



Thank you for trying to articulate the terms of your affection, but you are using confused gender, your participle is dangling and your superlative is "like, totally" infantile.

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Language Shapes Realities

TERRIBLE THINGS ABOUT TO HAPPEN...

The Plan for Today

- **The fertile basis for our susceptibility**
 - “archetypal” narratives
 - conditions
 - Protagonists, Antagonists and the Rest
- **A typology of Conspiracies**
- **Characteristics**
- **What to do about Conspiracy Theories**

Fertile Ground

Cultural and social mind sets

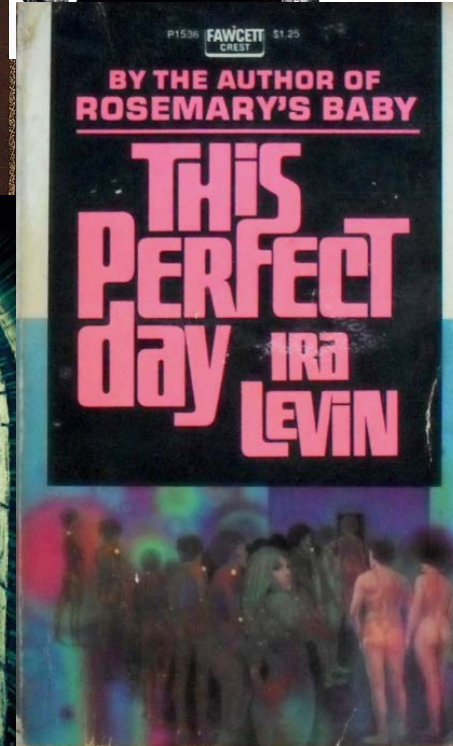
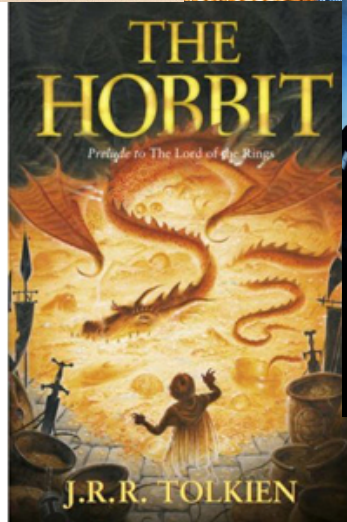
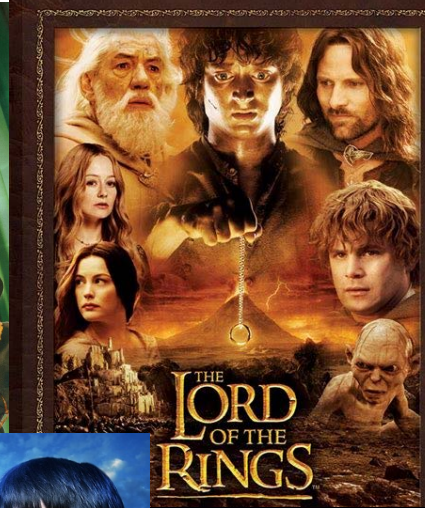
Little Guys against Big Noises



