

# *The Human System*

*Just how rational and  
reasonable are we?*

**Are we smart enough to keep  
from getting ourselves into  
environmental trouble?**

**Are we smart enough to get out  
of trouble once we have gotten  
into it?**

Is there a right answer?

Maybe

Are there wrong answers?

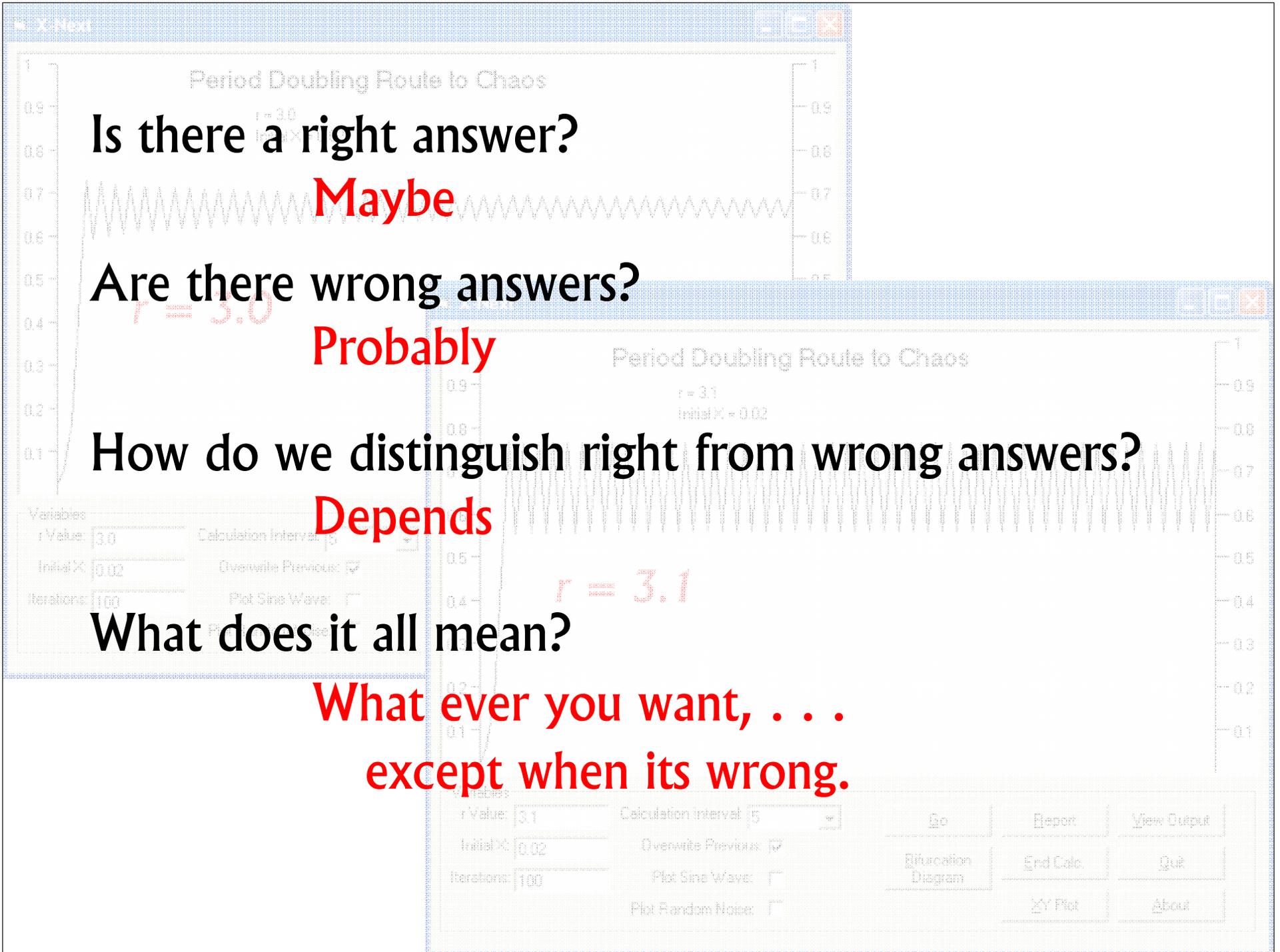
Probably

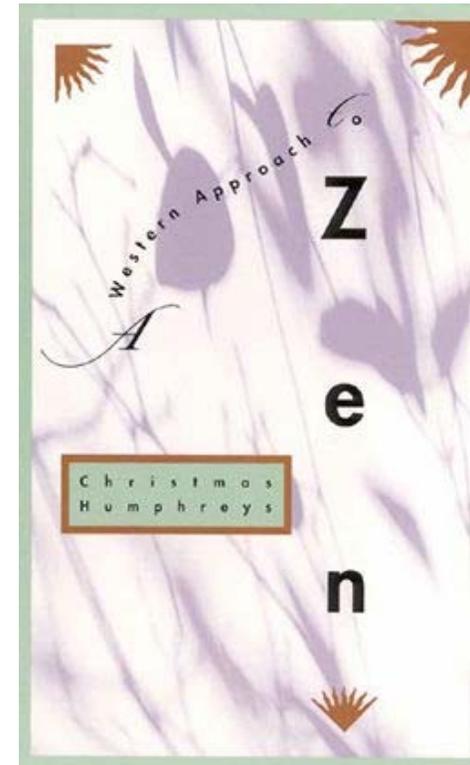
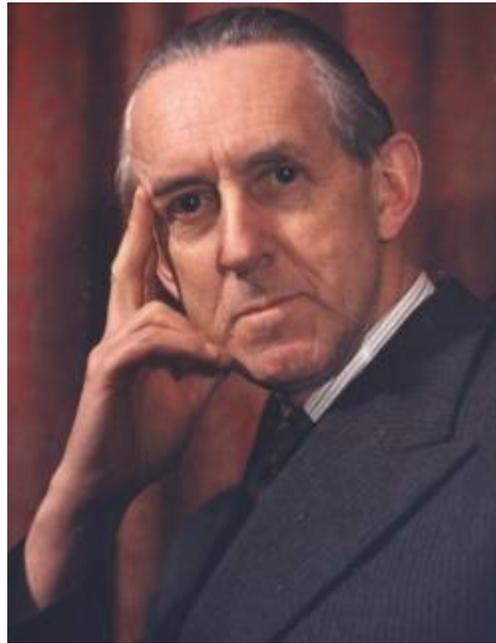
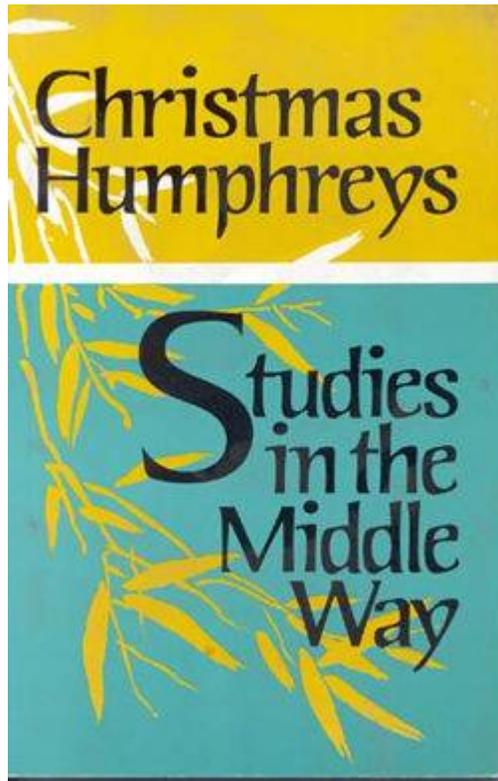
How do we distinguish right from wrong answers?

Depends

What does it all mean?

What ever you want, . . .  
except when its wrong.



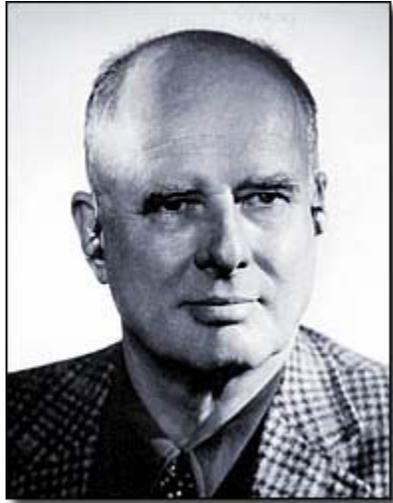


Our lives are based on what is reasonable and  
common sense;

Truth is apt to be neither.

From a well-worn path we step into a fog  
wherein lies precipices, quagmires, and a  
howling wilderness.

# The Perry Scheme of Ethical and Intellectual Development

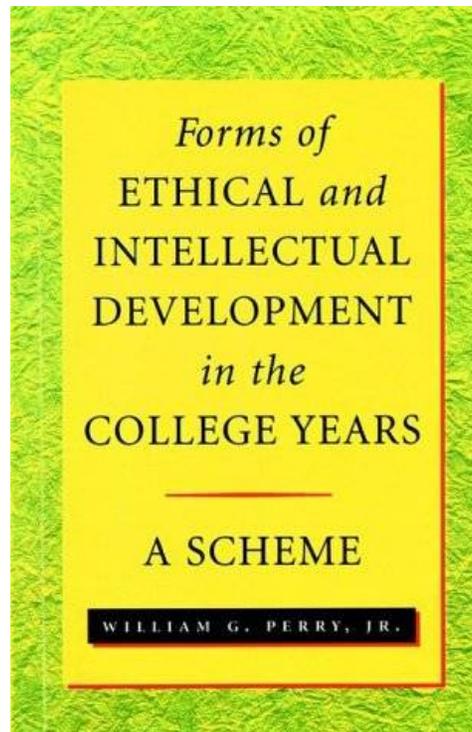


**William Graves Perry  
1913-1998**

*"like the rest of us I was  
born at an impressionable  
age."*

*Perry said, while teaching at Williams  
College he developed:*

*"a fateful curiosity about the ways in which so  
many of my students succeeded in not learning  
that which I was teaching them so well."*



# William Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development

Perry's scheme contains nine positions, with the last three being various level of commitment. This chart stops at position 6.

