Morten Tolboll

Alice in Wonderland

My professor in philosophy, the late David Favrholdt, was the first who drew my attention to the movie The Matrix, as well as Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and its sequel Through the Looking-Glass.

He saw the connections between both the movie, Carroll’s books and Descartes’ speculations on the possibility of deception by dreams or an evil deceiver. He asked the question which Morpheus asks Neo in The Matrix: “What pill would you choose, the red or the blue? Is ignorance bliss, or is the truth worth knowing, no matter what? My experience and his was similar to those of philosophy professors and students around the world. Which pill would you choose? Why?

Or, asking the question rhetorical, as agent Smith would have done it, if he were the president in Aldous Huxley’s novel Brave New World, where he asks the main character Johannes: Would you rather be right than happy? This question is scary enough also a central question which the creator of Nonviolent Communication, Marshall Rosenberg, asks people (see my article Nonviolent Communication is an Instrument of Psychic Terror). As if being right equals being unhappy. Such rhetorical manipulation is typical for the so-called Sophists (teachers of rhetoric), who are the archetypal opposition to the philosopher.

The red pill is a new symbol of bold choice, and most people insist they would take it if they were in Neo’s shoes. If they take it they will major in philosophy, stay in Wonderland and “see how far down the rabbit hole goes.” If they take the blue pill they will return to their previous virtual reality and forget they had ever given thoughts to questions that matter and mysteries of the universe. That’s what Agent Smith and the Sophists would try to persuade you to prefer. They would try to make you believe in that you could be a Matrix Agent or a Sophist yourself, and create your own reality, be a master of the Matrix, instead of a rebel trying to expose the Matrix, and thereby get out of it (read more in my pop culture file on The Matrix).

Since its publication in 1865 Alice in Wonderland has become our defining cultural myth of distorted reality. We’re all familiar with the characters (the Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter), the key phrases (“Off with their heads!”; “Curiouser and curiouser!”; “We’re all mad here.”) and the plot (Alice falls into a rabbit-hole,
gets lost in Wonderland, and has a series of bizarre encounters as she tries to find her way home).

Many of us associate drugs, specifically hallucinogenic drugs, with Alice. Indeed, Alice´s journey can be read as an allegory for an intense drug experience. Rephrasing the plot only slightly, Alice gets lost and tries to find her way back to normal reality. Within the story are specific allusions: the Caterpillar smokes a hookah, Alice drinks mysterious liquids and eats mushrooms, Alice´s perception of time and space are altered, and the impossible in everyday. The association of drugs with Alice is so established that Alice is now a slang term for LSD (the association with drugs is also important in my concept of Dream Yoga, and the relation between dream and awake, fantasy and reality. In normal reality you discriminate between these, in Wonderland you don´t discriminate between these (see my article What is Dream Yoga?).

Philosophers who read Alice recognize that she is by no means the first to be victimized by the use of specious logic. In fact, the logic of Wonderland has a long real-life history in philosophy. The great Greek philosopher Socrates, famous for saying, “The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being,” had no contend with a clique of the above-mentioned self-proclaimed savants calling themselves Sophists, who were notorious for using logic precisely to prevent such examination in favour of cleverly demonstrating how you could believe in six impossible things – before or after breakfast, as the Queen in Wonderland claims she can.

The Sophists took their name from the Greek word Sophia, meaning “wisdom,” to advertise their claim to be wise men, but to many who listened to their arguments, wiseass seemed like a more fitting sobriquet.

In the Euthydemus Plato, who recorded many of Socrates´s dialogues with his contemporaries, recounts how Socrates and some of his young friends are drawn into a conversation with two such Sophists – the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus – who treat them to a cavalcade of arguments that rival those of Wonderland and Looking-Glass creatures in absurdity. They confuse Socrates´s young friend Cleinias as dreadfully as their counterparts do Alice, goading him through fallacious reasoning to consider – if not in the end believe – considerable more than six impossible things!

