

The Disintegrated Mind: The Greatest Threat to Human Survival on Earth

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Theme: [History](#)

Like many people who have struggled to understand why human beings are driving the sixth mass extinction event in Earth's history, which now threatens imminent human extinction as well, over many decades I have explored the research and efforts of a great many activists and scholars to secure this understanding. However, with many competing ideas from the fields of politics, economics, sociology and psychology, among others, this understanding has proved elusive. Nevertheless, I have reached an understanding that I find compelling: Human beings are driving the sixth mass extinction event in Earth's history because of the disintegrated nature of the human mind.

While the expression 'mental disintegration' has been used in a number of contexts previously, for the purpose of my discussion in this article I am going to redefine it, explain how it originates, describe several ways in which it manifests behaviorally and the profoundly dysfunctional outcomes this generates, and suggest what we can do about it.

Given that the expression, as I am using it, describes a shocking psychological state but also one that is so widespread it afflicts virtually everyone, it can be described as posing the greatest threat to human survival on Earth. Why? Simply because it caused - and now prevents virtually everyone from thinking, feeling, planning and behaving functionally in response to - the multifaceted threats to humanity and the biosphere.

So, for the purpose of this article: Mental disintegration describes a state in which the various parts of the human mind are no longer capable of working as an integrated unit. That is, each part of the mind - such as memory, thoughts, feelings, sensing capacities (sight, hearing...), 'truth register', conscience - function largely independently of each other, rather than as an integrated whole. The immediate outcome of this dysfunction is that human behaviour lacks consideration, conviction, courage and strategy, and is simply driven compulsively by the predominant fear in each context.

The reason this issue first attracted my attention was because, on many occasions, I observed individuals (ranging from people I knew, to politicians) behaving in ways that seemed outrageous but it was also immediately apparent that the individual was completely unaware of the outrageous nature of their behaviour. On the contrary, it seemed perfectly appropriate to them. With the passage of time, however, I have observed this dysfunctionality in an enormously wide variety of more subtle and common forms, making me realise just how widespread it is even if it goes largely unrecognized. After all, if virtually everyone does it in particular contexts, then why should it be considered 'abnormal'?

One version of this mental disintegration is the version usually known as 'cognitive dissonance'. The widely accepted definition of this state, based on Leon Festinger's research

in the 1950s, goes something like this: Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all of our attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior in harmony and to avoid disharmony (or dissonance). This is known as the principle of cognitive consistency. When there is an inconsistency between attitudes, beliefs and/or values on the one hand and behaviors on the other (dissonance), something must change to eliminate the dissonance.

The problem with this approach to the issue is that it assumes awareness of the inconsistency on the part of the individual impacted and also assumes (based on Festinger's research) that there is some inclination to seek consistency. But my own observations of a vast number of people in a substantial variety of contexts over several decades have clearly revealed that, in very many contexts, individuals have no awareness of any discrepancy and, hence, have no inclination to seek consistency between their attitude, belief and/or value and their behavior. Moreover, even if they do have some awareness of the inconsistency, most people simply act on the basis of their predominant emotion - usually fear - in the context and pass it off with a rationalization. For example, that *their* particular work/role is so important that it justifies *their* excessive consumption on a planet of limited and unequally shared resources.

Consequently, to choose an obvious example, most climate, environmental, anti-nuclear and anti-war activists fail to grapple meaningfully with the obvious contradiction between their own over-consumption of fossil fuels and resources generally and the role that consumption of these resources plays in driving the climate and environmental catastrophes as well as war. The idea of reducing their own personal consumption is beyond serious contemplation (let alone action). And, of course, it goes without saying that the global elite suffers this disintegration of the mind by failing to connect their endless acquisition of power, profit and privilege at the expense of all others and the Earth, with the accelerating and multifaceted threats to human survival including the future of their own children. But the examples are endless.

In any case, leaving aside 'cognitive dissonance', there are several types of mental disintegration as I define it in this article. Let me briefly give you five examples of mental disintegration before explaining why it occurs.

1. