attributed to the placebo effect when no active pain-killer has been administered and the patient reports that the pain has lessened. A more accurate description in some such cases, however, might be that the patient has learned to associate pain reduction with pushing a button that releases morphine or with getting a morphine injection.

Conditioning and associative learning – along with owner or practitioner expectation and self-deception – might explain why some animals appear to get relief from Reiki, Homeopathy, or Acupuncture.

Conditioning can involve much more than obvious factors like getting an injection, taking a pill, or being touched where it hurts. Conditioning can involve the theater of the medical setting and medical rituals, including the medical uniforms worn, medical jargon spoken, and medical gadgetry used. These conditions affect the patient's expectation of relief from the treatment, as does the manner of the healer. Patient expectation, it turns out, plays a significant role in the effectiveness of many kinds of treatment. Therefore related to **Communal reinforcement** and **Subjective validation**.

Classical conditioning is hypothesized to be the primary triggering mechanism for the placebo effect, which must be learned before it can manifest itself. When conditioning is combined with desire and motivation for relief, the placebo effect is boosted for both active and inert substances. Related to **Wishful thinking**.

So, the next time you are wondering how healers can cure people with a simple touch or by waving their hands in the air over a body part or by uttering some ineffable incantation, think that maybe, just maybe, some sort of conditioned response is going on. You don't have to call it a placebo effect. There may be other explanations for some placebo responses and the issue may be more complicated than you think. Your first inclination might be to think magic or miracle (especially when you have heard other people say the same), but first inclinations may be responses to the **Availability bias**. If it is truth you're after, you might want to consider alternative explanations to what your intuition tells you. Here related to **Ignoring alternative explanations**. It is also important to be aware of **Proof by ignorance**.

All in all: it is important to be aware that the placebo effect doesn't relate to any facts about a "healing energy", or a "proof" of the "power of thought" as for example NLP psychotherapists, New Thought thinkers, and hypnotherapists often claim. The placebo effect is very limited, most often it only has a short lasting effect, whereafter your problems return.

The placebo effect should therefore never be seen as a valid "cure" for anything. Furthermore, the placebo effect often involves, as for example in NLP, New Thought and hypnotherapy, intentional manipulation of behavior and the inducing of certain worldviews, that are very problematic (see my articles *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP)* and *Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)*, *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*, and *Hypnosis, hypnotherapy, and the art of self-deception*).

One of the more important responses placed under the rubric of the placebo effect is the reduction of stress. This is often discussed separately as the relaxation response.

A caring therapist who exudes confidence and caring in a comfortable and professional-looking clinical setting can be very therapeutic by relaxing the patient. The resulting reduction of stress is physically therapeutic by reducing stress hormones and perhaps stimulating the production of hormones that enhance one's mood. The tapping, the waving of hands, the movement of a light source, the hypnotic repeating of "positive" confirmations, prayer, or whatever gimmick the therapist might use is actually superfluous.

But this doesn't mean that I think *all* spiritual healing phenomena are due to Classical conditioning and placebo effects. Precisely the term relaxation is important, and therefore the practice of, for example, meditation; that is: spiritual practice (see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice*).

I also believe that a spiritual healing phenomenon can come from an outer source; that is: when all the above-mentioned thought distortions have been ruled out. I have examined this in my articles *The philosophy of Karen Blixen*, *The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice*, and *What is karma?*

But certain healing methods can also be extremely powerful in a demonical sense. In my article *A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork* I mention the problem of spiritual crises provoked by such therapeutic methods. Also see the thought distortions **Ego-inflation** and **Painbody**.

The demonical use of energy is also explained in my article on the philosophy of Karen Blixen. Furthermore it is examined in my article *A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching*.

### **Clustering illusion**

Clustering illusion is the intuition that random events, which occur in clusters, are not really random events.

To some, the occurrence of for example a number of cancers in a defined space cries out for a causal explanation in terms of some unknown environmental hazard (related to **Arbitrary inference**). To others, familiar with the data and knowledgeable of proper statistical analysis, the number of cancers occurring within the same defined space is expected by the laws of chance.

Sometimes a subject in an ESP experiment or a dowser might be correct at a higher than chance rate over a limited period of time. However, such results do not indicate that an event is not a chance event. In fact, such results are predictable by the laws of chance. Rather than being signs of non-randomness, they are actually signs of

randomness. ESP researchers are especially prone to take streaks of “hits” by their subjects as evidence that psychic power varies from time to time.

The clustering illusion is due to **Selective thinking** based on a counterintuitive but false assumption regarding statistical odds.

### **Cognitive dissonance**

Cognitive dissonance is a discomfort caused by holding conflicting ideas simultaneously. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance. They do this by changing their attitudes, beliefs and actions. Dissonance is also reduced by justifying, blaming and denying.

So, dissonance is aroused when people are confronted with information that is inconsistent with their beliefs. If the dissonance is not reduced by changing one’s belief, the dissonance can result in misperception or rejection of the information.

An overarching principle of cognitive dissonance is that it involves the formation of an idea or emotion in conflict with a fundamental element of the self-concept, such as “I am a successful/functional person”, “I am a good person”, or “I have made the right decision.” The anxiety that comes with the possibility of having made a bad decision can lead to **Rationalization**, the tendency to create additional reasons or justifications to support one’s choices.

One situation that may create dissonance is when someone does a favor for a person that they dislike. Here, the dissonance is between those negative feelings for the other person, and the awareness of having expended effort to help them. Cognitive dissonance predicts that people will try to resolve this dissonance by adopting a more positive attitude towards the other person.

A counterpart to this effect is when someone’s actions hurt another person, whom they regard positively or neutrally. In this case, one way to resolve the dissonance is to think more negatively about that person, so that they seem to deserve what happened to them.

Smoking is another example of cognitive dissonance, because it is widely accepted that cigarettes can cause lung cancer. Smokers could rationalize their behavior by concluding that only a few smokers become ill, that it only happens to very heavy smokers, or that if smoking does not kill them, something else will.

The phrase *cognitive dissonance* was coined by Leon Festinger in his 1956 book *When Prophecy Fails*, which chronicled the followers of a UFO cult as reality

clashed with their fervent beliefs. The book gave an inside account of the increasing belief which sometimes follows the failure of a cult's prophecy. The believers met at a pre-determined place and time, believing they alone would survive the Earth's destruction. The appointed time came and passed without incident. They faced acute cognitive dissonance: had they been the victims of a hoax? Had they donated their worldly possessions in vain? Most members chose to believe something less dissonant: the aliens had given earth a second chance, and the group was now empowered to spread the word: earthspoiling must stop. The group dramatically increased their proselytism despite the failed prophecy.

In the Indian Oneness movement there are many examples of cognitive dissonance. The former high-ranking devotee, Freddie Nielsen, is an example of how cognitive dissonance works. For a long time he knew about all the problems and lies within the movement, but didn't admit it, or was explaining it away (see **Rationalization**).

Often Oneness devotees have put themselves up on a high position as enlightened persons, and to admit the lies in this is often too embarrassing to be practised (see my article *A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching*).

I would guess, that when the American self-help guru James Arthur Ray comes out of prison, we will also see an example of cognitive dissonance here. He will probably rise to be more worshipped than ever. If you don't know the story behind him being in prison, read my article *James Arthur Ray and the sweat lodge tragedy*.

## **Cold reading**

Cold reading refers to a set of techniques used by professional manipulators to get a subject to behave in a certain way - salespersons, hypnotists, advertising pros, faith healers, con men, some therapists, etc. - or to think that the cold reader has some sort of special ability that allows her to "mysteriously" know things about the subject.

Though cold reading is described as a technique, and though the following description might make it sound like a very difficult technique, cold reading is most often used in the same way as other thought distortions, completely unconscious, as a way of getting on in the world. Some educations in clairvoyance might just make you a bit more skilled in this.

Not all cold reading are done by malicious manipulators. Some readings are done by astrologers, graphologists, tarot readers, New Age healers, and people who genuinely believe they have paranormal powers. They are as impressed by their correct predictions or "insights" as are their clients and patients. They have good intentions,

but you should be careful not to be caught up by the thought distortion called **Good intentions bias**

Cold reading can be learned by anyone, clairvoyant or not. Just look at how Derren Brown numerous times has shown how easy it is to fool people by using cold reading.

There are many people who promote themselves as *clairvoyants* or *psychics*, and who claim that their *powers* enable them to *read* your character/destiny/karma, make contact with dead relatives, or provide insights into your life, your past or your future. In my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with clairvoyance* I have shown that most of this is directly anti-spiritual and unethical.

Paranormal abilities or not, there are especially two philosophical/spiritual principles you ought to hold on to, on the whole of this enormous, and growing market:

1) The so-called compensatory karma will by these experts and clients normal be misunderstood and abused as a kind of legitimation of, that we are as we are or do, as we do. He or she becomes obliged to do this or that in order to equalize old karma, or because it is his “destiny”. He is being told that he is going to meet certain people, are being told about other people, etc., etc. All this is spiritual seen nonsense. Usually the whole thing is about escaping from reality or excuses (read more about karma in my article *What is karma?*).

Precisely like philosophy of existence the spiritual traditions say that you in your opinion formation and identity formation must be yourself, live in compliance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.

If you follow clairvoyants’ advices the direct opposite happens: In your opinion formation and identity formation you will strive after becoming something else than what you are, you will imitate (model) others, be a slave of others’ ideas and ideals, and your actions will be characterized by irresoluteness and doubt. Instead of equalizing old karma (compensatory karma is what normally is understood as karma, or negative karma) they will create new compensatory karma.

Compensatory karma is the subconscious consequences of the Ego’s actions. Each time the Ego acts - and thereby changes the balance in the wholeness – then the structures and power lines in your spiritual essence changes, in the subconscious.

When your spiritual essence is sleeping, karma is automatically. The Ego's pendulum swings in one life out in an extreme. Hereby gathers in the wholeness, in your spiritual essence, momentum to, that the pendulum in a future life will swing out in the opposite compensatory extreme. This is the automatic compensatory karma. In one life ascetic, in the next libertine, then inhibited and expelled, thereupon sybarite etc. with no end, because the Ego has freedom continual to give new momentum and new course - within the karmacial possible; that is to say: heredity and environment - to the Ego's pendulum (the same is happening in numerous other ways within one life). That is one reason for that nobody can tell you about your karma.

2) Another philosophical/spiritual principle is to examine whether the karmacially talk and experiences of the experts and clients remove their energy-investments in the actual reality. If focus is displaced backwards or forwards in time, then the collective time has taken over and spiritual seen there therefore happens an escape. Such an escape is seen both in Freud, Rank, Grof, Janov, rebirthing, regression, clairvoyance, past (or future) lives therapy, astrology, prophecy, shamanism. None of these people and theories can therefore be said to work spiritual. And if they use the karma idea (the idea of a person's spiritual destiny) in that way, it is no longer a spiritual help, it is a collective displacement of the focus backwards or forwards in time and therewith out of reality and into the unreality of the collective time.

When the Ego decides to use its free energy, its existential option to begin to awake, then the karma structures changes. Then you begin to use and work with your spiritual dimension. This dimension is not subject to the karmacially structure, it *is* it, or it is over it. The wholeness is over, is transcendent, in relation to the laws and mechanisms, which regulate the infrastructures of the wholeness. The wholeness is not subject to the laws and energy transformations, which rule between the constitutive parts of the wholeness.

When your spiritual essence begins to dream, when the Ego-consciousness begins to bloom, to open itself, you discover the karmacially lawfulnesses and can therefore relate to them. Hereby you can break the karmacially automatism of compensatory karma. When your spiritual essence begins to dream and the continuum of the ego-consciousness breaks and expands into a discontinuum (into the superior continuum of the wholeness – or your spiritual essence), then the cosmic structur-pattern changes. Instead of mere compensatory karma, a progressive karma will now be effective. That, which you through existential achievement have reached of spiritual contact in one life, will form a progressive karma.

Only Man himself can find what is called *progressive* karma (his *spiritual* destiny; the dreamtracks and songlines in his spiritual journey; the map that shows his way to

enlightenment). The consciousness has the key in its life. It helps nothing, what clairvoyants may be able to see in the astral plane's collective history, or fantasize about another person's karmacially experiences.

Nobody can tell you about your karmacially structures. All people - clairvoyants, regression therapists, shamans etc. etc. - who are claiming they can help you karmacial (with your destiny), are cognitional and ethical delusional and deceptive. They are, if they actually *have* paranormal abilities, most often caught in some kind of **Ego-inflation**; that is: a spiritual crisis (see my articles *The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment*, and *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena*)

Only your own realization opens. Whether another person even was able to read the whole of the karmacially course (a person's life-history, destiny) and tell the seeker about it, it would not help. On the contrary it would harm. Only your own inner experience and realization can open the spiritual dimension. Karma in other ways is nonsense. And by the way, that's the same with all spiritual.

That is the other reason for why nobody can tell you about your karma.

The genuine karmacially structures (progressive karma, the spiritual destiny) do not lie in the astral plane's collective time, but in the universal time, which work in synchronism with the Now. If the karma idea (the idea of a person's spiritual destiny) is used spiritual seen correct, then the focus, instead of being projected out in something afar (past lives, the past, the dead, spirits, a guru, birth, the future), will be present in something very near, namely only in the most intensive experiences of this actual life, and after that: in this actual Now with its possibility of realizing your innermost. It is your awareness in the now that will find the progressive karma, and this awareness you can of course only practise yourself (see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with mystical experiences*).

Back to cold reading. It is very important to understand, that cold reading can't be understood, nor succeed, without understanding another thought distortion, namely **Subjective validation**. Subjective validation is active when people will validate a set of statements allegedly about themselves as highly accurate *even if these statements not are accurate*. In other words: the effects of cold reading will not go beyond the effects of subjective validation. It is this that constitutes the delusional about cold reading. But it also explains why clairvoyance not necessarily is based on guessing games, nor on trickery, such as chatting up the audience members before a performance and gather information about them; having accomplices in the audience; having detective work done on the sitter, for example through the internet; having an accomplice who chats you up, listens in on your conversations while you are waiting

for the reading to begin, or who collects written information from you that is later used in the performance.

Cold reading - and most other New Age techniques, as for example astrology and personality typing - is dependent of, that subjective validation is active in the client, or else it won't work. Cold reading and subjective validation are two sides of the same coin. Cold reading is therefore also dependent on, that all kind of critical thinking is eliminated. The role of subjective validation in cold reading is the reason for, that there has never been a successful demonstration of these "powers" in a laboratory, under properly controlled conditions, or that no clairvoyant ever has been able to take James Randi's The One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge. James Randi is an American stage magician and scientific skeptic. His challenge is offering a prize of US\$ 1,000,000 to eligible applicants who can demonstrate evidence of any paranormal, supernatural or occult power or event under test conditions agreed to by both parties.

By far the most common method employed by clairvoyants – no matter whether they have paranormal abilities or not – is cold reading. This method involves the clairvoyant reading the client's body language etc., and skilfully extracting information from the subject, which can then be *fed back* later, convincing the client that the clairvoyants have told them *things they couldn't possibly have known!*

The following is 13 points to understand cold reading (inspired by Ray Hyman's *Guide to Cold Reading*):

*1) The key ingredient for a successful character reading is the reader's confidence*

If the reader looks and acts as if she believes in what she is doing, she will, because of subjective validation, be able to sell even a bad reading to most subjects. One danger of playing the role of reader is that the reader may actually begin to believe that she really is divining her subject's true character. She is then caught in **Ego-inflation** (also see my article *The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment*).

*2) Many cold readers make creative use of the latest statistical abstracts, polls and surveys*

These can provide the reader with much information about what various subclasses in our society believe, do, want, worry about etc. For example, if the reader can ascertain a subject's place or origin, educational level, and his/her parents' religion and vocations, the reader has gained information which should allow her to predict with high probability his/her voting preferences and attitudes to many subjects.

Most of the time readers also utilize known principles of psychology that apply to nearly everyone; or simply: they use generalities.

3) *The reader will set the stage for her reading*

The reader will profess a modesty about her talents. She makes no excessive claims. She will then catch her subject off guard. She isn't challenging them to a *battle of wits* – she can read his/her character, whether he/she believes her or not.

4) *The reader will gain the subject's cooperation in advance*

The reader will emphasize that the success of the reading depends as much on the subject's cooperation as on her efforts. After all, the reader implies she already has a successful career at character reading (the thought distortion *Truth by authority* is central here). The reader is not on trial, but her subject is!

The reader will state that due to difficulties of language and communication, she may not always convey the meaning she intends. In these cases, the subject must strive to *fit* the reading to his/her own life. The reader accomplishes two valuable ends with this dodge – Firstly, she has an alibi in case the reading doesn't *click*: it is the subject's fault, not her! Secondly, her subject will, again because of subjective validation, strive to fit the reader's generalities to his/her specific life circumstances. Later, when the subject recalls the reading, the reader will be credited with much more detail than she actually provided! This is crucial. Her *reading* will *only* succeed to the degree that the subject is made an active participant in the reading, and therefore that subjective validation is active in the subject.

The good reader is the one who, deliberately or unwittingly, forces the subject to search his/her mind to make sense of her statements

5) *Some readers use gimmicks, such as Tarot cards, crystal ball, palm reading etc.*

Use of *props* serves two valuable purposes. Firstly, it lends *atmosphere* to the reading. Secondly, (and more importantly) it gives the reader time to formulate her next question/statement. Instead of just sitting there, thinking of something to say, she can be *intently studying* the cards/crystal ball etc. She may opt to *hold hands* with her subject – This helps her feel the subject's reactions to her statements. If she is using, say, *palmistry* (the reading of hands) it helps if she has studied some manuals, and have learned the terminology. This will allow her to more quickly *zero in* on her subject's chief concerns – “do you wish to concentrate on the *heart line* or the *wealth line*?”

6) *The reader will have a list of stock phrases at the tip of her tongue*

Even during a cold reading, a liberal sprinkling of stock phrases will add body to the reading and will help the reader fill in time while she formulates more precise characterisations. The reader uses them to start her readings. Palmistry, tarot and other *fortune telling* manuals are a key source of good phrases.

7) *The reader keeps her eyes open!*

The reader will size the subject up by observing his/her clothes, jewellery, mannerisms and speech. Even a crude classification based on these can provide the basis for a good reading. The reader will also watch carefully for her subject's response to her statements, and notice when she is *hitting the mark!*

8) *The reader will use the technique of fishing*

This is simply a technique to get the subject to tell the reader about his/herself. Then the reader will rephrase what she has been told and feed it back to the subject.

One way of *fishing* is that the reader says something at once vague and suggestive – (notice that readers *never* say anything directly – it is *always* fishing!) – e.g., “I’m getting a strong feeling about....” (something). The reader will have committed to memory such things as the most common male and female names and a list of items likely to be lying about the house such as an old calendar, a photo album, newspaper clippings, and so on. The reader also works on certain themes that are likely to resonate with most people who consult clairvoyants: love, money, career, health, and travel.

If the subject responds, positively or negatively, the reader's next move is to play off the response. If the response is positive then the reader will say something like: “Yes, I can see that,” anything to reinforce the idea that she was more precise than she actually was.

If the subject gives a negative response the reader might reply: “Yes, I see that you’ve suppressed a memory about it. You don’t want to be reminded about it. Something painful. Yes, I feel it, it is in the lower back (fishing)...oh, now it's in the heart (fishing)...umm, there seems to be a sharp pain in the head (fishing)...or the neck (fishing).”

If the subject gives no response, the reader will leave the area, having firmly implanted in everybody's mind that the reader really did “see” something but the subject's suppression of the event hinders both the reader and the subject from realizing the specifics of it. If the subject gives a positive response to any of the

fishing expeditions, the reader will follow up with more of “I see that very clearly, now. Yes, the feeling in the heart is getting stronger.”

Another way of *fishing* is that the reader is phrasing each statement as a question, and then waiting for reply. For example: “I sense that you have a strong feeling for...(someone/something)...am I right?” If the reply or reaction is positive, then the reader will turn the statement into a positive assertion, etc. Often the subject will respond by answering the implied question and then some. Later, the subject will forget that he/she was the source of the information – this is called “source amnesia” (forgetting the source of information) and is a very common occurrence - especially when enforced by subjective evaluation. By making her statements into questions, the reader also forces the subject to search his/her memory to retrieve specific instances to fit the reader’s general statement.

9) *A reader is a good listener*

During the course of a reading the clairvoyant’s client will be bursting to talk about incidents that are brought up. The good reader allows the client to talk at will. Afterwards the clients often will praise the reader for having astutely told them what in fact they had spoken themselves. Another value of listening is that most clients that seek the services of a reader actually want someone to listen to their problems. In addition, many clients have already made up their minds about what choices they are going to make. They merely want support to carry out their decision.

10) *The reader will dramatise her reading*

The reader will give back what little information she does have or pick up a little bit at a time. She will make it seem more than it is. She will build word pictures around each divulgence, and she will not be afraid of hamming it up.

11) *The reader always gives the impression that she knows more than she is saying*

The successful reader, like the family doctor, always acts as if she knows much more. Once she has persuaded the subject that she knows one item of information that *she couldn’t possible have known* (through normal channels) the subject will assume that she knows all! At this point, the subject will open up and confide in her.

12) *A reader is not afraid to flatter her subject at every opportunity*

An occasional subject will protest, but will still *lap it up*. In such cases, the reader can add: “You are always suspicious of those who flatter you. You just can’t believe that someone will say something good about you without an ulterior motive”.

13) *The reader will always tell the subject what he/she wants to hear!*

### **Communal reinforcement**

Communal reinforcement is a social phenomenon in which a concept or idea is repeatedly asserted in a community, regardless of whether sufficient evidence has been presented to support it. Over time, the concept or idea is reinforced to become a strong belief in many people's minds, and may be regarded by the members of the community as fact.

Often, the concept or idea may be further reinforced by publications in the mass media, books, or other means of communication.

