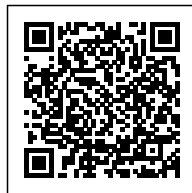


PRIME FACTS, CLOSED MINDS AND THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

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1.

- “Climate change” can only be overcome if we stop using fossil fuels and develop green energy. Anyone who disagrees is a climate denier or climate sceptic—and a conspiracy theorist;
- Racism in the Western world is systemic and can only be overcome when all white people acknowledging they are racists and privileged. Anyone who disagrees is a racist;
- Muslims are victims of imperialism and racism. Anyone who criticizes Islam is an Islamophobe;
- One has the right to choose one's gender because gender is a social construct. Anyone who disagrees is a transphobe;
- Vaccines ensure the survival of the species. Anyone who questions any vaccine is a science denier—and a conspiracy theorist;
- Anyone who disagrees with government-approved “science” about Covid-19 is a science denier—and a conspiracy theorist;
- Russia is guilty of an unprovoked invasion of the Ukraine. Anyone who disputes this is an enemy of the “Ukrainian people” and a Putin stooge;
- Anyone who believes in the inviolability of free speech and universal access to social media platforms is an advocate of haters, misinformation, disinformation and oppression—and conspiracy theorists;
- Donald Trump was a president for white supremacists and was a Russian plant. Anyone who disagrees is an enemy of democracy;
- Anyone who thinks the US election of 2020 was shrouded in an array of electoral improprieties and should be subjected to a thorough independent audit is an enemy of democracy—and a conspiracy theorist;
- Anyone who thinks that the riot of January 6, 2021 was not an insurrection is an enemy of democracy—and a conspiracy theorist follower of Q Anon;

- Anyone who thinks there is a distinction between migrants and “illegal” entrants who enter the United States through the Southern border is a racist;
- Anyone who disputes any of the above is not to be trusted and may rightfully be denounced, de-platformed, and deprived of his livelihood—and is most probably the dupe of some conspiracy theory.

Those who think the above claims are false do so because they detect a general fallacy lurking within each of the claims, whether it be a fallacy to do with the nature of science, the nature of racism, the nature of nature, the nature of authority, the nature of international diplomacy, the nature of emancipation/freedom or equality, or the nature of speech and information. Irrespective of the larger fallacies at play, the problem with the above claims is that there is at least one fundamental or prime fact that each claim is simply not attending to. And anyone who disputes the claims above will almost invariably draw attention to facts which are of such fundamental importance to the broader topic at hand that, if true, the claim collapses.

It is also conspicuous that in a world so complex in terms of the systemic modalities of world-making, reality-participation and formation (reality is not simply a block of “there-ness,” but something “happening” through every breath and deed that anyone living makes at each and every moment), that such issues from the climate to the most intimate of our existential features may be reduced to an ethico-political position which is so definitive, so absolute, that it can brook no dissent. Each one of these issues now comes with a truth status that must be locked in—anyone who publicly objects to anyone of them is spreading misinformation or disinformation. For the survival of the planet, the securement of world peace, democracy, an international world order it is required that everyone must subscribe to the ticket of truths on the list, as well as any others that those who decide which truths must be locked down identify. As with the truths themselves the Western political and ruling class has increasingly come to defend the necessity of the closed mind as the sine qua non of the values to be instantiated. The reductive and simplistic nature of the truths also allow for that class to easily train and deploy compliant truth educators, enforcers, informers, and persecutors.

Although the list forms a “ticket”, some will think it perfectly reasonable, to think that a commitment to one of the claims above does not require commitment to all. And yet, what is very conspicuous is that the same techniques of truth validation, and dissent suppression apply to any item on the ticket. Further, by agreeing with any one item on the ticket one will find oneself forming an alliance with and

thereby adding further authority and power to the party that one might wish to oppose on every other item on the ticket.

Thus, it is with the Russia-Ukraine war many people who are vehemently opposed to the corporatist liberal progressive technocratic view on life find themselves marching lock-step with that same globalist ruling political class and its "leadership" who seek total conformity of speech, thought, and "best practice" to create a world of inclusivity, diversity, equity, appropriate pronouns and boundless wealth for a tiny percent of the world's population. It does not matter which foot-soldiers are fighting on which mental fronts, so long as each front is attended to so that independence of soul, mind and action can be replaced by mental and spiritual conformity that complies with the various agreed upon bullet points of value and policy that have been identified by the leaders of the international order, which is to say Western "democracies."

Many people with whom I broadly concur with about the destruction of the best values that the West has discovered and institutionally cultivated do not see the Russia- Ukraine war as but one more ticket item. But, nevertheless, what they do is give credibility to the same sources of information that have proven to be untruthful and unreliable on all the other ticket items. They are, in other words, unwitting foot-soldiers for the same vested interests of big-tech-media owners, big-pharma, the arms industry, big energy, global finance, big government, etc., who are dictating the way the world must be.

For the remainder of this essay, I want to use the example of the Russian-Ukraine war to focus upon one extremely common personal shortcoming that I think has contributed to the Western intelligentsia becoming the foot-soldiers and enablers of an elite who are creating and presiding over an increasingly soulless, mindless and totally conformist society: this is the tendency for people to confuse what they think they know with what they do know. Never has the importance of true and reliable information played such a decisive role in how people go about their daily lives. Thus, too never have people been so dependent upon the ability, integrity, and accuracy of those who identify and provide information about the processes and events transpiring within the world. Never has philosophy, as the means by which we may better organize our information as well as assess the method for excavating or accessing and combining information, been so importance to the whole of society as it is today in which all our life-systems have become ideational concatenations. And as ideational concatenations, one erroneous idea may suffice to collapse all that we think of as certain and valuable.

