What's at stake: Several years ago on the same day I read the latest no. of Skeptical Inquirer and began reading the 2nd ed. of David Swanson's War Is a Lie, I was struck yet again by the similarities in the lies and myths that create fundamentalist religious belief and belief in the paranormal, and the lies and myths that cause and sustain wars. Resistance to both is also similar: particularly strong education in questioning assumptions and claims and in the use of evidence. Now myths and lies motivate or are exploited by deniers of anthropogenic global warming, and the cure again includes critical thinking, of which science is the foundation.

Nos. 1-3 at end

Here is the link to all the newsletters in OMNI's web site:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/.../fantasyland...kurt-andersen/978140006721...


*NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER* • “The single most important explanation, and the fullest explanation, of how Donald Trump became president of the United States . . . nothing less than the most important book that I have read this year.”—Lawrence O’Donnell
How did we get here?
In this sweeping, eloquent history of America, Kurt Andersen shows that what’s happening in our country today—this post-factual, “fake news” moment we’re all living through—is not something new, but rather the ultimate expression of our national character. America was founded by wishful dreamers, magical thinkers, and true believers, by hucksters and their suckers. Fantasy is deeply embedded in our DNA.

Over the course of five centuries—from the Salem witch trials to Scientology to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s, from P. T. Barnum to Hollywood and the anything-goes, wild-and-crazy sixties, from conspiracy theories to our fetish for guns and obsession with extraterrestrials—our love of the fantastic has made America exceptional in a way that we’ve never fully acknowledged. From the start, our ultra-individualism was attached to epic dreams and epic fantasies—every citizen was free to believe absolutely anything, or to pretend to be absolutely anybody. With the gleeful erudition and tell-it-like-it-is ferocity of a Christopher Hitchens, Andersen explores whether the great American experiment in liberty has gone off the rails.

Fantasyland could not appear at a more perfect moment. If you want to understand Donald Trump and the culture of twenty-first-century America, if you want to know how the lines between reality and illusion have become dangerously blurred, you must read this book.


https://thehumanist.com/magazine/january.../loss-critical-reasoning-harming-america

Dec 20, 2017. Your new book, *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire: A 500-Year History*, is a theory about how the triumph of the radical right, and Donald Trump in particular, are only part of the culmination of a long historical process. Can you explain? KURT ANDERSEN: We began, of course, ...

**GENERAL**


On *Think*: “A clear and passionate book on skepticism, clear thinking, and a wide range of juicy paranormal claims. A great and fun read for everyone. Harrison succeeds at motivating, inspiring, and indeed haunting the reader. As he says, ‘Think before you believe.’ Required reading for anyone who doesn’t want to waste time, health, money, and dignity on things that
probably are not real or true.” —Jonathan C. Smith, PhD, professor of psychology, Chicago's Roosevelt University; author of Pseudoscience and Extraordinary Claims of the Paranormal

Guy P. Harrison is an award-winning journalist and the author of Think: Why You Should Question Everything, 50 Simple Questions for Every Christian, 50 Popular Beliefs That People Think Are True, 50 Reasons People Give for Believing in a God, and Race and Reality: What Everyone Should Know about Our Biological Diversity. He has won several international awards for his writing, including the World Health Organization's award for health reporting and the Commonwealth Media Award for Excellence in Journalism.

How to Convince Someone When Facts Fail

By Michael Shermer | Scientific American January 2017 Issue

Have you ever noticed that when you present people with facts that are contrary to their deepest held beliefs they always change their minds? Me neither. In fact, people seem to double down on their beliefs in the teeth of overwhelming evidence against them. The reason is related to the worldview perceived to be under threat by the conflicting data.

Creationists, for example, dispute the evidence for evolution in fossils and DNA because they are concerned about secular forces encroaching on religious faith. Anti-vaxxers distrust big pharma and think that money corrupts medicine, which leads them to believe that vaccines cause autism despite the inconvenient truth that the one and only study claiming such a link was retracted and its lead author accused of fraud. The 9/11 truthers focus on minutiae like the melting point of steel in the World Trade Center buildings that caused their collapse because they think the government lies and conducts “false flag” operations to create a New World Order. Climate deniers study tree rings, ice cores and the ppm of greenhouse gases because they are passionate about freedom, especially that of markets and industries to operate unencumbered by restrictive government regulations. Obama birthers desperately dissected the president's long-form birth certificate in search of fraud because they believe that the nation's first African-American president is a socialist bent on destroying the country.