The phrase "millions of people can't all be wrong" is indicative of the common tendency to accept a communally reinforced idea without question, which often aid in the widespread acceptance of urban legends, myths, and rumors. Here related to **Confabulation**

### **Compensation**

You are for example trying to maintain a positive self-evaluation by avoiding areas of life where there are chances of fiasco, and instead are seeking areas where the chance of success is largest. This is in itself a compensation.

There is also another kind of compensation, because the unbalance in the above action will by the energylaws of life itself be compensated. Division consists in, that the Ego, through evaluations of the images of time, split the world up in opposites (good and evil, power and powerlessness, perfect and fiasco, love and hate). Thereby is created a line of one-sided and extreme basic assumptions (for example "I always have to be perfect!") and rules of living (for example "unless I always am perfect, then I am a fiasco"). The energylaws of life will seek to balance these imbalances, for example through contrabalances (perfect becomes fiasco) – that is: through a compensation. That is what so-called compensatory karma is about (see my article *What is karma?*).

Compensation is a big problem within the positive psychology of the New Thought movement.

### **Confabulation**

The drive to find personal meaning or significance in impersonal or insignificant coincidences (**Subjective validation**) may be related to the powerful "natural" drive

to create stories, narratives that string together bits and pieces of information into a tale. Of course truth matters most of the time, but many of our narratives satisfy us regardless of their accuracy. This tendency to connect things and create plausible narratives out of partially fictitious items is called Confabulation.

A confabulation is a fantasy that has unconsciously replaced events in memory. A confabulation may be based partly on fact or be a complete construction of the imagination. The term is often used to describe the “memories” of mentally ill persons, memories of alien abduction, and false memories induced by careless therapists or interviewers (see my article *Regression psychotherapies*).

Have you ever told a story that you embellished by putting yourself at the center when you knew that you weren't even there? Or have you ever been absolutely sure you remembered something correctly, only to be shown incontrovertible evidence that your memory was wrong? No, of course not. But you probably know or have heard of somebody else who juiced up a story with made-up details or whose confidence in his memory was shown to be undeserved by evidence that his memory was false.

In my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* Confabulation is a central issue. I here show how memories are constructed by all of us and that the construction is a mixture of fact and fiction.

Confabulation is an unconscious process of creating a narrative that is believed to be true by the narrator but is demonstrably false.

Young Earth creationists (YECs) provide an excellent example of Confabulation mixed with **Motivated reasoning**. To maintain their position, YECs must reject nearly all science and confabulate new laws of nature and rules of logic and evidence, and subject themselves to ridicule for their willful ignorance and irrational adherence to the myths of an ancient, pre-scientific people. The same we see within the postmodern intellectualism on Universities, which therefore justifies the tendency within Management theory and New Age to confabulate stories which are not true (see my article *Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry*).

As management theorists say: “It is not facts, but the best story that wins!”

So, in our time with the spreading of subjectivism and relativism - and therefore **Magical thinking** - we are seeing how Confabulation somehow gets a justification. There is in fact - as I claim in my article *The Matrix Conspiracy - a New World*

Order emerging: the world of Alternative History, Alternative Physics, Alternative Medicine and, ultimately, Alternative Reality.

**Communal reinforcement** is a social phenomenon in which a concept or idea is repeatedly asserted in a community, regardless of whether sufficient evidence has been presented to support it. Over time, the concept or idea is reinforced to become a strong belief in many people's minds, and may be regarded by the members of the community as fact.

Often, the concept or idea may be further reinforced by publications in the mass media, books, or other means of communication. There is no doubt about that The Matrix Conspiracy (which is a strong advocate for the use of hypnosis and hypnotherapy) will be made propaganda for through mass media phenomena such as Transmedia Storytelling, Alternate Reality Games (for example The Blair Witch Project), Viral Marketing/Internet Hoaxes and Collaborative Fiction.

The phrase "millions of people can't all be wrong" is indicative of the common tendency to accept a communally reinforced idea without question, which often aid in the widespread acceptance of urban legends, myths, and rumors.

The new New Age product called the WingMakers Project is an attempt to create an alternative history. It is not directly an example of Confabulation, since the creators of the website hardly believe their story to be true, but it will certainly create confabulation in others (see my article *Time travel and the fascism of the WingMakers Project*).

Alternative history or alternate history is a genre of fiction consisting of stories that are set in worlds in which history has diverged from the actual history of the world. Since the 1950s this type of fiction has to a large extent merged with science fictional tropes involving cross-time travel between alternate histories or psychic awareness of the existence of "our" universe by the people in another; or ordinary voyaging uptime (into the past) or downtime (into the future) that results in history splitting into two or more time-lines.

WingMakers is also a so-called secret history. A secret history (or shadow history) is a revisionist interpretation of either fictional or real (or known) history, which is claimed to have been deliberately suppressed, forgotten, or ignored by established scholars. Originally, secret histories were designed as non-fictional, revealing or claiming to reveal the truth behind the "spin". Today we see how secret history sometimes is used in a long-running science fiction or fantasy universe to preserve continuity with the present by reconciling paranormal, anachronistic, or otherwise notable but unrecorded events with what actually happened in known history; for

instance in the fictional time travel theories. The WingMakers story combines this with the urban legend and alternate history from the Ong's Hat myth. Though the WingMakers website tries to avoid critique by saying it is a modern mythology (where urban legends are considered as a modern folklore) it also keeps on, precisely as in urban legends, to insinuate that the story is true. It is therefore a piece of pseudohistory.

Pseudohistory is purported history such as Afrocentrism, creationism, holocaust revisionism and the catastrophism of Immanuel Velikovsky. Pseudohistory should be distinguished from the ancient texts it is based on. The sagas, legends, myths and histories, which have been passed on orally or in written documents by ancient peoples are sometimes called pseudohistory. Some of it is pseudohistory, some of it is flawed history and some of it isn't history at all.

Pseudohistory should also be distinguished from historical fiction and fantasy. Anyone who cites a work of historical fiction as if it were a historical text is a practising pseudohistorian. There are also writers of historical fiction who intentionally falsify and invent ancient history. A technique to do this is to claim to find an ancient document and publishing it in order to express one's own ideas. An example is *The Celestine Prophecy*. A variation on this theme is to claim that one is channeling a book from some ancient being, e.g, *The Urantia Book*, *Bringers of the Dawn*, and *A Course in Miracles* (see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling*).

New Age is permeated with references to vibrations and energy, advices to avoid the negative (you can tell good people by their eyes), stop doubting, follow your intuitions and premonitions, flow with coincidences, believe in the purposiveness of everything, join thousands of others on the quest, turn into your feelings and evolve to a higher plane. Follow your intuitions and dreams as you go through your spiritual evolution. Fact or fiction, it doesn't matter. Truth is what you make it. Life's too short and too complicated to deal with reality. Make your own reality.

This New Age subjectivism and relativism encourage people to believe that reality is whatever you want it to be. The line between fact and fiction gets blurry and obscured. Subjectivism shuts down people's critical faculties, making them suggestible for any **Ideology**. It involves making people quit thinking critically in order to open them up to thinking **Magical** about that **Subjective validation** and **Communal reinforcement** lead to bliss. Hypnosis is in New Age directly used as a means for inducing in people certain worldviews (see my article *Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception*).

The subjectivism in the WingMakers Project can be seen in the question about whether the WingMakers material is fact or fiction. The introduction to the project says as follows: “It is fact wrapped in fiction otherwise known as myth.” So here we see how subjectivism is used as an attempt to get the line between fact and fiction blurry and obscured. It is also an attempt to avoid critique. Without success, because the story, as mentioned, ends in pseudohistory.

Related to **Subjective validation, Confirmation bias** and **Motivated reasoning**

### **Confirmation bias**

Confirmation bias refers to a type of **Selective thinking** whereby one tends to notice and to look for what confirms one’s beliefs, and to ignore, not look for, or undervalue the relevance of what contradicts one’s beliefs.

The tendency to give more attention and weight to the positive and the confirmatory has been shown to influence memory. When digging into our memories for data relevant to a position, we are likely to recall data that confirms the position.

Researchers are sometimes guilty of confirmation bias by setting up experiments or framing their data in ways that will tend to confirm their hypotheses. They compound the problem by proceeding in ways that avoid dealing with data that would contradict their hypotheses.

In the movement of New Thought and the law of attraction Confirmation bias is, like **Conversion to the opposite**, directly used as a central part of their training.

The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego’s incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: “it is no use with me!”; or: “Wonderful me!”. Both, either the denial or the confirmation of the ego, maintain the ego-proces, the ego-identity, and the ego-centralization. The ego’s religion and exercises are the ego’s needs and longings and will: I want to, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, or, in its most common core: I, I, I...Me, Me, Me...

It should now be easy to see, that the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and the law of attraction, are based on the ego-religion and the ego-exercises, where it is about moving the focus away from the denial of the ego (the negative, evil), and encourage the confirmation of the ego, which is considered as positive, and in compliance with the divine, universal laws.

In the Danish New Age magazine *Nyt Aspekt* (New Aspect, January-March 2012), there is an article called “Super Thoughts” by the Health Coach Anni Simonsen.

After having stated that “New research has shown...” that “everything is subjective”, and “Fantasy=reality” she claims that you can think yourself healthy, by standing in front of a mirror and repeating: “You are so beautiful!” “I love you!” She states that it is about giving yourself positive confirmations, to acknowledge, praise and love yourself as unconditional as possible. Thereafter she states that critical thinking belongs to the denial side of the ego, wherefore you of course should avoid such kind of negative thinking. She concludes that giving yourself positive confirmations are synonymous with healthy thoughts, and that such thoughts are good thoughts, light thoughts, super thoughts.

If you find it difficult, she says, you must borrow (here we see that Anni Simonsen also is a NLP coach, and that New Thought is the source of inspiration for both the law of attraction and NLP – see my article *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)*). She continues the exercise: Let yourself be inspired by a person, whom you would like to be like, and use this model to create your own self-image. When this self-image is ready, it is time to put sound on. Listen to your own voice. Find the sound that tells you, that you speak to the world with confidence and trust. It is a voice people will listen to! Listen to how the whole world will answer with acknowledgement, respect and love.

I am afraid I don't agree that the whole world will love Anni Simonsen because she stands in front of a mirror repeating to herself: “You are so beautiful!” “I love you!” I think it sounds like the evil queen from the fairy tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. She ends the article with a preconceived response to critique. If you think that the image not is true, but only is fantasy, then remember that everything is subjective.

Such thoughts are actually an expression of black magic, a way of turning spirituality upside down.

First of all: Subjectivism means that truth *only* is something you create yourself – there is no absolute, or objective truth. This of course raises the Socratic question: from where does Anni Simonsen (and other New Thought thinkers) know that everything is subjective? She can't know this if reality only is a fantasy you create yourself. Subjectivism is self-refuting. The self-refuting aspect is that subjectivism makes an exception of its own position. The very assertion of subjectivism is itself non-subjectivistic (see the thought distortion **Self-refuting arguments**).

Besides this self-contradiction, then the assertion of subjectivism is in opposition to spirituality which in its worship of a divine reality of course believes that truth is absolute and objective. The opposition is due to, that religion, and therefore spirituality, has been reduced to psychology; a **Reductionism**, a distortion of the

human being (see my articles *Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*, and *The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind*).

Secondly: The ordinary ego-consciousness functions by being identified with the physical world, with instincts, sexuality, emotions and collective ideals. The true spiritual practice works through these aspects by means of, for example the core which exists in the basic monastic vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. These promises work with a restructuring of the ego's ownership to things, food and power, and they re-structure sexuality and emotions. First thereafter the mystical process can begin. Again: it should now be easy to see how positive psychology and New Thought are doing the exact opposite (Black magic).

The ego is a demonical structure, and it attracts demonical powers and energies which also have been created by the ego phenomenon. The same energy-process and function, which realized spiritual teachers use, can therefore be used for other purposes than spiritual. When the energy-processes of the astral plane's collective history are used spiritual, then the ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside, and the energy is turned into the now, and therefore in towards the source and the spiritual dimension. The people who around a spiritual teacher constitute an energy-mandala, are in this way made transparent for a higher common human spirituality.

In a lesser realized person's use of energy the contact with, and the ability to manipulate with such collective forms of astral energy, can be used for other puposes than spiritual. It can be creative, ego-affirmative, political, demonical, and so on.

The powers that, by realized spiritual teachers are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same powers can be turned in through the ego-structures, and therewith into past and future, and fragmentation (conflict). In this way there can be opened creative channels, created super egos (super thoughts), created political leaders and popular seducers (in my article *The philosophy of Karen Blixen* I have investigated these phenomena in detail).

These phenomena are well known from history and from literature. In the story of the temptation in the desert, we can see these possible ways of using the energy pictured in anticipated form. Here you see the possibility of using the freedom and the power to elevation of the ego and the consequent power and material glory. But Jesus abstains from this deification of the ego. It is also known from the Faust myth, described by for exampel Goethe and Thoman Mann.

When you in a selfish way use the powers from the collective history of the astral plane, and which demonical astral beings will help you with (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction), you can create personal power and material glory. That is the essence of Black Magic, and it is the background for the creation of the concept of the law of attraction (though the worshippers probably don't realize this - I think they have perfectly **Good intentions**. But they will eventually meet the compensatory karma, or Nemesis.

You can in short not use these energies as you want to; that is: through thinking, and therefore not through will, choices or feelings.

The eternal circling around your own dreams, desires, success etc., will in other words be contra-balanced through the opposite categories. New Thought here exposes its worshippers for the possibility of Nemesis.

An example: as soon as your thoughts spread themselves too much out in an extreme, the energy-system compensates by seeking to bring itself back to the balance of the middle. The system does this by seeking over towards the opposite extreme (for instance from perfectionism to a feeling of fiasco). That is: through a contrabalancing, a compensation. The energy works as a pendulum. The more energy, which is invested in an extreme of a pair of opposites, the larger the swing in the opposite direction will become (read more in my article *Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*).

Confirmation bias is related to **Selective thinking, Subjective validation, Motivated reasoning** and **Compensation**

### **Continued influence effect**

The Continued influence effect is short for "the continued influence of misinformation." The term refers to the way false claims enter memory and continue to influence beliefs even after they have been corrected. Unfortunately, many people do not understand how memory works. Worse, they have little interest in the science of memory (In my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* I have worked out a *philosophy* of memory and time). If a false claim fits with beliefs that more-or-less define a person's worldview and has a strong emotional component, they instinctively accept the false claim rather than investigate it as a critical thinker would.

It is very difficult to be fair and balanced in evaluating new information when one has a strong emotional attachment to beliefs that conflict with the new information. It should be obvious that most of us are not critical of claims that fit well with our **prejudices** and emotion-laden beliefs. Still, you would think that we would give up

believing something once the evidence shows that we're wrong, especially since most of us are encouraged in childhood to be truthful and honest. But the thought distortion **Backfire effect** indicates otherwise.

When you are taught something from childhood that is continually reinforced by one's family and other communities, it is very difficult to be fair and balanced in evaluating evidence that conflicts with those teachings (see the thought distortion **Communal reinforcement**). And, with the spreading psychologizing of our culture, where emotions and feelings are considered as the only scale of truth, and where the hostility towards critical thinking and science are growing, it becomes even more difficult (my concept of *The Matrix Conspiracy* is about this spreading tendency).

On the other hand, in areas where emotion is less dominating, when people are faced with overwhelming evidence contrary to what they believe, they correct their errors. This is what happens in science and philosophy again and again, unlike what has occurred with fundamentalist religious believers. Critical thinkers want errors corrected. At the very least, getting the facts right might prevent some faulty inferences and prevent one from behaving in ways that could prove harmful.

### **Contradiction**

Two statements, which cannot be true because one denies the other. Is for example seen in **self-refuting arguments**.

### **Conversion to the opposite**

You can for example convert your insecurity and anxiety for not being good enough to exaggerated self-confidence. Such a conversion is of course a kind of **Compensation**, escape, self-deceit, and will lead to a false and imbalanced way of life.

Sadly enough, it seems like the movement of positive psychology (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*) directly is using Conversion to the opposite as a central part of its training. Positive psychology is marked by its attempts, through thinking, to eliminate all negativity by converting it into something positive, or simply by ignoring it, or saying it doesn't exist. But a thought is always defined by its negation; that is: what the thought *not* is. This means that a thought always contains a pair of opposites. So, you can't by the force of thinking (and therefore not by force of will or choice) convert negativity to positivity. If you nonetheless try to do this you will end up in focusing on the one extreme of a pair of opposites, which is an unbalance. The energy-laws within the wholeness will therefore seek to bring the thoughts back to the balance of middle. They do this

through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with compensatory karma (see my article *What is karma?*). Existentially seen Conversion to the opposite causes a conflict between what you are and what you want to become, or between being and becoming.

Conversion to the opposite, and the above-mentioned problems, also seems to characterize Byron Katie's method *The Work*, in her so-called Turnaround technique, where you always have to look at your thoughts as false (see my article *A critique of Byron Katie and her therapeutic method The Work*).

In a true spiritual practice the transformation happens, partly through art of life, where you are dancing between the opposites (as in the teaching of Yin and Yang), and through deep meditative-existential inquiry.

## D

### **Denial**

Denial is when you interpret experiences and relations with other people as it suits you. You are for example unaffected by a violent event, ignorant about a critique, without understanding of warnings; that is: denial of the truth.

### **Dichotom thinking**

Dichotom thinking means that you arrange the surrounding world in a pair of opposites (for example life and death, past and future, subject and object, good and evil, justification and condemnation, love and hate, power and powerlessness, perfect and fiasco). This is a degraded and one-sided division, which happens when the Ego, through evaluations, splits the more universal images of time in pieces. These images are in themselves a kind of syntheses, because they always include the opposite pole. But the dichotomous thinking expels the opposite pole, removes it, and by doing so you are coming to live on postulates, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

### **Displacement**

Displacement of something from its real cause to something else, for example when you defend yourself against anxiety by letting a conflict come into expression towards a person, who you experience as less threatening than the person, the conflict in reality is about.

## **Don't knock it till you try it**

Don't knock it till you try it is a statement treated by its utterer as a knock-down argument against what has just been said; that is: a phrase used to silence critique. It *always*, more or less implicit, insinuates, that the critic is closed-minded, intolerant and judgmental. In that sense related to **That's judgmental**.

It takes this form: You've never tried/used/seen "X". Therefore, you can't have an opinion on "X".

The phrase is obviously a fallacy. If you should take it seriously you can't criticize anything unless you have tried it. Moreover, you can't *know* anything, unless you have tried it. But here the phrase becomes self-refuting, because then the utterer himself can't know if the critique has tried something or not (see **Self-refuting arguments**).

Don't knock it till you try it is a so-called **Reductio ad absurdum** argument; that is: an argument that would have absurd consequences if true. Here is a list of things you wouldn't be able to criticize, or know anything about, if you haven't tried it: abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, drugs, alcohol), Nazism, Stalinism, crime, war, terror, torture, murder, suicide, etc., etc.,

Even if the critic is wrong because he or she hasn't tried something (for example having had an experience of classical music), then Don't knock it till you try it is still invalid. Instead one should try to show the critic that he/she is wrong by seriously examining the critique and presenting reasons and evidence in support of conclusions.

Don't knock it till you try it is also a variation of **Truth by authority**. The one who utters the statement claims to be an authority on the matter because he/she has tried it. But this doesn't make the statement true. Often the utterer ends in some kind of **Contradiction** or even **Hypocrisy**, for example when using the phrase in a way that borders to insinuations/insults towards a critic, while defending a New Age/self-help technique claimed to create human improvement. A level of critical thinking is always appropriate, because the experience may be based on a variation of thought distortions, such a **Subjective validation**, **Wishful thinking**, **Cognitive dissonance**, **Ego-inflation**, etc., etc.

Often Don't knock it till you try it is a result of the **Backfire effect**, which is the curious response many people have to evidence that conflicts with their beliefs: instead of becoming open to the possibility that the evidence might be correct and

one might have to change one's mind, many people become more convinced that they were right in the first place.

The fact is: of course you can know a lot of things, and make correct opinions about it, without having tried it.

Finally, if you actually *have* tried something, and still are critical you might very well get the answer that you then haven't understood it correctly, that you are closed-minded, defensive, unprepared, prejudiced, etc., etc. But that would be an **Ad hominem move**, and therefore invalid in another direction.

## E

### **Ego-inflation**

The "positive" aspect of a spiritual crisis is the most self-deceptive, because it usually ends up in ego-inflation and total lack of self-realization (read more about spiritual crises in my article *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena*).

Self-help gurus, and New Age devotees, can be breathtaking in their combination of self-confidence and absurdity, where they with no hesitation are bullying highly educated and/or experienced experts. They don't care whether it is scientists, philosophers, or mystics, what they care about is whether such persons dare to be critical towards the ideology of the self-help industry (see my articles *Management theory and the self-help industry* and *Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality*).

The reason is that the subjectivism and relativism in these environments (as well as in many other areas), eliminate critical thinking (discrimination), and thereby makes you vulnerable for magical thinking and ego-inflation.

Through this we have reached the highest level of postmodern development for better or for worse. The same fully individualized core of personality, which makes us able to step out of the past's fixed and subconscious attachment, has itself become our main interest, center for our identity in a degree, that almost all our awareness are directed inwards in a global seen exceptional narcissism.

Individually we have created a large scale self-image, which in a quite high degree is based on assumptions/ideas. This self-image we almost continuously defend, by

filtrating the impressions we receive from the world. We want to be in peace with our self-images, and quite convenient we therefore have created a cultural pluralism (=culture relativism), which forbid actual value judgment. I have my truth, and you have yours. Respect! Self-accept! I am Okay, you're Okay! It all run together in a fear of hierarchies, or a fear that someone might know something better than yourself, and where it is political incorrect to claim that something is higher than something else. "You judge", is the same as "you condemn."

