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# Flawed Thought Processes: Society's Most Undermined and Easily Fixable Problem

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Introduction

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## Introduction

Politics and religion are important fields. People sacrifice their precious time and money to spread their opinions to others. Priests spend much of their time promoting their religion, while political activists make a living off conveying certain views to their audience. It is, of course, necessary for such a thing to happen as politics and religion are very important to our world today. A simple difference in political views, for example, may cause something as catastrophic as a war to occur. But despite all the resources spent on changing people's opinions, there are still many questions to be asked: Why is it that false ideas, such as the flat earth theory, are so commonplace with the large amounts of information available in the modern world? Why haven't people

reached a unanimous stance on what the best economic ideology is? Why do people have a firm grip on preposterous pseudoscientific beliefs such as breatharianism? Why do people still believe Obama was born in Kenya? Why do people still believe fake news on Facebook? Why do some people believe vaccinations are ineffective to this day? Can't they see they're wrong?

Many times, we see people having controversial political views as isolated incidents caused by people being too simple-minded, but we rarely look beyond that. We, of course, criticize their opinions and debate them. We search for scraps of evidence we can use to humiliate them. We spend much of our time trying to convince people who do not yet have an opinion on a topic we are invested in. We spend so much of our energy on trying to push forth our agendas and trying to prove ourselves correct, and yet these people and their seemingly far-fetched ideas still remain. Some of us decide to call it a day and just stop participating in any kind of debate and try their best to avoid controversy.

But of course, that does not solve the problem. That merely shifts it. We're fine with ignoring differing opinions. We are simply content as we are confident we would never be stupid enough to believe something as outlandish as Scientology. We tell ourselves that we would never be supporters of the horrible ideology of ISIL. But what we have failed to realize is that ignoring the problem does not solve it. These ideas belong to a pattern. While they may be unsubstantiated, they are remarkably popular,

some of them even superseding existing logical ideas.

In this essay, we wish to examine traits of the average human decision-making process and shed some light on how so many seemingly far-fetched ideas have gotten so popular. By no means, however, is this essay optimistic. We strive to obtain another view of the world. Learning that your opinions are wrong is not a pleasant feeling, but sugarcoating the truth is not what we aspire to do.

Please note that this essay is not meant to present any evidence for/against any political views. As information available in the future may not be available at the time of writing, please do your own research when forming opinions regarding examples included in this essay. These examples are included to prove a point and not to support certain viewpoints. Read with a willingness to improve the world and learn the truth, as opposed to a willingness to prove your opponent wrong. Read not with a willingness to show how your decision-making process is not biased, which is a bias in and of itself.

## **The MSG Craze**

There are many unsubstantiated ideas that have gained traction over the years. Whether it's science, religion, or popular culture, false ideas will be spread. One more moderate example is the irrational fear of monosodium glutamate (MSG), which started when a doctor named Robert Ho Man Kwok wrote a letter to the New England

Journal of Medicine, claiming:

I have experienced a strange syndrome whenever I have eaten out in a Chinese restaurant, especially one that served northern Chinese food. The syndrome, which usually begins 15 to 20 minutes after I have eaten the first dish, lasts for about two hours, without hangover effect. The most prominent symptoms are numbness at the back of the neck, gradually radiating to both arms and the back, general weakness and palpitations...<sup>1</sup>

He suggested possible reasons for these symptoms, including MSG. Soon after, as the media clung onto this story, the letter went viral. Consequently, the American public became quite fearful of "Chinese restaurant syndrome" and blamed MSG for the supposed effects with no proof to back the claims up. In fact, fifty years later, the FDA stated:

Over the years, FDA has received reports of symptoms such as headache and nausea after eating foods containing MSG. However, we were never able to confirm that the MSG caused the reported effects.<sup>2</sup>

No one has been able to prove that MSG caused any such symptoms, but to the general public, that does not matter. To this day, many people still are very concerned about the possibility of MSG being in their food. And many restaurants have latched onto this, using MSG-free food as a way to attract more customers. What started this was not valid scientific research. It was fear. People wanting a scapegoat. Being too lazy to check the reliability of what they read. Peer pressure. MSG has been a common flavour in the Far East for over fifty years when the controversy began, and yet

virtually no one stopped to question whether or not such claims had any standing at all. People act irrationally, and this idea took advantage of this very well.