So, when Alice falls down into the rabbit-hole you might say that she falls down into a world of thought distortions. The characters in Wonderland could be seen as images of thought distortions. In the following I will therefore write examples of thought distortions in Bold, so you can find them in my book A Dictionary of Thought Distortions.
The Queen of Hearts is one of the fictional characters from the book Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, in which she appears as the primary antagonist. She is a foul-tempered monarch whom Carroll himself describes as "a blind fury", and who is quick to give death sentences at the slightest offense. One of her most famous lines she states often is "Off with their heads!"

The Queen is referred to as a card from a pack of playing cards by Alice, yet somehow she is able to talk and is the ruler of the lands in the story, alongside her tiny husband, the King of Hearts. She is often confused with the Red Queen from the sequel, Through the Looking-Glass, although the two are very different.

She offers a bizarre approach towards justice: sentence before verdict. You could very shortly say that her idea of justice is prejudice. Prejudice is the main thought distortion which goes again in all thought distortions and therefore in all the characters in Wonderland.

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. That’s what Alice is doing.

Modern portrayals in popular culture usually let the Queen of Hearts play the role of a villain because of the menace the character exemplifies, but in the book she does not fill that purpose. Despite the frequency of death sentences, it would appear few people are actually beheaded, She is just one of the many obstacles that Alice has to encounter on the journey, but unlike other obstacles, she makes a higher potential threat.

So you could speak of Alice’s encounter with the Queen as the judge, or the automaton, in a courtroom of Sophists, or in a courtroom of Agent Smith clones.

The Queen’s death sentences "Off with their heads!" at the slightest offense, can be seen in the following three thought distortions Ideology, Proof by Ignorance and Rhetorical Questions:
Ideology is 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. It’s clear that Wonderland is ruled by an Ideology. In the context of my teaching this ideology is The Matrix Conspiracy.

Rhetorical questions are questions, which are asked purely for effect rather than as requests for answers. The questioner can for example assume that there on 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 process, 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. Anyone can see the similarity with the characters in Wonderland.

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

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

*The Hatter* is another of the fictional characters in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*. He is often referred to as the Mad Hatter, though this term was never used by Carroll. The phrase "mad as a hatter" pre-dates Carroll's works. The Hatter and the March Hare are referred to as "both mad" by the Cheshire Cat, in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in the seventh chapter titled "A Mad Tea-Party".

The Hatter explains to Alice that he and the March Hare are always having tea because when he tried to sing for the foul-tempered Queen of Hearts, she sentenced him to death for "murdering the time", but he escapes decapitation. In retaliation, time (referred to as a "he" in the novel) halts himself in respect to the Hatter, keeping him and the March Hare stuck at 18:00 (or 6:00 pm) forever.

When Alice arrives at the tea party, the Hatter is characterized by switching places on the table at any given time, making short, personal remarks, asking unanswerable riddles and reciting nonsensical poetry, all of which eventually drives Alice away. The Hatter appears again as a witness at the Knave of Hearts' trial, where the Queen appears to recognize him as the singer she sentenced to death, and the King of Hearts also cautions him not to be nervous or he will have him "executed on the spot".

Wonderland's residents and members of Alice's real world speak essentially the same language. However, the creatures in Wonderland take everything literally in a way which causes confusion for both Alice and the reader. What makes sense to Alice does not make sense to them and the other way around. This confusion makes it difficult to differentiate between sense and nonsense, sanity and insanity, and as mentioned, between dream and awake, fantasy and reality. As the Cheshire Cat says, "we're all mad here."

Carroll blurs the line between imagination and reality through the constant confusion of language, personhood, and sometimes surprising "real world" knowledge of the creatures inhabiting Wonderland. What the language of Wonderland is characterized by, is the thought distortion **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 Taoist 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., 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, which we will return to when Alice meets Humpty Dumpty.