Stories about Plucky Mavericks

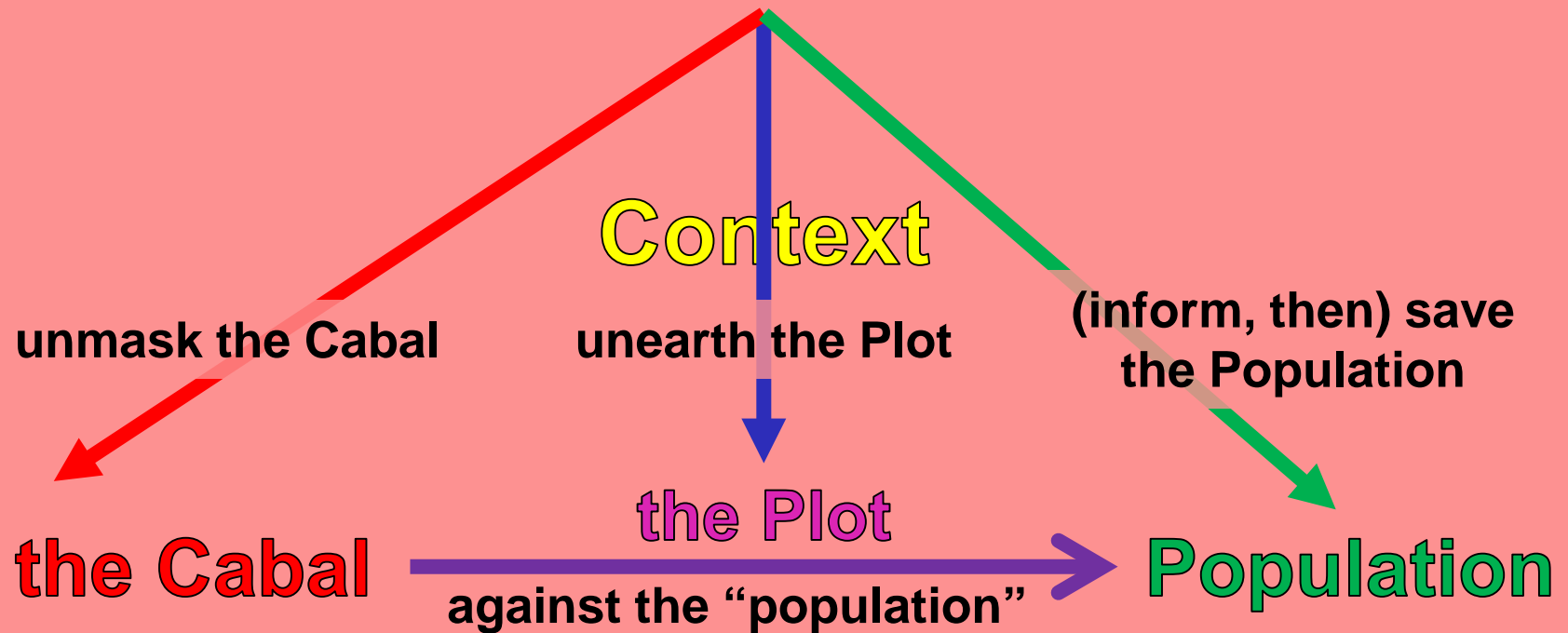


There, before all the people, Arthur pulled the sword out of the stone.



A Framework

Plucky Band of Mavericks



Basic Conditions

- **Historical**
 - period of general uncertainty
 - intra- or international changes
 - characterised by internal or external perceived threats
- **Social**
 - changes in society
 - power/hegemony questioned
 - social rifts (Tuner's notion of Social Drama)
- **Political**
 - divergent political takes on current issues
 - polarisation in the population
 - absence of a large(r)-scale consensus

Context

Characterising the Triangle

morally superior
uninterested in power
unafraid of the
cabal's power

Plucky Band of Mavericks

critical and very smart
see the Whole Truth
ready and able to
save the population

fiercely secretive
morally despicable/evil
inherently ill-intended
ruthless in pursuit of their goal
fixated on wielding power

the Cabal

contentedly unawares
naively credulous
unable to think critically
possibly brainwashed
in need of being saved

Population

A Field Guide to Conspiracy Theories

Typologies, focus and characteristics

Three fundamental tenets

Nothing happens without a reason.

Everything is connected.

Nothing is what it seems.