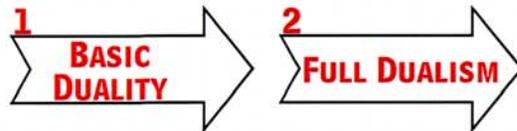
## DUALISM

*"There are right and wrong answers, engraved on Golden Tablets in the sky, known to Authorities and our responsibility is to obey Authorities."*

Knowledge is an accumulation of facts; the more facts you know, the smarter you are.

Answers should be simple and definitive.

The world is divided into those who know and those who don't; those who have Right Answers and those who are Wrong.



The authorities (our parents, ministers, teachers, etc.) exist to give us the answers, and we exist to obey them.

Answers should be simple and definitive. Goodness is hard work and obedience.

*"What is the right answer" is the main concern.*

There may be authorities other than ours, but those who do not believe as we do offer clear-cut answers are wrong. *Those would-be authorities who offer complexities are not to be trusted.*

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## MULTIPLICITY

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Since there are no clearly "right" answers in a particular area of inquiry, anyone is entitled to think anything.

*Everyone has a right to their own opinion"*



Our authorities don't have all the answers, so we must look to other authorities.

1. There are problems whose solutions we know.
2. There are problems whose solutions we don't know *yet.*

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Believing that authorities still have the right to grade us, even in areas of uncertainty, we set out to find the rules by which the authorities grade.

*If we tell the authorities exactly what they want to hear that will do just as well as the "right" answers.*

Common strategies are thinking independently under orders, as well as just parroting back answers we know the authorities want to hear.

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*"It all depends, so we must learn to evaluate solutions."*

"Ambiguity" is a fact of life since all facts and theories are or rest upon constructs developed by fallible human minds.

Facts are seen to be without real meaning unless the context is understood.

There is an effort to be "balanced" in looking at different points of view.



Here the individual is rudely thrust into a place where s(he) must be autonomous, where the authorities can no longer be counted on to provide any answers that are worthwhile. For every "truth" there is an opposite but equally valid "truth" - but no way to bring them together. *Deep feeling of loss, bewilderment, betrayal, and even rage can erupt; nothing has meaning.*

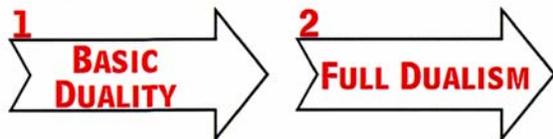
**DEFENSIVE MECHANISMS**  
Confronted with troubling uncertainty, avoidance strategies are pursued: Temporizing, Retreating, and Escape.

Having lived through the plethora of choices available in multiplicity and relativism, this position is seen as a "narrowing down" of choices in preparation for the commitment of the next position. There is also a *newfound sense of inner strength* that comes of the autonomy of choosing; the *choices are not made because authorities have told us to think a certain way, but because we have decided on our own.*

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If our authority gives us complexities, it is to teach us to find the answers for ourselves.

*"Gone is the safe and understandable world of dualism. We can no longer rely on our authorities to give us the answers, yet nothing before this has prepared us for the full weight of the choices that are laid out before us. Some common reactions to this transition are fear, anger, betrayal, depression, and grief. This is a very difficult shift, and virtually no one makes it out unscathed. People who get hurt or overstressed while trying to reason at Position 4 or higher often regress to Position 2 and hold it even more vehemently than they did before."*

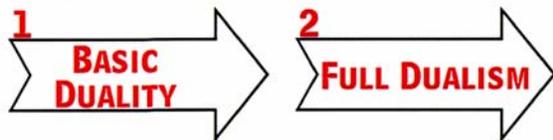
*"I prefer the simple world I grew up in."*

**Retreat**

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*In reaction to the terrifying uncertainty of relativism, the student regresses to Position 2, but with an added moralistic righteousness and a hatred of otherness. Not only are others wrong, but they are so wrong that they deserve no rights at all. An immense amount of prejudice, bigotry, and closedmindedness emerges as the student attempts to regain the certainty he once understood.*

*"I prefer the simple world I grew up in."*

**Retreat**

# Fundamentalisms

1. A movement in North American Protestantism that arose in the early part of the 20th century in reaction to modernism and that stresses the infallibility of the Bible not only in matters of faith and morals but also as a literal historical record, holding as essential to Christian faith belief in such doctrines as the creation of the world, the virgin birth, physical resurrection, atonement by the sacrificial death of Christ, and the Second Coming.
2. Strict adherence to any set of basic ideas or principles: the fundamentalism of the extreme conservatives.

# Fundamentalist Beliefs



Dr. Walter B. Shurden, founding Executive Director of The Center for Baptist Studies.

**Fundamentalism is "not so much an ideology as it is an attitude, an attitude of intolerance, incivility and narrowness." It is an attitude that says, 'We have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and we are going to impose it on you and control the system so that you will have to knuckle under to it.'**

**"It is an attitude that cuts off microphones, rudely terminates debate, stacks committees and centralizes power in order to control. It is not restricted to the right or the left."**

# Fundamentalisms Beliefs



Reverend Davidson Loehr

**Fundamentalism is too fearful, too restrictive, too lacking in faith to provide a home for the human spirit to soar or for human societies to blossom.**

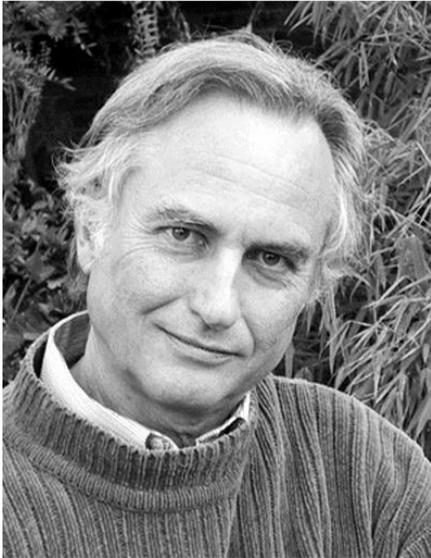
# Fundamentalisms Beliefs

*American Academy of Arts and Sciences*

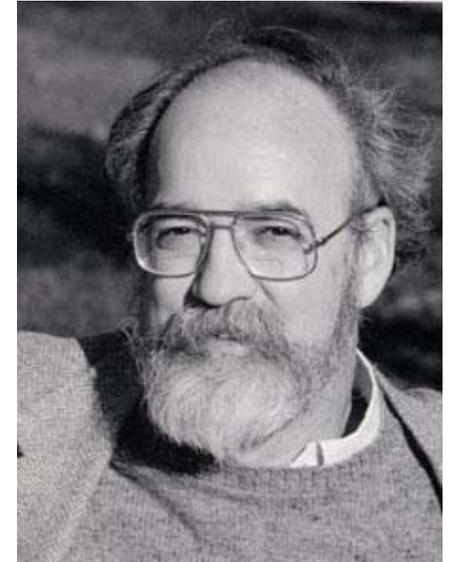
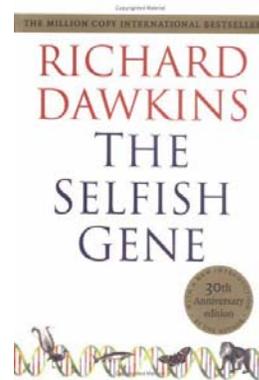
## **The Fundamentalism Project**

*More than 100 scholars from all over the world took part, reporting on every imaginable kind of fundamentalism. And what they discovered was that*  
*the agenda of all fundamentalist movements in the world is virtually identical, regardless of religion or culture.*

# Fundamentalist Beliefs



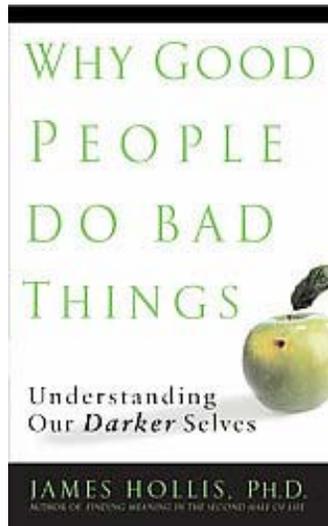
Richard Dawkins (left) and Daniel Dennett (right)



**And I also thought, on rereading the book, that the late Steve Gould was really right when he called Richard and me Darwinian fundamentalists. . .**

**And Dawkins insists, and I agree wholeheartedly, that there aren't any good compromise positions. Many have tried to find a compromise position, which salvages something of the traditional right-side-up view, where meaning and purpose rain down from on high. It cannot be done. And the recognition that it cannot be done is I would say, the mark of sane Darwinian fundamentalism.**

# Fundamentalist Beliefs In Institutions



**"Underneath the civilizing fantasies of any institution lie the archaic issues of anxiety management and self interest. When these two threats are activated, institutions, like individuals, tend to regress and abandon their founding vision. Such regression leads to our multiform fundamentalisms, because all fundamentalisms are driven by fear, and each is captive to some ideology that is worshiped without doubt, for it promises to deliver them from what they fear."**