An example of the nonsense spoken at the Mad Tea-Party is Pseudo-profundity which is about 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**

In my article *The Sokal Hoax* you can see how Postmodernists are using nonsense as propaganda tool. In the [updates and commentaries](#) to my Ken Wilber article you can see how nonsense is used as the insider language of his cult.

*Humpty Dumpty* is a character in an English nursery rhyme, probably originally a riddle and one of the best known in the English-speaking world. He is typically portrayed as a personified egg, though he is not explicitly described so. The first recorded versions of the rhyme date from late eighteenth-century England and the tune from 1870 in James William Elliott's *National Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Songs*. Its origins are obscure and several theories have been advanced to suggest original meanings.

The character of Humpty Dumpty was popularised in the United States by actor George L. Fox (1825–77). As a character and literary allusion, he has appeared or been referred to in a large number of works of literature and popular culture, particularly Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*.

The rhyme is one of the best known and most popular in the English language. The most common modern text is:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,*
*Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;*
*All the king's horses and all the king's men*
*Couldn't put Humpty together again.*

Humpty appears in *Through the Looking-Glass* where he discusses semantics and pragmatics with Alice:

'I don't know what you mean by "glory"," Alice said.  
*Humpty Dumpty* smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"'  
'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument"," Alice objected.  
'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.'
'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'
'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master — that's all.'
Alice was too much puzzled to say anything; so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. 'They've a temper, some of them — particularly verbs: they're the proudest — adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs — however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what I say!'

This passage was used in Britain by Lord Atkin in his dissenting judgement in the seminal case Liversidge v. Anderson (1942), where he protested about the distortion of a statute by the majority of the House of Lords.

It also became a popular citation in United States legal opinions, appearing in 250 judicial decisions in the Westlaw database as of 19 April 2008.

The large number of hate-mails I have received from New Agers over the years, seem to revolve around one central concept, namely the concept critique. These mails are sinister variations over Humpty´s “nice knock-down argument.”

I have been met by especially three thought distortions: Ad Hominem Move, Don´t Knock It Till You Try It, and That´s Judgmental.

They are all so-called knock-down arguments, or arguments used purely in order to silence critique:

**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).
The psychologizing tendencies shows in Ad Hominem Moves such as: “What a hateful person you are”, “You haven’t got much love in your childhood”, “Were you sexually abused by your father?”, “You got a severe personality flaw”, “You ought to be forced into one of the psychotherapeutic treatments you criticize” etc., etc.,

Ad hominem seems to be a seed which branches into a tree of other thought distortions, for example **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.

An example of the use of NewSpeak is the Danish feminist Susanne Staun who in an article in the Danish newspaper Politiken (July 29, 2017) writes an article about violence and men's violence against women. Here, Susanne Staun explains how the debate is leaked with different strategies. The Headline says:

*The tactics of the debate on violence against women are obvious: deny, attack and change victims and offender.*

In the article she accuses the medias (newspapers, Facebook, Commentators, etc.) for using a tactic called “Darvo” when it comes to discussing rape and men's violence against women.

The concept of Darvo refers to a reaction perpetrators of wrong doing, particularly sexual offenders, may display in response to being held accountable for their behavior. DARVO stands for "Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender." The perpetrator or offender may Deny the behavior, Attack the individual doing the confronting, and Reverse the roles of Victim and Offender such that the perpetrator assumes the victim role and turns the true victim -- or the whistle blower -- into an alleged offender. This occurs, for instance, when an actually guilty perpetrator assumes the role of "falsely accused" and attacks the accuser's credibility or even blames the accuser of being the perpetrator of a false accusation.

So, Susanne Staun is using the psychologizing aspect of ad hominem move and the NewSpeak technique in a way, that if anybody criticizes her, they will be reminded that they now are using Darvo, and is a potential sex offender. Darvo is a
psychological term that should be limited to use in criminal cases and not in a public debate against anybody who criticizes.

Susanne Staun could in this way be a character in Wonderland (also see my article The New Feminism and the Philosophy of Womens Magazines).