Barkun 2003

Types of “Cabals”

Focus the nature of “the Cabal” (Walker 2013)

The “Enemy Outside”	external power, aiming to subvert and sabotage the status quo	culture or ideological war rhetoric
The “Enemy Within”	internal group/force aiming to turn the status quo in their favour	domestic “terrorists”, political opponents
The “Enemy Above”	Elite cementing/extending hold on power	“classe politique”, George Soros, Bill Gates, etc.
The “Enemy Below”	Subordinate populations aiming for (more) power	workers, women, blacks, “minorities”
Benevolent conspiracies	“Angelic Forces” who help to make the world a better place	

Types of “Plots”

Focus on the nature of “the Plot” (Barkun 2003)

Event conspiracies	faked moon landing
	Kennedy’s assassination
	9/11
	lab origins of Aids or Corona
Systemic conspiracies	The Jews / Protocols of the Elders of Zion
	The Freemasons
	The Illuminati
	The Communists
Super- conspiracies	Icke: interdimensional reptilians, Archons or Annunaki, feed on negative energy emanating from humans kept in fear
	Qanon: paedophile, satanist Liberals and Democrats drink the blood of children to preserve their youth

“Debunking general beliefs” a)

Things that never actually happen(ed)

Historical Denials

Armenian
Genocide 1915

Turkish official history

“figures grossly exaggerated”

“casualties of civil unrest”

Holocaust

“it never took place” /

“it could not have taken on that scale”

Current Denials

Climate Change
Loss of species

“It’s not happening at all”

“Climate has always been fluid”

“It’s not man-made”

“It’s scientists securing their funding”

“Debunking general beliefs” b)

Science and Experts are lying...

**Evolution
is merely
a theory**

Fundamentalists

“Creation is too complex to be accidental”

“fossils incorrectly dated”

“Scriptures, the Word of God, don’t lie”

Flat Earth

Social Media

perception of the horizon

Covid

**New Agers
The Right**

Experts are lying

“It’s totally harmless”

Vaccinations

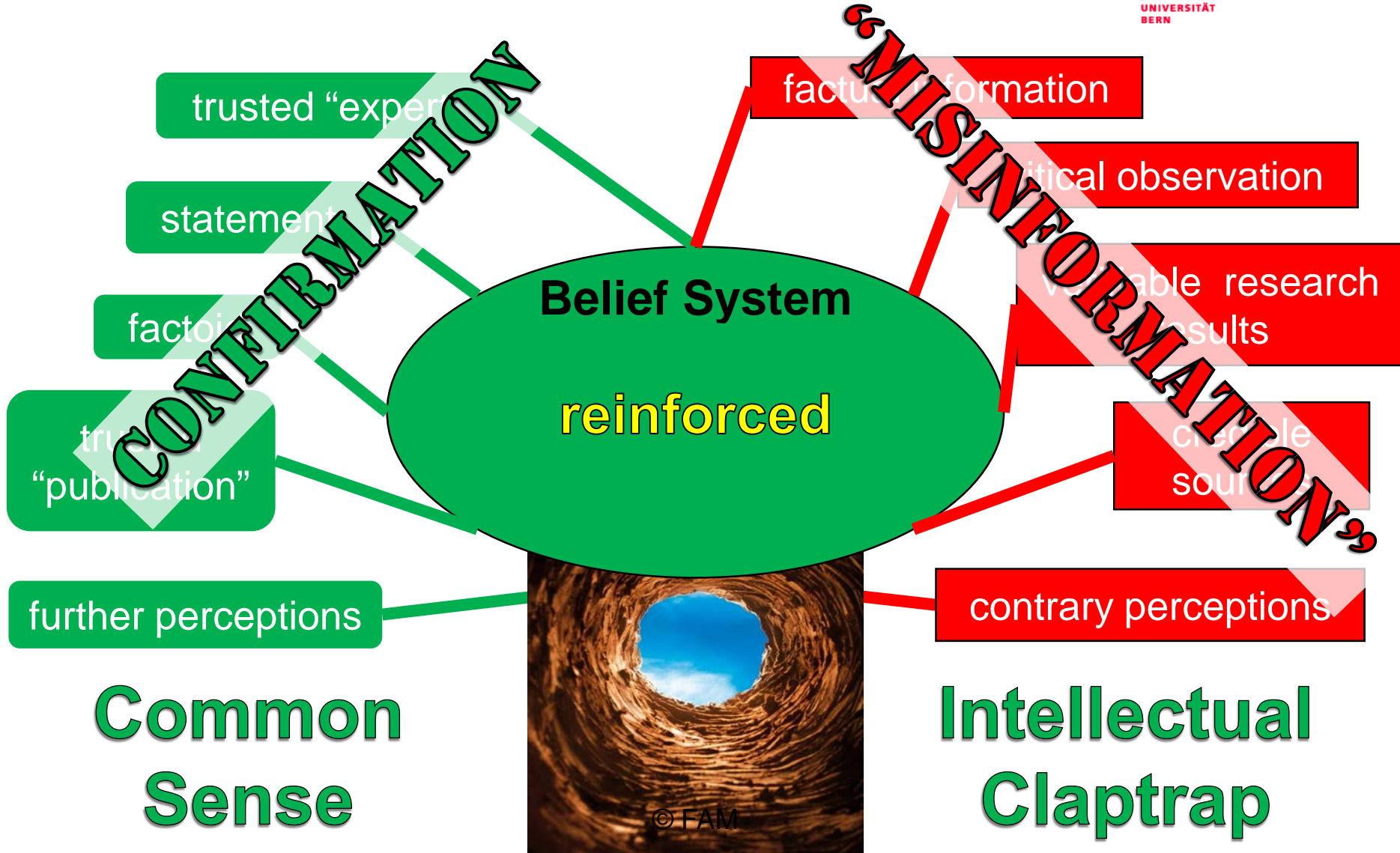
**concerned
parents**

“It’s aimed to take away our freedom”

Organised promotion of advantages

Why should “we” trust “experts”?

How “maverick” minds work



Accounting for the appeal

- Claims confirmed in popular online searches
- Information comes from
 - “scientific researchers” (or influencers)
 - using Credibility Establishing Strategies
- Facts are published
 - on youtube and other social media
 - no peer-reviewed publications (pre-publications)
- Searches are
 - fuelled by algorithms
 - and thus create echo chambers
- Alternative News sources contradict / “debunk”
brainwashed or evil mainstream media sources

“google it!”

Characterising the “mavericks”



Focus on Conspiracy Theory believers

- 30% of the population are susceptible (Eser 2020)
- Believers are quite keen to promote the theory
- claim to be critical in questioning “official” information
- but repeat uncritically what they consider “confirmed”
- inherent contradictions are not recognised
 - Is this alleged set of facts in any way plausible?
 - How many people would have to be in on this secret?
 - How adept is the cabal if even I can see through it?
- Correlation (or even co-existence) are portrayed as Causation

Language of Conspiracy Theories

- the need for the **population** to know
- claim to “**the Truth**”
- alleged **duplicity** and **underhandedness**
- Indication of “**something big**” ...
- ... in fact it's **superlative**
- **sensational language (adjectives)**
- **Invoked / vested credibility**
- threat of an **imminent danger** **implied**

<https://www.bitchute.com/channel/weBLW8e6mgIB>

Vital Information

To Expose The Nature Of Reality

What is Really Happening

Behind The News Headlines

And

Who Is Really Running The World

- Videos from D. I.

The Worlds [sic] Best Known

Conspiracy Researcher

D. I. beleuchtet den Einfluss der Hintergrundmächte auf das Weltgeschehen. Die umfassendste Bloßstellung der Welt, die je verfasst wurde

But: the Power of Paralepsis

**“I come to bury Caesar,
not to praise him.”**

(Julius Caesar, II.2.73)

“Don’t take my word for it ...”

“I’m only saying ...”

“... Check this out yourself”

“Anyone can google it”

#justasking

Shining a light down Rabbit Holes

**what to do about Conspiracy Theory
believers**

How to spot a Conspiracy Theory

The “plot”

- is there a claim about “the (hidden) Truth”?
- how plausible is it?
- how workable is it?
- how come, despite its deviousness it is so “obvious”?
- what do fact checks tell?

The Cabal

- who is the cabal and
- how concrete is it?
- how rational are the accusations?

The “Maverick(s)”

- who promotes the theory?
- how reliable is the promoter?
- on which source/authority?
- how trustworthy is the source?
- what reaction results from a demand for evidence?

The Population

- what am I supposed to do with the information?
- which (emotional?) reaction is expected?
- who/what may be deceptive?

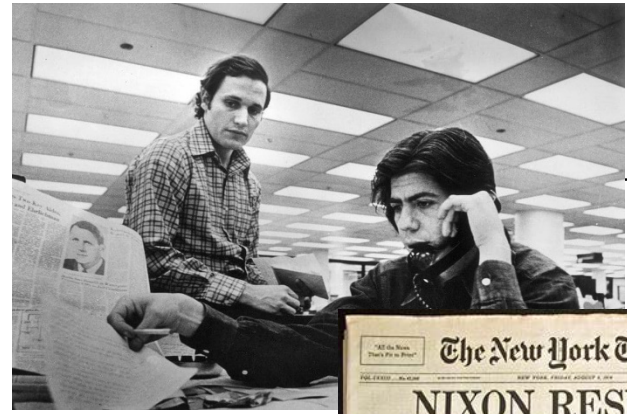
Weighing the Evidence

Woodward and Bernstein
Watergate

Snowden
NSA surveillance

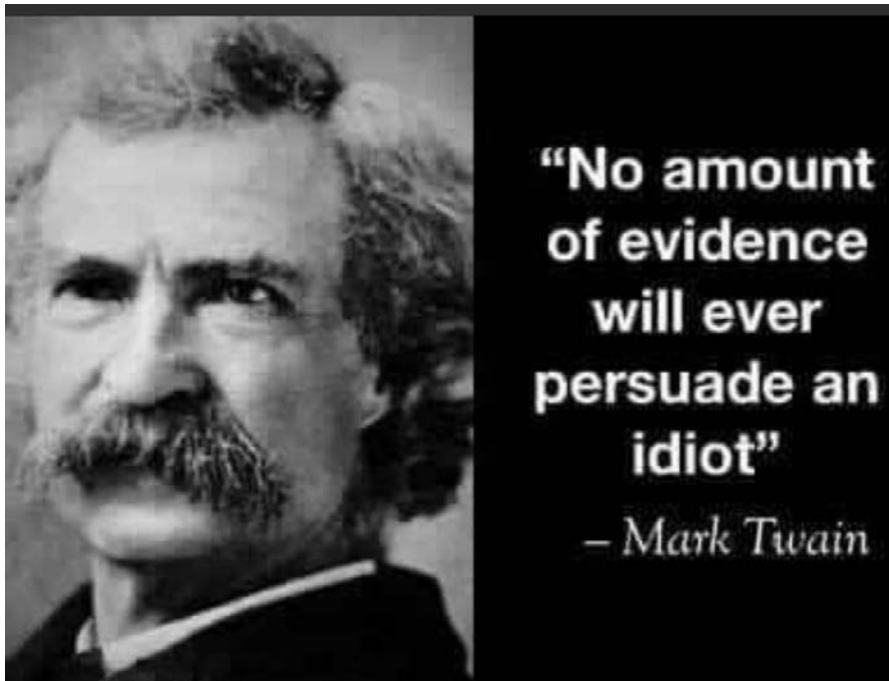
Assange
WikiLeaks

Panama Papers



So... sadly, sorry ... and ...

- ... should we
- try to engage in a serious debate?
 - react with sarcasm and irony?
 - not waste breath and energy on a lost cause



"Take nothing on its
looks; take everything
on evidence.
There's no
better rule."



– Charles Dickens,
Great Expectations



Curiosity

Creativity

Compassion

Community

Critical thinking

Education to promote

That's it for today...

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See you next Wednesday when
we will have a look at

A Question of Style