The price paid for building our world upon ideas is the precariousness of that world precisely because it

only takes one mistaken idea to be uncovered for catastrophic consequences to ensue for all the stakeholders of that particular concatenation. No wonder that people are so dogmatic, so defensive, so hostile to those who may jeopardise an ideational order which gives them purpose, status, and economic security. Woke ideas are easy to dismiss and satirise, but what is not easy to dismiss are the stakeholders whose lives and livelihoods depend upon the narratives they instantiate and, understandably, aggressively defend as if their very lives depended upon them – which they do. The triumph of *idea-ism* means that there are numerous classes of ideas-brokers whose economic and personal interests are completely dependent upon those ideas which they have built their careers and interests upon. The quality of the society as a whole, though, will depend upon the quality of ideas that have triumphed. Assuming that a generation is 25-30 years, and that it is with the American and French revolutions that we see a birth of a new (i.e., modern) world, the socio-political contestation and developments which are definitive of modernity are a mere eight or so generations – though liberal progressivism of the sort that has now become the dominant ideology of the West, has only been dominant for one generation. In other words, the ideas that have formed modernity and have developed within modernity have barely been tried and tested.

The totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century, and the ideology that drives the United States now illustrate that whatever the achievements of modernity, securing perpetual peace is not one of them, even though that was the dream of those philosophers whose ideas played such a decisive role in helping form the mindset, goals, and concepts of legitimation of the modern. Though the Enlightenment dream of a new world was meant to be universal, vast portions of the globe live within premodern values, relationships, and priorities alongside modern technologies. Although they usually invoke a crude kind of cultural relativism -as the means for attacking more traditional Western values and bestowing their moral benediction on the Other to demonstrate their virtuous largess—most modern professionals have neither any genuine interest nor understanding of the how, why or what of peoples who live outside of the supposed halcyon of modern ideational systems of social reproduction and value. Irrespective of that, we moderns simply have not had the time to really know what we are doing because the truth of any idea about how the world is to be made is not merely in the logical congruence it enjoys with other ideas that we esteem, but in the way it is lived out – only the living out of ideas, in and over time, shows us what they really contain, as opposed to what we want or believe them to contain. Believing that we can will what we wish by dreaming up ideas is far easier than living them out successfully – ask any coach of any team in any competitive sport.

Given the ever-increasing gap between what we will and we do, what we want to be the case and what we actually know to be the case, never has the Socratic foundation stone of philosophy proper (as

opposed to speculative conjectures) been so necessary: that foundation stone is the simple confession of one's own ignorance, and the importance of establishing whether those who claim to have knowledge, know what they are talking about.

In the specific case of the Russia-Ukraine war, I see that people whose thoughtfulness and social and political observations I generally admire have swiftly accepted very poor evidence to reach conclusions that they identify so strongly with that they are now contributing to locking down one more mental front on behalf of the globalizing elite who are supporting all endeavours to completely control speech and thought in service to their leadership and plans for the future.

2.

The conversations and sense of self-esteem and identity of the professional classes in the West are strongly bound up with the ideas they hold about how the world is, how it should be, and how it can be improved. Educated, professional people like to socialize and converse with other people who are well educated and able to converse about the topics of major urgency of the moment. Those topics range from the workings of nature to the nature of human beings to geopolitics to psychology to economics and society to aesthetics and much else beside. The problem all face is that because of the complexity of the world, gathering knowledge about all the topics that they wish to address when gathered in conversation is time consuming—and most professionals, once their work and relationships and entertainment and recreational activities (which, to be sure, does include reading and watching the news) does not leave a lot of time left for digging more deeply into a topic.

The ability to participate and contribute to conversational gatherings by demonstrating one's knowledge of all the important issues of the day is an unwritten social rule. Given the array of topics and the complexity of the world, the pressure to know "all sorts of stuff" does not change the fact that there is no short cut if one is serious about being well informed about so many of the urgent issues of our time. It takes considerable time to be able to learn which type of information is genuinely relevant to the topic. Because none of us can know everything, listening to experts is important. But anyone who has spent time developing expertise in a field knows that experts commonly disagree. And only someone who knows next to nothing about the history of science or the history of ideas, or the history of disciplines such as economics, or history thinks that one will be well informed by simply accepting a consensus among experts at any given time. To be well informed on any topic means that one must have some way of distinguishing between different experts making contrary claims.

Thus, it is that anyone wanting to be well informed should be well versed in the requisite methods of organizing different kinds of information, and hence able to identify which experts are more likely to be making the more accurate claims about an issue. One also needs a reasonably sophisticated grasp of the various theoretical alternatives that are part of the given field in which the topic for discussion occurs. This involves both the time taken to gather contingent knowledge (the appropriate facts), and sufficient philosophical ability and training to be able to identify the potential fallacies that might lead to oversimplifications, false generalizations, and false conclusions.

People with a college education, which is to say the overwhelming majority of professionals, might well assume that they have been trained in such a manner that they are better equipped than those who lack that education to address the topics that become the most urgent civic issue of the day. The fact is, though, that a college degree does not deliver that anymore: and that would be amply evident were a random sample of college educated people asked to answer even very basic questions of history, philosophy, geography, world politics or economics. Ideology has swiftly come to fill the void that has been created by the pedagogical decline in the gathering of contingent knowledge—something that also required a great deal of rote learning, of the sort, thanks to modern education theory, that rarely exists anymore, in one's mentally formative years.

Of course, the displacement of contingent knowledge by ideational and ideological knowledge which basically requires students imbibe some a priori principles which they then apply to any information that they deem to be relevant to the topic at hand. Thus, for example, someone trained in applying a set of ideas about race or gender to everything that might be considered important might claim that knowledge of a scientific or mathematical theory that has been discovered by a white male is of no important to them, nor to anyone else who has the same identity as them; as if women or black people live beyond the laws of physics, or economics.