When misconceptions like this run rampant, they can have a large effect on the economy and culture. They can wreck companies, cause massive layoffs, and cause significant damage to certain industries. We are not implying that Robert Ho Man Kwok had an ulterior motive, but the public can be manipulated in the same way in order to benefit specific individuals. This is why it is important to understand how this can happen and how we can prevent it.

# Chapter Two: Thought Manipulation

## How to Change Someone's Opinion

There are four main groups of factors that affect our opinions:

- our willingness to have a certain opinion;
- emotions;
- other biases; and
- evidence we perceive to be authentic.

To manipulate a person's opinion regarding a certain subject, an idea needs to take advantage of these factors more effectively than its competition. Once it has done that and become more attractive than having no opinion at all, the person's opinion is changed.

One important thing we must take into account is the fact that truth is always objective. While person A's favourite colour may be red and person B's favourite colour may be blue, they do not necessarily disagree. Although they may have different favourite colours, person A can acknowledge person B's favourite colour is blue and vice versa. One may argue that they are disagreeing on what colour is objectively the best, but that is incorrect, as favourite colours are subjective. The objective truth is the fact that person A's favourite colour is red and person B's favourite colour is blue.

However, while the truth is always objective, thinking is always *subjective*. There is no way to magically obtain the objective truth with 100% accuracy. We can only use our own thinking processes to guess what the truth is using the information we have access to. This is where people are most vulnerable, as since opinions are essentially formed by educated guesses, there lies some leeway for mistakes. The way people form these guesses not only can never be perfect, but most do not put much thought into them. This results in guesses that are largely determined by irrelevant factors instead of what truly matters: reliable evidence. That results in more false opinions. The less of an effect these subjective biases have on one's thought process, the more accurate their beliefs are.

Let's reexamine the example of the public's fear of MSG. A doctor reported symptoms after eating at a Chinese restaurant and suggested possible reasons for these symptoms, including MSG. The media made the doctor's claims go viral, causing a

widespread fear of MSG. The public was influenced by factors including the following:

1. their willingness to blame a specific chemical for health problems;
2. fear;
3. the tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information offered;<sup>3</sup> and
4. the correlation between eating at restaurants that use MSG with health symptoms.

All of these factors are prone to manipulation:

- The first factor is the willingness to have a certain opinion, specifically that we should put the blame on a chemical for society's health problems. People want to believe that the cause of a number of health problems has been found because that is a good thing, and people want good things to be true.
- The second factor is simple emotion. Fear and paranoia causes people to be more conservative and results in a pre-emptive, irrational perception of danger.
- The third factor is one of many biases out there, which is that people generally tend to comparatively undermine the importance of newer evidence. Due to how widespread anti-MSG articles were at the time, relative to the popularity of opposing publications, people were more likely to find anti-MSG articles first. When they did come across said opposing publications, they failed to take them into account as much as the anti-MSG articles they had first come across.

- The final factor is evidence that is perceived to be true. The correlation between eating at restaurants that use MSG with certain health symptoms is valid evidence in the eyes of the public, despite correlation implying causation being a logical fallacy.

As shown in that example, evidence is only one factor that people rely on when forming their opinions. Even when evidence is taken into account, it is often unreliable or false. This is how false ideas can spread. By focusing on factors other than evidence, one can still greatly influence public opinion regarding a certain subject without going through the trouble of creating fake evidence and censoring opposing evidence. Of course, we are oversimplifying this, as how each specific factor is weighed may greatly differ, but nonetheless, all of these factors play a part in affecting people's opinions.

## **Wishful Thinking**

One thing is for certain: A very, very important part of the thinking process is what the person thinking wants to be true.<sup>4</sup> This is not only a factor in and of itself, but it significantly biases the perceived validity of evidence in favour of the opinion they want to have. Combined with pseudoscience or other fake evidence, wanting to believe a certain idea can be an adequate reason to believe in that idea.

The most obvious real-world example of wishful thinking is the concept of an afterlife. Some religions claim that believers will live happy, indefinite lives after they

die and evildoers will be condemned to everlasting torture. This attracts potential converts as people want to go to heaven when they die and they seek punishment for those who are evil. Because they want to believe in this aspect of the religion, they are also more likely to believe in the rest of the religion. Note that the actual, objective validity of the idea in question is completely unaffected by how uplifting it is. Despite that, people are inclined to be optimistic by nature. As a result, their opinions can be manipulated, and religions can take advantage of that.

