

Look out – David Icke’s about...



David Icke turned up on BBC1's "This Week", this week, discussing conspiracy theories, in light of the increasingly inflamed rhetoric surrounding the forthcoming referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. Senior figures on both sides of the argument have been accusing their opponents of peddling conspiracy theories, to scare the public into voting with them.

Certainly, conspiracy theories are alive and well - and David Icke is at least as popular as he has ever been. He continues to sell out some of the UK's most prestigious entertainment spots - such as London's Shepherd's Bush and the O2 arena, and the Manchester Apollo. Some of his one-man gigs have exceeded ten hours in length.

There is evidently a strong, universal desire to put stock in conspiracy theories - whether it is the assassination of JFK, the moon landings, 9/11, or indeed, the Illuminati, which is considered by some to be a common thread that links many of these disparate historical events together.

Icke's fellow panelists on "This Week" - arbitrated as usual by Andrew Neil - were Labour MP Liz Kendall, and former Tory MP, Michael Portillo. Both made points that I tend to agree with. Kendall suggested that conspiracy theories are a comfort to those who believe in them, because they require a high level of organisation, and therefore bring meaning to what would otherwise be a chaotic world.

Portillo made the assertion that it is intellectually lazy to believe in conspiracy theories, because they offer a neat explanation for events that are readily appreciable, which fail to take into account the true substance of what is going on. This would include the regional politics, the geopolitics, culture, and the historical context in which the events have taken place.

Another good reason to be skeptical of conspiracy theories was voiced by William of Ockham who, Wikipedia tells me, was "an English Franciscan friar and scholastic philosopher and

theologian". His straightforward logical principle stated that: "Among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assertions should be selected".

Let's apply this to the major conspiracy theory of recent times: 9/11.

There is a choice here. You can believe that the twin towers were annihilated by jihadists in the grip of a death cult, promoted by the Saudi Wahhabist interpretation of Islam, and masterminded by Osama bin Laden, a fiercely intelligent malign critic of the West, who envisaged a way in which he could set off a chain reaction that would work to undermine western influence on the world stage, and damage the US economy. If you believe this, you also believe that the US government had no knowledge that the attacks were going to take place.

Option 2: You believe that the Bush administration either masterminded the attacks - or failed to prevent them, knowing they were going to happen - to give it a pretext to finish what Bush senior started, and topple Saddam Hussein, and take control of Iraq's oil fields.

If you believe this last option, and you are one of around fifteen percent of people worldwide who believe 9/11 was an "inside job", you may also believe that the CIA sabotaged the World Trade Centre with charges comprised of nano-thermite, which could be relied upon to melt through the structural support of the buildings - including building 7 - making it look like the terrorist attacks had brought them down, when in fact they did not.

Furthermore, if you believe 9/11 was an inside job, you would have to reconcile the fact that the Bush administration hired Saudi terrorists to smash up the buildings, despite the fact that it wanted desperately to frame Saddam Hussein for the outrage. That really doesn't make any sense.

And you would have to conclude that Option 2 fails Occam's Razor, when compared with Option 1.

Every conspiracy theory that I have ever heard promoted by David Icke fails Occam's Razor. That is to say, the non-conspiracy version of events is simpler, more straightforward, and fits with the historical context in which the events took place.

Let's look at the daddy of them all: the Illuminati.

The theory describes a global network of exalted families - such as the Rothschilds, and the Windsors (the UK royals) - who work with powerful institutions and governments to control aspects of the global economy, and the political landscape, to mold it to their own ends, and to ultimately bring about a new world order - which will look very good for them, and not so great for us.

(And of course, these individuals are shape-shifting lizards from Alpha Centauri. We'll come back to that.)

There is a neat plausibility to the idea (not the bit in brackets).

There is definitely a sense in which the wealthy and the privileged maintain their world hegemony by a deliberate policy of subjugating the vast majority, who are oppressed, and largely disenfranchised.

George Orwell, along with the principled Labour politician, Tony Benn, were of the opinion that the education system is tilted in favour of establishing a social hierarchy, which remains largely inflexible into adulthood. It is not hard to see its effects in the present day: the prime minister of Great Britain is a multi-millionaire, and his Chancellor, George Osborne, is also a multi-millionaire, and the eighteenth in a line of baronets. The probable next prime minister of Great Britain - Boris Johnson - came from a similarly privileged public school background, and the possible next president of the United States is the privileged son of a property tycoon.

So the wealthy, and the privileged, are doing very well - and are indeed shaping the societies in which we live. And in so doing, they *are* subjugating the majority, and promoting their own interests.

Is this proof of the Illuminati?

I would argue it is a natural, entirely predictable product of capitalism. Who needs the Illuminati when you've got an economic system based on a winner-takes-all model, where there is no limit to the accumulation of wealth for those at the top?

Icke and his adherents see the tyranny of the ruling elite over the majority as proof of collusion between powerful institutions, and individuals. In fact, the opposite is true: it is *competition* that drives wealth inequality. Just look at the legacy of Thatcher and Reagan: deregulation of markets and financial institutions. This "hands-off" approach effectively promoted pure capitalism, without checks and balances, making the rich fabulously more wealthy, before they spectacularly crashed the world economy in 2008. And then, who picked up the bill? Ordinary tax payers. Now the rich are wealthier than ever, and the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" is bigger than it has ever been.

You don't need to believe in the Illuminati to believe that the world order is heavily weighted in favour of the rich and powerful.

And if it turns out they really are all interstellar space lizards, it doesn't mean Icke has won the argument. When IS the Queen going to get an independently-verified blood test, anyway?

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