This is not only silly, but also damaging to students who are brainwashed into thinking that laws about reality can safely be ignored, and that ignoring such laws will enable them to have a better future. Yet the fact that such claims in the Western world are taken seriously by those who are responsible for education policy and administration and have impacted upon all levels of education is indicative of the crisis in which ideology displaces contingent knowledge.

Further, in premodern societies testimonies, stories, rituals and the like were the currency of social inclusion, today it is ideology, i.e., the acceptance of certain a priori—and unassailable—prime principles which dictate how facts are to be assessed. This is the reverse order of how genuine knowledge

develops. Which is why such an approach to world-making is one that proceeds by way of the defiance rather than the understanding of the real. But learning a priori principles can be done very quickly. Likewise, it gives people, whose livelihoods, sense of spiritual purpose and self- and group-worth depend upon knowing about the world and how to improve it, a great means for saving time. Time-saving and space compression are fundamental features of modern life, which dictate our contemporary dependency upon technology, and the direction that technology takes. But it also extends to human beings and their learning, and while it is marvelous to do and know things without much effort, most of us need time to do or know anything well. And there is simply no getting around that. Our contemporary attempt to bypass the requisite time needed to gather and organise information by means of internet search engines indicates the problem of such a bypass: we are easily exposed to, and hence overwhelmed by information, we have not been trained in interpreting and do not really understand, and hence do not know how to act in conjunction with.

The same kind of simplification that applies to ideology displacing contingent knowledge is replicated in the world of cyber information by ideologues (people committed to believing that they know what matters on all important topics) identifying which information (based upon the a priori ideas of those doing the truth-monitoring) is true knowledge and which is false knowledge. Thus the paradox of living in an age where there is more information at any time in the history of the world, while there is also an attempt to control and funnel information - hence to drastically limit information - about all matter of things on a scale only anticipated by the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. It seems that the real story of progress is that mental independence and an individual's knowledge exist in inverse proportion to the amount of knowledge that has been discovered but is identified as too ideologically dangerous to become part of public disputation. Though the next challenge of our intellectually and morally stunted elite is to ensure that the only knowledge to be uncovered and disseminated is that which conforms to what they deem to be worthy of knowing, and hence worthy of paying people to find, teach, and defend at all costs.

Given the combination of the nature of and role played by the professional classes in the modern Western world, the fact that class membership requires being conversant with a range of ideas on all sorts of topics—"talking points"—that serve as the social glue, the complexity of the world, and the limited knowledge that even the extremely well educated person in a specific field might have, it is very understandable why the professional classes are so dependent upon the various forms of media not only providing information upon the vast array of topics which they need to be conversant with if they are to be considered people worth associating with, but also upon the "talking points" or "formulae" that represent a particular "take' on a topic. For it is not only being conversant on the topic

that matters within a group, in which no one actually knows very much about the topic other than what they have picked up from the media, but it is even more important to be able to know what the “answer” is to any given issue—e.g., eliminate coal, teach critical race theory, allow choice over women's bodies, etc.

Given the pressures that are part and parcel of group membership and acceptance, it should be no surprise that members of the professional classes are not only largely in agreement with each other and with the media and public figures who provide the various “takes” on the topics of the day, but members of these classes see all major issues as political in nature, and they identify almost completely with the sum of political positions which they feel passionately identifies what kind of person they are. It is also not surprising that members of our professional classes have next to no desire to explore arguments that might undermine their convictions.

Likewise, when encountering someone who may have spent many years studying topics that they have come to feel strongly about based upon very cursory “information” they are not open to absorbing new information, nor considering alternative interpretative approaches which may cast that information in a different light. To expose people's lack of information and lack of knowledge is akin to showing that because they know next to nothing, they are nothing. I am reminded of this constantly on social occasions where my more than fifty years of studying and teaching Political Science is not considered of any importance whatever if I dare to raise questions that might destabilize the strongly shared consensus and conviction of the latest issue to consume the media and the minds of my friends.

The exact same behaviour I detect in my circle of friends is identical to the behaviour I witness among intellectual colleagues. People who are specialized in areas such as English Literature, or subjects having little to do with Political Science, seem to know all that one needs to know about any political issue of the day—and as in my personal circle, they too repeat what they have picked up from their diet of news. The more adroit amongst them may scour the web, but only for those sites that share their political point of view. Their thinking is the thinking of closed mindedness—it is not that thinking does not occur; rather, their thoughts are locked in, and they share socio-political consensus among the like-minded, and thus never face being challenged. Their thinking is on auto-pilot—they have a phrase, and explanation, a put-down for anyone who has the temerity to see things differently.

The academic work-place mostly consists of the like-minded; and the chances of getting tenure for anyone who does not go along with the consensus is increasingly zero. So, the academic work place is

the last place of meeting someone who might upturn the consensus. Closed minds are vaults, and all but impossible to open. The academy is no longer the place in which one typically may access the best that has ever been thought, but rather it is the place where the prejudices and myopia of the professional classes are manufactured, and where anyone who deviates from the consensus of what ideas are to be manufactured, distributed and monitored is to be excluded.

Thus too it is symptomatic of the great globalist elite transformation that has dictated the purpose of authority, the role of knowledge in shoring up authority, and the nature of what constitutes knowledge, and to which purpose it is to be put how university administration has moved from its role of enabling the academic pursuits of teaching and learning to be unencumbered by incidental administrative tasks that are required for the day to day necessities of institutional activity to articulating, planning and managing the core values and types of knowledge which are disseminated by academic employees.

