

Morten Tolboll

Donald Trump: a Master Practitioner of the New Trend in Psychology: Positive Thinking

Most people agree that Donald Trump at times is behaving rather weirdly. Have you ever wondered why? Personally, I have tried to figure out why in two previous articles: [The Confabulation of Trump](#), and, [A Critique of Donald Trump](#). Shortly said, these two articles suggest that his behavior has to do with the rise of relativism and subjectivism. And this is still true. But when I wrote my Ebook, [The Dark League Behind then 2020 Presidential Candidacy of Marianne Williamson](#), I discovered that he in addition also is practicing the new trend in psychology: positive thinking.

In the time of writing this, Trump has hired his positive thinking advisor through many years, Paula White, to become a part of his staff in the White House. And the newest example of him practicing positive thinking is his way of seeing the rise of wildfires in the USA. He claims that they aren't due to climate changes (or any external circumstance), but to the bad thoughts of the leaders of the states.

Let's look at what positive thinking is, and wherefrom it stems.

"Fake it till you make it" is an English aphorism which suggests that by imitating confidence, competence, and an optimistic mindset, a person can realize those qualities in their real life. It echoes the underlying principles of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as a means to enable a change in one's behavior. Or in other words: faith in one's self helps one's self improve.

In the 1920s, Alfred Adler developed a therapeutic technique that he called "acting as if". This strategy gave his clients an opportunity to practice alternatives to dysfunctional behaviors. Adler's method is still used today and is often described as "role play".

This is just one example of psychological reductionism being extrapolated to a philosophy of life. In the Law of Attraction movement, "act as if you already have it",

or simply "act as if", is a central concept. In her book, *The Secret*, the American New Age guru, Rhonda Byrne, writes:

How do you get yourself to a point of believing? Start make-believing. Be like a child, and make-believe. Act as if you have it already. As you make-believe, you will begin to believe you have received.

It is interesting that Marianne Williamson, the 2020 presidential candidate, and supposedly democratic alternative to Donald Trump, also is supporting the *Fake It Till You Make It* mantra. In her book, *The Gift of Change*, she writes:

We vastly underestimate the ability of our subconscious mind to support us in creating change. "Fake it till you make it" is often a good advice. When little girls play "house" or little boys play Spiderman, they are following a subconscious strategy of personality development, using their imaginations to prepare for new realms of being. And we need never stop doing this, unless we choose to (page 39).

Discovering own self-contradictions is, like Donald Trump, not her greatest gift. A few pages later she is complaining over "a large theft, betrayal by people I thought were honorable...(page 71). Complaining over betrayal, and talking about honesty, are curious statements coming from a person who a few pages earlier advised people in the mantra "Fake it Till You Make It". In her books, Williamson is writing a lot about how negative the betrayal of others is, and here she is writing a direct recipe in how you yourself can live a life of betrayal. But, of course, her extreme individualism, makes her blind for her own self-contradiction.

Williamson has also promoted prosperity gospel beliefs in her 2012 book, *The Law of Divine Compensation*:

"To whatever extent your mind is aligned with love, you will receive divine compensation for any lack in your material existence. From spiritual substance will come material manifestation. This is not just a theory; it is a fact."

In a sense, Williamson and Donald Trump are two sides of the same coin: both are self-help gurus, but Trump only intends to help himself. Trump's stated inspiration is from Norman Vincent Peale, one of the progenitors of the prosperity gospel that now are worshipped by psychology departments all over the world (they just call it positive psychology, and hides it under a lot of pseudoscientific nonsense).

After the second Republican debate, when it appeared Donald Trump's lead was finally starting to slip, and Carly Fiorina and Marco Rubio were gaining traction,

Trump himself, in typical fashion, appeared to only see positive signs. He told Fox News' Sean Hannity that only the polls (Time, Drudge Report, Newsmax) that showed him having picked up support mattered because they represented "the people who vote." The happy talk was relentless: After speakers at the Emmy Awards on Sept. 20 ridiculed him, Trump told Politico that the evening had been "amazing." More recently, Trump berated a news photographer who dared to take pictures of empty seats at one of his rallies, insisting his events were as packed as ever.

In her article, [How Norman Vincent Peale Taught Donald Trump to Worship Himself](#), Gwenda Blair asks: Is this guy for real? She writes:

Or more to the point, could anyone really possess that much self-confidence? There has been no shortage of explanations—a huge inferiority complex, infantile narcissism, delusional thinking—for Trump's undying self-assurance. But as I discovered when writing a book about Donald, his father, and his grandfather, if you want to understand what goes on underneath the blond comb-over, you'd do well to look back to two crucial events in the early 1950s.