The second thought distortion I often have been met with is 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 (see below).

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 what the critic has tried 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.

The third thought distortion is That´s judgmental. That´s judgmental is again 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 - See my book A Dictionary of Thought Distortions).

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, and, as we saw, NewSpeak.

The whole of this misunderstanding of the concept of critique is again an example on the monstrosity of pseudo-scholarship and lack of education within New Age. Besides that critique as above-mentioned is central in a spiritual practice, I will show what the concept critique means in scholarship.

Critique is a method of disciplined, systematic study of a written or oral discourse. Although critique is commonly understood as fault finding and negative judgment, it can also involve merit recognition, and in the philosophical tradition, as mine belongs to, it also means a methodical practice of doubt.

The contemporary sense of critique has been largely influenced by the Enlightenment critique of prejudice and authority, which championed the emancipation and autonomy from religious and political authorities.

Philosophy is the application of critical thought, and is the disciplined practice of processing the theory/praxis problem. That is precisely the discipline used in all wisdom traditions, but obviously not in New Age.

In philosophical contexts, such as law or academics, critique is most influenced by Kant's use of the term to mean a reflective examination of the validity and limits of a human capacity or of a set of philosophical claims. This has been extended in modern philosophy to mean a systematic inquiry into the conditions and consequences of a concept, a theory, a discipline, or an approach and/or attempt to understand the limitations and validity of that. A critical perspective, in this sense, is the opposite of a dogmatic one. Kant wrote:

*We deal with a concept dogmatically ... if we consider it as contained under another concept of the object which constitutes a principle of reason and determine it in conformity with this. But we deal with it merely critically if we consider it only in*
reference to our cognitive faculties and consequently to the subjective conditions of thinking it, without undertaking to decide anything about its object.

Later thinkers such as Hegel used the word 'critique' in a broader way than Kant's sense of the word, to mean the systematic inquiry into the limits of a doctrine or set of concepts. This referential expansion led, for instance, to the formulation of the idea of social critique, such as arose after Karl Marx's theoretical work delineated in his Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), which was a critique of the then-current models of economic theory and thought of that time. Further critique can then be applied after the fact, by using thorough critique as a basis for new argument. The idea of critique is elemental to legal, aesthetic, and literary theory and such practices, such as in the analysis and evaluation of writings such as pictorial, musical, or expanded textual works.

In French, German, or Italian, no distinction is drawn between 'critique' and 'criticism': the two words both translate as critique, Kritik, and critica, respectively. In the English language, according to philosopher Gianni Vattimo, criticism is used more frequently to denote literary criticism or art criticism, that is the interpretation and evaluation of literature and art; while critique may be used to refer to more general and profound writing as Kant's Critique of pure reason.

Another proposed distinction is that critique is never personalized nor ad hominem, but is instead the analyses of the structure of the thought in the content of the item critiqued. This analysis then offers by way of the critique method either a rebuttal or a suggestion of further expansion upon the problems presented by the topic of that specific written or oral argumentation.

It is clear that the attacks I´ve met is based on that New Age and the Self-help industry is a hard-bitten ideology, where one of the traits is that it doesn´t allow critique under any circumstances (see my article The difference between philosophical education and ideological education).

What Alice learn in Wonderland is most certainly towards an education in philosophy. Alice is a no-nonsense girl. Not that she´s unadventurous or unimaginative. Far from it! And she´s certainly not adverse to taking advantage of the opportunities for fun afforded her by the magical worlds she encounters down the rabbit-hole and through the looking glass. But through it all, she displays a relentless insistence on making sense of things that continually runs afoul of the equally relentless insistence of the wonderland and Looking-Glass worlds on making nonsense of everything. The mad chatter of the creatures that populate these worlds supplies much of the whimsy of Lewis Carroll´s stories. But it´s the maddening tug-
of-war between Alice’s obstinate good sense and the brilliant nonsense of the creatures she meets that supplies the hilarity.

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