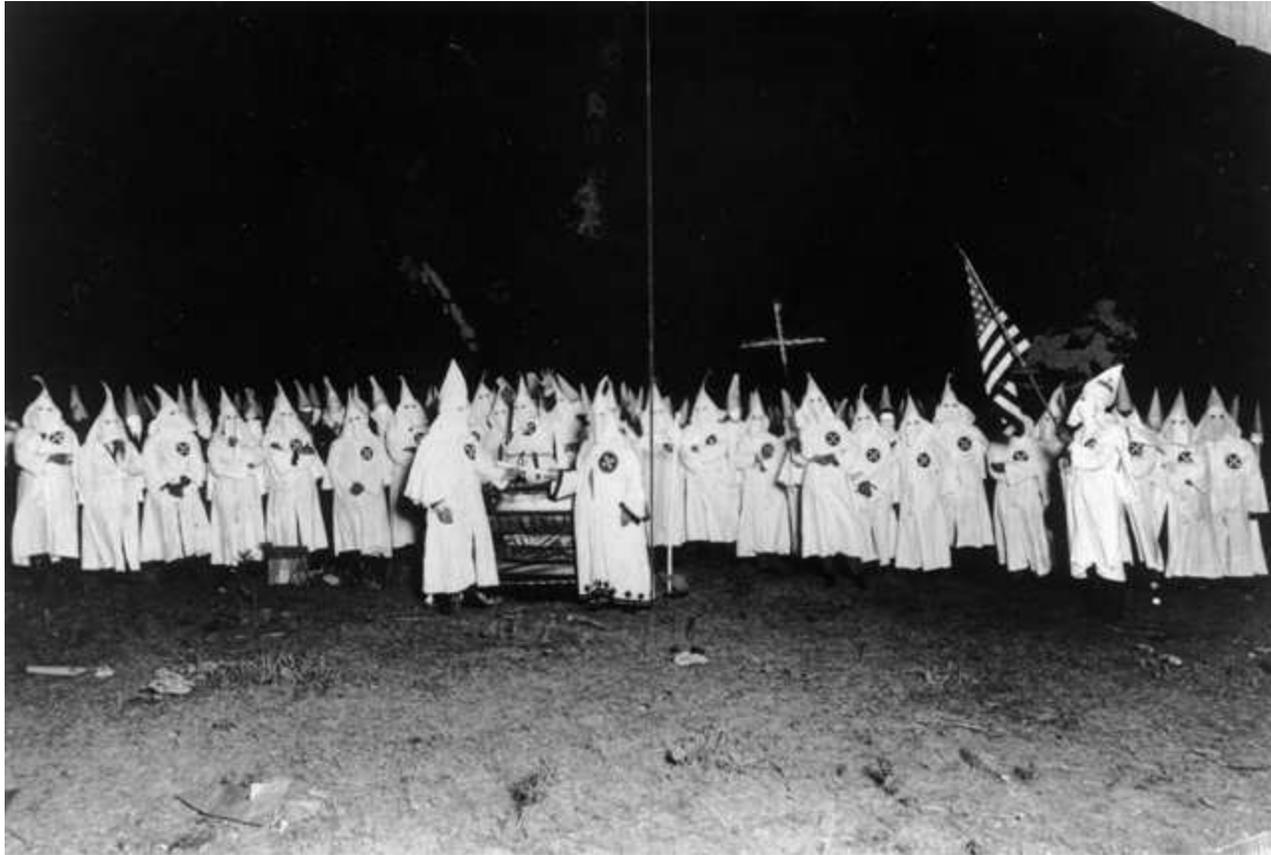
# Fundamentalisms Beliefs

## A Psychological Analysis of Fundamentalism



### Anitra Lenore Freeman

- A strictly hierarchical and authoritarian worldview. Everything has to have a First, a Somebody in Charge. Groups and societies work best with rigidly defined roles and stratifications.
- Ethical development at the "reward and punishment" stage: morality must be defined and enforced by an external authority.
- Distrust of their own judgment, or any other human being's judgment.
- Fear of the future.
- A low self-esteem that finds satisfaction in being one of the Elect, superior to all others.





The bodies of the men and boys over age 16 of Lidice, Czechoslovakia, murdered by the Nazis on June 10, 1942, in reprisal for the assassination of SS Leader Reinhard Heydrich.



Afghanistan  
Terrorist  
School

HUMAN  
BOMB  
CLASS

Pay attention,  
because I'm only  
going to do this  
once, ok?



# William Perry's Scheme of Intellectual

Perry's scheme contains nine positions, with the last three being various level

## DUALISM

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*Surviving the walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and fearing no evil.*



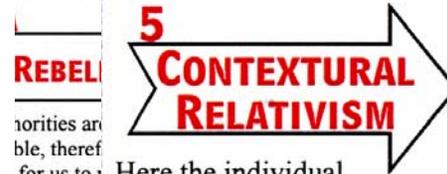
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## MULTIPLICITY

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Ambiguity exists in at least some realms of knowledge (sociology or politics, perhaps, but rarely math, physics, or biology) but this is a function of the particular professional expertise or a lack of research on the subject – *some have certainty.*



Authorities are not absolute, therefore for us to be independent. But, effective; the sense or personal experience supported on.

## PLAYING THE GAME

Knowing that authorities still have the right to give us answers to find the authorities if we tell them what they want to hear that will be "right" common sense being independent, as well as being able to get back to the authorities.

# RELATIVISM

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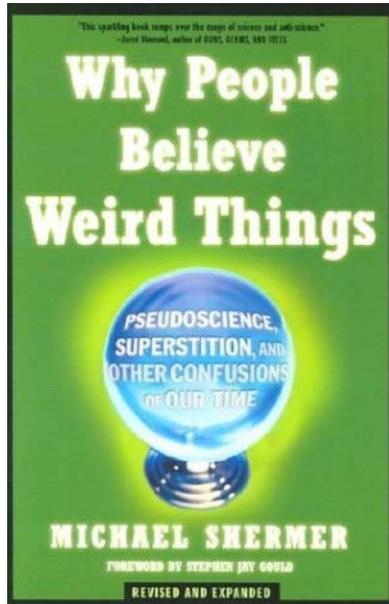


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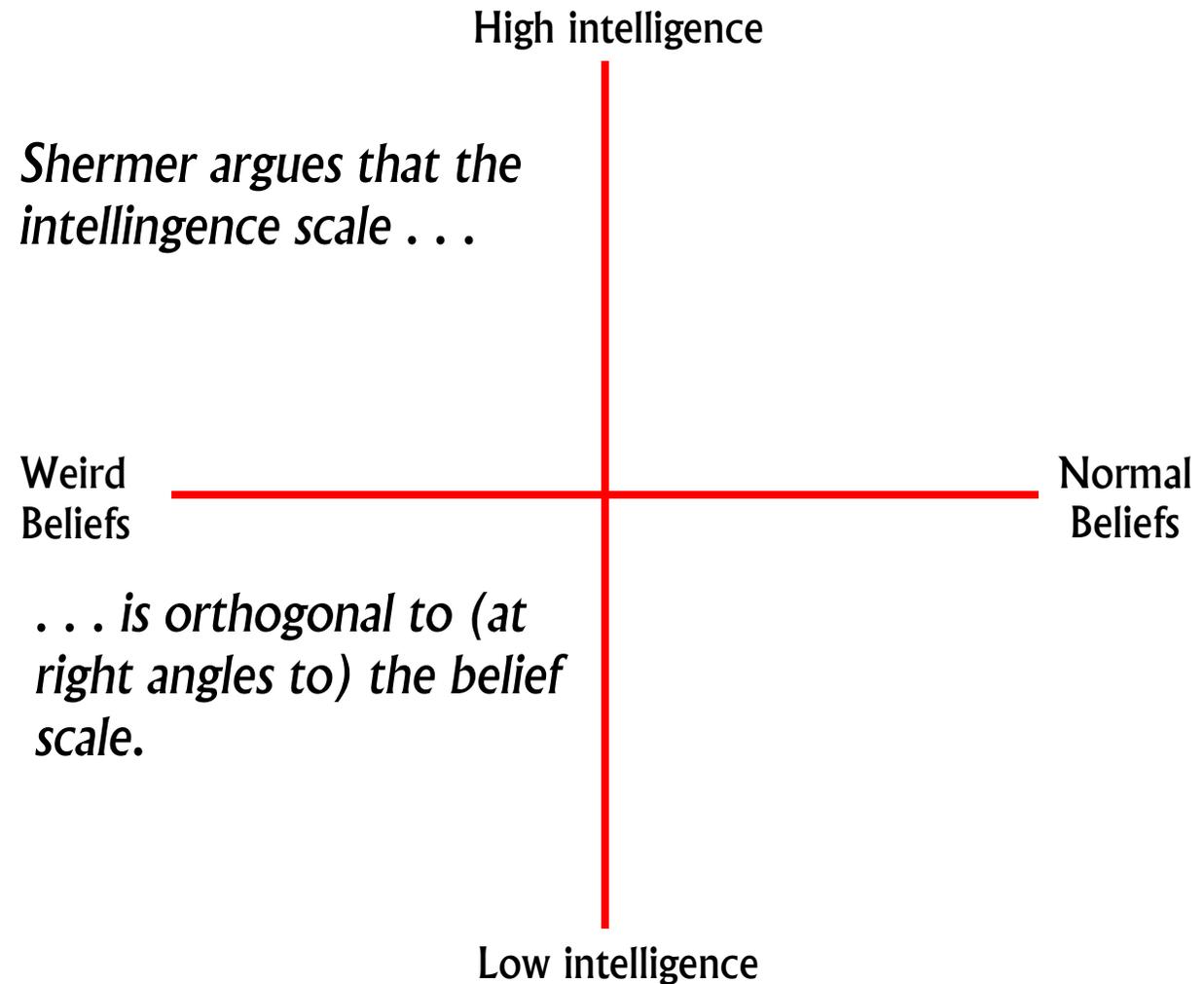
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# **Characteristics of Commitment Positions 7-9**



# Commitment Does Not Assure Being Right

What your commit to is not based on your intelligence.