Within the New Age and self-help environment this has opened the doors for people claiming just about anything about themselves, spirituality, science and philosophy, without having any knowledge or experiences. At the same time the enormous alternative grey market of private educations offer people educations, where they in one or two weekends can get themselves a certification in just about anything within spirituality. If you think that the only thing left is a weekend education to enlightened master, then I can tell you that it already exists in the Indian Oneness movement, where you can get enlightened in 21 days, and get a certificate. If you then ask, that no serious person would buy this, then I can tell you that the famous American success guru Tony Robbins is one of main figures behind, and that thousands of people follow it, hereunder a large group of celebrities. I will return to this in the end of this article.

For a couple of years ago I had to spend some days with a meditation teacher in Los Angeles. He had a certificate and quite a large group of followers. To my astonishment I discovered that he actually didn't had any meditation-practice. He wasn't meditating in the mornings, afternoons, evenings, or any other time. At one time he showed me that he could sit in the lotus position, and that I didn't understood meditation, and wouldn't do any progress, because I wasn't sitting in this position when I was meditating. It was impossible to lead a normal dialogue with him, he was the teacher and couldn't be adjusted. There wasn't any sign of experiences in what he told, or any interest in spirituality at all. The only thing he was interested in was his business as meditation teacher.

It is clear that the many people within New Age and self-help who have been caught up in this, will spoil their spiritual practice, if they actually have any – it will leave the rails, and end up blind. But worst of all, they will lead other people on the wrong track as well.

The great Tibetan meditation-master Sogyal Rinpoche says in his book *The Tibetan book of Living and Dying*:

"The most important is to avoid to get caught in the "shopping mentality", I see everywhere in the West: to "go shopping" from master to master, from teaching to

teaching, without any continuity or ongoing practice. Almost all masters in all traditions agree, that the essential is to master one path to truth, and this you do by following this path to the end with heart and mind, at the same time as you relate open and respectful towards others and others' insights.”

Ego-inflation happens when the ego has embezzled itself energy, which rightly belongs to the collective time. The collective time manifests itself in a widely and indefinite area, for example could a broad spectrum of common human activities and organizations be called manifestations of the collective time: parties, state formations, wars, work communities, concerts, clans, tribes and sects, mass psychological phenomena, religious parishioners, fashion streams, group souls, etc.

When the ego is getting inflated there comes a feeling of, that the “old” ego has been altered, even disappeared. This feeling is sensed a being good, positive, yes it can even be a peak experience. The illusion is that the ego hasn't disappeared, but instead has been inflated. Therefore the dark side of the ego, the whole complex of thought distortions, also has been inflated.

Ego-inflation is the cause of the sense of improvement, healing, or religious experiences people can have, when for example working with therapy, coaching, healing, clairvoyance, or when they have discovered a new ideology, religious or political. It is closely related to thought distortions such as **Subjective validation, Communal reinforcement, Groupthink, Illusion of control, Classical conditioning and placebo effects.**

There are three main forms of ego-inflation: intellectual, identifiical and euphorical inflation.

### *1) Intellectual ego-inflation*

Intellectual ego-inflation is extremely widely spread, especially today where so much knowledge is made common, and where practically everybody goes through one or the other form of theoretical education, or at least get knowledge of it through the medias. Intellectual ego-inflation is in fact one of the fundamental hindrances for the opening in towards the source, a malfunction in the mind, which is the crucial cause of the ignorance, conflict and sufferings of Man (see the thought distortion **Four philosophical hindrances**).

Intellectual ego-inflation has to do with lack of rationality. You take your assumptions, conceptions and values as absolute truths (hereunder subjectivism and

relativism), whereby you end up in a contradiction between your thoughts and lived life. It is actually a lack of ground connection.

In general, in intellectual circles, in cultural connections, and in the political life, they have always accepted intellectual ego-inflation – but as mentioned: it is one of the most crucial causes of all the conflict, war and violence, which the world is characterized by. People and their opinions and –isms, political directions etc., all of it is, as a rule, mainly an intellectual play characterized by a contradiction between thoughts and lived life. One is idealist, another realist, one is Marxist, atheist, another Christian, charitable, but if you look these people after in their existence – in their lived life – then you soon discover the contradictions.

Kierkegaard called it “the litany madness”; people can repeat the right doctrines and principles by rote, but when it comes to reality, to their way of living, then you discover all the contradictions.

Within the alternative environment of New Age and the self-help industry, intellectual ego-inflation is, as mentioned, extremely widely spread, and when the game, as here, is about the development of Man, about the depths of the mind, about archetypical powers, about the source of life, then intellectual ego-inflation can be a hazardous play. When the intellectual knowledge begins to approach religious areas, wisdom of life, therapy, meditation, spirit, then the ego can misjudge itself by being intoxicated by its intellectual understanding of deep phenomena. It is easy to understand the profound in an intellectual way. Everybody can say: “meditation is to become silent, without thoughts, without words, images”, but try to be silent, try to be awake without thoughts.

It is a widely spread misunderstanding in the meditation-circles of New Age and self-help, that meditation consists in being completely without thinking (time after time I have been criticized for that I emphasize the significance of philosophy in the meditationprocess). An enlightened master has admittedly no need of thinking, of philosophy, because he is in a condition of being (though he always uses a philosophical kind of counseling). But a person, who then just repeat this (“I have no need of thinking, of philosophy, because I am in a condition of being”), *without* being enlightened, has a seriously problem with ego-inflation.

Socrates was fully aware of the problem in this, when he consistently called himself philosopher (a lover of wisdom, one who seeks wisdom, but who has not yet found it) – and *not* a sage (guru/enlightened master). It namely gives ground connection. All people, who are not enlightened, are in need of thinking, of contemplation, of reflection – of *philosophy*.

Many people caught up in intellectual ego-inflation (and the other two types as well) commit the thought distortion called **Nondual bias**. Nondual bias arises when you describe something as nondual, while forgetting that you can't describe anything without implying the negation of it.

Intellectual the whole thing with development, with dream-understanding, with therapy and chakras, is very easy to understand. And very easy to tell others about – and get success on. There is incredible many in the world today, who speaks and talks about energy and chakras without ever really having had experiences with chakras and energy. This is intellectual theft. It is self-deception, it is ego-inflation – and it will unavoidably lead to misguiding of others.

Add to this the weird phenomena within New Age and the self-help industry, where most of the followers take an education as therapist, coach, clairvoyant, even spiritual teacher, without having any experiences (there are not many people in New Age, which you could characterize as disciples, students). Furthermore there are the many New Age speculators, that constantly are speculating in creating new forms of therapies, techniques and systems, which are deeply filled with scientific, philosophical and spiritual distortions – precisely because of the lack of training (see my articles *Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*, *Six common traits of New Age which distort spirituality*, and *The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy*).

Futhermore: a special danger in relation to the self-help industry is, that secularization here apparently has been removed. Self-improvement (personal development) has directly been introduced on EUs project on lifelong learning and education. You therefore meet it everywhere in society: in schools, education, workplaces, etc. I seriously think this is a sign of the rising of a very dangerous ideology, which I have called *The Matrix Conspiracy*.

The tool to be used against intellectual ego-inflation is in other words rationality and critical thinking, therefore philosophical training, where you investigate the validity of your assumptions, conceptions and values, and seek after coherence between your thoughts and lived life.

## 2) *Identifical ego-inflation*

Identifical ego-inflation is of two kinds: 1) Identification with an outer power, which not belongs to the ego (an institution, a teacher, others' techniques, meditation-

centres, one's role, etc.). 2) Identification with an inner power, which nor belongs to the ego (God, master, healing energy, the collective time, collective images, etc.).

The tool to be used against this form of ego-inflation is authentic spiritual practice; that is to say: where you understand the difference between the content of consciousness and the form of consciousness – that in neutrality to separate yourself from the content of consciousness, for thereby to direct yourself towards the form of consciousness; discrimination, which again is a central part of critical thinking (see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice*).

### 3) *Euphorical ego-inflation*

The euphorical ego-inflation is mainly due to up-streaming energy. There are then real transformation-processes in the chakra-system, and the transformed, or released, energy is rising upwards – it feels and is described this way, for then, in the consciousness, to bring about states of ecstasy, spiritual intoxication, exaltation, blissfulness. Oneness-consciousness as a spiritual *crisis* belongs to euphorical ego-inflation. Mystics in the West have called this euphorical ego-inflation “jubilatio”. It can escalate and completely take the ground connection away from a human being, so that you think, that you can fly, that you will be carried by angels. You fly in Sukavati, in Firdaus, in Paradise, in Elysium, as a balloon in the blue air.

The euphorical ego-inflation lies behind oneness-consciousness as spiritual crisis; that is to say: it is not a real experience of enlightenment, but precisely a crisis; rather than being a genuine mystical experience, it is a so-called peak experience.

It is without doubt the euphorical ego-inflation, which lies behind the so-called Deeksha phenomenon (transfer of enlightened energy or oneness-consciousness - see my article *The philosophy of Karen Blixen* about transmission of energy and consciousness).

The Deeksha phenomenon is today specially connected with the Oneness/Deeksha-movement, which is founded by Amma and Bhagavan, two Indian gurus, wife and husband, who claim they have created the entire Universe (and are the first 100% Avatars throughout history) and that mankind will get enlightenment only if we will cooperate with them.

This movement spreads as a lightning these days, with slogans as: ”Become enlightened in 21 days!” (For a huge sum of money of course). Thousands of people walks around and are claiming they are enlightened, and themselves able to give the enlightenment forward to others. After you yourself have become ”enlightened” you

yourself are becoming an "Oneness blessing giver", and ready to make money. You are even getting a certificate in this. Why on Earth waste time training yourself cognitional and ethical, when you after all just can have the enlightenment transferred by an Oneness blessing giver?

In parenthesis remarked, then many of these "enlightened" people never have experienced anything at all, but have become seduced into a web of lies, because the movement functions in that way, that you yourself shall get hold of new members by telling about how your life has been changed after you now have become enlightened – and you will after all prefer to keep a straight face to members you yourself have brought about. That is: they are also characterized by other forms of ego-inflation.

The spreading of the message is functioning in precisely the same multi-level-marketing-sales-networking-way as Large Group Awareness Training programs (LGAT), The Law of Attraction and so on – see my articles *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)* and *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction* - probably because of the involvement of the famous American success coach Tony Robbins, who has trained the movement's teachers in success coaching (read more about this in my article *A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching*).

Tony Robbins has often been connected with NLP, and LGAT. He is probably the most successful "graduate" of NLP. He started his own empire after transforming from a self-described "fat slob" to a firewalker to (in his own words) "the nation's foremost authority on the psychology of peak performance and personal, professional and organizational turnaround."

Robbins says: "I built my fortune by modeling the success of others...Now **you** can copy **my** mindset and make **your** millions!" Tony Robbins is himself apparently a designated Oneness blessing giver, and oneness blessing is apparently a regular part of his seminars today.

The mystics (for example Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse) discriminated between "jubiliatio" and "inflammatio", the ecstasy and the inflammation. And the euphorical inflammation is dangerous, very dangerous (see my articles *The awakening of kundalini* and *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena*).

The tools to be used against this ego-inflation is partially ground connection (Hara, earth bound work, preferably with other people, for example as a health care worker), partially again realization work, discrimination, humble separation of the ego and the spirit, between the ego and the rising, bubbling, jubilant delight. Moreover ethical

practice, training of compassion, for example Tonglen practice (in my book *Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader*, I have described both the Hara practice and the Tonglen practice in the supporting exercises The Hara meditation and the Heart meditation).

One of the deep reasons why they in monasteries anywhere in the world are letting the monks and nuns work with dirt, cleaning, cooking, taking care of sick people and dying, was in order to, that they never should lose reality and the ground connection of sight.

People who are being caught by ego-inflation, begin, as a rule, to act like kings and queens, they shall not anything practical do, they shall not be adjusted, they fly.

To all three kinds of ego-inflation there are in other words some philosophical principles and supporting exercises you ought to hold on to. And generally it is good to have knowledge about the thought distortion called **Truth by Authority**.

### **Enlargement and reduction of elements in the surrounding world**

Enlargement and reduction of elements in the surrounding world is for example to make a problem much larger than it is in reality, or to make the number of your life-possibilities much lesser than they are in reality. You overestimate or understate - exaggerate or understate, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

### **Endless split of the thought**

The endless split of the thought implies the so-called polarization-problem. Reality seems to be an Otherness which determines and defines the world – that is: a negation-principle. Any concept, any thing, is defined by its negation; that is to say: what it not is. A dream can for example only be defined from what it not is. It is for example not reality. How can you for example assert that life, or reality, is a dream, unless you know what a dream not is? What is the good? This you know if you know what the evil is. This logic seems to be impossible to get around.

The endless split of the thought has to do with the contradiction and split that are lying in, that the expulsion of the polar partners, as well as the negation as such, logical seen not is possible. All images imply the negation. But the more extreme you are thinking, the more you expel the negation, the larger are your contradiction and split.

You can see the logical problems manifested in a nightmare. When you in a nightmare are forced to confront the negations, but at the same time don't practise realizationwork and ethical practice in your awoken life, the nightmare will be characterized by contradiction and split. It is this doubleness, which creates the terror in the nightmare.

The paths and the locations in a nightmare can imply two types of terror. The one terror lies in the paths. Each point on a path is determined by the negation of the point, which itself is determined by a third negation etc. The path constitutes in other words a series of points with no end. The points themselves are limited extents. This means, that there never will come a time, where you will get out over the limited points. On the path you become forced from point to point without ever being able to reach the unlimited, this endless, which would bring the path to finish. And yet the path is endless.

The second terror lies in the locations. When each location is determined by the negation of it, this means, that it might well be, that the location is divided from its negation, but nonetheless identical with it. This means, that each location is an endless number of locations, an abyss of worlds, countless, swarming, branching off to all sides in labyrinths, yet without that the worlds ever become mixed together.

You can see these terrors illustrated in the stories by the Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. You can also see it in M.C. Escher's works, or in the movies by David Lynch.

Nietzsche is letting his "Zarathustra" preach the teaching of the "eternal recurrence of the same". This teaching contains in its poetic language some complicated considerations over the problem of time, over the perception of time and the understanding of life. But in all briefness it says, that any event repeats itself in all eternity – that is: without change and without any kind of increase. History is a circle, and there isn't anything, which hasn't been before, and which doesn't come again. A nightmarish thought because each event then must be an endless number of events, an abyss of events, countless, swarming, branching to all sides in labyrinths, yet without that the events ever become mixed together. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ has happened an endless number of times before, is happening again right now in an endless number of worlds, and will happen again an endless number of times in the future.

The weak nihilists break down, when they realize the meaninglessness in the eternal recurrence, while the supermans on the contrary "insatiable shouts Da Capo, not only to themselves, but to the whole play and acting".

The problem of the endless split of the thought happens because of a lack of discrimination between the thinking and life itself; that is: the problem of **magical thinking**.

In fact it is the same type of split you can experience, when you are looking up towards the stars and become captured by this wonder over the infinity. How can it just go on and go on? But it is due to magical thinking, the lack of discrimination between the thought and reality itself. Something, which by nature is limitary, namely the thought, seeks to grasp the unlimited. Something, which by nature is expelling, seeks to grasp the all-inclusive. It results in a feeling of endless split, which again results in a lot of logical anomalies, paradoxes and problems. And it is these logical problems which lies underneath the thought distortions, for example **Dichotom Thinking** and **Catastrophe-thinking**, and therefore underneath a lot of inappropriate assumptions and rules of living.

It is precisely these logical anomalies, paradoxes and problems, which create Samsara's wheel of eternal repeating up-cycles which is followed by eternal repeating down-cycles and vice versa (for example life and death, success and fiasco, joy and sorrow) – as well as the ignorance and the suffering when you are caught into this wheel, for example in the experience of nightmare and anxiety. All Jorge Luis Borges' small stories are about these logical and philosophical problems. His stories are filled with mirrors, masks, infinite series and regresses, labyrinths, doppelgängers, time travel theories, other dimensions, parallel universes, solipsisms and dreams.

We have already examined the concept of endless series. But you must discriminate between the concept of endless series and the concept of endless regresses. An endless regress is an endless series, but an endless series is not necessarily an endless regress. You can very well operate with endless series without being involved in an endless regress, as for example when you talk about the cause of a road accident, which is enough explanation, though the chain of causes goes endlessly back in time. But if your thought is getting involved in such a chain of causes, then it ends as an endless split of the thought. This happens often in regression therapy, psychoanalysis, or self-analysis, where the discovery of the "cause" of, for example anxiety, doesn't heal the anxiety, wherefore you are in need of new analysis, new discoveries of causes, and so on, in endless series, that are flowering in all kinds of directions. I have investigated this in my book *A Portrait of a Lifestylist* in the section about analysis.

Anyway, you can use the reference to the endless regress as an argument, when the *understanding* of a concept or a point of view – or the description of something – presupposes a final reason; that is: that the series of assumptions for the

understanding have to end somewhere, but where the concept or the point of view nevertheless implicates, that the series continue endlessly.

In ancient India they meant that the Earth was a flat disc. When the children asked how the Earth could keep itself floating in the Universe, then the wise men said, that it was because it was carried by a giant elephant. When the children asked what the elephant was standing on, the answer was: on a giant turtle. And when the children then asked what the turtle was standing on, the wise men answered: now you are asking for more than can be answered.

This “explanation” on, how the Earth keeps itself floating, leads into an endless regress. It is no explanation at all, because it ends with a riddle that is as equally great, and which demands as much explanation as the riddle you started with.

Theories such as **solipsism**, Theories of everything and Time travel theories always end up in an endless split of the thought.

About solipsism and endless regress, see my article *The Dream Hypothesis and the Brain-in-jar Hypothesis*. About theories of everything, see my article *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr*. About Time travel see my article *Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project*.

## F

### **False dichotomy**

False dichotomy is a misleading conception of possible alternatives. A dichotomy is a division in two alternatives. Often seen in the expressions Either/or – If/then, as for example: ”Either you are with us, or you are against us” – ”if I´m not always a success, then I´m a fiasco”. Similarly, someone who says that you must either believe that God exists or else that God doesn´t exist is setting up a false dichotomy since there is the well-known third option of the agnostic.

A false dichotomy appears when somebody sets up a dichotomy in such a way, that it looks like, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. False dichotomy is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life.

In connection with inappropriate basic assumptions such as "If I am not always a success, then I am a fiasco", the false dichotomy is closely related to the development of guilt, shame and depression.

Note, that you can't think in extremes such as I am a success, I am perfect, I am beautiful, without the opposite extreme. That is: if you for example follow the teaching of positive psychology, which excludes all negativity, then you induce in yourself a false dichotomy, because an exclusion of the opposite extreme not is possible (see my article *The New Thought movement and the Law of Attraction*).

### **False implication**

By Robert T. Carroll.

What do each of the following products have in common?

Berry Berry Kix  
 Country Time Lemonade Flavor Drink  
 Cap'n Crunch with Crunch Berries  
 Dannon Danimals XL (Strawberry Explosion)  
 Froot Loops  
 Fruity Cheerios  
 Juicy Fruit Gum  
 Life Savers (Wild Cherry)  
 Nestle Nesquick milk and drink mix (strawberry)  
 Post Fruity Pebbles  
 Push Pop (cherry)  
 Ring Pop (cherry)  
 Tang  
 Trix cereal  
 Trix yoghurt (strawberry kiwi)  
 Yoplait Go-Gurt yoghurt (Strawberry Splash)

They contain no fruit. But the labels and ads used to attract consumers to these products falsely imply that fruit is one of their ingredients.

Another example of false implication: The law recognizes that reporters, politicians, and anyone with an axe to grind can libel another person by omitting facts that would negate or mitigate otherwise defamatory statements. For example, a television reporter who lets her audience know that there have been some serious allegations of abuse and neglect at a daycare center and that a mother has taken her children out of the center because her son was abused and the daycare center has abused her trust

would be guilty of libel by omission if she also failed to report that the alleged abuse involved one four-year-old boy touching another four-year-old boy inappropriately. Commenting on just such a case, an appeals court judge wrote:

A reasonable jury could find that this statement was defamatory, inasmuch as there is material difference between a daycare worker actually abusing a child in his or her care, and a daycare worker negligently supervising a child such that he or she is ultimately responsible for one child's assault of another child.

Libel by false implication could be a confusing and troublesome area for reporters, who might believe that they've done their job well if they report only the truth or the facts as they know them. But it is obviously true that a reporter can get all the facts right but imply something that is totally false by not reporting *all* the facts. It might be true that Dr. Stanley stuck a knife into Richardson's belly and that Richardson died soon thereafter, but you might be led to falsely conclude that Stanley murdered Richardson if I didn't also tell you that Richardson had been brought to the emergency room and had suffered multiple gunshot wounds when Dr. Stanley tried to save his life by cutting into his abdomen.

### **Four philosophical hindrances**

In my first book *Meditation as an art of life – a basic reader* I presented what I call the four philosophical hindrances and openings in towards the Source. I presented them in order to show what I think characterizes the spiritual practice, as it exists in all the traditional wisdomtraditions. Ever since I have become increasingly puzzled over, how the self-help industry - which claims to work in accordance with spirituality - is turning this upside down. The paradox is that while the self-help industry is claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapists, coaches, others ideas and ideals; making them modeling and imitating so-called successful people, etc., etc.

The one face of this paradoxical Janus head is the empowerment culture, the other face is the victimization culture (and the connected recovery movement) - read more about this paradox in my articles *Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity* and *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing*.

The self-help industry is today often calling its method positive psychology. It has especially three sources of inspiration:

1) The American New Thought movement, which is the subjectivistic belief, that your thoughts are creating reality, and that by focusing on what you find positive, and avoiding what you find negative, you can create your life in accordance with your wishes, feelings and needs (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*). The “positive” is identified as success, money, sex, personal power, material glory, etc.