*Event No. 1 occurred in October 1952, when a book appeared called *The Power Of Positive Thinking*. Written by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and translated into 15 languages, it remained on the New York Times best-seller list for 186 weeks and sold 5 million copies. Donald was only 6 years old at the time and didn't read the book until much later, but it quickly became important in the large Queens household in which he grew up, and it would play a critical role in his future.*

[...]

Event No. 2 in the early 1950s—and in the development of Donald's personality and style—was the emergence of modern branding. At the dawn of the 20th century, most makers of consumer products focused only on selling as much as possible. But by mid-century, manufacturers of everything from laundry soap and baked beans to automobiles and airlines were taking their focus a few steps further: concentrating not just on how much rolled off the assembly line but on polishing and enhancing the aura and attractiveness of the product.

From now on, marketers would not simply tout how well a product performed. Instead, they would study how consumers felt about the maker of the product—and they would bend every effort toward making everything associated with that name as positive and compelling as possible.

As the management theorists say: "It is not facts, but the best story that wins."

Management theory is a central part of The Matrix Conspiracy.

Norman Vincent Peale was an American minister and author known for his work in popularizing the concept of positive thinking, especially through his best-selling book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. He served as the pastor of Marble Collegiate Church, New York, from 1932 until his death, leading a Reformed Church in America congregation. Peale was a personal friend of President Richard Nixon.

Donald Trump attended Peale's church while growing up, as well as marrying his first wife Ivana there. Peale's ideas and techniques were controversial, and he received frequent criticism both from church figures and from the psychiatric profession.

Peale's works came under criticism from several mental health experts. Donald Meyer directly said Peale was a con man and a fraud. These critics appeared in the early 1950s after the publication of *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

Peale's book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, is, like Williamson's books, full of anecdotes that are hard to substantiate. Almost all of the experts and many of the testimonials that Peale quotes as supporting his philosophy are unnamed, unknown and unsourced.

I have listed testimonials as a thought distortion. Testimonials are central to the whole of the law of attraction movement, and it is also central in Williamson's books.

A second major accusation of Peale is that he attempted to conceal that his techniques for giving the reader absolute self-confidence and deliverance from suffering are a well known form of hypnosis, and that he attempts to persuade his readers to follow his beliefs through a combination of false evidence and self-hypnosis (autosuggestion), disguised by the use of terms which may sound more benign from the reader's point of view ("techniques", "formulas", "methods", "prayers", and "prescriptions"). Meyer called Peale's book "The Bible of American autohypnotism".

A third major criticism is that Peale's philosophy is based on exaggerating the fears of his readers and followers, and that this exaggerated fear inevitably leads to aggression and the destruction of those considered "negative".

I could mention a line of other thought distortions involved, as for example black and white thinking, guilt by association, contradiction and false dichotomies.

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.

Williamson's recurring false dichotomy is love versus fear. Either you are a loving person or you are a fearful person (this is paradoxically enough something she uses to attack Donald Trump with). She is also all about how perfect you are. She obviously believes that claiming that you are absolutely perfect is a fantastic positive message. She also seems to believe that lining up such simple dichotomies are a good message which is easy to understand. The problem arises when you realize that you not at all are loving and perfect. Then you are left with the opposite alternatives: namely that you are fearful and a failure. A lot of Williamson's audience are women with a lack of self-esteem, and it is incredible to observe how Williamson is inducing in them one of the very factors behind lack of self-esteem, namely a false dichotomy.

The Law of Attraction is a metaphysical New Thought belief that "like attracts like," that positive and negative thinking bring about positive and negative physical results, respectively. According to the Law of Attraction, the phrase "I need more money" allows the subject to continue to "need more money." If the subject wants to change this they would focus their thoughts on the goal (having more money) rather than the problem (needing more money). This might take the form of phrases such as "I have as much money as I need" or "I have a job that pays very well."

The question is, of course, whether all this is positive. It is interesting that just because an American preacher, Norman Vincent Peale, has written a book about positive thinking, the whole world is taking it as a scientific fact. He is an American you see. Every psychology department today, with respect for itself, must therefore teach “positive psychology”.

Today Donald Trump performs as a famous example of a person practicing positive thinking, and whose absurdities you can follow daily on Twitter, and in the news. It is like a surrealistic reality show.

Related Ebook:

[The Dark League Behind then 2020 Presidential Candidacy of Marianne Williamson](#)

Related articles:

[A Critique of the New Thought Movement and the Law of Attraction](#)

[A Course in Miracles \(ACIM\) – a Critique](#)

[A Critique of Donald Trump](#)

[The Confabulation of Trump](#)

[New Age Magazine: “Donald Trump: A Gift”](#) (New Age is all about positive thinking)

All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

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