The universities and schools of the West provide the academic foot-soldiers for the administrators of global knowledge and leadership. The university administrators, like CEOs of private companies and the governments and senior appointees of the public or civil service are all implicated in advancing the same ideas that form the conversational talking-points in dinner parties, bars and restaurants wherever modern professionals gather to bond and demonstrate that they have the knowledge that illustrate that they belong to the group who knows how the world works and how it can be improved. It is the greatest Ponzi scheme that has ever existed, and trying to trace its creators to this or that secret society misses the point that it exists because all sorts of people identify with it. Unfortunately, though, like all Ponzi schemes the lack of something genuinely good ever coming from it is intrinsic to its nature and the deception at its base.

In this case, though, the deception is not even known to those who stand most to gain from it. That might be disputable, and one might make a pretty compelling case for the likes of Bill Gates, George Soros, the Rothschilds, Jeff Bezos etc. knowing what they are doing, but while they may know how they may make personal gain, I cannot see how even they will not eventually be caught up in fallouts they have not calculated for. And that is the problem with all calculative thinking when applied to the human story. To the extent that Globalism inc. has fueled fires of what may be a protracted and global period of war I find it difficult to envisage that they and/or their lineage will come out of the catastrophe unscathed.

3.

If Descartes's formula "I think therefore I am" is the founding principle of the modern metaphysical journey of the world and self-making, a journey in which comfort and longevity are the ends of life, and mastery over nature the means, then my experience has taught me that "I am what I think" is the belated corollary of the professional classes who are living in what Descartes had merely dreamt of.

Descartes, of course, was the original metaphysician of that project, which would come to be known as the Enlightenment—in no small part due to Descartes' elevation of the natural light of reason as the source that enabled one to follow that method of analysis and synthesis (breaking down things into their simplest parts and reassembling on the basis of their causal connections); for it was that method which he said would lead us to become lords and masters of nature.

Although Descartes himself shied away from spelling out the social and political implications of that project, they were quickly spelled out by others who, in spite of their metaphysical differences, were also committed to breaking down experience into its constitutive mechanisms—most notably Hobbes, Spinoza and Locke—and refabricating the natural and political world according to the clarity of their ideas.

The problem with following the path of ideas was espied by that canny Scott, philosopher, and minister, Thomas Reid. He realized that the "way of ideas" (a formulation provided by Locke about the path of the enhancement of our understanding of the world) was a reductionist approach to reality that oversimplified the nature of reality and even the nature of science—Reid was every bit a Newtonian as Immanuel Kant, who can rightly be identified as the last great philosopher of the Enlightenment. But unlike Kant, Reid looked to language and social environment and circumstance, rather than philosophical ideas and principles that had been philosophically honed by someone who created abstract thought cathedrals, as providing us with vital information for making decisions about our lives.

Elsewhere I have written a rather turgid tome on what I call philosophical "idea-ism" (sic.), but here I want to speak of ideas in the more commonsensical way that is consistent with Reid's commonsense philosophy, and the more ordinary language sense of an "idea." And, in so far as I am curious about why people who are not mere ideologues, people who are normally sceptical (in a good way) and thoughtful about the way the world is and why it is the way it is now—now embrace claims that are not true.

Most of us, most of the time, act in the world the way we do because of our induction into its pathways

and possibilities, and the capacities and the feelings we have in our participation in it and with it. Most of the time our practical engagements provide the horizon of possibilities and potentials we engage with (Martin Heidegger developed an entire philosophy around what philosophers had largely ignored because of an undue emphasis upon reflection and consciousness in our being in, and making of, the world).

However, when we converse about the state of the world, reflection is indeed important, though it invariably brings with it a horizon of tacit/unconsciously accepted commitments, appeals and consensuses—and the question of the quality of reflection is bound up with the quality of the evidence we have in making our judgments and claims. Vico had observed that philosophy was a way of thinking whose seeds were originally institutionally instantiated by practices that had evolved in the assembly/“law court.”

Once we seek to think about the world as such, we rarely retain the theoretical disposition—a disposition that, as the original Greek term *theoria* indicates, has also the vantage point gained by a seating arrangement which enables us to see the whole of an action, as opposed to the limited line of sight which the actor himself has at his disposal. Life, though, is neither a court of law nor a play, and our reflective disposition is rarely of such a quality that we see “clear and distinct ideas” (the way and *desiderata*) for the natural light of reason building its new world.

What constitutes the relevant ideas for a narrative will very much depend upon what kind of claims, and hence what kind of narrative one is making. Kant famously took the traditional philosophical trinity of the good, the true and the beautiful and made a powerful case for distinguishing between different kinds of judgment claims—experiential, moral and aesthetic—on the basis of their distinct underlying (a priori) preconditions. Though G.W.F. Hegel would swiftly expose some of the problems with Kant’s artificial application of too strict a severance between the three. Hegel also rightly emphasized that ultimately what we know about anything at all is both a social and historical, and institutional process, commencing with the language we use to depict and communicate, so that we may explore further into potentials and hidden layers of processes and aspects of the logos of phenomena and its spirit.

Nevertheless, it is true that if we are dealing with an event, it would be a mistake to construe the various kinds of judgments we deploy in dealing with its different aspects and our responses to it, as if they were identical to how we might appraise phenomena of the type required for natural science claims (as would be appropriate for claims about the future of the climate). When it comes to political

and social facts or matters, we are speaking of facts, albeit facts in which intentionality and an accompanying horizon of background circumstances and characteristics—themselves facts of a sort—are absolutely intrinsic to the facts themselves. That is, we are dealing with a situation in which the meaning really matters. And hence we have to take into account that facts are never stand-alone items, but aspects of larger meaning-providing fact-blocks.