2) Humanistic psychology is the belief, that if you focus on your emotional experiences, needs, will and wishes, you will find your authentic self, which is claimed to be more or less divine. Religion has in that way been reduced to psychology. Another way of saying this is that humanistic psychology has reduced the negation-principle (see **Endless split of the thought**), the otherness, or the wholeness, to something inner-psychic, which thereby can be completely controlled through psychological means such as thoughts, feelings, will, choices, etc. Humanistic psychology is a central inspiration for management theory (see my articles *Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*, *The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice* and *Management theory and the self-help industry*).

3) The postmodern intellectualism, which supports the subjectivistic and relativistic idea, that there doesn't exist any objective truth. Truth is something we create ourselves, either as individuals or as cultures, and since there doesn't exist any objective truth, there doesn't exist any objective scale of truth. Therewith it also says, that we live in a Matrix, a dream/fantasy, a kind of virtual reality we have created ourselves, and that there is no chance of getting out of this. Therefore the best is to be interested in finding ways of getting on in this world, rather being interested in finding ways of discovering the truth (see my articles *Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry* and *The Matrix Conspiracy*).

The Matrix Conspiracy is characterized by what you could call The Mythology of Authenticity (again: see my article *Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity*). It has two world-images which are closely connected: humanistic psychology and constructivism. And the two methods used by these world-images are psychotherapy (humanistic psychology) and coaching (constructivism). It is a mythology because it isn't something real, it is the dream about becoming another, a life in a constant state of non-authenticity; in contrast to true spirituality, which you could call the reality of authenticity, because it here is about being precisely what you are, no matter how insignificant, or negative, it might seem in relation to your own or others' ideals.

The five main programming technologies of the conspiracy are:

- 1) Management theory (see my article *Management theory and the self-help industry*)
- 2) New Age (see my article *Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality*)
- 3) Nonviolent Communication (see my article *Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is an instrument of psychic terror*)
- 4) Neuro-linguistic Programming (see my article *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)*)
- 5) New Thought (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*)

It is on the background of these sources of inspiration that the self-help industry is turning the philosophical hindrances and openings upside down, so that the hindrances are considered as positive, and the openings are considered as negative. I call this the 666 aspect of the Matrix conspiracy. In the following I will present the philosophical hindrances and openings, and explain the 666 turn further:

The philosophical hindrances are (the mythology of authenticity is written in italic):

- 1) A rational where you take your assumptions, conceptions and values for absolute truths (*hereunder the subjectivistic and relativistic point of view that the power of thought can create reality as it fits you*) and hereby end up in a contradiction between your thoughts and lived live.
- 2) A life-philosophical, where you are circling around your own past and future (*the idea that you should get in contact with your hidden resources to either becoming yourself as you once were: humanistic psychology and the idea about your inner core, and its method: psychotherapy and the dream of a lost past – or to become the other, you want to become: the constructivistic idea about your potentials, and its method: coaching and the hope for a richer future*) and hereby are creating a closed attitude, inattention, absent-mindedness and ennui.
- 3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion formation and identity formation strive towards being something else than what you are (*the dream about that you in reality are another (humanistic psychology) – or that you always can become another (constructivism)*), where you imitate others, are a slave of other's ideas and ideals (*life is about becoming something fantastic and/or becoming a success; you ought to model fantastic and/or successful people; the conception of*

*Man as chronic non-authentic, a victim who constantly has to heal (humanistic psychology and psychotherapy) or form (constructivism and coaching) himself in the therapeutic practice; psychotherapists and coaches as the new authorities), and where your actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt.*

4) A spiritual where you are identified with your lifestituation, are dependent on political or religious ideologies (*the supreme good is lying out in the future, and the end therefore justifies the means; you ought to find ways of getting on in the world rather than finding ways of discovering the truth; it is alright to use thought distortions in this quest*) and where you hereby exist on a future salvation. And this evaluating fragmentation is the separation of the observer and the observed.

According to the traditional wisdomtraditions these four hindrances constitute a malfunction in the human mind. And it is this malfunction, which is the cause of the ignorance of the source of life. Ignorance is again the cause of suffering. In this way spiritual practice becomes a practice, which seeks to correct this malfunction. And therefore the two main concepts in spiritual practice are ignorance and suffering. In that way you get the four philosophical openings in towards the source:

1) A rational, where you examine the validity of your assumptions, conceptions and values, and search for coherency between your thoughts and your lived life.

2) A life-philosophical where you are present in the Now, and hereby achieve that self-forgetful openness and absorption in the world, which is a condition for love, spontaneity, joy of life and wisdom.

3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion and identity formation are yourself in the sense of being precisely what you are here and now (no matter how insignificant, or negative, it might seem in relation to your own or others' ideals), live in accordance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.

4) A spiritual, where you aren't identified with your lifestituation, and where you, independent of religious or political ideologies, live from something deeper: The source itself; the Good, the True and the Beautiful. Said in another way: where essence (the form of consciousness, meditation, the divine source) is one and the same with existence (being precisely what you are, existential presence in the now, life itself, the otherness). And this realized oneness is the wholeness of the observer and the observed.

I am well aware that the self-help industry is using the concepts of the openings as positive concepts (especially the existence-philosophical opening with its concept of authenticity; that it is good to work with yourself, and realize your illusions, etc.), and therefore would disagree with my claim that they see them as negative. The use of the concepts of the openings is also the reason why it can be hard to discover the paradoxes. But the problem arises because they see them as future-oriented goals or ideals. And in order to reach these ideals you need therapy or coaching. And it is in this "practice" they end in the hindrances. That should be easy to see, when looking at the concepts of the hindrances. What they misunderstand is that the openings precisely are a practice in themselves: the true spiritual practice.

Such a spiritual practice can again be said to contain three aspects:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions created by dualistic unbalance – both in yourself and in others)
- 2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the ego – see my articles *The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it*, and *Suffering as an entrance to the Source*)
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images – see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with the spiritual practice*)

The reason why the self-help industry considers these three aspects, and therefore the four philosophical openings, as negative, is as follows:

- 1) There is no objective scale of truth that can decide whether something is positive or negative; it is entirely your own subjective feelings that decide what is positive or negative. Therefore thought distortions can be seen as positive means of getting on in the world.
- 2) The positive psychology of the self-help industry is training people in avoiding and ignoring all negative; that is: your shadow, your ignorance, your painbody, your suffering, your dark side.
- 3) It is not possible to go beyond your ideas and images. The only thing you can do is to change them into what you find positive.

In my article *Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*, I explain how the self-help industry, unknowingly, is supporting a kind of black magic, or satanism, which show the essence in the 666 conspiracy,

namely that the ego has become an object for “spiritual” worship. This will end in spiritual crises, especially the “positive” aspect of the spiritual crisis called **ego-inflation** (see my articles *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena* and *The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment*).

## G

### **Generalization**

Generalization means for example that you expect that something which has taken place in one situation, also takes place in other situations, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

### **Good intentions bias**

Good intentions bias is a variation of **Ad hominem move**. It occurs when people confuse a critic’s attack on a person’s opinions with an attack on this person’s good intentions (or other nice personality traits), which lead them to blaming the critic for falsely assigning bad motives to the person’s good intentions. This blaim can then continue into moralizing, even defaming, **Ad hominem moves** towards the critic’s person.

It is also a construction of a **Strawman**, because the critic would very likely just answer that he is agreeing that the person has good intentions, but that this is irrelevant for the problems he has discovered in the person’s opinions. So, people’s good intentions are irrelevant to whether a critique of the people’s opinions is valid or not. The Good Intentions Bias is a way of shifting attention from person’s opinions to some irrelevant postulates about the person’s good intentions.

In other words: a person’s good intentions are not the factor, that makes this person’s opinions valid. It is the person’s *argumentation* for his opinions that makes them valid or invalid.

The bias is easily seen by looking at the big scoundrels of history, for exampel Stalin, Hitler or Mussolini. These persons had very likely good intentions, and were probably even looked at as nice persons by their family or friends.

As a proverb says: The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

You might say that any reasonable person would agree that these persons' good intentions don't make their opinions valid. But there are subjectivistic and relativistic opinions where good intentions are the basic of their ethics, for example in the movement of positive psychology (see my articles *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP)*, and *Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)*, and *The New Thought Movement and the law of attraction*), which claim that it is the good intentions that make opinions true. The advocates are in this way demonstrating a lack of ability to discriminate between critique of opinions and the persons who put forward these opinions. And here they show a real problem with ethics.

Anyway, if you are a reasonable person then remember: Whether you are going to criticize someone, or you yourself are being criticized, or another person, whom you like - or just opinions, which you are in favour for - are being criticized, always remember to discriminate between the critique of opinions, and the persons who put forward these opinions.

Like the Ad hominem move Good intentions bias is a very widespread bias among psychologists, psychotherapists and subjectivists, when they are participating in public discussions.

## **Groupthink**

Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within groups of people. It is the mode of thinking that happens when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative ideas or viewpoints.

The primary socially negative cost of groupthink is the loss of individual creativity, uniqueness, and independent thinking.

Groupthink is related to **Argumentum ad populum**

## **H**

### **Halo effect**

The halo effect refers to a bias whereby the perception of a positive trait in a person or product positively influences further judgments about traits of that person or

products by the same manufacturer. One of the more common halo effects is the judgment that a good looking person is intelligent and amiable.

There is also a reverse halo effect whereby perception of a negative or undesirable trait in individuals, brands, or other things influences further negative judgments about traits of that individual, brand, etc. If a person “looks evil” or “looks guilty” you may judge anything he says or does with suspicion; eventually you may feel confident that you have confirmed your first impression with solid evidence when, in fact, your evidence is completely tainted and conditioned by your first impression.

James Randi took advantage of the Halo effect when he tested two Russian ladies who claimed to be able to use their psychic powers to determine the personality and life experiences of someone from a photograph. He showed the ladies a picture of Ted Bundy, a handsome, wholesome-looking mass murderer. The results are both amusing and disgusting. Related to **Good intentions bias**

### **Hermeneutics of suspicion**

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur has referred to the “hermeneutics of suspicion” encouraged by writers such as Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. What people think, and the reasons they produce, may not be the real reasons at work. It then becomes easy to become suspicious of the motives of everyone, whether as the representative of an economic class or the purveyor of a morality, or just as an individual with psychological problems to solve.

This form of analysis (leading us to think of groups or individuals “what is in it for them?”), is not only corrosive of trust in society. It is bound eventually to undermine itself. Why are such views themselves being propagated? What are those spreading them going to gain?

Related to **Ad hominem move, Prejudice, and Thought-reading**

Read more about Hermeneutics of suspicion in my article *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing*

### **Hypocrisy**

Advocating one thing, but doing another. Hypocrisy is the charge levelled at those who don’t practice what they preach; for example if you are preaching a simple life, while yourself are living a life in luxury. Related to **Contradiction**.

# I

## Ideology

Let me explain with a distinction between two kinds of education: philosophical education and ideological education.

Philosophical education has its basic objectives, firstly, the disposition to seek truth, and, secondly, the capacity to conduct rational inquiry. Training scientists, for example, requires the inculcation both of an ethic of inquiry – do not fabricate or distort results, take care to prevent your hypotheses (or desires) from affecting your observations – and the techniques of inquiry appropriate to the discipline.

There are of course many different forms of philosophical education, corresponding to the numerous ways in which truth may be pursued (my own method is philosophy seen as an art of life – see my articles *What is philosophy?* and *Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy*). Nevertheless, these forms of education share two key features. First, they are not decisively shaped by the specific social or political/religious circumstances in which they are conducted, or, to put it the other way around, they are perverted when such circumstances come to have a substantive effect. There is no valid distinction between “Jewish” and “Aryan” physics, or between “bourgeois” and “socialist” biology; truth is one and universal.

Secondly, and relatedly, philosophical education can have corrosive consequences for the political (and/or religious) communities in which it is allowed to take place. The pursuit of truth – scientific, historical, moral, or whatever – can undermine structures of unexamined but socially central belief.

Ideological education - (today through what I call *The Matrix Conspiracy*) - differs from philosophical education in all these respects. Its purpose is not the pursuit and acquisition of truth, but rather the formation of individuals, who can effectively conduct their lives within, and support, their political (and/or religious) community. It is unlikely, to say the least, that the truth will be fully consistent with this purpose. Nor is ideological education homogeneous and universal. It is by definition education within, and on behalf of, a particular political (and/or religious) order. Nor, finally, does ideological education stand in opposition to its political (and/or religious) community. On the contrary, it fails – fundamentally – if it does not support and strengthen that community.

Ideology altogether is a psychic disease. You are not in doubt about, that ideology is a psychic disease if you look at its collective manifestations. It appears for example in the form of ideologies such as Communism, Liberalism, Conservatism, National Socialism and any other nationalism, or in the form of rigid religious systems of faith, which function with the implied assumption, that the supreme good lay out in the future, and that the end therefore justifies the means. The goal is an idea, a point out in a future, projected by the mind, where salvation is coming in some kind – happiness, satisfaction, equality, liberation, etc. It is not unusual that the means to come to this is to make people into slaves, torture them and murder them here and now.

That a thought-system has developed into an ideology shows in, that it is a closed system shared by a large group of people. Such a closed system has especially two distinctive characters: 1) It allows no imaginable circumstance to talk against the ideology. 2) It refuses all critique by analysing the motives in the critique in concepts which are collected from the ideology itself (an ideology always thinks black and white, and therefore always has an anti-ideology, an enemy image, which it attribute on to everyone, who don't agree).

An ideology is therefore characterized by that it is not able to contain, or direct refuses, rationality and critical thinking. We all know how dissidents have been killed, jailed and tortured under totalitarian ideologies.

Ideologies are using propaganda in order to get their “truths” forced through. In that connection they use thought distortions.

Critical thinking, or philosophy, is in opposition to thought distortions. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions, and examining them by presenting reasons and evidence in support of conclusions.

In philosophy you focus on, what cooperation and conversation require of you in order to that you at all can exist: that you speak true (don't lie), that you are prepared to reach mutual understanding and agreement (don't manipulate), don't make an exception of yourself (but treat others as equals). From this rises the eternal moral values (as for example that it is wrong to lie), and generally our ideas of right and justice: the so-called human rights, the idea about the individual person's autonomy and dignity: you shall treat the other *not as a mean, but as a goal*.

### **Ignoring alternative explanations**

Ignored explanations of the phenomenon in question. In many situations it is tempting to believe that because an explanation is consistent with the known facts it

must therefore be the correct explanation. This is especially tempting when the particular explanation is the one, which we would most like to be true. However, this is **wishful thinking** and ignores the possibility of plausible alternative explanations of precisely the same observations.

### **Illusion of control**

Control makes us feel powerful, which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is a right order in the universe, that some being, God or guru, are in control of everything that happens is comforting to many people.

Is there any harm in this? What's the harm in obliterating truth and reality in favor of what you want to be true? A great deal of harm can come from deluding yourself that you can control your health, spiritual development and your wealth, or somebody else's health, spiritual development and wealth, with your thoughts and prayers or other superstitious actions.

In my article *The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it*, I explain how the painbody, through the inner evaluating ego, is connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history; you might call it original sin or negative karma. This you can't control.

In my article *The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice* I describe that only an intervention from the source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to be able to receive this help you must do your part of the work: the spiritual practice. Many years. And this means that you need to re-structure the ego's ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. First thereafter the mystical process can begin.

The magnet of attraction, which the ego is controlled by – (the ego's identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desire, collective ideals, ownership, personal power) – will in a true spiritual practice loose its attraction. Investments in the material world's ups and downs, its demands, temptations and dramas, become undramatized, uninteresting, even meaningless, in relation to the consciousness' opening direction in towards its spiritual essence: the now, the wholeness, life itself, and finally: the eternal otherness, from where the good, the true and the beautiful are streaming as grace and forgiveness.

In this movement in towards the source you begin to ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way: Who am I? Where do the thoughts come from? What is consciousness and where does it come from? Is there a meaning of life? How does man preserve peace of mind and balance in all the relationships of life? How do we learn to appreciate the true goods and flout all transient and vain goals? Is the destiny of Man part of a larger plan? In this way the grab, which the material world has in your mind, is automatically reduced (I have explained this in my book *Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader*).

Very few people will be willing to do this work. On the contrary many people have today done an illusory work of trying to re-define this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the object of worship. That's what the law of attraction movement is about (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*).

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of compensatory karma which is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually pure causal regularity of mechanical kind. It would be an illusion to connect such things with a superior intentional divine order (see the thought disortion **Intentionality bias**).

Furthermore you have your free will either to continue to be identified with the area of compensatory karma, or break with it, and move in towards the source, which is the area of progressive karma (where the mystical process begins) – about karma see my articles *What is karma?*, and *A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork*.

In Taoism and Zen they talk about the concept of Wu Wei, which means non-activity, passive listening presence, non-control, non-interfering, which lead to Tzu-jen, spontaneity and naturalness. In Zen they for example talk about that when practising Wu Wei you are letting the grass grow by itself. Also the Stoic concept of Apátheia (the Stoic calmness) is about this - which you by the way find in all wisdom traditions. So, it is puzzling that they in the New Thought movement often quote these wisdomtraditions as if the New Thought ideology is in perfect harmony with these. The fact is that New thought is an extreme example of the illusion of control, when believing that you via the "power of thought" can attract (control) everything you can dream of.

Illusion of control is related to **Ego-inflation**

### **Intentionality bias**

Intentionality bias refers to the tendency to see intentions in the movements of both animate and inanimate objects. This bias serves us well in most interactions with purposive agents, such as other humans, but even then we often see intentionality or purposiveness where there is none. A drunk bumps into us at the bar and spills his drink on our back. We're sure he did it on purpose, though it might well have been an accident.

Several studies on intentionality bias in children indicate that a "natural" way of perceiving and making sense out of the natural world is to see intentional agents behind the movements of many things that adult scientists attribute solely to mechanistic forces. Some skeptics argue that all that we're justified in inferring from the "natural" bias toward perceiving intentional agents as behind the movements of both animate and inanimate objects is that it is "natural" to think anthropomorphically about natural events and that it's "natural" to think that others like us have intentions like we do.

The belief that everything in nature is intentional is sometimes called the teleological view of the universe. This view is opposed by the mechanistic point of view (also called naturalism, or an instrumental view of nature), which claims that everything in nature is controlled by causal regularity of mechanical kind. This materialistic ontology claims, that the only thing which has real existence is mass entities in motion. The whole of nature can fully be explained from the knowledge of these mechanical principles. All explanations use the cause and effect relation. They are causal. Teleological explanations – that is: explanations from purposes – are rejected.

This point of view often uses the intentionality bias to explain why belief in gods is popular or why religions evolved into the major social institutions they've become. It may be intuitive to perceive order as coming about from intentional agents, while disorder can be perceived as coming about with or without the intervention of intentional agents. But in addition to our "natural", instinctive way of seeing the world, we also have the ability to reflect on what we observe and overcome our "natural" instincts. Just because it is "natural" to see the world as designed doesn't mean that the world *is* designed. We need not to be a slave of the brain, which, after all, deceives us about many things. Why should we be surprised if the brain tricks us into believing in gods and other intentional agents as the designers of plants, animals, and the vast expanse we call our universe?

Intelligent Design is a clear example of a pseudoscientific point of view (see my article *The pseudoscience of reductionism and New Age*).

The problem with the mechanistic view is the often implicated *instrumental* view of nature which has caused that many see nature as pure material, or alone as a means for the unfolding of Man.

It is interesting, however, that the more science develops, the more you have to give up backgrounds, which occur evident to mechanistic points of views. In nuclear physics and the quantum mechanics we have learned that there exist processes which is not cause determined, and do not follow the old rule about that everything has to be continuous. Processes in nature, and in the human brain, are in a wide extent quantum mechanical, and since the quantum mechanics breaks with the principle of causation and determinism, then nature, and therefore the brain, is not a fully cause determined system (included in this is also the problem of mind – see my article *The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind*).

This has led to - and under impression of the discussion about the damage we have caused nature - that there in the later years have been worked out conceptions, that claim, that nature has a value in itself. It is not only means, but ought to be respected for its beauty and richness. There is a beauty and richness in nature, which are of non-causal and non-mechanical kind, and that Man as a natural being has a community with this nature. It is called a communicative view of nature. Through meditation you can enter deeper and deeper into this community with nature, and directly *experience* an intentionality (see my articles *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with mystical experiences*, and *What is karma?*) Personally I think, that it is such experiences that are the background for popularity of religion.

But this doesn't mean that the mechanistic view of nature has to be rejected. In quantum mechanics the classical physics is still valid, but quantum mechanics has given it a limited scope of application (see my article *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr*).

What is important is to be aware of the intentionality bias, and not end up in **Magical thinking**, where you don't discriminate between images and reality. Also see **Illusion of control**.

In my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* I have investigated the relation between an instrumental view of nature and a communicative view of nature in the sections *The Lifeartist as a Natural Being* and *The Lifeartist as a Communicative Being*.

**M**

## Magical thinking

In *Out of Africa* Karen Blixen somewhere describes the magic of the words. The natives named for instance an European after an animal, and a human being, who through many years, by all his surroundings, has been named with one animal-name, finally happens to feel himself related to the animal he is named after; he recognizes himself in this animal.

In the natives' ability to create myths they don't discriminate between the word and the thing, the name and the named. The white men are really, in the eyes of the natives, both humans and animals. In the same way with their linkage of spirits and machines.

Karen Blixen tells about how the natives, because of this mythical "gift", can put experiences on humans which they can't defend themselves against, and not get out of. They can make humans into symbols. She tells that it is a kind of magic which is used on you, and that you later never completely can disentangle from it. It can be a painful, heavy fate to be exposed as one or the other symbol.

But also in the Western civilizations we become exposed for such a magic. It is not something which we have come over. Now it is happening through one or the other kind of religious or political propaganda - and in particular through the media storm, which transforms humans into consumers. "You are what you eat!" It is also this magic George Orwell describes in his novel 1984, with the language called **NewSpeak**, a language created by the rulers in order to control thinking. We all know it more or less. If you by your surroundings constantly are being induced some kind of image, you will in the end begin to believe in it, even if it is not true (**Subjective validation**). Especially in family relations we see how family members are being induced roles which are incredible difficult to disentangle from, because family relations also have with love to do.

