

## Conspiracy Theories – 4: Collectivism

[For the first three instalments of this series, see [here](#).]

Have you heard the one about light bulbs? The secret of everlasting light bulbs has been known for decades but is being **suppressed** by the manufacturers of electrical goods because they would be ruined if people did not continually have to buy new bulbs. But how do they enforce this policy among themselves, and how do they prevent researchers (including their own, who are presumably dupes wasting their lives tinkering with an obsolete technology) from rediscovering the principle?

Now give the story a more sinister turn. The myth relies on conspiracy. Even if an individual firm would seize avidly the opportunity created by the everlasting light bulb, the manufacturers would establish a cartel to see that our inventor was assassinated or otherwise removed from the scene.

This urban myth is one of a **class** of conspiracy theories about evil capitalists. They are widely believed. And yet the people who believe them – and make real-life decisions on the assumption that they are true – nevertheless fail to wonder about even the most elementary implications of their own theory. For instance, how does the conspiracy get transmitted to the next generation? There must come a point at which a conspirator's child, or a talented young executive about to be promoted from Dupe to Conspirator, is taken aside and told the dirty secret: "until now you have believed that we make our living by making a positive contribution to society, but in fact we are secretly parasites and murderers". What happens to those who are appalled by the revelation and want nothing to do with the conspiracy? Can all light bulb manufacturers be relied upon to murder their own children if they suspect they may be about to flirt with environmentalism, or with integrity? What happens to manufacturers who are going bankrupt anyway and so have nothing more to gain from the conspiracy, but could be saved by capitalising on the secret? If the conspiracy theory is true, we cannot directly observe how the conspirators deal with such dramatic problems, but we do know that they must be doing so: the logic of the situation dictates that a long-lasting conspiracy must include some method of converting dupes to conspirators. And this method must be extremely reliable despite the fact that it involves people suddenly and radically altering the moral values on which they base their

lives.

But the believers in such theories just don't care. **We have remarked** that one characteristic of conspiracy theories is that their holders apply them very selectively to explain away some aspects of the world that they do not like. They are uninterested in any wider consequences that their theory would have if it were true. In other words, they fail to take their own theory seriously as an account of what is happening in the world.

It is therefore no accident that conspiracy-theoretic ways of thinking are always associated with collectivist fantasies of one sort or another. For Marxists, the 'ruling class' has many of the attributes of a *person* – a devious, dangerous person capable of having inherent 'interests' and secret motives and taking coherent actions to further them. Likewise, Nazis and other antisemites conceive of The Jews (or often, tellingly, 'The Jew') as being such an entity, while for many Libertarians The State plays this role. If the conspiracy theorists can manage to think entirely in terms of this monstrous Person and its evil agenda, then they never have to think about the issues which make all conspiracy theories ludicrously flawed when taken seriously – issues such as how the conspirators are supposed to communicate, agree upon their evil plans, deal with dissenters, launder the funds needed to pay the assassins, groom a new generation to take over in due course, fool and control the dupes, distribute the spoils and so on, all while plausibly pretending that all their overt actions have some entirely different purpose.

Some ideologies have become notorious for the conspiracy theories that they contain. So when we find people who earnestly believe the light bulb myth, we may well enquire whether they are (say) socialists, and if so, we may guess that this explains their gullibility in regard to the economics of electrical technology. Given our analysis here, though, it is possible that the true explanation goes in the other direction. It may be that people are attracted to collectivist ideologies (including **Libertarian versions of statism**) because they want to believe a conspiracy theory and because the collectivist ideology allows them to disregard its flaws, rather than vice versa.

## Part 5

Sat, 03/20/2004 - 18:32 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

### Why do they bother?

*issues such as how the conspirators are supposed to communicate, agree upon their evil plans, deal with dissenters, launder the funds needed to pay the assassins, groom a new generation to take over in due course, fool and control the dupes, distribute the spoils and so on, all while plausibly pretending that all their overt actions have some entirely different purpose*

And they have to work full time on their ostensible jobs too. And

those researchers: they have to pay them anyway, so they could be paying them to do real profitable research instead! Why don't they? The whole thing's crazy.

by a reader on Mon, 03/22/2004 - 04:50 | [reply](#)

## Conspirators

I have come to the conclusion, um theory, that most and maybe all conspiracy theories depend on the 'juicy gossip' syndrome, just bigger and more full of lies. Conspiracy theories are patently nonsense and otherwise they would have no life. Most of the people, conspirators, that pass them on are not convinced of their truth themselves, but pass them on because they would like to believe them, or some choice portion of them. Or, they would just like to stir up some trouble and controversy. Or, they have nothing better to do and no one would talk to them without their conspiracy gossip.

Conspiracy theories are tall tales that are told on the basis that you can trust no one, which itself is untrue. Make up a wild alternate scenario to what actually happened. Talk trash and nonsense in a conspiratorial tone. Psst, pass it on, because the conspirator has nothing better to do. Be untrustworthy or gullible or both, but blame it on the wild conspiracy rumor. Otherwise the person and their willing confidants might have to stick with truth.