For instance, wishful thinking plays a significant role in the world's financial markets. It is not uncommon for amateur investors to significantly overestimate the soundness of their decisions due to the blinding effect of optimism. They voluntarily suppress thoughts that are rational but painful in favour of those that are false but pleasant. They invest while thinking of the potential gains but not the potential losses. Unsurprisingly, their optimism harms their decision-making process, and their speculations often wind up being wrong. Capital that could have been used to invest into more successful startups is lost. In essence, optimism is the main driving force behind a surprising number of financial decisions.

But optimism doesn't just affect decisions directly. Optimism makes people want to avoid the unpleasant, such as the existence of unexplained phenomena. They want explanations to make them feel good. And the most straightforward way to find them is to look for patterns even if they do not exist.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon may be subtle,

but its effects are ubiquitous. It causes people to assume there are connections between certain events without considering other possibilities. For example, gamblers erroneously bet on coincidences they do not perceive as such. Many conspiracy theories are based on misperceived patterns. Those who are desperate find meaning in random words and expressions expressed by psychics. Has a terrorist attack recently occurred against politicians I like? It's because of terrorists affiliated with their rivals. Has a terrorist attack recently occurred against politicians I don't like? It's because they're trying to defame the politicians I do like. Even if optimism does not directly affect one's opinions, it may make them connect the dots that will.

Additionally, wishful thinking is also closely related to one's ego. People do not like admitting mistakes as that threatens their self-image. This means you can use their past decisions to persuade them to make similar decisions in the future. For instance, let's say you represent company A which sells product A. Along with company B and their product B, you have a duopoly over a certain market. A potential buyer has bought an older version of product A in the past. An apt tactic to use in these circumstances is to change their perception of your product not as a mere commodity, but forever a part of themselves that they must embrace. You want them to think switching over to product B is the equivalent of admitting they make poor decisions. Once you have their self-image on your side, you have their decisions on your side.

Furthermore, if you've ever had a debate, there is a good chance you have

experienced another powerful side effect of wishful thinking: confirmation bias. Because people dislike being proven wrong, there is a tendency for one to reject evidence that contradicts their beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Not only that, but presenting such evidence usually tends to strengthen their existing beliefs.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon, the backfire effect, is why you should refrain from presenting evidence if your audience doesn't already believe in your idea. Instead of arguing with a non-believer, you should understand basic human psychology and learn how to use it to your advantage.

The importance of one's ego cannot be understated. People like to be right. People do not like to be wrong. By bluntly presenting an idea that contradicts one's views, you are implying they are wrong. As that will make them perceive said idea as a threat to their reputation, they will consequently be compelled to fight against it. They will use any arguments available, no matter how nonsensical they are, to resist having to admit being wrong. This is likely the single biggest challenge you will face as one who wishes to spread an idea. The solution is to try to make them question their own beliefs naturally instead of trying to force them to do that by debating them. Otherwise, you risk estranging them and strengthening their original beliefs. You want your potential believers not to see their existing beliefs as extensions of themselves, but ideas that have misled them and that have never been a part of their true selves.

But of course, that is easier said than done. How do you get someone to consider an idea without getting heated up and argumentative about it? Well, the answer is to

try to make them willing to change their beliefs. Make it cool to do so. Befriend them. Surround them with people who already believe in it. Instead of seeing their beliefs as a part of *them*, they should see their past beliefs as a forgivable part of their *old selves*, as long as they choose to change them. Groupthink is very powerful. And in the modern day world, there is no excuse for not trying to capitalize on it. You don't have to convince those whom you know personally to take advantage of this. You can simply start an online community or try to influence a pre-existing one. There are many examples of this on websites like Facebook and Reddit, and when you attract enough members, they will be doing all the work for you. Peer pressure and geniality are your friends, not heated arguments.

Ultimately, wishful thinking is a significantly underestimated bias--it can easily make or break one's belief in an idea. There are many ways to exploit it: Make your idea appealing. Take advantage of people's egos. Befriend them. Never overlook the importance of such a powerful bias.

## **Emotions**

Manipulating a person's emotions is arguably the simplest and most obvious way to change their opinions without using evidence. There are many different emotions that can have profound effects on people's opinions. Those who are angry make decisions quickly that they are unlikely to analyze.<sup>8</sup> Those who are fearful have

an increased perception of risk.<sup>9</sup> Empathy causes an individual to be more willing to spend resources on helping others, while anger has the opposite effect.<sup>10</sup> Play the right cards, and one's emotions may be your key to convincing them.