All this is magical thinking, and there are a lot of thought distortions built into it, for example the thought-distortion **Arbitrary inference** which means that you make a causal linking of factors, which is accidental or misleading, and **Communal reinforcement** which opens you for the power of suggestion. When you use an **Ideology** (a system, an image), or other limited thought-constructions, to explain everything, you end in an **Endless split of the thought**.

The main reason for the rise of magical thinking is that you don't discriminate between image and reality, the map and the landscape, subject and object. Such a discrimination is central in critical thinking, but it does not involve an ontological

dualism, so that you can't experience nondual, mystical states of mind. It involves a so-called epistemological dualism, orgnoseological dualism, as Niels Bohr has pointed out.

In accordance with Bohr *quantum mechanics is a generalization of classical physics* and the complementarity viewpoint is a generalization of the classical causality principle (see **Nondual bias** for a description of the complementarity principle). The theory of relativity is also a generalization in another direction of classical physics.

Nor can you – in Bohr's opinion – replace classical physics with quantum mechanics, because *the validity of classical physics is a necessary precondition for, that you can describe the quantum mechanical phenomena* and make account for the macroscopic ("classical") experimental arrangement. Bohr is writing in a famous discussion contribution against Einstein, who didn't want to accept that the causality principle has no validity in nuclear physics:

"...the account for all experiences – regardless how far the phenomena are lying outside the reach of classical physics – must be expressed in classical concepts. The reason is simply that we by the word "experiment" refer to a situation, where we can tell others what we have done and what we have learned, and that the experimental device and measuring results therefore must be described in the usual language with appropriate use of the terminology of classical physics."

Niels Bohr: *"Atomfysik og menneskelig erkendelse"*, Schultz' Forlag, København 1957, p. 53.

Note, that Bohr here speaks about the usual language (*everyday language*) supplemented with the terms of classical physics. This is due to, that he regards the *concepts of classical physics as a more explicit formulation of everyday language*. In that sense *everyday language is a necessary precondition for all natural scientific realization*, and nor can everyday language be replaced by an unambiguous and formalised, logical scientific language (read more in my article *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr*).

My professor in philosophy David Favrholt has developed this important theme in Bohr's epistemology further in his own philosophy. He works with, what he calls *The Core* in everyday language.

Favrholt asks us: please observe following concepts: Time – object – space – logic – body – person – experience – memory.

*The phenomenalist/idealist* claims that we only with certainty can know, that the here italicized concepts stand for something real; that is to say: something from the concepts different: *Time – object – space – logic – body – person – subject – experience – memory*.

*The materialist* claims that we only with certainty can know, that the here italicized concepts stand for something real; that is to say: something from the concepts different: *Time – object – space – logic – body – person – subject – experience – memory*.

Favrholdt claims that since these concepts are interdependent, they all represent something. Together they are what he calls *The Core* in everyday language. That they are interdependent means that they have to be used in a certain way in relation to each other, if we at all want to talk meaningful. The relations between them are not established by arbitrary definitions. We have discovered that we shall respect the relations between them, if we want to describe something, whether we want to describe, that there is lying a phone book on the desktop, or that we have an experience of the phone book.

What we must say is as follows: When we as ordinary people – before we have heard anything about philosophy – orientate in life, we form a concept about reality. We associate with humans and animals and plants and non-living things in our daily lives, and we learn to discriminate between what is dream and reality - and what is lie or illusion, and reality.

Any human being understand what we mean by saying that the witness explained in the court, that the thief had a pistol, but *in reality* the thief was unarmed. We also learn to talk about the poetic reality, about the experienced reality etc. We learn to talk about things which exist, despite that no one experiences them, or have consciousness about them. When they found the Golden Horns at Gallehus, they found something which no one knew were there. But they *found* them. Is wasn' t so that they *arised* because they were experienced.

Then certain philosophers are coming and saying, that we don't know whether there is anything behind our experiences. What can you do but ask them what they mean with "experiences". Then they explain this. But it turns out that they only can do this by using the whole of *The Core*. And in this set of fundamental concepts is included the concept "object" or "thing" which represent "things, which exist whether they are experienced or not".

This is included as a necessary precondition for that we can define or explain what we shall understand by experience. So because they have explained what they mean

by "experience" - so that we know the correct use of this concept - they have already accepted that we in our description of reality must assume a correct use of the concept "things which exist whether they are experienced or not".

Why the conceptual relations in the *The Core* not are conventional or accidental, but unavoidable as the relations in the number theory, is precisely because reality - the from our experiences and mind independently existing reality - is included in the determination of how we have to use our concepts in order to be able to realize it, and describe it.

We can choose not to describe it and instead soak ourselves in Hinajana Buddhistic meditation (or music), but *if* we want to describe it, *if* we want to find out what is subjective and objective, *if* we want to achieve realization within physics, biology, psychology etc., then we must use our fundamental concepts in a correct, non-arbitrary way.

This involves, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself that we have to discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism, relativism) are mistaken points of views.

And the same is the case in order to think clearly. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others.

So central in critical thinking is the discrimination between subject and object, dream and reality - and what is lie or illusion, and reality.

And discrimination is also a central virtue in true spirituality. The Dominican mystics call this steps *discriminatio*, the ability to discriminate between how the energy is used temporal or religious. And despite that magical thinking actually can create something magical, then in true spirituality it is still something temporal, or relatively (black magic/occultism), which will create negative karma if practised. The Orientals call it *viveka*, discrimination, the ability to use your will on that part of the energy, you can steer yourself, and steer it towards exercises, prayer, mantras, meditation, instead of towards career, worldliness, self-unfolding, as for example New Thought does.

### **Motivated reasoning**

Motivated reasoning takes **Confirmation bias** to the next level. Ordinary confirmation bias makes it cognitively easy to recognize data that support what we already believe. And ordinary confirmation bias makes it difficult for us to perceive data that disconfirm what we believe. Motivated reasoning takes disconfirming data and turns it into confirming data.

When we have a strong emotional commitment to a belief, we don't just dismiss disconfirming evidence, we rationalize it and twist it so that it becomes confirming evidence. This all happens, of course, at the unconscious level. Consciously, we think we are being objective and unbiased in our evaluations. Unconsciously we are being driven to evaluate data to confirm what we already believe and further disconfirm what we already believe is wrong, *regardless of the nature of the evidence*.

People who make a living claiming to get messages from the "spirit" world depend on believers ignoring both individual errors from so-called psychics and scientific studies that fail to confirm psychic abilities. There are also those who will appeal to scientific studies to support their belief in psychic powers, regardless of the quality of those studies; these believers will also ignore all the studies that don't support their beliefs.

Young Earth creationists (YECs) provide an excellent example of motivated reasoning mixed with **Confabulation**. To maintain their position, YECs must reject nearly all science and confabulate new laws of nature and rules of logic and evidence, and subject themselves to ridicule for their willful ignorance and irrational adherence to the myths of an ancient, pre-scientific people.

Anthropogenic global warming deniers demonstrated motivated reasoning when they put more weight in the views of 31,000 scientists – few of whom were *climate* scientists – than in the views of the vast majority of *climate* scientists. It would not take much investigation to find out that what motivates the deniers is not the evidence but their political and economic beliefs (**Vested interest**). (Here we are not talking about disagreements over policy, but over whether human behaviors and practices are largely responsible for global warming).

Nobody is immune to motivated reasoning. Worse, it is often accompanied by an attitude of mistrust regarding the motives of those who disagree with us. Combine motivated reasoning with our own sense of being unbiased and objective, while being sure that our opponent is biased and not objective, and you have the recipe for predictable obstinacy.

Related to **Confabulation**, **Confirmation bias**, **Backfire effect**, **Ideology** and **Vested interest**

## N

### NewSpeak

The name *Newspeak* is the name George Orwell gave the language, which the rulers in his dystopian novel *1984*, had created. The intention with it is to control thinking, to make some ideas impossible to think, including concepts such as good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly. In this connection they are using concepts such as old-thinking and new-thinking, so that people get a feeling of guilt, everytime they use concepts within old-thinking. The rulers are doing this by connecting concepts within old-thinking with the word thought-crime.

The overriding intention is of course to eliminate critical thinking, or said in another way: that people think for themselves.

NewSpeak is today widespread in the positive thinking environment (which is rooted in the New Thought movement, and supported by constructivism – see my articles *The New Thought Movement and the law of attraction* and *Constructivism, the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry*).

A long line of “old” words – which according to the ideals of positive thinking – are negative, are in our society systematical being replaced with new, more “positive” sounding words. The idea is that you through thoughts and language can eliminate negativity and suffering. Problems are being given “positive” names, whereby they either are being hidden, denied or simply not are being *acknowledged* as problems.

This is especially seen in the business industry and in the working life. Quite superior words such as “problems” and “difficulties” have been transformed to “possibilities” and “challenges.” Within NLP the word failure has been changed to feedback, and many NLP practitioners directly say that there is no such thing as failure – there are only positive feedback or delay (see my article *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)*).

The list over expressions of problems, which in the name of positive thinking, has become converted into something promising, is very long. Guilt has been changed to responsibility, evil to inappropriateness, crisis to growth-potential, dismissals to new beginnings, “to be unsatisfied” to “to seek new challenges”, suffering to stress,

colleague to fellow player, work to career, problem-orientation to solution-orientation, human working capacity to human resource, sacking to setting free, conclit to conflict-solution, critique to response, leadership to self-leadership, etc., etc.

In the working life people are today educated to *think* positively, both about themselves and about others, to *communicate* positively, and to *speak* with positive words and phrases, which turn problems into challenges.

The whole idea is that negativity simply doesn't exist, except in our thoughts and language. There only exists positivity in the world itself (that is: what the positive thinking movement *itself* believes is positivity – note how we already here see “problems” with the idea).

On July 23, 2012, in San Jose, California., 21 people were treated for burns after walking barefoot over hot coals as part of an event called Unleash the Power Within, starring Tony Robbins. The American journalist Oliver Burkeman is the author of the book *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking*.

In an article called *The Power of Negative Thinking* Burkeman is asking in a comment to the firewalker incident: What, exactly, did they expect would happen? In fact, there's a simple secret to “firewalking”: coal is a poor conductor of heat to surrounding surfaces, including human flesh, so with quick, light steps, you'll usually be fine.

But Mr. Robbins and his acolytes have little time for physics. Burkeman says: “to them, it's all a matter of mind-set: cultivate the belief that success is guaranteed, and anything is possible”. One singed but undeterred participant told The San Jose Mercury News: “I wasn't at my peak state.”

Burkeman asks: “What if all this positivity is part of the problem? What if we're trying too hard to think positive and might do better to reconsider our relationship to “negative” emotions and situations?”

A positive thinker can never relax, lest an awareness of sadness or failure creep in. And telling yourself that everything must work out is poor preparation for those times when they don't. You can try, if you insist, to follow the famous self-help advice to eliminate the word “failure” from your vocabulary — but then you'll just have an inadequate vocabulary when failure strikes.

The social critic Barbara Ehrenreich has persuasively argued that the all-positive approach, with its rejection of the possibility of failure, helped bring on our present financial crises. The psychological evidence, backed by ancient wisdom, certainly suggests that positive thinking is not the recipe for success that it purports to be.

Americans are a "positive" people - cheerful, optimistic, and upbeat: This is their reputation as well as their self-image. But more than a temperament, being positive is the key to getting success and prosperity. Or so we are told.

In the utterly original debunking book *Bright-Sided – How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*, Barbara Ehrenreich confronts the false promises of positive thinking and shows its reach into every corner of American life, from Evangelical megachurches to the medical establishment, and, worst of all, to the business community, where the refusal to consider negative outcomes - like mortgage defaults - contributed directly to the current economic disaster. With the myth-busting powers for which she is acclaimed, Ehrenreich exposes the downside of positive thinking: personal self-blame and national denial. This is Ehrenreich at her provocative best - poking holes in conventional wisdom and faux science and ending with a call for existential clarity and courage.

She begins her book with a chapter called *Smile or Die: The Bright Side of Cancer*, where she tells that the first attempt to recruit her into positive thinking was when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She experienced that everything and everybody around her tried to make her “realize that breast cancer is not a problem at all, not even an annoyance – it is a ‘gift,’ deserving of the most heartfelt gratitude.”

Another example is a New Thought “online expert”, who not only advised her client to remove the word critique from his online-material, but also to remove “all judgmental terms.” If he should take that literally, he might as well close his website.

NewSpeak is closely connected with **Magical thinking, Confabulation** and **That’s judgmental**

### **Nondual bias**

Nondual bias arises when you describe something as nondual, while forgetting that you can’t describe anything without implying the negation of it.

The only thing that can be said to be nondual is the wholeness. According to the Taoistic teaching of Yin and Yang there isn’t anything beyond the world. You can’t see the world from outside. You are in the world and you can only describe something from its opposition. What is the good? This you understand if you know

what the evil is. You can't say anything about the world as a whole, because you can't put the wholeness in opposition to anything. The wholeness is therefore the indescribable (Tao).

So clear thinking, and therefore clear communication, involves, according to Taoism, an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological, dualism (Yin and Yang). Clear, or unambiguous, description, has the distinction between subject and object, image and reality, as a necessary precondition. We have to discriminate between subject and object, image and reality, in order to communicate unambiguous (read more about this in **Magical thinking**). And we have to discriminate between a long line of other oppositions as well: under one called Yin and Yang. And this discrimination is characterized by the knowledge that oppositions are complementary to each other, because they mutually exclude each other and at the same necessarily must supplement each other. If your thoughts slip out in one extreme you must remember the other extreme and bring it in. If you confuse oppositions, you must separate them (read more about complementarity in my article *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr*).

Unclear, or ambiguous, thinking, or communication, arises when you either are confusing the oppositions, or are thinking in one extreme of a pair of opposites. That is: dualistic unbalance which creates thought distortions.

Clear thinking and communication therefore also involve critical thinking, where you try to spot thought distortions. Such a critical thinking must both be directed in towards the subject as well as out towards the object. And therefore clear thinking and communication are an ethical practice.

In meditation circles they often commit the Nondual bias by saying that meditation is to be completely without thoughts, because the enlightened consciousness (the wholeness) is without thoughts. This is without doubt a comforting thought for many people who might have had bad experiences within the area of thinking (for example education). They can then attack, for example critical thinkers, for being dual (that is: on a lower plane of consciousness), while themselves being nondual, and therefore on a higher level of consciousness. They just forget that they themselves are using thinking in order to communicate this, and that in a very unclear and ambiguous, even insulting way. In this way the Nondual bias is used in combination with thought distortions such as **Ego-inflation** and **Truth by Authority**. An actually enlightened master would never do this, because he knows he must think in order to communicate. And in this thinking he uses the complementarity principle, and the art of discrimination.

Therefore: always first look at how unambiguous/ambiguous so-called spiritual teachers, gurus, New Agers, and other people, etc., use their communication, before taking their claims seriously.

There are also many people caught in spiritual crises of different types, or clairvoyants, mediums, channelers, etc., who experience non-ordinary phenomena, and where images and reality in their descriptions flow together in one big confusion. It can be very flattering to hear, and sound very “nondual”, but in reality they express themselves, not only unclear and ambiguous, but directly obscure. So instead of taking them seriously, you should remember that obscurantism means hostility towards enlightenment, or simply: darkness (see **Pseudo-profundity**). So who knows what it is that expresses itself through them (about spiritual crises, see my article *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena*).

You can also see the Nondual bias in action when New Agers claim that their techniques, systems, therapies, methods, etc., etc., are nondual, or holistic, which is another word for nondualism. Here it is also often used as attacks on critics. The most known example is the so-called “integral” method of Ken Wilber (see my article *A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method*).

The Nondual bias is also active in philosophical theories of mind such as materialism and idealism.

Nondual bias is often used in connection with **That’s judgmental** in order to silence all critique or discussion.

## P

### **Painbody**

The problem with New Age psychotherapy is, that it often one-sided is focusing on feelings, and thereby is neglecting the importance of thoughts (see my article *The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy*).

Feelings are the body’s reaction on the mind (the thoughts). Feelings arise where the mind and the body meet. They are reflections of the mind *in* the body. Feelings can also be a reflection of a whole thoughtpattern. A thoughtpattern can create an enlarged and energycharged reflection of itself in the form of a feeling. This means, that the whole of the thought’s past also can create a reflection of itself in the body.

And if this past is filled with pain, then it can show itself as a negative energyfield in the body. Eckhart Tolle calls this the emotional painbody. It contains all the pain you have accumulated in the past. It is the sum of the negative feelings which you have "saved together" through life and which you carry. And it can nearly be seen as an invisible, independent creature. Therefore we also could, as H.C. Andersen does in his fairy tale, call it the Shadow.

The painbody is the inner demon, or the devil in the heart. Some painbody's are relatively harmless, some are anxietyfilled, depressive or angry, others are directly malicious and demonical. They can be passive or active. Some are passive 90% of the time, others are active 100% of the time.

The painbody is the expression of suffering itself.

The painbody is activated in the same moment as specific challenges activate the inappropriate basic assumptions, which have been created by bad experiences in the past. And they are being maintained by the vortex of negative automatic thinking, which follows from these basic assumptions. In other words it constitutes a rather particular reaction-pattern, a manuscript, which gets you to play the same role (or the same roles) again and again. That will say, that specific situations will continue to activate it, so that your actions become an eternal repetition of the same. It takes control over you, so to speak.

Therefore you should of course not seek to activate your painbody, as for example cathartic psychotherapies believe you should, because you thereby also activate the negative thoughtpattern behind the painbody, which such psychotherapies don't work with (cathartic psychotherapies are psychotherapies based on the notion that if you express your feelings you will purge yourself of your troubles – see my article *Cathartic psychotherapies*).

The painbody lives of that you are identified with the negative thoughtpattern behind it. In this way the painbody gets your energy. And for that reason you also give energy to your negative feelings when you activate your thoughtpattern. Negative feelings will in other words increase if you express them. And the painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego. The energies found here are unfathomable, and when you direct them into your painbody, you are really facing problems. That is what is happening in a spiritual crisis (see my article *Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena*).

Instead you should relate completely neutral in relation to your painbody, and through critical thinking seek to change the inappropriate basic assumptions which are the thoughtpattern behind the painbody. That is how philosophy and true spirituality works (the inappropriate basic assumptions are based on thought distortions).

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane's collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collective history.

When therefore therapy requires a change, then the instinctive survival-preparedness in us reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfulness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is Ego-centredness. The bigger Ego, the bigger survival chance.

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategy (the ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can't, through therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions (see my articles *Suffering as an entrance to the Source*, *What is karma?*, and *The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice*).

I already now hear advocates of the positive psychology of the New Thought movement claim, that if the painbody is created by a negative thought pattern, then you just have to change this thought pattern into a positive thought pattern (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*). Therefore this distortion of the concepts of negativity and positivity, which this movement has created, must be clarified.

### *Problems of positive psychology*

In accordance with the authentic spiritual traditions the movement of time is a power, an expression of energy, which follows some laws. These laws are also called compensatory karma. I use this concept because the concept of negative karma also has been distorted by the positive psychology movement (into what they call the law of attraction).

The energy-laws function in all cycles of life. On the plane of the outer forms there are birth and death, creation and destruction, growth and dissolution of apparently separated outer forms. This is reflected everywhere: the life-cycle of a star, a planet, a physical body, a tree or a flower; in the rise and fall of nations, political systems and civilizations; and in the inevitable cycles of gain and loss in the individual person's life.

A cycle can last from some hours to some years. There are big cycles and small cycles within the big ones. The cyclic nature of the Universe is closely connected with the impermanence of all things and all situations. Buddha made this into a central part of his teaching. It is also a central part of the teachings of the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, which you can read about in my article *A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method*.

There are cycles with success, where things come to you, and you flourish, and cycles with defeat, where they wither away or wear down, and you become obliged to let go of them, in order to make space so that new things can arise, or so that there can happen a transformation. If you cling to them and make resistance at that time, this means, that you deny accompanying the stream of life, and then you will suffer.

The problem with the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and therefore the ideology of success coaching, is that it one-sided is focusing on that the up-cycles are positive, while the down-cycles are negative.

In his book *The Good Life* the Danish philosopher of life, Mogens Pahuus, writes, that if you ask what the old Scandinavians saw as the highest and the greatest in life, the ecstasy of life, then the answer would be, that it is self-assertion – the assertion of oneself and the family. He also writes that you in Christianity find a diametrically opposite view of self-assertion, – both in its Catholic form as in Protestantism. In Saint Gregory and Thomas of Aquinas haughtiness/pride/self-assertion was the first and greatest of the seven so-called deadly sins. And in Luther self-assertion nor was a goodness, but the vice over all vices. It is the seven deadly sins Dante in *The Purgatory* must look in the eyes one after one, in order to be able to progress. He must use the discrimination, which is the purification process, where you look your

destiny in the eyes and do penance after having realized how your perspective distorts reality.

So self-assertion is a vice. Self-assertion is a kind of self-interest, where everything turns around the Ego, and therefore makes the mind mediocre. To live in a world, which is controlled by self-assertion, without being self-assertive, means, truly, to love something for its own sake, without seeking a reward, a result; but this is very difficult, because the whole world, all your friends, your relatives, struggle to achieve something, to accomplish something, to become something.

Today self-assertion once again is considered as a virtue. The gurus are the many advocates for the market and the economical competition, as for instance several management theorists (management theory, and its use of coaching/psychotherapy, is directly inspired by the positive psychology of the New Thought movement – see my article *Management theory and the self-help industry*). And the education-instrument is self-help (self-improvement). The disciples are the consumers; that will say, that this outlook of life obviously is shared by most people in our society: that it is about becoming something, to get success, to conquer a place on the top of the mountain, to become a winner. Mogens Pahuus believes that the modern ideal about becoming a success, a winner, is a perverted ideal. The society praises a self-assertion which has gone over the top, and there dominates a self-assertion which is a vice, because it both spoils the life of the self-assertive, and the lives of those, whom the self-assertive measures himself in relation to, and whom he wants to overpass.