Conspiracy theories would quickly fade away if it were not for the conspirators who perpetuate them.

by a reader on Tue, 03/23/2004 - 23:32 | [reply](#)

## Conspiracy Theories Are Elementary School BS - Tabloids Paradise

It is elementary... Conspiracy Theories are just a quick way to make people question a particular person or party. If someone wants to find fault with a particular person or party to turn others against them, they think of ways they are trying to harm everyone... That is how most gossip starts in high school, elementary school, work places etc.... Democrats want to find fault with the Republicans... It is that simple.. But think about it, if Clinton had been elected, I am sure we, Republicans could somehow blame Clinton for the 911 attacks... perhaps linked to Monica Lewinsky too! Perhaps Hilary and Monica were having an affair and had to cover it up... Believe me.. If we tried hard enough.. we COULD link them somehow.. It is all Tabloid BS to me..

by gadarInbabe on Sat, 08/20/2005 - 22:53 | [reply](#)

## every corporation is a conspi

every corporation is a conspiracy.

every rock band is a conspiracy.

every plot to bomb a building is a conspiracy.

people working together - that's all a conspiracy is. nobody knows anything about anything anyone is doing; therefore every group's operations are to a large degree secret. most public operations of groups are uninteresting to others anyway. therefore either every group is a conspiracy or conspiracy is a meaningless term.

the author of this site is tilting at windmills. there is no such thing as a "conspiracy theorist". people are exposed to different information and draw different conclusions based on that information and their own biases. the only thing protecting us is our ability to assess the quality of the information we take in and our ability to suppress or eliminate our biases. better information inevitably precedes better conclusions about the true nature of things. there is better information to be had about 9-11 than what most have read. those who have read it and have incorporated it into their knowledge framework will see that all roads of inquiry lead to a small nest of neocons who obviously engineered 9-11 and the iraq/afghanistan mess. we who know this are not "conspiracy theorists"!

i am sussing that the implicit message of this website is: "if you think Bush was behind 9-11, you're a CONSPIRACY THEORIST and here's what's wrong with you." If the author were describing inane arguments against evolution, perhaps I would have understood. but I myself have done research on 9-11 and know what I know to be corroborated by FACTS, some of which I have observed firsthand  ground zero or through logical fallacies i discovered in the media myself.

Let me break it down for you:

**BUSH AND HIS TEAM WERE BEHIND 9-11.  
BELIEVING THAT DOES NOT MAKE ME CRAZY.**

have you considered that by your definition of "conspiracy theorists" it's the mainstream media that are the REAL conspiracy theorists by pointing the finger at bin Laden and his supposed "gang of 19" without a shred of evidence?

-j

by the definition on Sat, 12/03/2005 - 17:58 | [reply](#)

## **a hoax?**

Why did bin Laden admit it?

by a reader on Sat, 01/21/2006 - 00:54 | [reply](#)

## **You don't have to be crazy but it helps**

"BUSH AND HIS TEAM WERE BEHIND 9-11.  
BELIEVING THAT DOES NOT MAKE ME CRAZY"  
erm, Yes it does. OK maybe not crazy but certainly deluded or

stupid.

The insanity of people who believe in 9/11 conspiracy theory is incredible to behold. The way they can hold mutually incompatible theories in their heads at the same time is truly impressive. I visited a couple of sites and in less than ten minutes of looking managed to find these two examples of "evidence" on the same sight.

1 The planes that crashed into the twin towers were "remote controlled" from a secret command centre operated by Dick Cheney.

OK you may say that in itself is nuts. Put aside the calls from those onboard or indeed what truly happened to all the passengers because this same site goes on to claim

2 The FBI failed to investigate Mohammed Atta because they were instructed not to by lawyers acting for the administration.

To all 9/11 conspiracy theorists out there, please think this through and please be consistent. Either there were hijackers out there being protected by the evil lawyers and they crashed the plane OR the planes were remote controlled by Cheney and the passengers killed off separately after making their last calls. You cannot have both!

by RK on Thu, 06/29/2006 - 13:20 | [reply](#)

## 9/11 denial

9-11 Conspiracy Websites are apt to point out that never in world history has a plane brought down a building by airplanes but go on to state that the World Trade center buildings were brought down by a controlled demolition using thermite. So when in world history has thermite ever been used in a controlled demolition? It could probably be done, but the fact that it hasn't happened before is completely irrelevant to a reasonable discussion. The tin foil hat brigade themselves don't take their theories seriously. So no plane hit the Pentagon you say? How did the 5 light posts and generator get moved? Oh they were planted. What about the DNA tests, oh, I see, the FBI, CIA, FAA, NTSB, Military, pentagon employees, fire department, coroner, FEMA, police, NSA, they are all in on it too? What happened to the original plane? Were the passengers killed or are they coconspirators? Wouldn't the coconspirators be worried about eye witnesses to the missile attack and workers at the pentagon, or FAA inspectors that weren't in on the plot leaking what they actually saw? Wouldn't it have been easier just to use a remote controlled plane like they did with the World Trade center towers? Popular Science magazine disagrees with the theories, that's because they are yellow journalists as a front for the CIA. The Structural Engineering Institute of the American Society of Civil Engineers disputes your claims? That's because they are in on it too! So is the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, the National Fire Protection Association, The American Institute of Steel Construction, the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, the Structural Engineers Association of New York. Not a single structural engineer

in the United States believe the world trade centers believe the world trade center was brought down by controlled demolition but you know the truth, you've done your research on the web. Boy ain't you smart! How far down the rabbit hole do you want to go, if you believe your own theory, consider the implications. Are the passengers still alive as well as the so called hijackers? How do "they" keep them quiet? It's absurd.

by random on Sat, 09/23/2006 - 04:03 | [reply](#)

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