# **Positions 7-9**

**One of William Perry's great strengths was the ability to listen to people with compassion. In his book he lets people speak for themselves.**

**The following quotes represent people at positions 7, 8, and 9.**

Positions 7, 8, and 9

# Commitment

Stage 7

**“There are so many values you can’t possibly line up all of them. Maybe what you do is pick out one, or two, or three, after a while. It’s not a fast thing. It’s slow. But you pick out something that you kind of like after a while, rather than trying to do what you see is being liked. I mean, you come here, and you get a total view of everything, and you see a whole lot of values. I mean you’re confronted with them.”**

# Alternative to Fundamentalism

## A Psychological Analysis of Fundamentalism

*After exploring the characteristics of fundamentalist belief, Freeman lists the beliefs and practices that emerge when one grows beyond fundamentalisms (into Perry stages 7, 8, and 9). She says it is not necessary to abandon all personal faith and beliefs in order to be tolerant of others. The majority of the followers in any of the world's religions are able to hold a strong personal belief and not feel threatened that others hold different beliefs.*



Anitra Lenore Freeman

- **A trust that one can "figure things out," along with a willingness to learn from others and to change one's mind.**
- **A faith that whatever the fluctuations in life and society, things can and will get better. A feeling of personal responsibility and resolve to make it so.**

Positions 7, 8, and 9

# Commitment

Stage 8 - Student experiences implications of commitment, and explores issues of responsibility.

**“What you have to do is set up a set of rules for yourself that you’re going to live by, . . . . You can’t lose your self respect. . . . You have to operate within a certain set or rules, a certain set of principles, or, or you’re going to lose you self respect.”**

# Alternative to Fundamentalism

## A Psychological Analysis of Fundamentalism

- **A spiritual epiphany, with a new faith that one's relationship with God is not conditional on "perfect" faith or behavior, that it can grow and change.**
- **Free social and intellectual interaction with others, beyond -- or even without -- evangelism.**
- **Relationships with "non-believers" who become emotionally valued.**



Anitra Lenore Freeman

Positions 7, 8, and 9

# Commitment

Stage 9 Student realizes commitment is an ongoing, unfolding, evolving activity

**“You can’t let go of your own standards, but you can’t really afford to look down on anyone who has a different – I won’t say lower anymore – a different set of standards. Perhaps it isn’t tolerance, perhaps it’s just awareness of the fact that that’s the way it should be, if it isn’t.”**

# Alternative to Fundamentalism

## A Psychological Analysis of Fundamentalism

- **A tolerance -- even enjoyment -- of ambiguity and diverse beliefs. One can cheerfully live with the fact that one's neighbor on one side believes that his little blue pickup truck is God and one's neighbor on the other side doesn't believe in God at all, and feel no compulsion to convert either of them. One is not frightened to question one's faith or explore alternatives.**
- **A strengthened self-esteem, with the loss of the need for others to be Wrong.**
- **An unconditional self-esteem and (usually in consequence) an unconditional love of others.**



Anitra Lenore Freeman

*Positions 7, 8, and 9*

**Commitment**

**Tolerance**

**Humility**

**Compassion**

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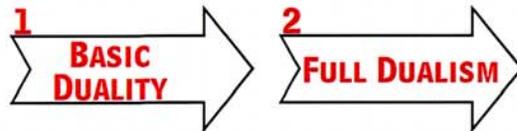
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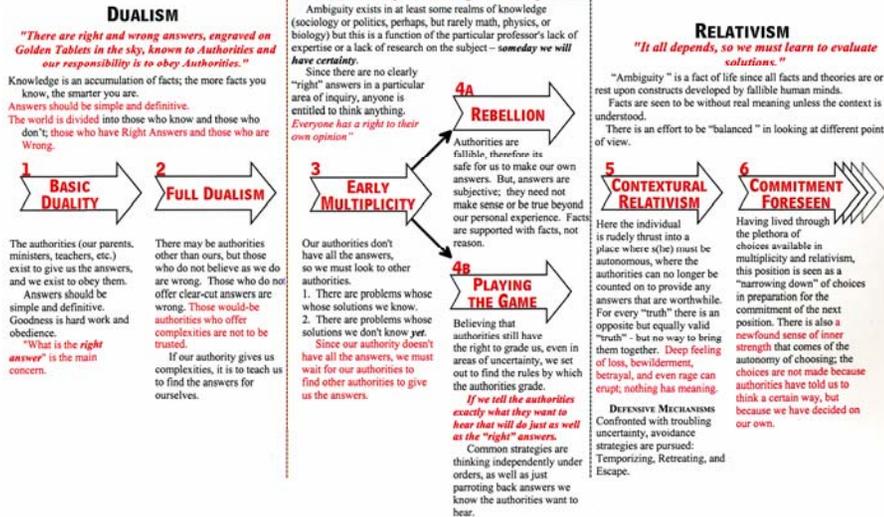
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# Some Feature of Perry's Scheme

- We can be in different positions in different parts of our life: academic, social, religious, sports, etc.
- When we are in a new situation with new rules and/or new knowledge we typically return to earlier strategies for coping.

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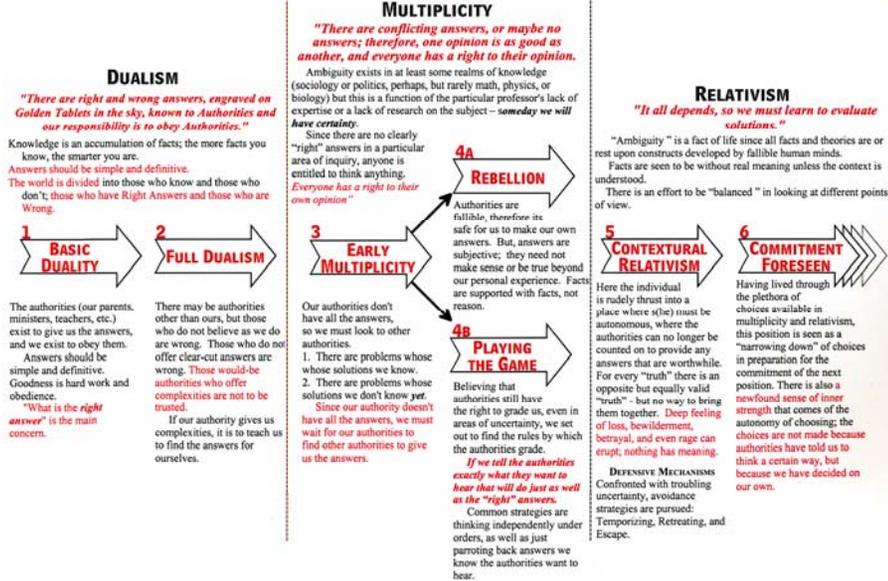
# What Can We Do With This Knowledge of A Person's (Our Own) Ethical and Intellectual Development ?

How does a person's position equip them to deal with:

- Ambiguity?
- Novelty?
- Complexity and subtlety?
- Ability to work collaboratively with others?

## William Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development

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# Question

At what Perry level have most of your classes been taught?

## Dualism

Levels 1 and 2

## Multiplicity

Levels 3 and 4

## Relativism

Levels 5

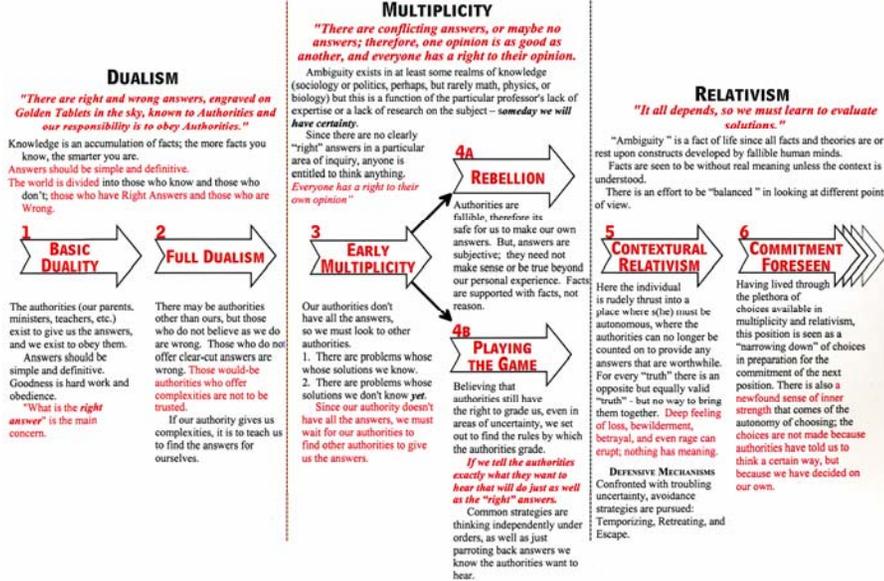
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# Statement

Most of education is about being told what to believe – what is 'true'

Therefore, without great effort we cannot free ourselves from the shackles of authority . . .

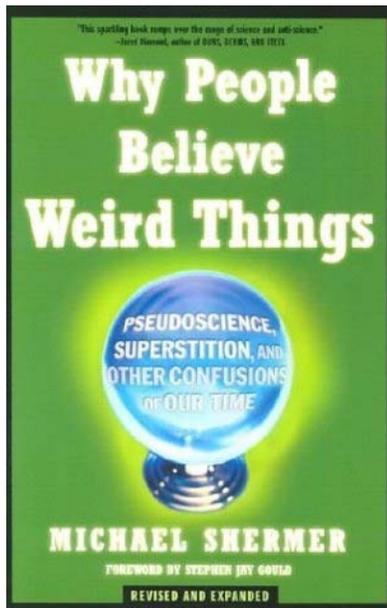
And think for ourselves.

Change on our own seems to be very difficult for us to do, and individuals, let alone nations are rarely up to it.

Change usually become possible only when the catastrophic consequences of our behavior become so overwhelming that we have no choice.

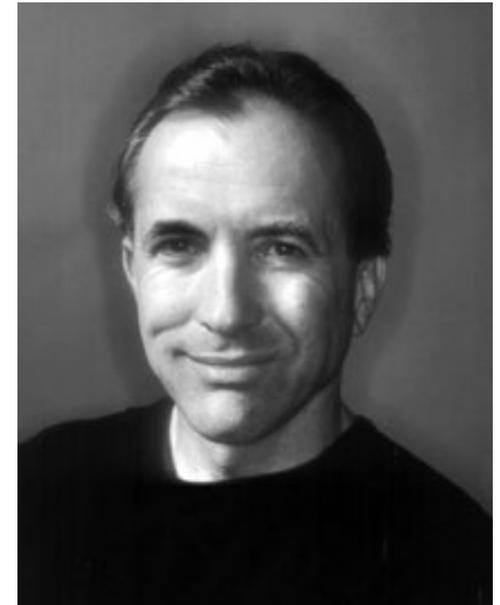
We either change, or we die  
(although along the way there is usually a dark night of the soul).

**Epidemics of  
Accusations: Witch  
Crazes, Recovered Memories,  
and other Self-Organizing  
positive feedback loops**



# *What is Weird?*

Unfortunately, there is no formal definition of a weird thing that most people can agree upon, because it depends so much on the particular claim being made in the context of the knowledge base that surrounds it, and the individual community proclaiming it.



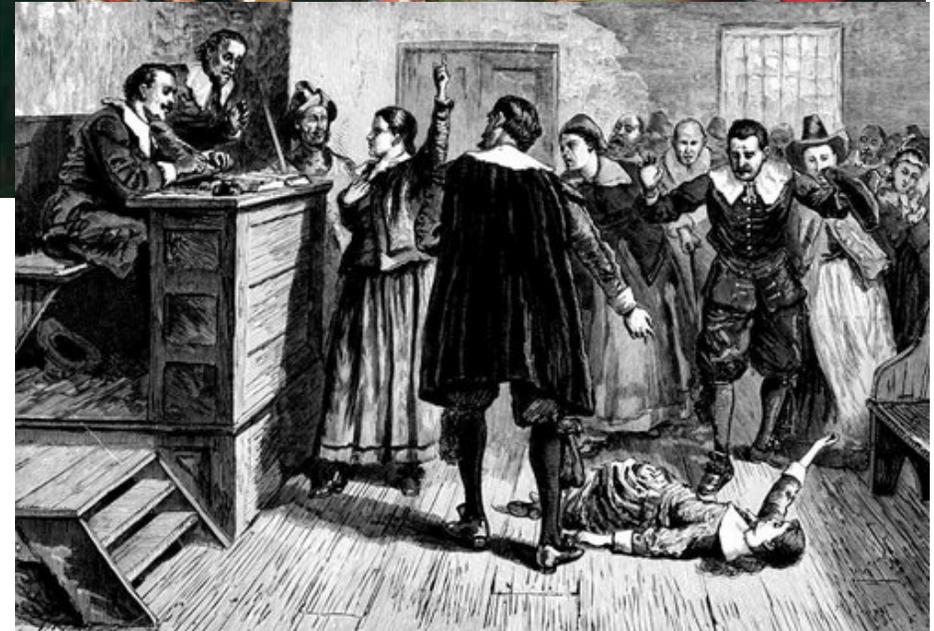
One person's weird belief might be another's normal theory, and a weird belief at one time might subsequently become normal.

What Shermer means by a weird thing:

1. A claim unaccepted by most people in that particular field of study.
2. A claim that is either logically impossible or highly unlikely, and/or
3. A claim for which the evidence is largely anecdotal and uncorroborated.

*Periodically in history there are convulsions of hysteria . . .*

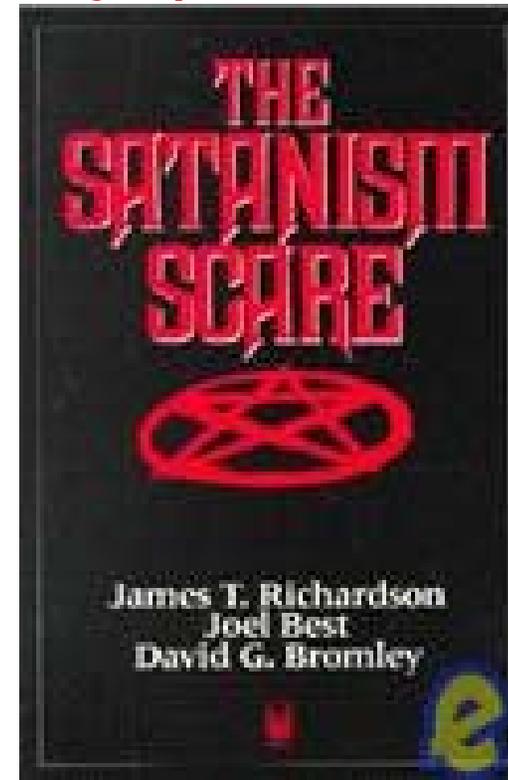
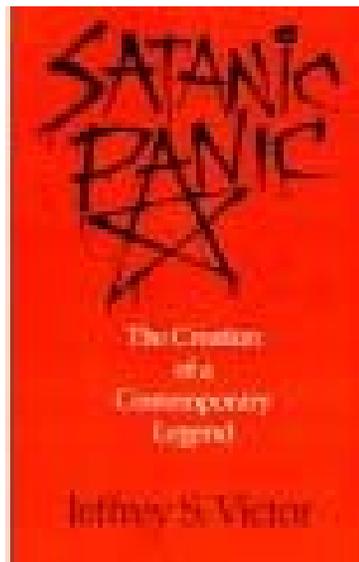
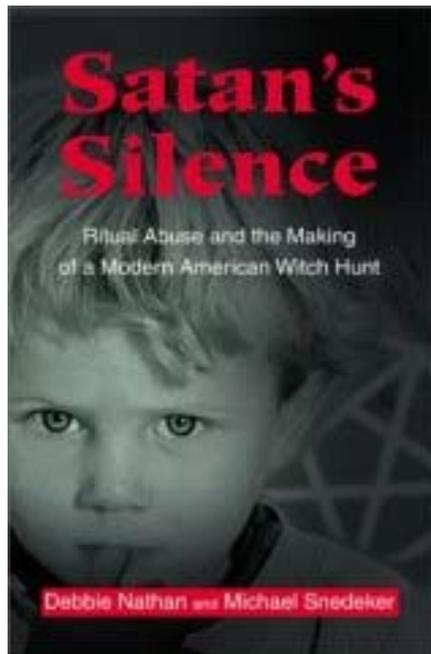
Witch Crazes . . .



*Periodically in history there are convulsions of hysteria . . .*

Witch Crazes . . .

Satanic panics . . .



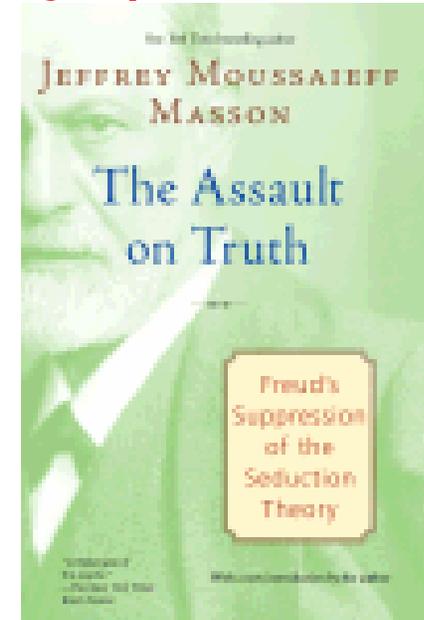
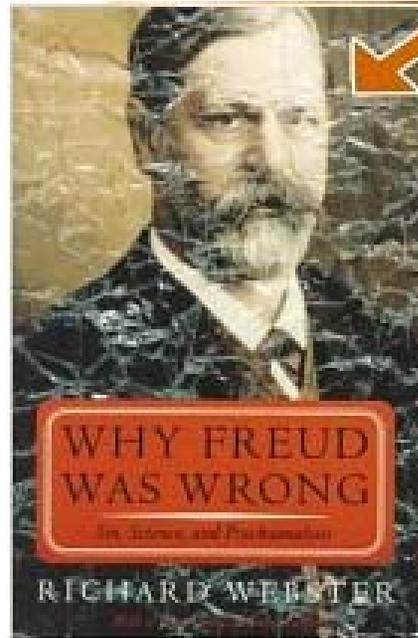
*During the 1980's thousands of satanic cults were believed to be operating in secrecy throughout America, sacrificing and mutilating animals, sexually abusing children, and practicing Satanic rituals*

*Periodically in history there are convulsions of hysteria . . .*

Witch Crazes . . .

Satanic panics . . .

Recovered memory  
movement . . .



*Recovered memories are alleged memories of childhood sexual abuse repressed by the victims but recalled decades later through use of special therapeutic techniques, including suggestive questioning, hypnosis, hypnotic age–regression, visualization, sodium amytal (“truth serum”) injections, and dream interpretations . . . Absent at the beginning of therapy, memories of childhood sexual abuse are soon created through weeks and months of applying the special therapeutic techniques. Then names are named – father, mother, grandfather, uncle, brother, friends of father, and son on. . .*

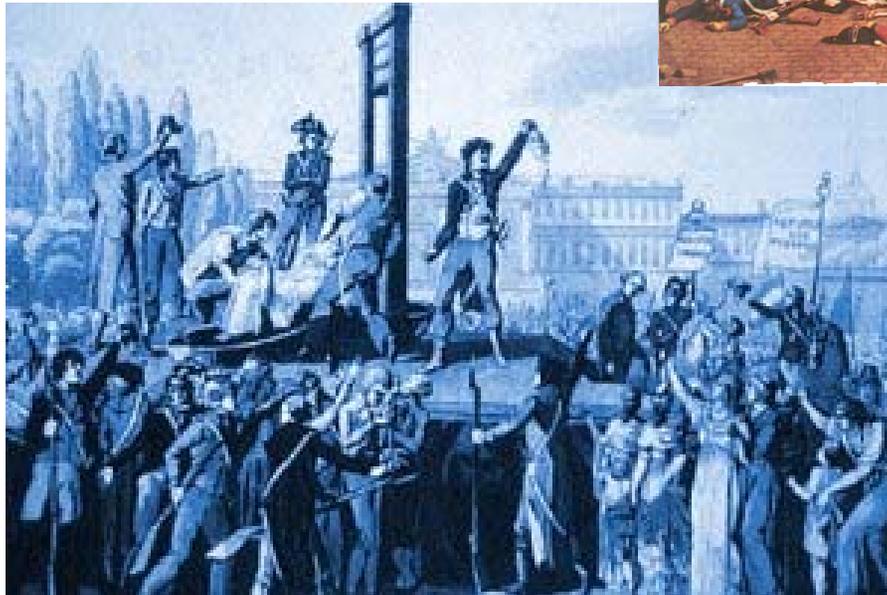
*Periodically in history there are convulsions of hysteria . . .*

Witch Crazes . . .

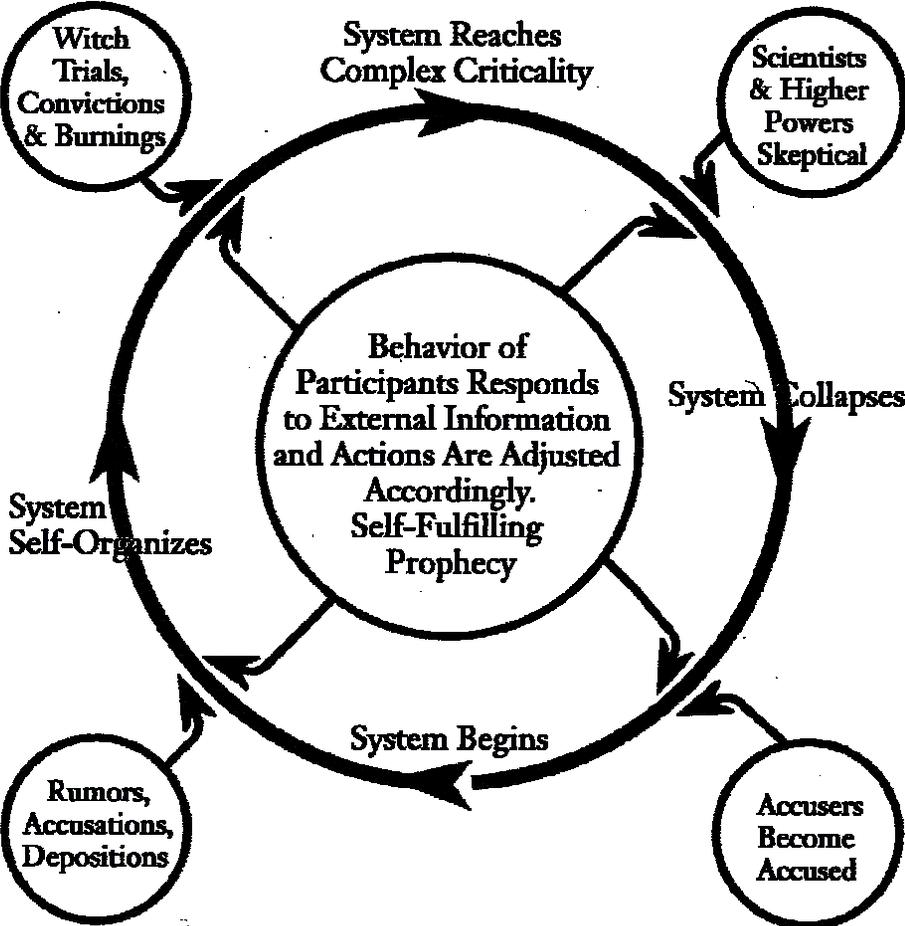
Satanic panics . . .

Recovered memory  
movement . . .

French Revolution.



Shermer explains these in terms of self-organizing systems where positive feedbacks drive the system forward until it reaches a frenzied climax, at which point it collapses.

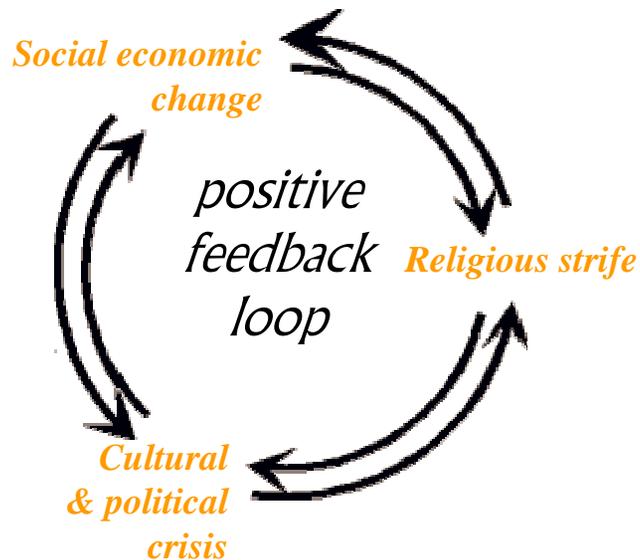


**FIGURE 10:**  
Witch craze feedback loop.

# The Witch Craze (and other Epidemic) Feedback Loops

## Extrinsic Feedback Loop

Background of rising  
psychic/emotional energy

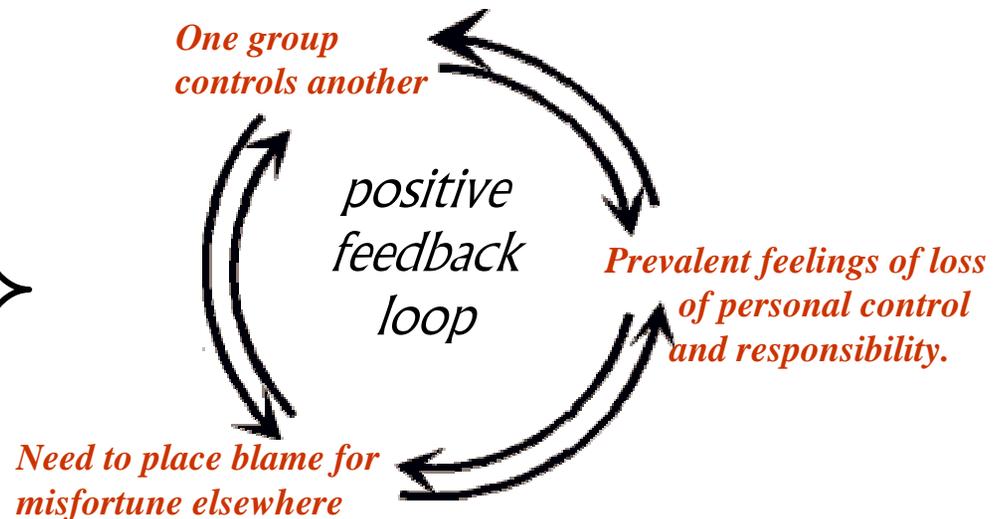


All increase 'r'

Rising anxiety needing to  
be dissipated

## Intrinsic Feedback Loop

Specific ways the energy is  
released



The anxiety needs a specific focus  
for its energy, a scapegoat

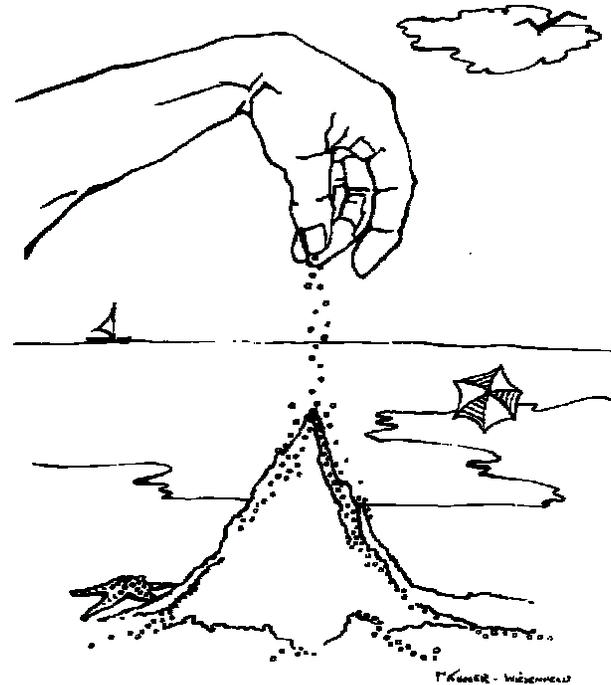
Perry Levels 1, 2, or 3

*There are right and wrong answers known to  
authorities and our responsibility is to obey them;  
i.e. an abdication of personal responsibility*

## Driving the Cycles

*Theological imaginations, ecclesiastical power, scapegoating, the decline of magic the rise of formal religion, interpersonal conflicts, misogyny, gender politics, and possibly even psychedelic drugs were all, to a lesser or greater degree, components of the feedback loop.*

*They all either fed into or out of the system, driving it forward.*



## *The Conditions Favoring Epidemics*

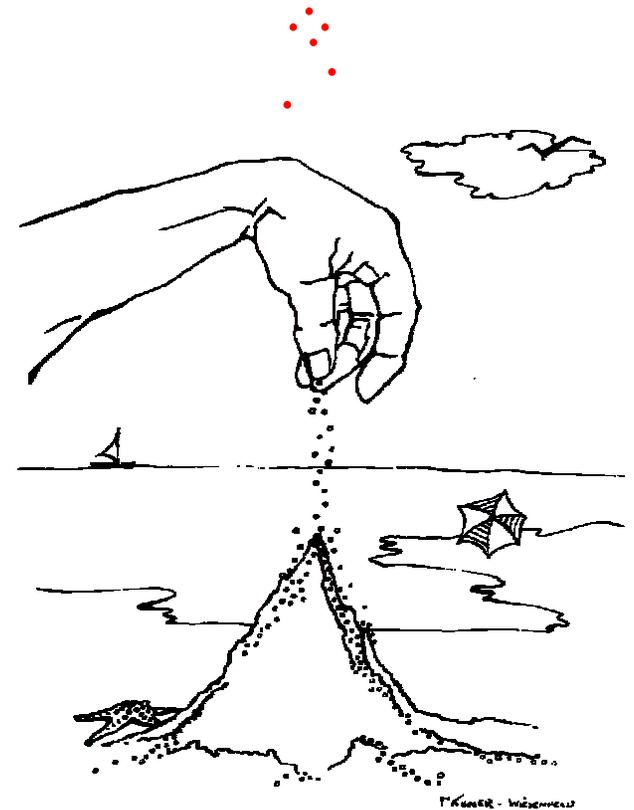
*The motive . . . is repeated historically from century to century as a shunt for personal responsibility – fob off your problems on the nearest enemy, the more evil the better.*

*And who fits the bill better than Satan himself, along with his female co-conspirator, the witch.*

*“Perhaps no other form of crime in history has been a better index to social disruption and change, for outbreaks of witchcraft mania have generally taken place in societies which are experiencing a shift of religious focus – societies, we would say, confronting a relocation of boundaries.*

*Erickson*

*Kai*

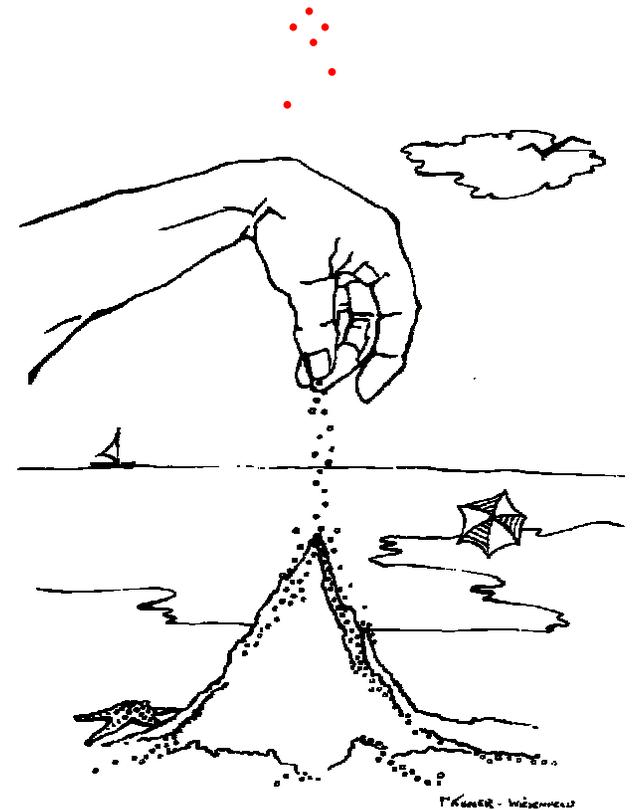


## The Conditions Favoring Epidemics

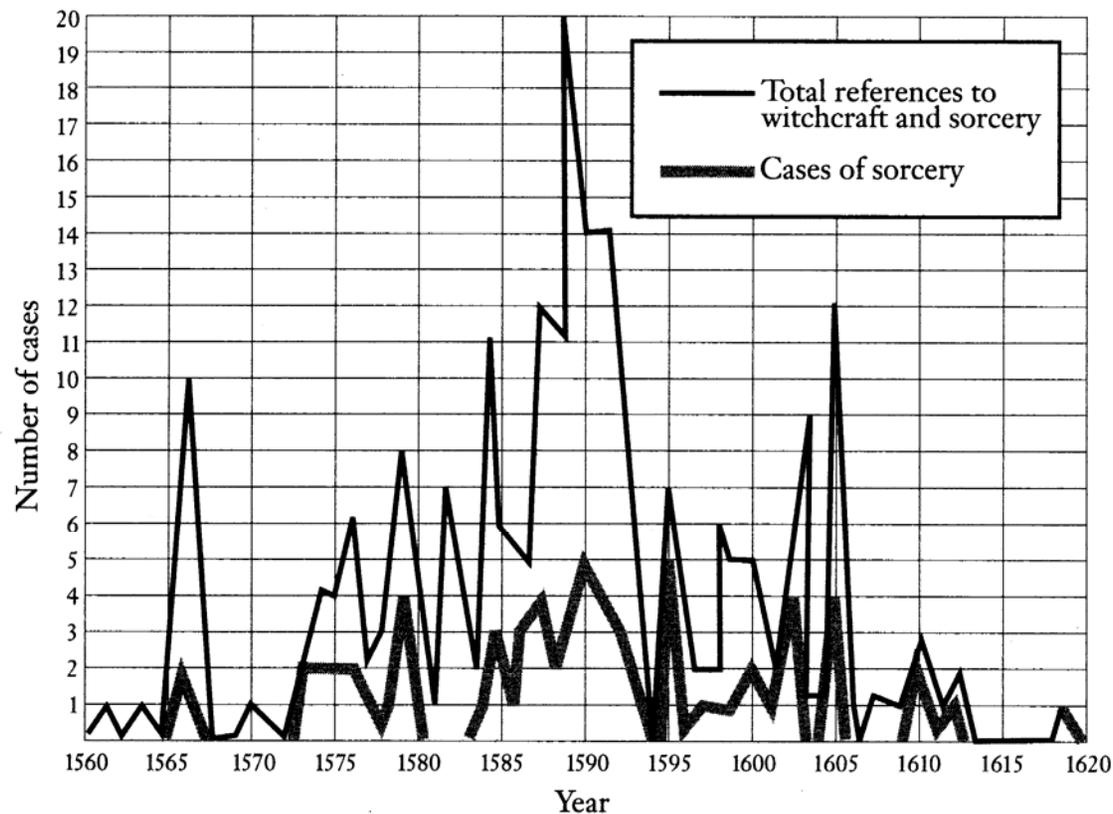
*“The principle result of the witch-hunt system was that the poor came to believe that they were being victimized by witches and devils instead of princes and popes.*

*Did your roof leak, your cow abort,  
your oats wither, your wine go sour,  
your head ache, your baby die? It  
was the work of the witches.*

*Preoccupied with the fantastic  
activities of these demons, the  
distraught, alienated, pauperized  
masses blamed the rampant Devil  
instead of the corrupt clergy, and the  
rapacious nobility.” Marvin  
Harris*



*“History’s final pathways are determined by the functions of any given moment interacting with the intentions that came before.”*



**FIGURE 11:** Accusations of witchcraft at ecclesiastical courts, England, 1560–1620. [From Macfarlane 1970.]

## Driving the Cycles

A few claims of ritual abuse are fed into the system through word-of-mouth.

An individual is accused of being in league with the devil, and denies the accusation.

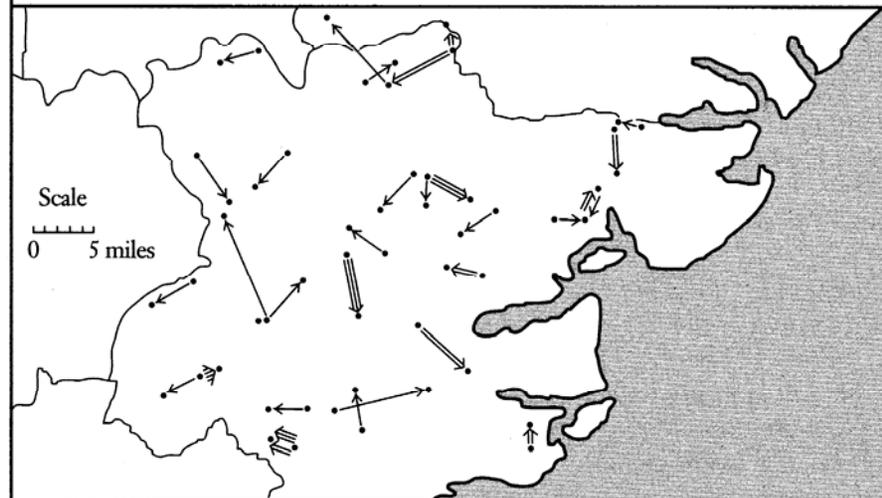
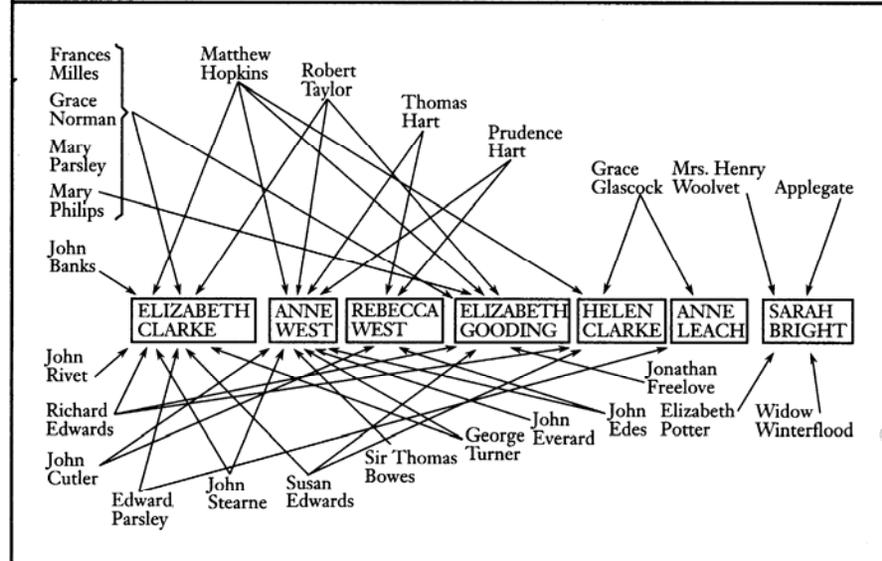
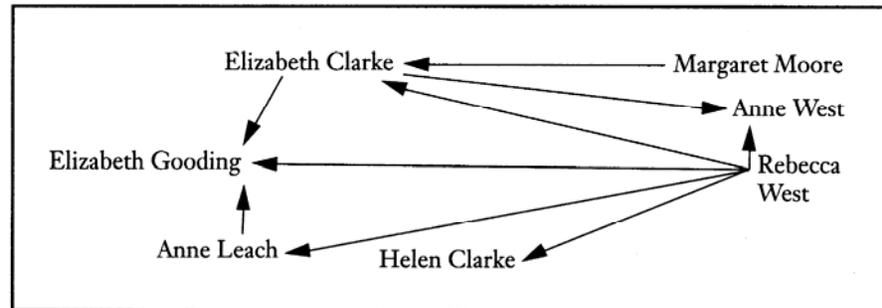
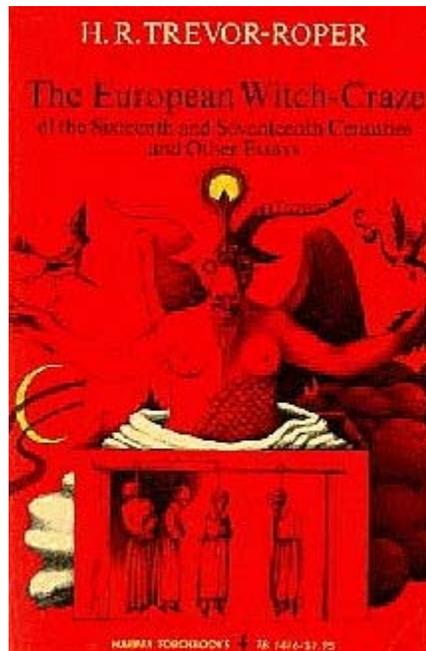
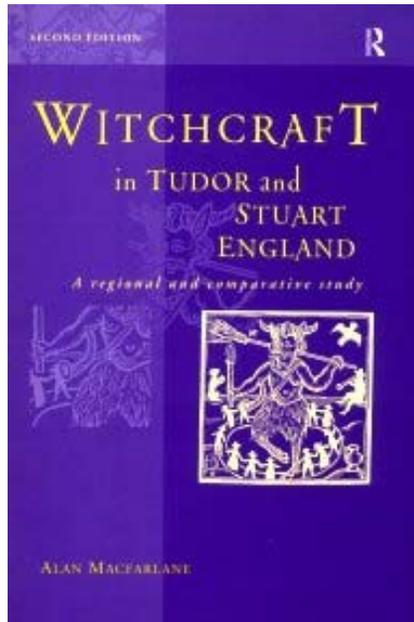
The denial serves as proof of guilt, as does silence, or confession.

*The feedback loop is now in place*

The witch or Satanic ritual child abuser must name accomplices to the crime.

The system grows in complexity as gossip or the media increase the amount and flow of information.

Witch after witch is burned and abuser after abuser is jailed, until the system reaches criticality and finally collapses under changing social conditions and pressures.



# Self organizing steps

During normal conditions general stress is low, anxiety is dispersed, no fringe groups (or not recognized) to focus on . . .



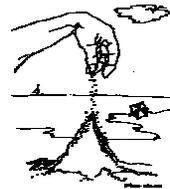
Sand dribbles randomly – no chance to build sand piles.



Positive feed back loop begins; rumors, accusations, depositions. The density of accusations drives the feedback loop.



Sand dribbles begin to concentrate; pile begins to accumulate

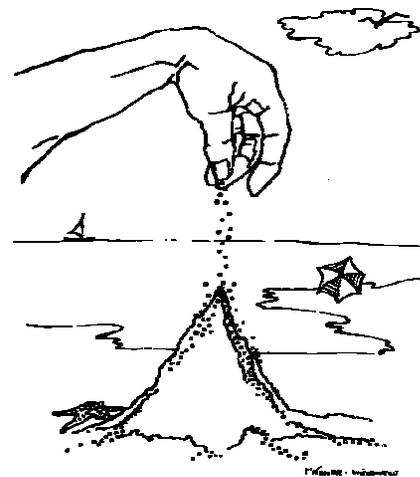


Trigger

Self organization: witch trials, convictions, burnings; self fulfilling prophecies

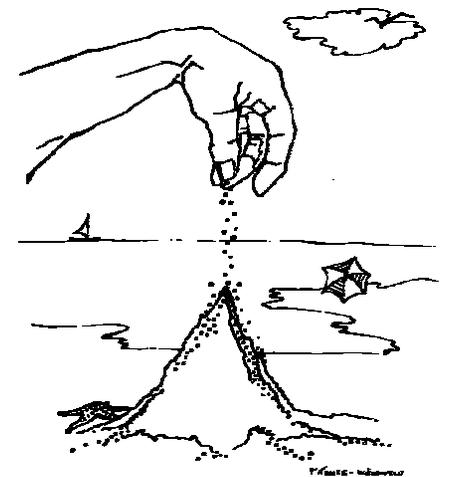


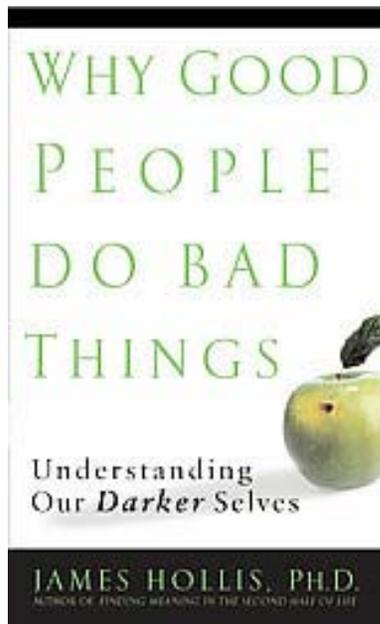
Avalanches building sandpile in size, leading to even larger avalanches



Critical Level: negative feedback begins to intercede: innocents begin to fight back through legal or other means; accusers become accused, skeptics begin to voice doubts

Sand pile collapses

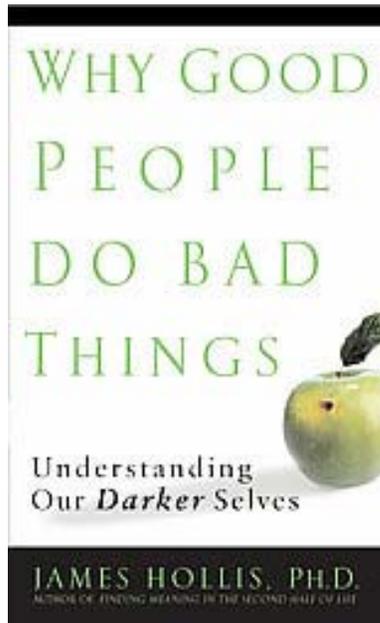




**P 132**



"Underneath the civilizing fantasies of any institution lie the archaic issues of anxiety management and self interest. When these two threats are activated, institutions, like individuals, tend to regress and abandon their founding vision. Such regression leads to our multiform fundamentalisms, because all fundamentalisms are driven by fear, and each is captive to some ideology that is worshiped without doubt, for it promises to deliver them from what they fear."



**P 132**



No fundamentalism serves evil consciously, but in its inability to critique itself, fundamentalists create the monsters of history – the pogroms, the inquisitions, the persecutions, and the violence that is the silent companion of faithful fervor.