Pahuus mentions some of the forms of self-assertion: 1) Vanity, which is a vice, because the vain-full always is bearing in mind how he or she looks like, or is considered like, in the eyes of others. 2) Ambition, which is a vice because you here constantly are on the way forward, or upwards. 3) Haughtiness, which is a vice because you here, in your feeling of own superior value, look down at others, are letting others feel their inferiority; that is: because haughtiness is unethical. But also in the arrogant himself haughtiness is destructive: it isolates. 4) Joy of power. The ethical seen most violating form of self-assertion is the joy of having power over others, of controlling others, or oppressing them.

The most extreme expression of the seven deadly sins is **Ego-inflation**.

Ego-inflation happens when the ego has embezzled itself energy which rightly belongs to the collective time. The collective time manifests itself in a widely and indefinite area, for example could a broad spectrum of common human activities and organizations be called manifestations of the collective time: parties, state formations, wars, work communities, concerts, clans, tribes and sects, mass psychological phenomena, religious parishioners, fashion streams, group souls, etc.

When the ego is getting inflated there comes a feeling of, that the “old” ego has been altered, even disappeared. This feeling is sensed a being good, positive, yes it can even be a peak experience. The illusion is that the ego hasn't disappeared, but instead has been inflated. Therefore the dark side of the ego, the whole complex of thought distortions, also has been inflated.

Ego-inflation is the cause of the sense of improvement, healing, or religious experiences people can have, when for example working with therapy, coaching, healing, clairvoyance, or when they have discovered a new ideology, religious or political. It is closely related to thought distortions such as **Communal reinforcement, Groupthink, Illusion of control, Classical conditioning and placebo effects.**

If a person really succeeds in adopting the advices of the self-help books she really gets a problem. Not only does she have to fight with the never-ending development, and the egoism. She is also becoming a serious problem for her surroundings. Because she is now, as the Danish psychologist, Nina Østerby Sæther, says, a potential psychopath.

On a course about psychopaths Nina Østerby Sæther realized that there was many similarities between psychopathic traits, and the advices which are given in self-help books. It made her point out some frightening resemblances (see my article *Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*).

Though some of the self-help books' advices might sound similar to true spirituality - most often they directly quote and use spiritual texts taken out of context - then you have to remember how the wholeness and otherness have been removed. Religion and philosophy have been reduced to psychology and psychotherapy. And when this happens it takes a totally wrong course.

The vice in the different forms of self-assertion is that it leads to an unreal life where you are yourself absent in a state of becoming, and not yourself present in a state of being. You are suffering, it is therefore not at all positive (about the suffering of unreality: see my article *Suffering as an entrance to the Source*).

Positive psychology induces in people especially five thought distortions: **False dichotomy, Compensation, Conversion to the opposite, Confirmation bias, and Illusion of control.** In my article *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)* I have discussed these five thought distortions in relation to positive psychology.

I have in my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* set up six steps in a true spiritual practice:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

The first step, the separation of the observer and the observed, is the step where you are completely ignorant about your painbody; that is: completely identified with it, and therefore in its control. The next step is religion and supporting exercises. Religion and supporting exercises are a valuable early stage in a spiritual practice. Religion and supporting exercises cleanses and prepares transformation on a collective, unconscious-instinctive, level.

The two main reasons why religion and supporting exercises is a necessity is partly, that the ongoing self-confirmation of the ego and its negative automatic thoughts (which, as explained, also can be illusions of positivity), is replaced by a spiritual remembrance, partly that the collective inertia is purificated and prepared, so that the Ego is made transparent along with that original sin and negative karma are transformed and transfigured in the contact with the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness, the saints etc.) And these two processes mutually fertilize each other (also negative automatic thoughts are based on thought distortions).

Religion has to do with the pious attitude and way of thinking, which stands for the observance of religious virtues, duties and rituals. In this way you can bring a unity and direction into the mind, an order and tranquillity in the thinking, a consistency between thought and conduct of life, an awareness of your relationship with persons, things and ideas, which no therapy is able to. In a spiritual practice it serves as a frame of reference.

The supporting exercises are the beginning of the spiritual practice, where you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind (you can find the exercises in my book *Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader*). In order to discover and break the identification with the samsarical producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego's, or the thinking's, functions. This happens through meditation.

The Ego's functions constitute what you could call the ordinary consciousness. You can talk about four such, lower, functions of the ordinary mind:

1. Evaluation (accept/denial, yes/no)
2. Focus
3. Activity
4. Language (words, images)

The source of awareness, the naked consciousness, is hidden because it has melted together with these four functions. They have become a kind of veils, or layers, which are maintained by what you could call the ego-religion and the ego-exercises. The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego's incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: "it is no use with me!"; or: "wonderful me!". Both, either the denial or confirmation (which is what positive psychology is focusing on) of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity and the ego-centralization. The ego's religion and exercises are the ego's needs and longings and will: I want to, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, or, in its most common core: I, I, I...(see **Confirmation bias**)

In my articles *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*, and *A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching*, I have described how the worship of the ego can lead to black magic.

Meditation is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with these functions. Then you can talk about four higher functions of the consciousness, which are becoming activated through meditation:

1. Neutral observation
2. Passive listening presence (or wordless prayer) (defocus)
3. Non-activity (non-action)
4. Non-language (wordless)

The whole proces is like a flower opening itself.

Read more in my article *The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it*.

## Personalizing

Personalizing means that you see independent incidents which happen in the surrounding world, as related to yourself. It is to take something personally, without asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives.

Related to **attribution** and **projection**.

## Persuader words

Words such as “surely”, “obviously”, and “clearly” whose main role is to persuade the reader or listener of the truth of what is being asserted. They are used for rhetorical effect.

Always be aware of the danger of **Rhetoric** and **Sophistry**.

## Politician’s answer

A kind of irrelevance which is often encountered when politicians are interviewed on radio or television. It is a rhetorical technique (see **Rhetoric**) by which they avoid giving direct answers to questions which they don’t really want to answer in public. Instead of giving a direct answer to a direct question, the politician delivers a short (or sometimes quite long) speech on a related topic. The trick is to make the speech internally coherent; thus the politician seems to give a confident and plausible performance in response to what should be probing questions. This diversionary tactic allows him or her to avoid giving an honest response to a potentially damaging question and also provides air time for a short party political broadcast. It is a kind of economy with the truth.

Unfortunately this technique is not confined to politicians (from whom we have come to expect devious face-saving rhetorical techniques) but is used by many other people in responsible positions who want to avoid facing up to their responsibilities.

Avoiding taking responsibility is as old as mankind. In my article *The philosophy of Karen Blixen* I explain how The Western civilization from Christianity has inherited and taken over a very characteristic religious worldimage. Sex is sin. Sex is in the highest a necessary evil you in the safe, god-guaranteed and eternal-made institution of marriage have to give way to. And God is good. God is creative.

Unfortunately we have in this religious worldimage got the Devil, the evil, the destructive, *and* the sexual weaved together. Therefore the destructive, the subversive, has become overlooked. It doesn’t belong to the productive nature of

God. But because it is such evident a fact, you have to do something about it. We have then suitably handed the destructive over to the Devil, who is a fallen angel, an outcast and unhappy, without possibility for salvation and redemption. The danger is, that when sexuality and destruction are excluded from the divine – and herewith from the spiritual dimension – then people are tempted, in powerlessness, to run away from their responsibility. And that is precisely what mankind do. Wars, torture, anger, atomic bombs, chemical war, plague-weapons. No one has the responsibility. All of it makes it difficult to assign responsibility. And the result is, that no responsible is taking care of destructivity. It rambles restless around, un-released, demonized. Everybody is afraid of this destructive evil, but no one takes the responsibility for his own anger.

The feminist scholar and author Daphne Patai is the inspiration to my thesis about the development of a new Puritanism, where traditional religious confession-techniques have been transformed into psychotherapy (see my article *The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines*). This new Puritanism has from Christianity inherited and taken over the above-mentioned characteristic religious worldimage, that sex is sin. Sex is in the highest a necessary evil. Therefore the destructive, the subversive, again is becoming overlooked. But because it is such evident a fact, the radical feminists have to do something about it. Like in Christianity they have therefore suitably handed the destructive over to the Devil. And in this worldimage they have got the Devil, the evil, the destructive, and the sexual weaved together.

There are namely a painful irony in the fact, that our days feminists so uncritical have affiliated the methods, which psychotherapists and hypnotherapists pretend can uncover repressed memories from childhood about sexual abuse and more bizarre things such as satanic rituals, cannibalistic orgies, alien abduction, past lives etc. In this way they paradoxically come to remind about earlier times' Christian inquisitions, a kind of psycho-religious inquisitions (see my articles *The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy*, and *Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception*).

Another way of running away from responsibility is in the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and therefore in the whole of the self-help industry, where they train people in ignoring and avoiding negativity; for example in the typical advices about removing "negative" words such as guilt, shame, etc., from your vocabulary (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*).

A third way is in the heredity and environment ideology. If Man only is a product of heredity and environment, then he has no longer any responsibility for his actions. Even the murderer, who is standing accused in court, is able to defend himself with

that he basically can't help that he has committed a murder. Firstly he was born with some unfortunate genes which did that he wasn't all too clever. Therefore he was bullied in the school, and thereby he was developed to become aggressive and hot tempered. All this caused that he in a certain situation committed a murder, but this he could not help. Heredity and environment led him precisely to this situation. Guilty? No, many people would say today, he is no more guilty than a person is to blame, that he came to cough in a place filled with smoke. No, on the whole it is society and environment, which are to blame for the murder.

When you are advocating a reductionism and are claiming, that Man *is nothing else than* for example a product of heredity and environment, then concepts such as responsibility, guilt and duty lose all meaning. And it becomes meaningless to talk about human ideals. Why admire people, who have achieved something great? They have only good genes and a beneficially environment. Why condemn people, who spoil and break down society? They can't help it (read more about this under **Reductionism**).

## **Prejudice**

A prejudice is a belief held without good reason or consideration of the evidence for or against its being true. Philosophy – that is: rationality and critical thinking – is opposed to prejudice. We are all riddled with prejudices on a wide range of issues, but it is possible to eliminate some of them by making an effort to examine evidence and arguments on both sides of any question. Human reason is fallible, and most of us are strongly motivated to cling on to *some* beliefs even in the teeth of evidence against them (see **Backfire effect** and **Motivated reasoning**); however, even making small inroads into prejudice can transform the world for the better.

## **Priming effect**

The priming effect is a biasing effect on judgment or action by the cognitive meaning or emotive aura of memories, words, images, or symbols. Most of us have had an experience where we misheard some words in a song, a prayer, or a pledge and then continued to mishear the same words – sometimes for years – until somebody corrects us. We might call such cases examples of self-priming. (This kind of mishearing is called a *mondegreen*.) Another example of priming comes from backmasking. What at first sounds like gibberish becomes a clear message after somebody tells you what to listen for. Another example of priming comes from allegedly outraged parents and a talking doll: “Little Mommy Real Loving Baby Cuddle and Coo” from FisherPrice. Some folks swear the doll mumbles “Satan is king” and “Islam is the light.” Some might even hear “Palin is a terrorist who is perpetrating voter fraud” once they're told that's what the doll is saying.

A person's **prejudices**, preoccupations, or **vested interests** might prime one to mishear or misread words. Many studies have demonstrated that we are influenced in our judgments and actions both by words themselves and by the *order* in which words, images, or statements are presented to us or which present themselves to us naturally.

Sometimes we see or hear things without being conscious of seeing or hearing them. Evidence of unconscious perception may become clear at a later time. For example, a person may go many years without understanding why a road sign with the words "hidden meadow" in it produces sexual arousal. Then, one day she returns to a place she hadn't been in many years. She remembers that this was where she met her first lover and the place is called Hidden Meadow.

The priming effect is evident in the unconscious influence of beliefs on actions, such as the hearing of intelligible speech by bird owners and devotees of EVP, and the ideomotor effect on dowzers, Quija board users, table tilters in séances, assistants in facilitated communication, subjects of hypnotic suggestion, and both parties in applied kinesiology. Even more evident is the priming effect in the inquire-techniques in NLP-coaching, and the active listening in Nonviolent Communication, which both praise the neutral approach while forgetting that they are sitting and using theories, which not at all are neutral (see my articles *Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP)*, *and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)*, and *Nonviolent Communication is an instrument of psychic terror*).

The priming effect has shown to be powerful enough to create false memories (here related to **Confabulation**). Priming is especially problematic in hypnotherapy. Many hypnotherapists seem unaware that they are priming their patients. The dangers of this practice are stated by Martin Orne: "The cues as to what is expected may be unwittingly communicated before or during the hypnotic procedure, either by the hypnotist or by someone else, for example, a previous subject, a story, a movie, a stage show, etc. Further, the nature of these cues may be quite obscure to the hypnotist, to the subject, and even to the trained observer." – read more in my article *Hypnosis, hypnotherapy, and the art of self-deception*.

The priming effect is also evident in the unconscious influence of symbols and metaphors, as Sigmund Freud noted long ago. It may well be true, as Freud allegedly said, that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. But sometimes a cigar may be a symbol or stand-in for something else, and the fondling, licking, and sucking actions of the smoker may represent unconscious desires or portend future actions. There is a reason that presidents pose for photos while sitting at a desk with a library of books

in the background guarded by a hanging American flag and fronted by a family photo.

The idea of the priming effect – of the very idea that our conscious choices, decisions, judgments, and behaviors are being biased by unconscious factors – is unsettling to many people. The main moral of priming research is that our thoughts and our behavior are influenced, much more than we know or want, by the environment of the moment. Many people find the priming results unbelievable, because they do not correspond to subjective experience. Many others find the results upsetting, because they threaten the subjective sense of agency and autonomy. If the content of a screen saver on an irrelevant computer can effect your willingness to help strangers without your being aware of it, how free are you? - (in my article *The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind*, I investigate the problem of the free will).

What is unsettling is not so much the possibility that all our thoughts and actions might be determined by factors we have no control over, but that they might be determined by factors we are unaware of and are inherently unknowable.

The priming effect is closely related to **Magical thinking**, where you don't discriminate between word/image and reality, between subject and object. Central in critical thinking, and spiritual practice as such, is precisely that you begin to discriminate between word/image and reality, and between subject and object. See my article *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr*.

The priming effect is also a central issue in my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist*

## **Projection**

Characteristics, thoughts, feelings, attitudes or wishes, which the person refuses to realize in himself, are attributed to other persons or things. Related to **Attribution**.

## **Proof by ignorance**

Proof by ignorance (*argumentum ad ignorantiam*, *argument to ignorance*, *argument from ignorance*, and *appeal to ignorance*), is a fallacy in which a lack of known evidence (or just knowledge) against a belief is taken as an indication that the belief is true. However ignorance of evidence against a position does not prove that there could not be evidence against it; at best it is only indirect support for it.

Many logic texts list Proof by ignorance as a fallacy of reasoning. Examples vary, but some of the more popular ones refer to Sen. Joseph McCarthy's justifying a name

remaining on a list of suspected Communists because “there is nothing in the files to disprove his Communist connections.” The critical thinker Robert T. Carroll used to call this the “Mike Wallace fallacy” when he was teaching logic courses; he named it after a tactic Mr. Wallace frequently used in “60 Minutes.” He would show up unannounced, confront a surprised person with accusations of some sort of wrongdoing, and then the scene would cut to a slamming door or a grainy film of a car driving out of a parking lot. Wallace would then announce something to the effect of: *Mr. X refuses to answer our questions and still has not shown any signs that he is innocent of the charges we’ve made.* It should be obvious that not having proof that someone is not a Communist is not proof that he is and not defending yourself against charges is the same as admitting they are true.

Another common example given in text books is from the Salem witch trials of 1692 where some of those testifying claimed that they could see specters or auras around the accused, but these specters were visible only to the witnesses. Such claims are impossible to disprove. They’re in the same class as the claims of mediums who say they are getting messages from the dead (such claims is often used in connection with the though distortion called **Truth by authority**). One would assume that a reasonable person would require more evidence than just the word of a witness or medium when judging either the cause of the perception or the veracity of the sensations reported. Furthermore, the fact that an accused witch could not prove that she didn’t have a demon’s specter around her or that a skeptic cannot prove that John Edward is not getting messages from someone’s Aunt Sadie does not imply that the accused is a witch or that Edward is really psychic.

It is easy to see why this won’t do, since precisely the same lack of evidence could be used to “prove” the opposite case: that *therefore* I am not a Communist, and *therefore* I am not a witch; that is: because you don’t have any evidence against me.

Proof by ignorance is often used by pseudoscientists (see **Pseudoscience**).

Another area where Proof by ignorance is a common thought distortion is within the area of healing. Since "healings" typically are held to be miraculous because they are "medically inexplicable", claimants are often engaging in Proof by ignorance, where they are drawing a conclusion from a lack of knowledge. Touted healings may actually be attributable to such factors as misdiagnosis, spontaneous remission, psychosomatic conditions, prior medical treatment, the body’s own healing power, and other effects. Here related to **Subjective validation** and **Classical conditioning and the placebo effect**

### **Pseudo-profundity**

Uttering statements which appear deep but which are not.

One way of generating pseudo-profundity is to ask strings of **Rhetorical questions**.

Another way is to use jargon, which is the specialist terminology associated with a particular profession or area of interest. The term “jargon” is almost always used in a pejorative sense to suggest that language is unnecessarily obscure (read more about obscurantism under **Nondual bias**).

A third way is the use of **pseudoscientific** language, for example 1) the assertion of scientific claims that are vague rather than precise, and that lack specific measurements. 2) Use of obscurantist language, and use of apparently technical jargon in an effort to give claims the superficial trappings of science. 3) Creating scientific-sounding terms in order to add weight to claims and persuade non-experts to believe statements that may be false or meaningless. 4) Using established terms in idiosyncratic ways, thereby demonstrating unfamiliarity with mainstream work in the discipline.

Related to **Nondual bias** and **Magical thinking**

### **Pseudoscience**

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Such questions are then solved by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be tested through new experiences, or serve as the best explanations.

So, one crucial principle in science is, that a certain theory has to be testable. Another crucial principle is the use of abductive reasoning (inference to the best explanation).

Is it testable whether God exists or not? No! Is it testable, that the human consciousness only consists in some physical-chemical reactions in the brain, or that it only is a social construction? No!

Is the best explanation for crop circles, that they have been made by extraterrestrials? Although it is undoubtedly true, that strange patterns are sometimes found in cornfields (crop circles) - it doesn't follow that they must have been made by extraterrestrials. There is a wide range of far more plausible alternative explanations of the phenomenon, such as that they have been made by pranksters.

Pseudoscience is philosophical, political, religious/occult theories, that seek legitimacy by claiming, that they are scientific theories, while the fact is, that they either not is testable, or that they abuse the use of abductive reasoning.

Pseudoscience is for example seen in the New Age environment, where they demand that science has to be integrated with so-called “alternative sciences”, such as Intelligent Design, Cryptozoology, Dianetics, Eugenics, Graphology, Homeopathy, Morphic Resonance, Perpetual Motion, Astrology, Personology, Phrenology, Theosophy, Physiognomy, Pyramidology, Quantum Mysticism, Quantum biology, Creationism, Radionics, Time Cube, Ufology, Vitalism, and many more.

New Age pseudoscience is always based on some kind of religious or occult viewpoint.

More accepted pseudosciences is seen in the intellectual environment in form of **Reductionisms**, where they for example claim, that Man fully can be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they claim, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

But all this is not testable. Often the reductionisms then claim, that their theories are the best explanations. The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man? The reductionisms' explanations of this always end up as philosophical shipwrecks. Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer the question of Man, or reality as such. But no single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

It is unfortunate that the reductionisms are so accepted, because it is them that have created distinctions such as “Jewish” and “Aryan” physics; “bourgeois” and “socialist” biology; IQ tests; Eugenics; Personality typing - and a lot of other political inferences from science that have had catastrophic consequences (see for example my article *Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice*).

Where New Age pseudoscience typically is based on that science has to be integrated with certain occult and religious viewpoints, then the pseudoscience of reductionism typically is based on that science has to be integrated with, or is the same as, certain

atheistic/political/postmodernistic viewpoints (see my article *The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind*).

What can be a serious problem in the future, is that a new kind of pseudoscience is trying to unite New Age pseudosciences with some of the pseudosciences of reductionism (see my article *The Matrix Conspiracy*).

Both New Age pseudoscience and the pseudoscience of reductionism are common in sharing some kind of scientism; that is: they overestimate the importance of science, for example by claiming:

- 1) that philosophy and religion need to be founded in science
- 2) that certain single branches of science can give an explanation of everything
- 3) that certain single branches of science are self-sufficient and that philosophy and religion are superfluous.

In New Age it happens in the demand of “alternative sciences.” In reductionism it happens in the form of pseudoskepticism.

Pseudoskepticism is usually used in opposition to an assortment of questionable claims (from UFOs and paranormal phenomena to alternative medical practices to religious ideas). Pseudoskepticism refers to arguments which use scientific sounding language to disparage or refute given beliefs, theories, or claims, but which in fact fail to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism.

The term “pseudoskepticism” has gradually been expanded to include any unsubstantiated invalidation of a theory.

The term was coined by professor in sociology, Marcello Truzzi. Truzzi attributed the following characteristics to pseudosceptics:

- 1) The tendency to deny, rather than doubt.
- 2) Double standards in the application of criticism
- 3) Tendency to discredit, rather than investigate
- 4) Presenting insufficient evidence or proof
- 5) Assuming criticism requires no burden of proof

- 6) Making unsubstantiated counter-claims
- 7) Counter-claims based on plausibility rather than empirical evidence
- 8) Suggesting that unconvincing evidence is grounds for completely dismissing a claim

Truzzi characterized true skepticism as:

- 1) Doubt rather than denial; nonbelief rather than belief
- 2) An agnostic position, one that says the claim is not proved rather than disproved
- 3) Maintains that science need not incorporate every extraordinary claim as a new “fact.”
- 4) As a result, has no burden to prove anything
- 5) Discovering an opportunity for error should make such experiments less evidential and usually unconvincing. It usually disproves the claim that the experiment was “air tight” against error, but it does not disprove the anomaly claim.