As there are many ways to manipulate one's emotions and the potential rewards for doing so are very promising, it comes as no surprise that many use it to their advantage quite often. Politicians, for example, often exploit anger by exaggerating the consequences of certain issues. This increases the number of supporters they have and makes them more passionate about their beliefs. Religions can threaten non-believers with eternal torture. Fear causes people to overestimate the risk of that happening, significantly bolstering the effects of these threats, and resultantly causing people to convert. When they are properly taken advantage of, emotions can be the deciding factor in one's beliefs.

Refugee crises demonstrate this quite well. Politicians with anti-refugee policies will tend to try to manipulate the citizens' anger and fear to increase their voter base. Anti-refugee propaganda,<sup>11</sup> such as the short film *With Open Gates: The forced collective suicide of European nations*, will generally show refugees as threatening people to evoke these emotions. Politicians with pro-refugee policies will instead try to manipulate the citizens' empathy. Pro-refugee propaganda, such as the Aylan Kurdi photo, will generally show refugees as helpless for this purpose. Despite opposing each other's views, the proponents of both sides leverage emotions to influence those who are

undecided.

Be strategic about this and take advantage of serendipity. When events evoke emotions that you can take advantage of, react quickly. Right after a terrorist attack is a very good time to introduce a bill expanding police powers as a politician in a democracy. Your aim is to take advantage of people's knee-jerk reactions to that event. If you wait long enough, people's emotions may die down and start thinking too rationally for you to benefit.

To sum up, emotions often rely on effective timing and execution, but when they are strategically manipulated, they can be a godsend.

## **Other Biases**

As our brains are simply not designed for rational thought, there exists innumerable cognitive biases that are caused by how they work. We do not have enough time to discuss every known cognitive bias in existence, but a few examples can be useful:

- **Anchoring.** This is the tendency for a person to rely too heavily on an initial piece of information offered.<sup>12</sup> For example, by setting the price of a certain product high, a company can make the prices of other products seem cheap.
- **The pseudocertainty effect.** This is observed when people are less likely to take risks when the more likely outcome is positive. But when the more likely

outcome is negative, they are more likely to take risks.<sup>13</sup> Great for lottery companies.

- The bandwagon effect. This is the phenomenon wherein people adopt ideas simply because others have done so. Useful for those who have already amassed a significant number of believers.
- The bias blind spot. This is the inclination for one to spot biases in other people, but not oneself.<sup>14</sup>
- The illusory truth effect. This is the tendency to believe information is correct after repeated exposure.<sup>15</sup> Very convenient for those with influence over the media.

Every idea is different. While it may be best to take advantage of the anchoring effect if you are a shopkeeper, it is probably not as useful if you want to spread a religion. While it may be ideal to take advantage of the bandwagon effect as a well-known politician, it may not be if you are less established. Understand your idea and its target demographic well, and your tactics will be more effective.

Also, keep in mind that biases are often categorized to make them easier to understand, but the boundaries between some of them can be blurry, especially those related to wishful thinking. For example, the bias blind spot can be said to be caused by people disliking the idea of being biased. The bandwagon effect can be said to be caused by not wanting others to be wrong. These categories are not meant to be hard

boundaries but abstract concepts used to clarify people's behaviour.

All in all, there exists many biases that may not be as versatile as wishful thinking or emotions but can have a noticeable impact on one's thought process.

## **Evidence**

Evidence is the one factor that stands out. It is the only one that is reasonably accurate at predicting the truth. However, if its cards are played right, a false idea can still take advantage of this. Evidence can be intensified, altered, or even outright made up. Determining the validity of evidence is a decision in and of itself, which means that it is influenced by biases too, especially wishful thinking. It can be very effective, and simply disregarding it can be a deal-breaker for potential believers.

The simplest way to use evidence to your advantage is to use factual information to spread your idea. This is very common and easy to perform but generally is only possible when the idea you wish to spread is true. The stronger your evidence is, the less wiggle room there will be for other biases to subvert belief in your idea.

Convincing a jury that your client is innocent using evidence is nearly always going to be more difficult than using logic to prove a mathematical conjecture. However, even if your evidence is overwhelmingly compelling, do not be overconfident, as humans can never be completely rational and will be influenced by other biases. Nevertheless, sound and logical reasoning can be a very useful tool in your arsenal.

But of course, you are not always going to want to spread a truthful idea. Sometimes the truth conflicts with your interests. If so, fake evidence can be useful. As people generally do not want to be seen as irrational--not even to themselves--they need an excuse for their beliefs which they consider rational and believable. To your believers, fake evidence can serve as this excuse, making it easier to convince them of your idea. An example of this is the Bedford Level Experiment, which shows that a boat's mast on a river can be seen from miles away, despite the Earth's curvature. The general scientific consensus is that this is caused by atmospheric refraction, a phenomenon in which light rays are curved downward. Unsurprisingly, those who believe the Earth is flat often use this experiment as an excuse for their beliefs regardless. In any case, so long as you keep it remotely believable and take advantage of other biases, forged evidence is often an adequate substitute for real evidence.

Furthermore, there often are consequences for outright lying, but wishful thinking can be used to minimize them. For instance, smart politicians take advantage of this very well. They know that people like hearing what they want to hear, even if it is far from the truth.<sup>16</sup> Their supporters will perceive them lying as less dishonest considering they agree with the political messages said lies convey. Thanks to wishful thinking, they will ask themselves "Could they have been true?" and, when the answer is yes, consequently downplay the immorality of such lies. Of course, lying too much can be detrimental to your reputation. But so long as you sufficiently understand your

idea and its supporters, you will be able to find the optimal balance of lies and truths to maximize the spread of your idea.

Sometimes, fake evidence can be more intricate. Fraudulent/misleading scientific studies give people an excuse to believe in ideas they want to believe in but have no evidence for. It is very easy to fabricate or manipulate scientific data in such a way that a certain agenda is promoted. For example, small sample sizes and confounding variables, unrelated factors that are not accounted for, can skew the results without the need to lie. In a 2010 paper, three researchers claimed that a certain posture, the power pose, can induce positive hormonal and behavioural changes.<sup>17</sup> Since garnering significant attention from the public, numerous studies have tried to replicate the results of that paper with no success.<sup>18</sup> The same concept applies here: A research study can serve as a seemingly more academic excuse for one's beliefs. But oftentimes, many of the readers of said study let their opinions and biases significantly affect their fact-checking process of that study, thus failing to recognize its flaws. Ultimately, believability matters most, regardless of the medium of the claim.

In essence, both real and fake evidence are powerful and versatile tools, as they can serve as reasons or excuses for one's beliefs. You don't need to convince someone of your idea solely using evidence, but at least some evidence is necessary for one to convince themselves they have a rational basis to believe in your idea. Remember that the factors that affect one's thought process work in conjunction with each other, and

evidence is only one of them.

## **How to Maintain Someone's Opinion**

Congratulations. You've done the impossible: changing one's beliefs. But before you let go of your believer's hand, you should understand how you can retain them. Yes, people generally don't change their beliefs often, but it is possible for another idea to somehow take advantage of your believers' thought processes well enough for that to happen. To prevent that from happening, you should still try to take advantage of the same factors you have taken advantage of before, but there are a few more things to keep in mind when the person in question is already a believer.

Firstly, a very useful tactic is to make a person's belief in your idea a deep part of their identity. This makes it so that attacks against that idea are perceived as an attack against themselves, further disincentivizing skepticism. Generally, all ideas constitute a part of one's sense of self to some extent. Your objective should be to entrench your idea in your believer's self-identity by making their belief in that idea seem like a positive trait. One of the best ways to do this is to promote an "us vs. them" mentality. Portray non-believers as evildoers whose actions lead to the detriment of society. This decreases the likelihood of them changing their opinion despite evidence opposing your idea. Always take advantage of your believers' egos.

Moreover, the importance of echo chambers cannot be understated. Being proven wrong displeases people, making their existing views have a significant advantage in terms of their desire to believe. However, this effect can be overcome if the views they are considering adopting are more attractive to them. To reduce the time they are exposed to such views, promote echo chambers. Unlike constructive discussions, they serve to increase hatred toward opposing views without making your believers reconsider their existing views. This can be a very useful tool to strengthen their belief and the aforementioned "us vs. them" mentality.

Lastly, it doesn't take a genius to realize that a child's parents can greatly influence their beliefs. When they become an adult, their ego will cause them to accept their inherited beliefs as fact instead of questioning them. This is so prevalent nowadays that it is the main driving force of some of the most popular ideas that exist today. As many topics of debate lack empirical evidence, people instead use emotions and wishful thinking to distinguish ideas. As a result of these biases, those raised with such beliefs are likely to keep them in the future. Evidently, childhood indoctrination is one of the most effective ways to keep an idea thriving.

To conclude, maintaining one's belief in your idea comes down to taking advantage of the same factors used to change their opinion. Nonetheless, there are a few important things to keep in mind: Firstly, one will defend their ego, so you should associate it with your idea. Secondly, echo chambers help strengthen people's belief in

your idea without much risk of them changing their beliefs. Lastly, childhood indoctrination is a powerful tool that can maintain one's belief in an idea throughout their life.

## Chapter Three: What We Can Do

### The Solution

The simple solution to disagreement most people think of is to debate the people whom they deem misled and hope that they can change their views. But, of course, it is not that simple. Debates have existed for millennia, and while we have never had as much information as we have now, disagreement remains a significant problem. It hinders our conquest for peace and the solutions to many other issues that exist today. So what is the solution, then?

*The solution is to get people to desire to ascertain the truth, not win arguments. This leads to the replacement of people's existing thinking processes with one that only takes reliable evidence into account and disregards everything else as much as is feasible.*

This thinking process shall be used to objectively analyze information to form new opinions. While it is impossible for our thought processes to be 100% objective, evidence-based, and rational, there is still much room for improvement. The good news is that when one voluntarily chooses to change their thought process for the better, they can do so quite effortlessly. However, what if disagreement still exists? That brings us to debates.

Debates should not exist for the purpose of convincing others of your beliefs. Instead, we should replace them with discussions that serve to show each participant others' perspectives so that all can think more objectively. Everyone must understand that their views may be wrong and sincerely consider what others say. Again, the goal here is not to convince yourself or others that you are right, but to ascertain the truth. Currently, in most debates, the goal of all participants is to convince others of their beliefs. This often only results in more strongly held views and negative emotions as a result of the backfire effect. However, if they mutually agree to rethink their views and politely analyze each other's thought processes with the goal in mind being to ascertain the truth together, then the truth shall prevail. If you avoid scrutinizing your own opinions, why would you expect your opponent to scrutinize theirs?

Furthermore, one of the most important steps to take in order to maximize the objectivity of your thought process is to dissociate your identity from your beliefs. You are not a Republican. You are not a Democrat. You are simply a person who is in the

pursuit of the truth. If you get angry in a political discussion, you may be too attached to your opinions. Being more attached to your beliefs may provide you with comfort and peace of mind. But it changes your goal from ascertaining the truth to fighting for your reputation. Instead, if you view yourself as a rational person, your ego will incentivize critical thinking so that you can maintain that perception of yourself. Keeping your beliefs and your identity separate is vital to having a truly objective debate.

To reiterate, thinking objectively and rationally does not apply solely to politics and religion, but to any area of study with any form of disagreement. When disagreement occurs, we must take into account the fact that at least one of the parties disagreeing is wrong. This means that if a debate with sufficient evidence to prove an idea correct beyond a reasonable doubt results in no views changed, one of the participants is not thinking rationally. Most importantly, understand that this participant could be you.

Finally, we must not underestimate how unreliable evidence can be, especially scientific studies. Oftentimes, the goal of a researcher is not to contribute to the scientific progress of humanity but to better their career prospects. For this reason, it may not be in the researcher's best interests to perform a reliable, controlled study. Be vigilant when evaluating evidence and set a reasonable burden of proof for its validity. Perform a holistic analysis of all the research on the matter before forming a conclusion.

A detailed explanation of how to conduct objective scientific research is outside the scope of this essay, but doing so is essential to having accurate opinions.

All in all, an individual must be willing to improve the way they think if we want change to happen. When that does happen to society on a wider scale, people's opinions will become more accurate. Wars between democracies will occur less often. Economic policies will improve. The world will become a better place. Until then, we ought to actively apply these principles to our lives and help others do the same.

## Endnotes

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<sup>11</sup>Please note that by "propaganda," I only mean any information that is intended to promote a certain viewpoint. I am not implying that it is inherently false.

<sup>12</sup>Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1982). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics

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