Unfortunately, many commentators, including academic ones, who see themselves as gatekeepers of meaning, believe that the “philosophy” they use to depict the meaning of an event itself provides an express route to knowing all the essential facts of any phenomenon that falls within their area of “expertise.” In this way they let philosophy do the work that only contingent knowledge, and attention to the kinds of (methodical) questions that need to be posed to the phenomena can satisfactorily do. Indeed, acting thus, they substitute their own ideas and pseudo-reality for the reality they are supposed to be clarifying. Their ideas may be clearer and more distinct than a more contingent-based analysis would provide, thanks to their deployment of certain moral ideas and classifiers identifying who is right or wrong, guilty or innocent, but it is ultimately not doing anything other than misleading people about the nature of the event. And it is also shoring up the status of the commentator who ostensibly has identified who is virtuous and who is guilty—clambering on board of the good ship “Leadership.”

In the case of the Ukraine war, there is no end to commentators who vie to identify the innocent and the guilty— though the answer is simple because it has been predetermined: Putin/ Russia: guilty; Zelensky/ Ukraine: innocent.

But let us pause upon facts as such before addressing the specific facts that are germane to the terrible event taking place in Ukraine now. For at the moment, Western media and political leaders have dictated which ideas matter when it comes to discussing the war—thus RT news has been vanished from YouTube, while news outlets scream out Putin's malevolence and guilt, Russia's cruelty, (non-ethnically Rus) Ukrainian bravery, Russian false flags, Zelensky's honorableness, etc.

The prime facts upon which subsequent facts informing us about an event are mounted are rarely obvious to most people's “knowledge” of world historic events—were that not the case historians would shut up shop, and not persist in endlessly trying to find one more prime fact that “sets the record straight.” Having limited knowledge about the facts of an event is inevitable, but it is also the limitation of the facts that we are aware of that make it very easy to jump to conclusions about the causes and moral nature of an event in which we identify with people we recognize as being more like our good

selves.

Concomitantly, our limited knowledge is typically the result of ignorance of prime or foundational facts. That ignorance may simply be due to the obscure nature of a prime fact- and the obscurity may itself be due to simply not looking closely enough into the details of a situation and paying attention to the weight of a particular deed. But prime facts may also be shrouded in secrecy and lies as well as ignorance. Othello is possibly the greatest literary example of the tragic nature of believing a lie. There are so many recent examples of the deliberate concealment of or false fabrication of facts that have political importance one hardly knows where to begin: but Iraq's possession of mass destruction is one of them which will forever be a reminder of the nature not only of the incompetence but dishonesty of the United States government and military in the post-Cold War period.

Another prime fact that is pertinent to United States and Russian diplomacy, and to why Russia has very good grounds not to trust the United States, is the support that the United States had given to Chechen jihadists, thus fueling the Chechen war and terrorist acts against Russia. In that case, the prime fact of CIA involvement in the war was simply concealed from, rather than lied about to the Western public.

The concealment of military support for jihadists and Al-Qaeda and affiliated terrorist groups against the Assad government by the United States is also relevant to why the Syrian government has forged stronger ties with Russia, and why, yet again Russia cannot ignore the fact that the United States is deliberately fueling jihadist forces destabilizing governments with closer geopolitical interests and ties to Russia.

The recent attempted coup in Kazakhstan, and, almost simultaneous attempt to assassinate the subsequently ousted Prime Minister of [Pakistan](#) Imran Khan are also facts that most supporters of the United States in its proxy war with Russia are ignorant of, or simply do not see as relevant in condemning Russia's decision to secure its own strategic interest—as if no other governments other than those the United States support have legitimate strategic interests. The seemingly haphazard application of moral principles is invariably the result of people thinking that their interest is the interest of humanity or the public at large. Such hubris is the inevitable accompaniment of people identifying with what they think they know, whilst not bothering to dig deeper into prime facts that once uncovered may leave them in the mud where they think only those beneath them morally flounder.

Every “whodunnit” or thriller with a twist is based upon the concealment of a foundational fact which

provides the key for discerning what information one has picked up matters. For me, the greatest literary whodunnit is Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. Everything points to Dmitri Karamazov killing his father—indeed so cleverly does Dostoevsky draw the picture of Dmitri's guilt that he counts on no reader thinking that any reasonable person could have the slightest doubt of Dmitri's guilt (without at least being pulled by Dostoevsky's subtle depiction of Dmitri as a man with all the motive and capacity to kill his father, but with some concealed characteristic within himself, a mere memory of kindness from his childhood, a memory that almost everyone but the most astute men of spirit, would simply not lend any importance to, that would draw him back from the deed).

Thus too, Dostoevsky spends an interminable amount of time in the depiction of Dmitri's trial, repeating all the essential points, so that no reader might miss the point. But, of course, Dmitri was not guilty. One all important-fact was unknown, and it only belatedly comes light. But as it does so, all the other facts that had indicated the guilt of a man evaporate into nothingness.

In *Notes from the Underground*, Dostoevsky had used the form of the novel to argue the case that human beings are not reasonable creatures. In the *Brothers Karamazov*, he developed the point that our reason easily leads us astray, because we commonly base our judgments on facts mounted upon other facts which we are unaware of and whose relevance we ignore.

It is the people who are most accustomed to using their powers of reasoning about the way of the world, who are most likely to succumb to the temptation of mounting facts upon non-foundational facts, after making an initial but wrong decision about which facts should provide the basic foundation—but more often these are only associations upon associations (for association-making is the bread-and-butter of the intellectual).

If ordinary professionals feel compelled to repeat what they have been informed about by journalists, or professors who repeat to journalists the ideas that have been fed to them by journalists (with a dash of intellectual sauce to add a special authoritativeness to whatever is being said), then intellectuals as a class invariably feel compelled (I know I am guilty as charged) to write about what they think they know.

Increasingly our intellectuals are indistinguishable from journalists—and their credo might well be, "I Am What Someone Says I Should Think." Indeed, were that not the case, then the academy as a whole would not be the breeding ground of intellectual conformity and compliance with the vision and mission statements provided by Global Inc.

4.

Everywhere I turn today, I am confronted by people who are absolutely certain that they understand the purpose and reason behind the war in Ukraine—Putin's personality meets the Russian soul in the first step of Russia's conquest of the world, an ambition motivated by the "fact" that one of the richest men in the world and his rich friends can have even more wealth and power—maniacal laughter, stage right. This kind of sounds like Hitler's modus operandi (though funnily enough I don't think I have ever heard people say that Hitler did it for the money—and, come to think of it, they don't say that about old Uncle Joe, either—so Putin must be even worse than those two!).

But I hear people in my "educated" social circle say this without any hint of doubt that they may be talking nonsense—and yet, I cannot open a newspaper, or turn on the news without hearing the same thing. If it is an academic saying it, it is said with a little more preening pomposity and affectation, and usually filmed with a towering bookcase as a background, lending the formidable weight of "learning" to a prejudice based upon a failure to ask the right questions.

And yet, how dare anyone raise the matter of prime or foundational facts amidst the relentless images of suffering? What monster could not accept "our" diagnosis, and hence the legitimacy of training troops way back before the event, and supplying weapons, and potentially destroying the economy and livelihoods of millions of those evil Russians, who are guilty of having Putin as their president and not having the guts to overthrow him? Of course, most of the people on the news, at the universities and at my dinner parties, if they were Russian, would be walking straight into the Kremlin to sort it out with mad bad Vlad. Boy, they just wanted to assassinate Don, but Vlad is going to get a real pasting before they are ready to finish him off.

With respect to those images from Ukraine coming out on mainstream media—I assume some, perhaps most, must be real. Though I note this: in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US government tried its best to prevent any images coming out of the war that would show the invading forces in a bad light (though the aerial fireworks of the first Iraq war remain indelibly imprinted on my brain). But with the (Western) Ukrainians, there seems to be a camera to capture every bit of inhumanity perpetrated by the Russians.

And in the West, every image we receive of the war is constructed to confirm that one side is guilty of barbarism and inhumanity, while the other is ever brave and decent and good. I can only ask, is one

really using one's intelligence if one believes that one side in this conflict always acts humanely and wisely and nobly, and the other not? Is one using one's intelligence if one is satisfied with the explanation that Russia has risked so many lives, and so much of the nation's wealth without provocation?

I think the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were disasters in every which way, but I would not for the life of me think that anyone who traced their origin purely on the basis of George Bush Jr's psychotic personality, or money grabbing by him and his mates, or US evil imperialism were doing much of a job as an international relations analyst.

The US had its reasons—they may have been bad reasons, which I think was the case, but they had them. But for the most part Western media simply refuses to take Russia's reason for the invasion seriously. In part, that is because to do so would require actually heeding facts in which the entire rationale for what is a de facto US/NATO led proxy war—one which involves all manner of support, asset seizure, sanctions, censorship etc. without any actual declaration of war – would collapse. But the entire purpose of the bombardment of images of suffering by non-ethnically Russian Ukrainians seems to be to ensure that people feel so firmly convinced of Russia's evil, that they do not have minds sufficiently open to investigate other facts.

If, however, one took the time to watch Patrick Lancaster's reports from the Donbas one would have to accept the fact that exactly kind of horror is being inflicted upon Ukrainians, who are Russian first language speakers, and this has been the case for eight years, and it had received only the scantest attention from Western media. But the tacit moral a priorism that triggers the Western mind is one which that makes it obscene or callous to compare evil with evil. The evil is all Russia's, or more pointedly Putin's. But such moral framing as effective as it is as propaganda, and as effective as it is for dictating how people in conversation or in a public forum should speak or respond about the event is simply a displacement that is based upon a closed Western media intent on keeping the minds of people in the West closed.

Because the minds of the media audience in the West have already been shaped and largely made up prior to the war about who the goodies and baddies are, that there is no need for Western media outlets to apply even basic techniques of authentication to witness claims, "sets" within the theater of war, or footage they receive about the war. For some of the footage from the war on the Ukrainian side is purely fabricated; and I recommend Gonzalo Lira's analysis of the footage of the Bucha massacre .

Lira is one of a couple of independent Western journalists who has been reporting the war from inside Ukraine. There may well be Russian fabricated images as well, but not being able to trust main stream reporters to do an impartial job of analysis means I simply have no way of knowing anymore when these reporters are telling the truth. There are also examples of real images where the identity of the perpetrators has been changed to fit the required narrative of Ukrainian bravery versus Russian brutality. But to know that one would have to start looking at people who demonstrate the fakery of the images, or the real perpetrators of a war crime.

When it comes to war crimes, it is supposedly perfectly reasonable and hence not a violation of the Geneva Convention for Ukrainian citizens to be compelled to bear arms in the conflict. But let's not talk about Ukrainian war crimes; "fact-checkers" quickly establish that all those who have been let out of prison and given arms or groups, rounded up to fight, are "volunteers."

Once upon a time journalists for major news outlets used to question stories that smelled funny—but those days are long gone, and the academic commentariat are only too happy to slot such "fact-checked" facts into their factually-based narrations about Putin's guilt. What matters is how many repeat the same narrative. The modus operandi of the fabrication of "truth" was established long before this war. But now it is treasonous to ask questions about the role of the United States in this proxy war in which Western Ukrainians are but cannon fodder. That the West simultaneously reports upon the massive number of Ukrainian refugees whilst also reporting on the bravery of Ukrainians fighting to the death for their freedom is suggestive of misinformation (a lie) concerning the degree of Ukrainian national unity which is simply not there. Another concealed prime fact is that Ukraine has been in a civil war for eight years. It has largely been covered over by the lie that the Maidan was something hailed by almost all Ukrainians who were so fed up with the pro-Russian President Yanukovich that they spontaneously took to the street to vent their anger. Yes, there was a large opposition – just as there is large opposition to any regime in any Western democracy. But the mechanisms of democracy count for nothing in the Western media any more once their corporate owners and their employees agree about overthrowing a democratically elected government.

There are also lies by omission – and one big whopper by omission is the general failure of the Western media and politicians to bother mentioning the widespread corruption of the Ukrainian political class from its post-Soviet origin to Zelensky himself. There was also the failure to mention the role of the United States, and anti-Putin oligarchs and their interest in providing resources for the Maidan. And, of course, the violence of ultra-nationalist, ethnic militias (the neo-Nazis) against (Russo-)Ukrainians, and

the extent of the leverage and institutional power they represent (something that is not uncovered if one solely focuses upon their negligible parliamentary representation, which is only indicative of outright public support, which is not the issue at all).

There is also the failure to seriously examine the case for such an overwhelming number of Russo-Ukrainians in Crimea to seek and vote for independence – we are meant to believe it is merely an “invasion” by Russia. Similarly, I don’t know anyone personally who knows why the overwhelming majority of people in Donetsk and Luhansk want to be autonomous regions, and why they are so desperate to be protected from government and militia forces attacking them. Then there is the failure to examine the prime facts involved in the Minsk Agreements—see Jacques Braud for more details (here and here).

There has, in sum, been an enormous amount of prime fact concealment if not outright fabrication in the war. And I find it somewhat incredulous that people who do not bother with such prime facts think their opinion on the war is anything more than prejudice and worth paying any attention to. But that, as I said earlier, is the problem with the Western know-all mentality which is but a thought cathedral of a priorisms or sheer ideology.

The combination of outright censorship, denunciation and moral belittlement of journalists who introduce information that is said to be “enemy propaganda” means that most people I know and read are completely ignorant of these alternative sources. That is to say there is plenty of information and plenty of points of view which are well and truly hidden from the general public’s ken.

It is also the case that well-educated people, when it comes to Russia and Vladimir Putin, are now perfectly happy to trust the same journalists who have regularly propagated a great litany of falsehoods (from misinformation to disinformation to mere mangling of information to destruction of people’s livelihoods and reputations). Why such trust in the case of Ukraine?

I can only answer that they are happy with what they think they know. They shouldn’t be, but they are. When I say they shouldn’t be, allow me to be theological for a moment. Those of us within the ideas-professions have been called upon to profess the truth as we know it. But in so far as we are weak vessels with little intelligence, our professional calling also requires us to be aware of our ignorance. Such a concession is our saving grace, for it also means that our knowledge will always be partial, and we will invariably err. Hence while we are called upon to explore and investigate and present our

findings it is essential if we are to do our jobs right to present our information as provisional. Far from being leaders and know-alls in the discovery and dissemination of information, we must labour humbly trying to understand more and communicating what little we know in the manner of a participant in a collective and ongoing dialogue.

Academics and intellectuals, in other words, are akin to the jurors of the trial of Dmitri Karamazov; we are in the position of trying to make sense of the evidence before us; but if evidence, i.e., a prime fact heretofore hidden is uncovered which makes the rest of the evidence collapse, then we should be resolute in following the truth and being grateful that we have been rescued from a great error. We move from error to error constantly. On those rare occasions we stumble upon some really important truths that matter are moments more due to God's grace, or, for those who wish to free themselves from all talk of gods, sheer good fortune, than our ability.

Sadly, though, my experience of those who work in service to ideas forget their higher duty to the higher power which places ideas in their proper context within life. Thus, my observation that academics and academically trained professionals are amongst the least likely people I have ever met to admit they are wrong and to change their mind.

Again, observed from my experience as university student and professor, the overwhelming majority of people who teach and study the Humanities at the universities have made up their minds on all important socially and politically essential issues by the time they have turned twenty (usually earlier). There are those who have a crisis of confidence in their ideological leanings, and turn the other way; but they are rare enough.

Much rarer, and I am grateful to a set of circumstances that allowed me to fall into this group, there are those who come to break not only with an ideological position but an attachment to the kind of abstractions that form the woof and warp of academic work which forces one to be more resolute in focus in trying to understand human experience, rather than a philosophy or theory.

The Humanities part of the academy is largely held together by ideologically or ideationally like-minded groups: whether liberal, Marxist, feminists, post-structuralists, critical race theorists, post-colonialists, or, the far more marginal groups like the Straussians, Girardians, etc. matters little, because such group-membership involves a betrayal of one's calling, which is to follow truth wherever it might lead, and to stand up and profess that truth. That is a lonely path; and it is not a way to secure prestigious publishers, or tenure, or friends within the profession and who can help you get ahead.

The one benefit of academia is that you can reach the best and brightest of students who are hungry for the same thing you are and who will tarry a while with you as you follow your path. Apart from some students, I have met very few solitary travelers on their search to have a better picture about the ways and whys of the world and humanity. And the ones I have met are rarely working within a university.

The fact that few tread this path may well be why my academic friends are so willing to think they know what they don't know and to accept as facts reportage that lacks credibility. I might be wrong about this; it may just be laziness, or pride, a willingness to show their academic friends that though they cannot agree on some things they are not such monsters that they would disagree on something as important as the global climate catastrophe, or the invasion of the world by an ex-KGB agent.

What is indisputable is that, for my part, if there were compelling proof, I would gladly accept the truth that the war in Ukraine is due to unprovoked aggression by Russia; that it is but the first domino of a grand plan by Russia and China; and that the United States, Europe and other Western countries are within their rights to fight a proxy war against Russia, and to seize Russian assets and reconfigure the world's financial system in order to win this war, because it will not only stop World War III from starting, but also preserve the free world.

But there is no longer a free world to preserve, nor any compelling proof to convince me of that position— and if proof there be, it is certainly not to be found in lurid biographies that merely repeat the unsubstantiated stories that Putin's many enemies have routinely provided to the press (see John Helmer's blogs for more information regarding some of the more well-known ones). Moreover, those who denounce Russia's invasion invariably do what I find morally and intellectually repellant: they must absolve the West and NATO and the Zelensky government, and Ukrainian oligarchs, and Russian anti-Putin oligarchs in exile, and Western oligarchs with ambitions to own Syrian and Russian oil, and the representatives of Globalist Inc. who have taken it upon themselves to define who and what the international order is and how we all must live and accept as truth what they say is the "truth."

At the very least any compelling argument justifying the West's proxy war against Russia would require disproving—that the US and NATO have had a long-term plan to bring regime change to Russia; that the Maidan was part of that strategy; that the lie about official Russian interference in the US election of 2016 was a lie; that successive Ukrainian governments since the Maidan have been responsible for the persecution and mass slaughter of Russian first-language speaking Ukrainians, and the bombing and shelling of their homes and villages; that various players, from the President and his son, and other

members (in both political sides) of the American government have had financial interests that have contributed to the corrupt nature of the Ukrainian government, and exacerbated conflict in Ukraine; that the Ukrainian government had not been aggressively building up its troops to finally “take back” the Donbas before Russia’s invasion; that Russia’s strategic objective is not the complete destruction of Ukraine, but demilitarization and de-Nazification. On this last point, it would also be nice for anyone arguing the West’s case against Russia to at least have a rudimentary understanding of military theory so that they might have some basic understanding of the tactics of Russia’s military operation.

They might also take the time to investigate whether President Zelensky has truly sought to broker peace with Russia, and show that he is not beholden to Ukrainian and anti-Putin-Russian oligarchs, and ethnic militias. At the moment he is screaming that Russia is going to start a nuclear war if the West does not stop him. Really? Why would Putin not just do what the US did to Baghdad? (See the above point regarding Russia’s tactics.) And such a person might also demonstrate how the United States has brought peace and prosperity to any region that it destabilizes, especially since the end of the Cold War. Recently, I saw an interview with Tony Blair by a journalist working for the *Economist*—for Blair Iraq is a success story. Some claims are so bereft of any connection to reality that to even bother to engage with them leaves one as covered in mud as if one were wrestling with a pig. But Blair is also symptomatic of a wide-spread cast-of-mind, in the West that is as woefully misinformed about Putin and Russia, as it is unmoved by facts about the basics of international diplomacy and the scale of mass murder and the sheer social wreckage that the United States has created in its attempt to fabricate and then lead a unipolar world into a new world order.

Apart from Jacques Baud, see his two articles in this magazine ([here](#) and [here](#)), who really knows what he is talking about when it comes to Ukraine and NATO and the War, and the blogs and writings of John Helmer, I strongly recommend tuning to [Alex Thomson](#)—or any of the other podcasts and figures in [my article of last month](#).

When I see academic friends of mine convincingly refute the insights of such people who really know what they are talking about, I will gladly change my mind. In the meantime, I only wish that those whose livelihoods have been in the groves of the institution founded by Plato would follow in the way of his teacher and founder of philosophy proper—by starting from the position of knowing that they don’t know, instead of identifying with and repeating and expanding upon what someone else says who also does not know (or worse, prefers to conceal).

The men of light hoped for too much of human beings, and claimed too much about what they know and could know. In doing that they contributed to previously unimagined evils – most notably the sheer scale of technologies of destruction that science enables, and the totalitarian ideologies which legitimate mass killing.

I have all manner of reservations about the writings of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (*The Authoritarian Personality* is truly abysmal)—especially their ignorance about economics and international relations, and a reliance upon Marx that they think offers them a cloud-like vantage point from which they are able to break down the social world into the two dominant social types, viz., oppressor and oppressed. In doing this, they also helped prepare numerous foot-soldiers for Globalism Inc.—which is, inter alia, the perfect firm for employing the saviours of the oppressed, so that a great new technocratic tier of wealth and status will exist purely to ensure that oppression will never occur again: life will be sheer pleasure and complete virtue, at least for those who decide who may live, reproduce, be employed, and speak on the topics, which they, as funders and directors of the “science” and the “good,” deem permissible. All we will have to do to not be oppressed is give our hearts, minds and souls over to those who will think for us, and lead us.

But I do concur with them that the Enlightenment carries its antithesis within its development, and the best we can do against the totalising global corporatist administration reality of our times is speak out against the mental closure rapidly befalling the West. Refusing to accept the lies about the war in the Ukraine is the least someone can do who would like our political class to become skilled in the creation of peace, rather than continue in the bumbles of war and the spreading of international chaos that comes from incompetence, and the same lack of basic human decency that has created the same moral chaos that exists today in pretty well every Western nation. No, that does not mean I think China and Russia do not have their own problems—but unlike us, their leaders did not have the social-economic- capital supplied by multiple generations who fought for and achieved great liberty which is now being squandered in reckless geopolitical adventurism and the domestic suppression of freedom, for the sake of vapid abstractions, divisive identities, and infantile and self-indulgent priorities and values. When someone can show me that going to war with Russia might somehow solve these problems, I might take them seriously. For now, though, I see the refrain that Putin and Russia are simply evil as but one more symptom of the West's loss of mind.

Wayne Cristaudo is a philosopher, author, and educator, who has published over a [dozen books](#).

[Featured image](#): "The End of the War," by Géza Faragó; painted in 1918.