An example of pseudoskepticism within reductionism is the British ethologist Richard Dawkins. He is well known for his criticism of religious pseudoscience such as creationism and intelligent design, but is himself, in his atheistic faith, ending in the pseudoscience of reductionism (biologism), for example in his book *The God Delusion*.

Other examples of the pseudoscience of reductionism is the American philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, who in his book - with the ambitious title *Consciousness Explained* - seeks to explain consciousness, partially through computer analogies, partially through neurology and psychology.

Personally I am supporting true skepticism within science, but my method is not itself building on science, but on philosophy. I consider myself as a philosophical investigator, who is using critical thinking, and not a scientific investigator, who have to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism. This is due to, that I have experienced spiritual crises and paranormal phenomena (therefore I can't be an agnostic), but at the same time I am critical towards how to describe and behave in relation to such phenomena.

In the following I will show six ways of identifying pseudoscience:

*1) Use of vague, exaggerated or untestable claims*

- a) Assertion of scientific claims that are vague rather than precise, and that lack specific measurements.
- b) Use of obscurantist language, and use of apparently technical jargon in an effort to give claims the superficial trappings of science.

*2) Over-reliance on confirmation rather than refutation*

- a) Assertions that do not allow the logical possibility that they can be shown to be false by observation or physical experiment.
- b) Over-reliance on testimonial, anecdotal evidence, or personal experience. This evidence may be useful for the context of discovery but should not be used in the context of justification (e.g. statistical hypothesis testing).
- c) Presentation of data that seems to support its claims while suppressing or refusing to consider data that conflicts with its claims. This is an example of selection bias, a distortion of evidence or data that arises from the way that the data are collected. It is sometimes referred to as the selection effect.
- d) Reversed burden of proof. In science, the burden of proof rests on those making a claim, not on the critic. “Pseudoscientific” arguments may neglect this principle and demand that skeptics demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that a claim (e.g. an assertion regarding the efficacy of a novel therapeutic technique) is false. It is essentially impossible to prove a universal negative, so this tactic incorrectly places the burden of proof on the skeptic rather than the claimant.

*3) Lack of openness to testing by other experts*

Evasion of peer review before publicizing results (called “science by press conference”). Some proponents of theories that contradict accepted scientific theories avoid subjecting their ideas to peer review, sometimes on the grounds that peer review is biased towards established paradigms, and sometimes on the grounds that assertions cannot be evaluated adequately using standard scientific methods. By remaining insulated from the peer review process, these proponents forgo the opportunity of corrective feedback from informed colleagues.

*4) Absence of progress*

- a) Failure to progress towards additional evidence of its claims. Terence Hines has identified astrology as a subject that has changed very little in the past two millennia.

b) Lack of self correction: scientific programmes make mistakes, but they tend to eliminate these errors over time. By contrast, theories may be accused of being pseudoscientific because they have remained unaltered despite contradictory evidence.

c) Statistical significance of supporting experimental results does not improve over time and are usually close to the cutoff for statistical significance. Normally, experimental techniques improve or the experiments are repeated and this gives ever stronger evidence. If statistical significance does not improve, this typically shows that the experiments have just been repeated until a success occurs due to chance variations.

#### *5) Personalization of issues*

a) Tight social groups and authoritarian personality, suppression of dissent, and groupthink can enhance the adoption of beliefs that have no rational basis. In attempting to confirm their beliefs, the group tends to identify their critics as enemies.

b) Assertion of claims of a conspiracy on the part of the scientific community to suppress the results.

c) Attacking the motives or character of anyone who questions the claims.

#### *6) Use of misleading language*

a) Creating scientific-sounding terms in order to add weight to claims and persuade non-experts to believe statements that may be false or meaningless.

b) Using established terms in idiosyncratic ways, thereby demonstrating unfamiliarity with mainstream work in the discipline.

Pseudoscience is related to **Research has shown that...**

## **R**

### **Rationalization**

Disguising the real reasons for acting in a particular way by giving a self-serving justification, which, even if plausible, is not true (see also **wishful thinking**). In extreme cases, rationalisers come to believe in their own Rationalizations. Related to **Ad hoc clauses**.

### **Reductio ad absurdum**

Positions that would have absurd consequences if true. If you for example preach relativism and believe that everything is relative and for that reason equal true, you have thereby accepted that nazism, fascism, dictatorship, popular murder, terror and violence, are as equally great blessings for mankind as democracy, negotiation and dialogue. Then you have no basis in order to criticize, because you haven't got any rational frame to start from. You can't criticize anyone for argumentation bungling, or to replace arguments with machine guns, because this presupposes, that there is a rational foundation in your arguments.

### **Reductionism**

Along with the development of the sciences the so-called reductionisms have got status of whole research programmes. After Darwin many thought that everything could be explained biological. In Logical Empiricism materialism lived onwards in the form of Physicalism, which was about, that all sciences eventually can be reduced to classical physics – or eventually to "the intersubjective controllable language of things". Psychologism was one of the other ravaging reductionisms in the twentieth century. Freud and Jung thought separately, that they had the key to the understanding of diverse cultural phenomena because of the storeroom of the unconsciousness. Moreover there was Historism, which followers thought that they could generalize hermeneutics also to include the exact sciences. The latest craze in reductionism is Social Constructivism (see my article *Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry*).

Surely – many are the people, who become seduced by the reductionisms. Maybe not so strange after all: all reductionisms imply a simplification, a manageable solution to all problems, a key, which saves the supporters for having to think fundamentally over the philosophical questions – which after all only a few are capable to.

What is reductionism? Science can't give answers to the problems of lifeworlds and view of values. Single branches of sciences can't out of hand answer questions about values or moral standards.

However this they nevertheless often do, but then it ends in reductionism. And there has not been a lack of trying to understand Man from one or the other single branch

of science. As already mentioned under **Pseudoscience**: They have for example claimed, that Man fully can be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they have thought, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

These viewpoints are forms of reductionism; that is to say: they reduce or devaluates Man to a phenomenon of a single type. The problem is then to lead all other sides of Man back to this single type, for example to explain ethics, politics and mathematics as pure historical or psychological phenomena. Here the reductionisms always end in various forms of explaining away, which often is direct absurd.

The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man?

The reductionisms view themselves as scientific approaches, but they are not. It is here the fundamental invalidity in the reductionistic viewpoints arises, since their basis not is building on argumentation, but on the claim, that they are founded in science. But science is as mentioned not able to answer problems of lifeworlds and values. Reductionisms are *philosophical* viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer questions of values or moral standards. No single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

Our wonder over Man becomes philosophy when it reaches the question of Man as such. Philosophy throws out answers to the question, argues for the answers and investigates their consequences. This happens first of all by critical thinking and meditating over the things, not through an experience-scientific method.

Philosophy is in that way a deepening of our everyday understanding. It is a reflection over well-known subjects. Its answers lie in continuation of our immediate knowledge and understanding. Similar you can say, that philosophy is a deepening of the forms of understanding which lie in for example science, art and religion.

Philosophy seeks for *oneness* and *coherence*. This means, that it both ask for the fundamental trait of the essence of Man, and for how all other traits of Man is connected therewith. The answer to what the essence of Man is has to throw a light of transfiguration over everything we know about man.

Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man, the *common* or *universal* which all of us have part in, in spite of the fact that we can behave so different and be studied in so many various ways. Here it is about what we can call the essence of Man, and the question is solved, not by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories - it is only solved by critical thinking and meditating over everything we already know about Man, and by searching for oneness and coherence in it.

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories that can be determined by new experiences. Philosophy uses alone the tool of critical thinking and meditation.

Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints because they seek to answer the question about Man as such, but as philosophical viewpoints they are cognitional and ethical shipwrecks.

Let us first try to look at the cognitional shipwreck. The truth which philosophy seeks to achieve, is a truth that raises over human views, yes over the whole of the human existence. That something is true means in philosophical sense that it is true independently of who claims it, and when it is claimed. And independently of whether anybody at all has claimed it, thought it, believed it or knows it. Truths are therefore, in philosophical context, both time-independent and idea- and mind-independent.

Since *all* philosophical views qua views claim to be true in precisely this sense, then it should be clear that views which try to *reduce* or *cause explain* all views, are self-refuting views (see **Self-refuting arguments**).

A self-refuting view can't be saved by saying that it shall apply to all views except itself. Because in that case you have to accept that there exists at least one scientific and/or philosophical doctrine, which are independent of what you seek to reduce everything to, and this is precisely what the understanding itself claims that there isn't.

It seems to be a common trait of the self-refuting philosophical views, that they pull the carpet away under themselves because they seek to reduce fundamental concepts such as "meaning", "truth", and "validity" to something factual, for example physical, biological, psychological, social or historical. Herewith they at the same time claim that if these conditions had been different (because they are changeable), then all our concepts about meaning, truth and validity also had to be different. But

therewith they deprive themselves the possibility for being regarded as meaningful, true or valid.

Let us now try to look at the ethical shipwreck the reductionisms lead us out in.

My concept of Illuminati is based on the rise of pseudoscience. As suggested under **Pseudoscience** there are especially two kinds of pseudoscience: 1) the pseudoscience of New Age which demands that science has to be integrated with certain “alternative” sciences with spiritual content. 2) The pseudoscience of reductionism which demands that science has to be integrated with, or is the same as, certain atheistic/political/postmodernistic views.

Both are a part of The Matrix Conspiracy because they both support subjectivism and relativism, which are a fundamental philosophy of this ideology. In the following I will concentrate about reductionism.

#### *The heredity and environment ideology and the problem of mind*

When you today ask: what is a human being? Then most people answer, that Man ”is a product of heredity and environment”. This has become a whole ideology in the Western world, and a fundamental part of the Illuminati aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy. It is actually a kind of sociobiology, or social Darwinism.

Both Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett advocate some kind of sociobiology. Social biology became notorious in 1975, when the American biologist Edward O. Wilson published a major treatise on the subject: *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. Accusations of sexism and racism were leveled because Wilson suggested that Western social systems are biologically innate, and that in some respects males are stronger, more aggressive, more naturally promiscuous than females. Critics argued that all social biology is in fact a manifestation of Social Darwinism, a nineteenth-century philosophy owing more to the English philosopher Herbert Spencer, than to Charles Darwin, supposedly legitimating extreme laissez-faire economics and an unbridled societal struggle for existence.

But the search for a synthesis of the heredity and environment split, a holism, is common in the pseudoscience of reductionism.

Within the pseudoscience of New Age the American physicist Fritjof Capra, has in his book, *The Turning Point*, outlined an ideology, where he combines quantum mysticism with reductionism, especially reductionisms such as historism and sociologism (read more in my article *Quantum mysticism and its web of lies*).

And, since the first publication of his ideas at the age of 23, the American New Age guru, Ken Wilber, has also sought to bring together the world's far-ranging spiritual teachings, philosophies, and scientific truths into one coherent and all-embracing vision. This integral map of the *Kosmos* (the universe that includes the physical cosmos as well as the realms of consciousness and spirit) should then offer an unprecedented guide to discovering your highest potentials.

Wilber introduces his vision by saying, that during the last 30 years we have witnessed a historical first: all of the world's cultures are now available to us. In the past, if you were born, say, a Chinese, you likely spent your entire life in one culture, often in one province, sometimes in one house, living and loving and dying on one small plot of land. But today, not only are people geographical mobile, we can study, and have studied, virtually every known culture on the planet. In the global village, all cultures are exposed to each other.

Knowledge itself is now global, Wilber claims. This means that, also for the first time, the sum total of human knowledge is available to us – the knowledge, experience, wisdom and reflection of all major human civilizations – premodern, modern, and postmodern – are open to study by anyone.

Wilber asks: What if we took literally everything that all the various cultures have to tell us about human potential – about spiritual growth, psychological growth, social growth – and put it all on the table? What if we attempted to find the critically essential keys to human growth, based on the sum total of human knowledge now open to us? What if we attempted, based on extensive cross-cultural study, to use all of the world's great traditions to create a composite map, a comprehensive map, an all-inclusive or integral map that included the best elements from all of them?

Wilber asks: Sound complicated, complex, daunting? In a sense, it is, he answers. But in another sense, he continues, the results turn out to be surprisingly simple and elegant. Over the last several decades, there has indeed been an extensive search for a comprehensive map of human potentials. This map uses all the known systems and models of human growth – from the ancient shamans and sages to today's breakthrough in cognitive science – and distills their major components into 5 simple factors, factors that are the essential elements or keys to unlocking and facilitating human evolution.

Ken Wilber calls these 5 elements **quadrants, levels, lines, states** and **types**; that is: quadrants of development, levels or stages of development, states of consciousness, and a human personality typing system, a typology. All of these elements are, right now available in your own awareness, he claims. These 5 elements are not merely

theoretical concepts; they are aspects of your own experience, contours of your own consciousness.

What is the point of using this integral map or model, Wilber asks. First, whether you are working in business, medicine, psychotherapy, law, ecology, or simply everyday living and learning, the integral map helps make sure that you are “touching all the bases.” If you are flying over the Rocky Mountains, the more accurate a map you have, the less likely you will crash. An integral approach insures that you are utilizing the full range of resources for any situation, with the greater likelihood of success.

Second, if you learn to spot these 5 elements in your own awareness – and because they are there in any event – then you can more easily appreciate them, exercise them, use them...and thereby vastly accelerate your own growth and development to higher, wider, deeper ways of being. A simple familiarity with the 5 elements in the integral model will help you orient yourself more easily and fully in this exiting journey of discovery and awakening (read more in my article *A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method*).

It is very popular in New Age, inspired by Theosophy, and writers such as Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber, to term their positions as “Holism”. But both Theosophy, Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber’s systems, can be seen as substantive philosophies of history; that is: searches for overall meaning in human history; searches for models of everything (read my articles *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr* and *The fascism of Theosophy*). Such philosophies are all involved in the **Nondual bias**.

In the West, substantive philosophy of history is thought to begin only in the Christian era. In the *City of God*, Augustine wonders why Rome flourished while pagan, yet fell into disgrace after its conversion to Christianity. Divine reward and punishment should apply to whole peoples, not just to individuals. The unfolding of events in history should exhibit a plan that is intelligible rationally, morally, and (for Augustine) theologically. As a believer Augustine is convinced that there is such a plan, though it may not always be evident.

In the modern period, philosophers such as Vico and Herder also sought such intelligibility in history. They also believed in a long-term direction or purpose of history that is often opposed to and makes use of the purposes of individuals. The most elaborate and best-known example of this approach is found in Hegel, who thought that the gradual realization of human freedom could be discerned in history even if much slavery, tyranny, and suffering are necessary in the process.

Marx, too, claimed to know the laws – in his case economic – according to which history unfolds. Similar searches for overall “meaning” in human history have been undertaken in the twentieth century, notably by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) author of the twelve-volume *Study of History*, and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), author of *Decline of the West*.

The main problem with all the above theories, are that they, in different ways, reduce consciousness to heredity and environment.

If Man only is a product of heredity and environment, then he has no longer any responsibility for his actions. Even the murderer, who is standing accused in court, is able to defend himself with, that he basically can't help, that he has committed a murder. Firstly he was born with some unfortunate genes, which made, that he wasn't all too clever. Therefore he was bullied in the school, and thereby he was developed to become aggressive and hot tempered. All this caused, that he in a certain situation committed a murder, but this he could not help. Heredity and environment led him precisely to this situation. Guilty? No, many people would say today, he is no more guilty, than a person is to blame, that he came to cough in a place filled with smoke. No, on the whole it is society and environment, which are to blame for the murder.

When you are advocating a reductionism and are claiming, that Man *is nothing else than* for example a product of heredity and environment, then concepts such as responsibility, guilt and duty loose all meaning. And it becomes meaningless to talk about human ideals. Why admire people, who have achieved something great? They have only good genes and a beneficially environment. Why condemn people, who spoil and break down society? They can't help it (see **Politician's answer**).

Typical enough (foolish enough), then heredity and environment also are being used as a political tool. Often with followers on the respective sides of the extremities. In the dispute between heredity and environment it is for example considered political progressively (“*left wing*”) to think, that the environment is more or less the sole decisive factor. The environment (upbringing, social conditions) is people themselves in the principle able to control and change through political actions. This is also background for, that *Lamarckism in the form of Lysenkoism* – which almost completely refuses the biological genetic meaning – got monopoly on engaging themselves with heredity in Soviet.

Similar it is regarded as political reactionary (“*right wing*”), if you believe, that the hereditament (genes) of the individual is the most important factor, which determines its actual development. Ideological this is connected with, that in that case a social reformatory policy is not for a lot of benefit: the biological inheritance has so far been a destiny, which you have to tolerate. Right wing politicians have for example

claimed, that aggression or competition is inborn in the biological nature of man. Therewith the assertion can be used to justify, that specific social conditions, for example warfare or the capitalistic, economical system, is "natural". Evolutionism "proves" that the unlimited competition is as natural, as the survival of the best fitted. Moreover we know Nazism's use of biological theories.

As mentioned, the combination of the two extremities – the heredity and environment ideology – looks like a kind of Social Darwinism. Before we go further it is important to mention, that evolutionism – also in its most modern Neodarwinistic version – is a natural historical report, and not a natural scientific theory. Neodarwinism can – as all other historical sciences – only *retrospective* explain the development up to now in a rational way. This appears clearly from the fact, that it can't give any scientific well-founded prediction of the future development. It is *not possible* with any reasonable precision *to predict the future biological development* on the background of the theoretical foundation of evolutionism.

Until today Man has not been able to do anything in order to change his genes. This has been changed with the modern genetic engineering, which already in principle has made it possible to change the genes of our gametes. In the future the problem about conscious changing peoples' genes in order to improve certain characteristics is not any technical difficulty. It is in turn a serious *ethical* and political problem about setting limits and about, where these limits have to be set.

As mentioned in my article *The fascism of Theosophy*, then the reductionism of Theosophy is due to the attempt of integrating spirituality and science. It is from Theosophy all New Age ideas of integrating spirituality and science comes. Theosophy is especially inspired by Darwinism, and its theories about human evolution. And the idea continues today in New Age and Ufology, where spirituality, apart from Darwinism, furthermore is sought integrated with new developments within psychology, psychotherapy, natural science, especially biology and quantum mechanics. The whole thing is presented as an ideology with a lot of attempts to predict the future evolution of Man, often connected with eugenics: the applied "science" or the bio-social movement (Social Darwinism) which advocates the use of practises aimed at improving the genetic composition of people, usually referring to human populations (read for example my articles *Time travel and the fascism of the WingMakers Project* and *The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines*).

But it could also be, that it is wrong to say, that Man *only* is a product of heredity and environment. Has science really proven this assertion? No, it hasn't. Firstly science till today has not been able to give any explanation of that we have a consciousness, that we are conscious about ourselves and are able to reflect and meditate over our

own wishes, actions and doings. In natural science all explanations are *quantitative*; that is to say: they are given within the frames of what can be measured, scaled and counted. It speaks from an outside-and-in perspective on Man. But when we speak about everything the word consciousness covers – thoughts, feelings, considerations, pains etc. – then it seems quite clear, that it is not something that is quantitative. When we are using an inside-and-out perspective and describe our states of consciousness and our experiences of, what we think is beautiful, ugly, attractive, repelling etc., - then we use a completely other language than the quantitative language of natural science. So how should one be able to reduce everything to natural science?

The interesting is however, that the more science develops, the more you have to give up backgrounds, which once occurred evident to everyone. In nuclear physics and the quantum mechanics we have learned that there exist processes, which is not cause determined, and which do not follow the old rule about that everything has to be continuous. Brain functions are in a wide extent quantum mechanical, and since the quantum mechanics breaks with the principle of causation and determinism, then the human brain is not fully a cause determined system. And then you can't up from the ground explain brain processes from genetical and environmental factors.

(Read more in my article *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr*, where I also present, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself, that we have to discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates, that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism/relativism) are mistaken points of views – also see **Magical thinking**).

Just as inexplicable is it, what an "I" or a "Self" is. I wake up in the morning, and I know, that I am the same as yesterday or ten years ago, in spite of the fact that my body since then has changed look and that the content of my thoughts in many ways has become something else. What is this "Me"?

It is not my body, because then I should each morning go out in the bathroom and look in the mirror, in order to find out who I am. Nor is it the content of my consciousness, my thoughts and my memories, because then I first had to evoke a line of memories each morning, before I knew who I am. The whole of the total science has no explanation of, what a "Self" is, or what personal identity is.

In this there also lies another factor, namely the question about the free will, the possibility of Man consciously to decide on his own present condition and within some limits to make a free choice.

Meanwhile I mean, that the concept of free will and free choice is unfortunate concepts. In my understanding the will is the will to power, and belongs to the Ego, which makes its choices on background of the past, and which therefore is determined by both its personal and collective history. Therefore the Ego always strives towards being something else than what it is, it imitates others, are a slave of others ideas and ideals, and its actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt. A more fortunate concept would in my understanding be the freedom that lies in the existential concept of being yourself; that is: where you live in accordance with your own essence and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action. I will therefore use the concepts of freedom of action and freedom of decisiveness.

The assertion that Man is nothing else than a product of heredity and environment has become an ideology, a part of the planlessness of our welfare society, where no one is responsible, where no one can help anything, where everything is to blame the genes or the society. However facing this reductionism you can place a more true understanding, which has science on its side: Man is a product of heredity and environment, yes, but also of your own consciousness about yourself.