This article was originally published with the title "When Facts Backfire"


Art Hobson, ahobson@uark.edu NWA Times. 25 August 2015 “Think more, believe less.”

All of us base our actions on a mixture of beliefs and conclusions. "Beliefs" are principles, generally inculcated by upbringing and tradition, to which we are attached emotionally, fervently, and certainly. "Conclusions" are more rational, more tentative, and based on
evidence from daily life or information sources such as newspapers. This distinction is subtle, sometimes ambiguous, but crucial. There is ample evidence in the turmoil and tragedy of nearly every Mideast nation today that a population's strong attachment to extreme beliefs leads to disastrous public policy. I would also argue that the social success of northern Europe demonstrates that nations operating more on conclusions and less on beliefs are more successful. I'm painting with a broad brush in the two preceding sentences, and there are plenty of exceptions, but the general point is valid. For just one example, a 2015 CNN poll of national happiness listed 7 northern European nations plus Canada, New Zealand, and Australia as the 10 happiest nations in the world. In my opinion, this is partly a consequence of the low level of religious belief in northern Europe, along with their moderate and rational politics (welfare state capitalism). America is an anomaly in that it is rich, highly dysfunctional socially, and highly religious. There's strong evidence the latter two are linked, much as they are in the Mideast. In 2009, paleontologist and sociologist Gregory Paul published a study of religion and dysfunctionality, based on existing statistics, of 17 prosperous nations including most of western Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the U.S. He ranked nations on the basis of 25 social indicators such as homicide rates, teenage abortion rates, and poverty rates, and 9 religiosity indicators such as belief in God, frequency of prayer, and biblical literalism. Paul found a high correlation between religiosity and social dysfunction. The U.S. was an extreme outlier, being by far the most socially dysfunctional and by far the most religious. Ireland and Italy were similar but less extreme. At the other end of both scales were Japan, Sweden, and Denmark as least religious and least dysfunctional. America is also exceptional in basing national policy on beliefs rather than conclusions. Here are a few examples. Global warming: A remarkable scientific consensus agrees global warming is real, it poses a serious threat, and it's caused primarily by humans. Yet only 67 percent of Americans think Earth is getting warmer. Breaking this figure down politically, 84 percent of Democrats, 46 percent of Republicans, and 25 percent of Tea Party Republicans agree Earth is getting warmer. Thus we see a cultural divide between "thinkers" and "believers" on this issue. Biological evolution: Only 47 percent of Americans agree with the overwhelming consensus among biological scientists that humans developed from earlier species of animals. Incredibly, according to a 2014 Gallup poll, 42 percent of Americans believe that God created humans within the past 10,000 years. Among Gregory Paul's 16 other prosperous nations, agreement with the scientific consensus ranges from 64 percent (Ireland) to 80 percent (Sweden, Japan, Denmark, France). Abortion: It's superstitious dogma to argue that a new fetus—a fertilized egg—is fully human and to argue, as for example Republican candidate Mike Huckabee does, that it should be accorded full constitutional rights. This would imply that abortion is always murder, in which case nature or God would be the world's most prolific murderer, because most fertilized eggs either do not implant in the uterus or else miscarry after implantation. A fetus only begins to become fully human when organized brain waves appear, which occurs in the seventh month of pregnancy. Ironically, the evidence shows that legal restrictions on abortions actually increase abortions: Internationally, the legality of abortion is negatively correlated with its frequency. Thus those who oppose abortion should, rationally, support organizations such as Planned Parenthood and oppose restrictions on the procedure. Guns and violence: A committed core of true believers continues to resist rational restrictions on gun ownership in America, despite massive evidence that widespread gun ownership is strongly linked to homicide and injury. Peer nations with much stronger gun restrictions have far lower homicide rates, and Americans living in states such as Arkansas having high gun ownership rates are four times more likely to be killed by a gun than are Americans living in states having low gun ownership rates (see my August 4 column). Could
America find solutions to its social dysfunctionality by relying less on emotional beliefs and more on rational conclusions? The evidence seems to answer "yes."


**Surfaces and Essences** BY **Douglas R. Hofstadter** and **Emmanuel Sander**. **Basic Books, 2013.**

From the simplest forms (a single word, category, or phrase) to infinitely complex constructions (an idiom, or proverb, or algorithm) analogies are the tools our brains use to interpret and master daily life. This book argues that analogy is the basis for all human thoughts.


At the age of eighty-seven, the renowned linguist, philosopher, historian, cognitive scientist, and critic Noam Chomsky maintains the same clarity found in any of his books, lectures, or television appearances dating back to the 1970s. While in a face-to-face conversation he might adopt an informal and humorous tone towards relevant topics, he is very much that same serious and detailed thinker we all recognize from the conferences and different interviews—one of those individuals history will remember for centuries. MORE http://thehumanist.com/magazine/july-august-2016/features/rescuing-memory

**SCIENCE**


We live in the Information Age, with billions of bytes of data all just two swipes away. But how much of this is of value? How much is mis-, or even dis-information? Lots. And your search engine can’t tell the difference. As a result, an avalanche of misinformation threatens to overwhelm the rational discourse we so desperately need to address complex social problems such as climate change, the food and water crises, biodiversity collapse, and emerging threats to public health.

This book provides an inoculation against the misinformation epidemic by cultivating scientific habits of mind. Anyone can do it — indeed, everyone must do it if our species is to long survive on this crowded and finite planet.

"A Survival Guide for the Misinformation Age is an impassioned plea for science literacy. Given the state of the world today, in which scientifically under-informed voters elect scientifically illiterate politicians, Professor David Helfand has written the right book at the right time with the right message. Read it now. The future of our civilization may depend on it."

--Neil deGrasse Tyson, Astrophysicist

Advertisers, public figures, and the media in general regularly misinform the public, but the Internet has taken this to a new level, reports Helfand, former chair of Columbia University’s department of astronomy. This cheerful corrective defines and demolishes many categories of nonsense. Warning that the brain is programmed to find patterns where none exist and to prefer simple, vivid explanations for reality, Helfand proceeds to show how competent scientists work and how to tell good evidence from bad. This turns out to be no simple task. Even scientists fail regularly, and readers must be prepared for meticulous explanations of scatter plots, Gaussian and Poisson distributions, proxies, and probability. Popular science writers traditionally boast that they will go light on mathematics, but Helfand will have none of that. As Jonathan Swift wrote, “Reasoning will never make a man correct an ill opinion which by reasoning he never acquired,” so this book will not attract climate-change deniers, anti-vaccine activists, creationists, astrology lovers, and the like. Darrell Huff’s delightful 1954 classic How to Lie with Statistics may be more accessible, but Helfand’s work is an admirable response to a long-standing problem of sloppy thinking. (Mar. 2016)

Description

- Not a "save the earth" book but a sober diagnosis of why we have failed and a proposal for concrete steps for how to move ahead. Argues that common sense notions of responsibility are inadequate for moralizing acts that contribute to climate change. Reflects on how we, as individuals, can live meaningful lives in the face of climate change. Treats the scientific, historical, economic, and political dimensions of climate changes as well as the philosophical ones.

*The Rational Animal: How Evolution Made Us Smarter Than We Think* by Vladas Griskevicius and Douglas Kenrick uses evolutionary lens to explain irrational decisions.

**THE RATIONAL ANIMAL** by Douglas T. Kenrick, Vladas Griskevicius ...


New Book from University of Minnesota Business Professor Suggests We’re Not Really That Stupid.

*APS Physics | FED | Book Review of Unscientific America: How ...*

https://www.aps.org/units/fed/newsletters/fall2009/hobson.cfm

by Chris Mooney and Sheril Kirshenbaum (Basic Books, New York, NY, 2009); 132 pages of text plus 66 pages of notes, ISBN 978-0-465001305-0. Reviewed by Art Hobson. The rift between science and mainstream American culture is growing ever wider, says this book. Chris Mooney should know; his 2005 book The ...

*Reality Check: How Science Deniers Threaten Our Future*

Foreword by Michael Shermer

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Related Links

The battles over evolution, climate change, childhood vaccinations, and the causes of AIDS, alternative medicine, oil shortages, population growth, and the place of science in our country—all are reaching a fevered pitch. Many people and institutions have exerted enormous efforts to misrepresent or flatly deny demonstrable scientific reality to protect their nonscientific ideology, their power, or their bottom line. To shed light on this darkness, Donald R. Prothero explains the scientific process and why society has come to rely on science not only to provide a better life but also to reach verifiable truths no other method can obtain. He describes how major scientific ideas that are accepted by the entire scientific community (evolution, anthropogenic global warming, vaccination, the HIV cause of AIDS, and others) have been attacked with totally unscientific arguments and methods. Prothero argues that science deniers pose a serious threat to society, as their attempts to subvert the truth have resulted in widespread scientific ignorance, increased risk of global catastrophes, and deaths due to the spread of diseases that could have been prevented.

TEACHING

2017 is a good time, when people are so aware of political chicanery, to advocate teaching critical thinking in the public schools, not only in specific courses by that title, but the encouragement of all teachers in all classes to ask frequent questions about the content of their classes. And it could begin in K. Dick


Scholarly articles for Lilienfeld, Teaching Skepticism

Public skepticism of psychology: why many people ... - Lilienfeld - Cited by 121

The teaching of courses in the science and ... - Lilienfeld - Cited by 43

... the Hopkinsville Goblins: using pseudoscience to teach ... - Schmaltz - Cited by 14

Tackling student skepticism of psychology: Recommendations for ...
Key **teaching** tip: Provide students with research that contradicts each of these claims (see Lilienfeld et al., 2010) and repeatedly test students on these claims'...

**Frontiers | Redefining Critical Thinking: Teaching Students to Think ...**

by RM Schmaltz - 2017 - Related articles


**RELIGION**

**American Humanist Association**

Advocating progressive values and equality for humanists, atheists, and freethinkers

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**LUIS GRANADOS, DAMNED GOOD COMPANY: TWENTY REBELS WHO BUCKED THE GOD EXPERTS. HUMANIST P, 2012.**

Latest Humanist Press Ebook Includes Online Reader Commentary, Linked Videos

(Washington, DC – July 31, 2012) – The power that comes from religious authority has been at the center of all human societies from time immemorial—but those claims of sovereignty have been disputed for just as long. In Damned Good Company: Twenty Rebels Who Bucked the God Experts, author Luis Granados explores twenty cases, from Socrates to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, of brave challenges against those claiming a special authority from God.

*Damned Good Company* is a book about people, not about God. People who have preached about God, taken money for sharing what they say they know about God, and ordered others about to enforce what they claim to be God’s will—and a small band of heroes who stood up to them.

In short, *Damned Good Company is a Profiles in Courage* for humanists.
Some of the twenty heroes of *Damned Good Company* are well-known: Erasmus, Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Clarence Darrow, Atatürk, Nehru, Steve Biko. Others are not: people like Han Yü, banished from the 9th century Chinese court for questioning the worship of the Buddha’s finger, and Lucy Harris, who came within an inch of deflating Mormonism before it got off the ground.

Each hero is contrasted with a villain of his or her time and place: either a God expert like Martin Luther or Joseph Smith or a cynical politician like Mussolini, who never believed in God but exploited religion shamelessly to advance his political ambition.

The stories in *Damned Good Company* will inspire those today who want to stand up to the Christian Right, the Muslim fanatics, the oppressiveness of Catholic and Jewish orthodoxy, the rising Hindu Taliban, and everyone else who claims a God-given right to tell the rest of us what to do.

This enhanced ebook has been extensively researched, with over 1,100 footnotes. It takes full advantage of state-of-the-art features with over 100 photographs, online reader comments, linked videos, and hundreds of useful web links.

*Damned Good Company* is available from [HumanistPress.com](http://humanistpress.com) and all major online ebook retailers.

A chapter excerpt can be found here: [http://wdn.ipublishcentral.net/american_humanist_association/viewinside/37848926609202](http://wdn.ipublishcentral.net/american_humanist_association/viewinside/37848926609202)

Brief video summaries of each chapter can be found here: [https://vimeo.com/album/2002877](https://vimeo.com/album/2002877)

Humanist Press is the publishing house of the American Humanist Association, providing material for the humanist/freethought/atheist market since 1995. The American Humanist Association ([www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)) advocates for the rights and viewpoints of humanists and atheists in the United States. Founded in 1941 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., its work is extended through more than 150 local chapters and affiliates across America. Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism, affirms our responsibility to lead ethical lives of value to self and humanity.
Fox TV’s Seth McFarlane has joined with astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson and Ann Druyan, Carl Sagan’s widow and collaborator, to continue Sagan’s marvelous *Cosmos* series of decades ago. The new series is a splendid blend of homage to Sagan’s original one with dazzling new graphics–and new discoveries.

The second episode of the series, first broadcast March 16, 2014, covered evolution and natural selection. (Link) As expected, creationists were furious. The main promoter of “intelligent design,” Seattle’s Discovery Institute, has run several anti-*Cosmos* blogs on its Evolution News and Views (ENV) website.

In their zeal to attack Tyson and the *Cosmos* series, however, the Discovery Institute has created a stunning example of the straw man logical fallacy. This fallacy is so named because it involves attacking one’s opponent not by an honest dissection of his or her actual views but by attacking a caricature, a distorted misrepresentation of those views. The Discovery Institute’s attack on the evolution episode of *Cosmos* was a particularly egregious example of this fallacy—a straw man for the ages, as it were. MORE click on author above

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**Freedom From Religion Foundation**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) is an American non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin, with members from all 50 states.[1] The largest national organization advocating for non-theists, FFRF promotes the separation of church and state and educates the public on matters relating to atheism, agnosticism and nontheism. The FFRF publishes a newspaper, *Freethought Today*. Since 2006, the Foundation has produced the *Freethought Radio* show.

The FFRF was co-founded by Anne Nicol Gaylor and her daughter, Annie Laurie Gaylor, in 1976 and was incorporated nationally in 1978.[2] The organization is supported by over 19,000 members[3] and operates from an 1855-era building in Madison, Wisconsin, that once served as a church rectory. According to the 2011 IRS tax Form-990, FFRF spent just over $200,000 on legal fees and services and just under $1 million on education, outreach, publishing, broadcasting, and events. The allotment for legal fees is primarily used in cases supporting the separation of church and state that involve governmental entities. FFRF also has a paid staff of thirteen, including four full-time staff attorneys.[5]

Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the FFRF, is the author of *Women Without Superstition: No Gods - No Masters* and the nonfiction book on clergy pedophilia scandals *Betrayal of Trust: Clergy Abuse of Children* (out of print) and editor of the anthology *Woe to the Women*. She edited the FFRF newspaper *Freethought Today* until July, 2008. Her husband, Dan Barker, author of *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist, Goddess: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America’s Leading Atheists, The Good Atheist: Living a Purpose-Filled Life Without God and Just Pretend: A Freethought Book for Children*, is a musician and songwriter, a former Pentecostal Christian minister, and co-president of the FFRF.

In March 2011, The FFRF, along with the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, began The Clergy Project, a confidential on-line community that supports clergy as they leave their faith.[6][7] In 2012, it gave its first Freedom From Religion
Foundation and Clergy Project “Hardship Grant” to Jerry DeWitt, a former pastor of 38 years who left the ministry to join the atheist movement.

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www.centerforinquiry.net/

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Publisher of the Skeptical Inquirer magazine. Some contents of May/June 2016 number: “Creators of the Paranormal” “How Not to Do Science” “A Testament of Belief Masquerading as Science” Book reviews, including The Art and Science of the Scam: Implications for Skeptics” --Dick

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