



RESISTING THE FACTS

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The value of knowledge

Knowledge has a great instrumental value – it is needed if we are to **reach our goals**.

Why then do people resist available knowledge?

Complex interaction between **societal** and **individual** factors.

The post-truth era

- **High-choice** information environment (selective exposure)
- Large spread of **unreliable** information
- Declining and polarized **trust** in sources

Knowledge

I know that the Earth is round:

- I **believe** that the Earth is round
- It is **true** that the Earth is round
- I have **reasons** to believe that the Earth is round

Knowledge resistance

The tendency to **resist available evidence** – not drawing the proper conclusion.

Basic forms of evidence:

- **Experiential** (direct perception)
- **Testimonial** (from other people, through language)

The social nature of knowledge

Knowledge requires **trust** – and trust can be manipulated...

Knowledge resistance typically involves resisting testimonial evidence.

Conspiracy theories central!

Motivated reasoning

Reasoning driven **not by accuracy goals** but by other goals – skewed reasoning used to protect a cherished belief.

Politically motivated reasoning: The goal is **identity-protection**. Factual beliefs become a mark of political/cultural identity.

Counteracting?

Societal factors:

- Unreliable information (including disinformation)
- Partisanship and polarization

Individual factors:

- Background knowledge
- Critical reasoning skills
- Accuracy attitudes

The rational animal

- **Argument quality** matters! Explanatory power makes a difference.
- **Correction** works! Not enough to reject the false statement – must also provide the correct answer and a supporting explanation.
- **Respect** and self-affirmation essential! Need to create trust.

Knowledge Resistance:

Causes, Consequences and Cures



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