I am born with some specific genes, which to a high degree put limits for, what I am able to and not able to. In some ways I have had good growing up conditions, in others bad. But I have since my childhood been conscious about myself and my surroundings, and have more or less freely been able to decide on something rather than something else, within some limits. So therefore I am not only a product of heredity and environment, but also a person, which has become what I am due to a line of decisions which I have made through life.

It is a viewpoint between two extremes. On the one hand we have the assertion that no one can help, that he is as he is. No one is able to change himself. My answer is: yes, you can. You can within some given limits work with yourself, and consciously decide to critically think and meditate over your background, your past, your environment, the whole of your character. You can decide to start a spiritual practice, which you know in longer term will change your outlook and way of being. In a spiritual practice you can change yourself quite considerably.

On the other hand we have Sartre's assertion about, that a person's life is determined alone by all the choices, he makes; that is to say: by the evaluations, which the inner thinker makes by saying yes and no, justifying and condemning, accepting and denying. But this is an overstatement, which sounds a bit too much of "everyone is the architect of his own fortunes", and the mantra of the self-help industry that you, through the power of thought, can create reality as you want to. Moreover there is the problem with the Ego and its thought distortions.

It is therefore not true, that freedom lies in choosing to become what you want to. You can for example without guilt become beaten down by an assailant, so that you have to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair. Here it is so so with being the architect of your own fortunes.

Truth lies in the middle of these extremes. Heredity and environment put some limits for, what we can do and not can do. But our self and our consciousness, which scientifically seen can't be explained alone from heredity and environment, makes us capable running to decide on how we want to react in a lot of the situations life puts us in. Therefore you can in some situations talk about a personal responsibility.

Read more about consciousness and free will in my article *What is karma?*

### **Representativeness bias**

Many of our judgments involve classifying or categorizing individual persons or things. The representativeness bias manifests itself when we take a few traits or characteristics of someone or something and fit them to a stereotype or model.

The key to avoiding the representativeness bias is to open to the possibility that the case before you isn't typical. Force yourself to consider other possibilities. A human being is much too complex to be reduced to a stereotype.

Related to **Prejudice**.

In organized form the representativeness bias is active in all forms of personality typing systems (see my article *Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice*)

### **Research has shown that...**

Within **Pseudoscience** there has gone inflation in the phrase *Research has shown that...* Pseudoscience is seen in the New Age environment, where they demand that science has to be integrated with so-called "alternative sciences", and in the intellectual environment in form of **Reductionisms**, which demand that science has to be integrated with, or is the same as, certain atheistic/political/postmodernistic views.

*Research has shown that...* is a phrase, which often is used to convince the listener about that the one who talks can reason what he says with concrete empirical proof. But this is often just an example of subjective argumentation, a kind of unethical manipulation (often based on **Wishful thinking**), because it is extremely vague to claim that "research has shown" anything, unless you can reason the assertion with

specific details about the claimed research. Who has carried out this research? Which methods were there used? What exactly did they found out? Have their results been confirmed by others who work within the area?

Related to **rhetoric** and **sophistry**.

### **Rhetoric (subjective argumentation)**

Rhetoric (subjective argumentation) is an unethical way to convince others about your opinions because it doesn't show, what in reel sense is appropriate or inappropriate about a case, but manipulates with it. Contains some of the following elements: innuendoes, distortions, **Generalizations**, over-/understatements, sarcasm, satire, irony, postulates, **Persuader words**, emotional affections, coloured diction, choices and exclusions, subjective style; or said simply: thought distortions.

Objective argumentation is always a more ethical way to convince others about your opinions, because it actually shows, what in reel sense is appropriate or inappropriate about a case. It also trains you in thinking more clearly. Contains some of the following elements: summary or abstract, information, description, reasons, concrete diction, nuanced objective statement, argumentation; or said simply: critical thinking.

Rhetoric is related to **sophistry**.

### **Rhetorical questions**

Questions, which are asked purely for effect rather than as requests for answers. The questioner can for example assume that there only is one possible answer to the question in which case the rhetorical question functions in precisely the same way as **Persuader words**. In this form rhetorical questions are simply substitutes for straightforward statements.

It is comparatively easy and certainly unhelpful to raise a large number of seemingly deep questions on almost any topic (see also **Pseudo-profundity**); what is difficult and important are finding answers to them.

Byron Katie's The work is an example of how a one-sided and simplified version of Cognitive Therapy ends up as rhetorical questions. The Work consists in four questions you have to ask to a problematic thought of yours, and a turnaround technique. The four questions are:

1. Is it true?
2. Are you absolutely sure it is true?

3. How do you react when you think this thought?
4. Who would you be without this thought?

These questions can be a good idea to ask yourself if a problematic thought of yours actually is false. And there is nothing new in it. As mentioned they also use such questions in Cognitive Therapy, but not so simplified. So why not use that instead, or take a few lessons in philosophy?

Because the problem with The Work is that it has a conclusion in advance, namely that the thought is false, and therewith it is in progress, as with other New Age directions, of eliminating peoples' ability of critical thinking. Problematic, because the training of critical thinking is the first step in a true spiritual proces, and on the whole a primary condition for a healthy mind. In Cognitive Therapy for example, they also have questions to ask to problematic thoughts that actually have some truth in them.

When the conclusion is given in advance then The Work's four questions become rhetorical questions.

And former devotees say that The Work can get quite nasty with its turnaround technique. After that you, as expected, have "realized", that your thought is not true, then you have to turn it upside down; you so to speak have to think the opposite thought.

Again it can be a good thing to look at problems from different sides, but that is not what you do with the turnaround technique. The turnaround technique actually sounds a bit like **Conversion to the opposite**. The turnaround technique must be a dream for any bully, liar or manipulator. If you are critical, then this is due to your own false thoughts. If someone have bullied you, and you feel hurt, then this pain is based on your own wrong way of thinking. Certainly not the bully's.

Read more in my article *A critique of Byron Katie and her therapeutic method The Work*

## **S**

### **Selective abstraction**

Selections and exclusions - which means that you, usually unconscious, choose to perceive special parts of reality and leave out other. These special parts can both be positive or negative. Related to **Selective thinking**

### **Selective thinking**

Selective thinking is the process whereby one selects out favorable evidence for remembrance and focus, while ignoring unfavorable evidence for a belief. This kind of thinking is the basis for most beliefs in the psychic powers of so-called mind readers and mediums (see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with clairvoyance*). It is also the basis for many, if not most, occult and **pseudoscientific** beliefs. And of course, the positive psychology of New Thought (see my article *The New Thought movement and the law of attraction*).

Selective thinking is related to **Selective abstraction, Confirmation bias, Motivated reasoning, and Subjective validation.**

### **Self-refuting arguments**

Is for example seen in relativism which considers all views as relative, and therefore equally good. Relativism is logical fallacious because it of course considers itself as being true. But it can precisely, in accordance with its own built-in relativism, not itself be regarded as truer than for example absolutism. For that reason it is followed by a long line of self-contradictions.

The self-contradiction is that relativism makes an exception of its own position: the very assertion of relativism is itself nonrelativistic.

Another self-refuting argumentation is **That's judgmental**. The statement That's judgmental is often used to silence critique, but it can itself be construed as judgmental: it is a judgment that what has just been said is worthless because it is judgmental. The act of deeming worthless itself involves being judgmental, so this position is self-refuting.

Related to **Contradiction** and **Hypocrisy**. Read more under **Reductionism**

### **Solipsism**

Solipsism (of lat. *Solus ipse*, I alone) is the opinion, that I alone, and my states of consciousness, exist, or that I, and my states of consciousness, are the only things which really can be realized. Everything else, for example other people's

consciousnesses, as well as material things, which are claimed to be outside my consciousness, are problematic things.

Solipsism can for example only be stated in first person. There are not two persons who can agree about it because all other persons than the person who put forward the statement of solipsism, *ex hypothesi* only are phenomena in his consciousness. When I – in first person – analyze the eventual arguments *against* solipsism, I realize that I don't need to take them seriously, because they *ex hypothesi* only are phenomena in my consciousness, which can't be compelling. But at the same time I realize that all my arguments *for* solipsism for the same reason nor can be considered compelling. I have ended up in a self-contradiction (see **contradiction**).

Solipsism ends in the problem of **The endless split of the thought**. Read more in my article *The Dream Hypothesis and the Brain-in-jar Hypothesis*

### **Sophistry**

The Sophists were teachers of rhetoric, who against a fee, taught people how to persuade other people about their "truths". **Rhetoric**, or sophistry, is precisely the art of persuasion. Rather than giving reasons and presenting arguments to support conclusions, as Socrates did, then those who use sophistry are employing a battery of techniques, such as emphatic assertion, **Persuader words** and emotive language (or thought distortions as such), to convince the listener, or reader, that what they say or imply is true.

The Sophists taught their pupils how to win arguments by any means available; they were supposedly more interested in teaching ways of getting on in the world than ways of finding the truth, as Socrates. Therefore any charlatan is welcome.

### **Straw man**

A caricature of your opponent's view set up simply so that you can knock it down. Sometimes it is a deliberate ploy; in which case it is a disreputable form of **Rhetoric**. More often it involves a degree of **Wishful thinking** stemming from widespread reluctance to attribute great intelligence or subtlety to someone with whom you strongly disagree. Over-confidence in your own position may lead you to treat dissenting views as easy targets when in fact they may be more complex and resistant to simple attacks.

### **Subjective validation**

Philosophical counseling (and therefore true spiritual counseling) claims that our problems, and suffering as such, are due to a separation of the observer and the observed (this separation is a central theme in my book *A Portrait of a Lifestylist*). In its practice it directs itself away from the observed, towards the observer himself (the form of consciousness: the one who evaluates, who says yes and no, who accepts and denies, who compares with earlier and hopes/fears something else), and not the observed (the contents of consciousness: feelings, thoughts, experiences, sense impressions, memories, wishes, hopes, fears, lusts) as in psychotherapy. Its questions therefore become of existential, conceptual, ethical, epistemological and metaphysical kind. They are therefore in their essence philosophical, as for example the question: *Who am I?* (To ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way is a central theme in my book *Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader*. Also read my article *Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy*).

Psychotherapy is a branch of psychology, and therefore something scientific, which directs itself towards aspects of the observed that can be empirically tested. Therefore it must not contain philosophical and/or religious theories. But this is precisely what the whole of the New Age and self-help environment are doing, when they reduce religion and philosophy to psychology. And in neglecting the observer they are misleading their clients philosophically and spiritually (see my articles *The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy* and *Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology*).

The problem is that they consequently overlook the problem of thought distortions. This is especially seen in the ignorance of Subjective validation. Numerous psychologizing therapies and techniques within New Age and self-help simply can't be understood, nor succeed, without understanding subjective validation (for example Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), Nonviolent Communication, Law of Attraction, Personality typing, Hypnotherapy, Astrology, Clairvoyance, Channeling, Human Design System, The Work, different healing methods, etc., etc.).

These therapies and techniques are dependent of that subjective validation is active in the client, or else they won't work. They, and subjective validation, are two sides of the same coin. They are therefore also dependent of, that all kinds of critical thinking are eliminated. The role of subjective validation in these therapies and techniques are therefore also the reason for, that there never has been a successful scientific validation of them under properly controlled conditions, or that none of them ever have been able to take James Randi's The One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge. James Randi is an American stage magician and scientific skeptic. His challenge is offering a prize of US\$ 1,000,000 to eligible applicants who can demonstrate evidence of any paranormal, supernatural or occult power or event under test conditions agreed to by both parties.

The effects of these therapies and techniques will therefore not go beyond the effects of subjective validation!

Subjective validation is active when people will validate a set of statements allegedly about themselves as highly accurate even if these statements *not* are accurate. This tendency to find personal meaning and significance in statements not based on personal knowledge extends to words, symbols, initials, and objects as well.

Some of the statements or other items we find personally meaningful – even when they’re not – seem meaningful because of our desires (see the chapter *The Lifestylist as a Desirous Being* in my book *A Portrait of a Lifestylist*)

One reason for that people rate impersonal statements as highly significant to them – even when they’re not - is because they’re *gullible*. People tend to accept claims about themselves in proportion to their desire that the claims be true rather than in proportion to the accuracy of the claims as measured by some non-subjective standard. We tend to accept questionable, even false, statements about ourselves if we deem them positive or flattering enough.

Being gullible and prone to **Wishful thinking** may partially explain the tendency to subjective validation. Another key element is **Selective thinking**, the tendency to focus on and remember evidence that supports one’s beliefs, while ignoring or forgetting the evidence that conflicts with one’s beliefs. Some of the statements in the drugstore astrology reading may be false for you, but you ignore, downplay, or forget those statements when making your overall assessment of accuracy. Subjects who seek counseling from psychics, mediums, fortune tellers, mind readers, graphologists, etc., will often ignore false or questionable claims and, in many cases, by their own words or actions provide most of the information they erroneously attribute to such counselors (the explanation of why **Cold reading** works). Many subjects will often believe that information they provided the counselor was profound and personal information that the counselor couldn’t possibly have known.

Another important element in subjective validation is the “natural” human tendency to find meaning and significance. We will often give very liberal interpretations to vague, ambiguous, or inconsistent claims about ourselves in order to make sense out of the claims. In fact, we will often work hard to figure out some significance or meaning for statements that aren’t even about us when told that they’re somehow important. Mentalists and unscrupulous people claiming to be psychic take advantage of our desire to find meaning everywhere (see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with clairvoyance*).

There is at least one more key to understanding subjective validation: *motivation*. Many people seek fortune tellers of all sorts or psychic mediums because they desperately desire to have someone tell them what lies in store for them or they desperately wish to make contact with a dead love one. The sitter must be willing to validate. The stronger the desire to make contact, the harder the sitter will work to find meaning and connections in the medium's items.

There may also be another mechanism at work here: the desire to please the medium. This may be due partly to the consideration that by pleasing the medium, the odds increase that the medium will make contact. But it may also have to do with a strange phenomenon that occurs in settings where a person gives up control of the situation to another, as in hypnosis or when being asked to assist a magician do a trick (see my article *Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception*). There is sometimes a kind of loss of self in those situations, and combined with a desire to please, a kind of submission to the will of another, up to a point. If such a mechanism is at work in psychic readings, the sitter may acquiesce to the suggestions or items thrown out by the medium, not because they are true or truly significant, but out of a desire to please (also see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling*).

When the motivation of the sitter is high enough it might lead her to validate false or ambiguous statements.

Also the **Clustering illusion** can be a key to understanding subjective validation: the intuition that random events, statements, or items, which occur in clusters are not really random events, statements, or items.

Finally, the drive to find personal meaning or significance in impersonal or insignificant coincidences may be related to the powerful "natural" drive to create stories, narratives that string together bits and pieces of information into a tale. Of course truth matters much of the time, but many of our narratives satisfy us regardless of their accuracy. This tendency to connect things and create plausible narratives out of partially fictitious items is called **Confabulation**.

## T

### **Testimonials**

Testimonials can for example be used by individuals, groups, organizations, etc., as a "proof" of that some kind of theory is correct.

They do this by pointing to the many “successes.” They can demonstrate that their programs “work”. They can bring forth to testify on their behalf hundreds, if not thousands, of satisfied customers.

Though testimonials of course can lead to a scientific investigation (or fully valid can be used in many other contexts) then it is important to know that testimonials don't *validate*, for example a self-help program. Scientifically seen this is pure nonsense, and deeply manipulative. All talk about that testimonials are a *proof* of something, is a sign of **pseudoscience**.

Furthermore, the sense of improvement, for instance peak experiences in a self-help workshop, might not be matched by improved behavior. Just because they feel they have benefited doesn't mean they have. Often they simply have become a nuisance to their non-initiated surroundings.

When looking at testimonials one must always consider the power of a long line of thought distortions, such as for example **Subjective validation, Selective thinking, Confirmation bias, Motivated reasoning, Classical conditioning and placebo effects, Proof by ignorance**, etc., etc.

Related to **Anecdotal evidence**.

### **That's judgmental**

That's judgmental is a statement sometimes mistakenly treated by its utterer as a knock-down argument against what has just been said. The assumption so obviously being made by those who use this phrase to silence discussions, or critique, is that, for some usually unspecified reasons, judgments are considered as an invention of the devil; that is: judgmental terms such as good versus bad, right versus wrong, fair versus unfair.

I will mention two reasons though: namely subjectivism/relativism and misunderstood spirituality.

Both subjectivism and relativism claim that any objective truth doesn't exist. Truth is something we create ourselves, either as individuals or cultures, and since any objective truth doesn't exist, any objective scale of truth doesn't exist either. All truths are therefore equally true and equally valid, and if one person's truth, or one culture's truth, try to intervene in the truths of other individuals or cultures, then this is considered as an aggression.

In order to explain the misunderstood spirituality, I will mention the three aspects of spiritual practice:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions created by dualistic unbalance, both in oneself and in others).
- 2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the ego – see my articles *The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it*, and *Suffering as an entrance to the source*)
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images – see my article *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice*)

The misunderstanding happens when you only focus on 3; for example in meditation where you practice neutral observation, passive listening presence, etc.; that is: where you try not to make judgments - because in order to exist in the world you must think, and therefore make judgments. In every act of communication you must think, and therefore make judgments. The art is then to make these judgments liberated from thought distortions, and therefore liberated from the painbody. Critical thinking is a central aspect of exploring, changing and restructuring thought distortions.

One of the more grotesque examples of how That's judgmental directly has been put in system by combining subjectivism with misunderstood spirituality, is in the communication theory Nonviolent Communication (NVC), where 1 and 2 precisely have been removed (see my article *Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is an instrument of psychic terror*). You are here encouraged to observe neutral (this is possible in meditation) and express your feelings and needs without judgments (this is not possible). The contradiction here is that if you for example have a feeling of anger, then this anger is caused by a thought and therefore a judgment, and therefore you can't express it neutral. Shortly said: a feeling is a judgment (if you actually were observing neutral then the anger hardly would emerge – or said differently: the painbody would not be active). But NVC completely abjures thoughts, and in the oblivion of the thoughts, NVC allows thought distortions to speak uncontrolled. And since the negative thought pattern behind the painbody consists in thought distortions, NVC also allows the painbody to speak uncontrolled.

To be a witness to a NVC group session is therefore something of an experience. Nobody notice the self-contradictions; not even the obvious NVC division of language in giraffe language (good) and wolf language (bad). It is heart breaking to see the manipulation, the creation of rancour, the disrespectfulness, the put-downs, the ruination of reputation, and the emotional torture, which in NVC happen in the name of compassion and nonviolence. And due to **Subjective validation** most of the

participants will say that it was a good experience though it wasn't. So, rather than saying that judgments are an invention of the devil, you could say that the thought distortion That's judgmental is an invention of the devil.

The problem of NVC is characterizing the whole of the New Age and self-help industry, which are based on the same fundamental psychologizing sources of inspiration.

The idea that we should not be judgmental is therefore not an easy position to defend in any context since almost every aspect of our lives which we are likely to argue about is infused with judgments: we make implicit judgments in nearly everything we say. There is rarely any justification for deeming judgments impermissible. What you can discuss are judgments characterized by thought distortions.

The statement That's judgmental can itself be construed as judgmental: it is a judgment that what has just been said is worthless because it is judgmental. The act of deeming worthless itself involves being judgmental, so this position is self-refuting (see **Self-refuting arguments**).

That's judgmental is often used in combination with **Nondual bias**. Also see **NewSpeak**

### **Thought-reading**

Thought-reading means for example that you are convinced that you know what others think about you. You don't investigate whether you are right by asking or searching for contra-conceptions and alternatives. Without deeper reflection you just conclude, that others for example are critical.

A variation of this is the thought distortion **Hermeneutics of Suspicion** where your own theories make you convinced about what people *in reality* think, while you at the same time are ignoring what they actually are saying.

### **Truth by authority**

There are today a vast amount of non-enlightened, self-proclaimed New Age/self-help gurus (in science of religion they actually have no numbers of this enormous market) who get authority by claiming, that their teaching/technique, either is coming from a state of enlightenment, is being channeled from some kind of divine source, or are coming from clairvoyant abilities (see my articles *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling*, and *Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with clairvoyance*).

They might very well have strange paranormal abilities, it doesn't matter in this question, because if such teachers put their teaching forward in this way, you can be hundred percent sure, that this teacher has a problem with **ego-inflation** (if he is not directly a fraud -and then there are thousands of within New Age). Why? Because no real enlightened master would argue in this way. True enlightened masters, or sober spiritual teachers, speak from their own source, and are always characterized by humility. Just look at Dalai Lama, who incessantly claims, that he hasn't reached the full Rigpa, and that he just is a beginner. True enlightened masters, as well as sober spiritual teachers, are also always philosophers, who are giving reasons and presenting arguments to support conclusions.

Truth by Authority is about taking statements to be true simply because an alleged authority (experts, teachers, states of enlightenment, divine sources, paranormal abilities, etc.) on the matter has said/justified that they are true. A level of critical thinking is always appropriate, because the statement may be based on different kinds of thought distortions, for example **Nondual bias**.

People, who in their arguments/teachings, again and again, have to defer to some authority (experts, teachers, states of enlightenment, divine sources, paranormal abilities) in order to justify their arguments/teachings, are hundred percent on the wrong track, even if they should have some paranormal abilities. Again it is interesting to see, that true enlightened masters, as well as sober spiritual teachers, never do this. And interesting, that probably most of the many people, who have made a business on being clairvoyants/mediums/channelers etc., will fall for *Truth by Authority*.

## V

### **Vested interest**

Having a personal investment in the outcome of a discussion: standing to gain if a particular conclusion is reached. People who have vested interests in particular outcomes often distort evidence or are economical with the truth in order to achieve their desired end.

## W

## **Wishful thinking**

Wishful thinking is to think, that because it would be nice, if something were true, then it actual must be true. This thoughtpattern is very common, and very seductive because it allows us to avoid unpleasant truths. But it is a form of self-deceit. Wishful thinking for example often ignores the possibility of plausible alternative explanations on exactly the same observations (see **Ignoring alternative explanations**).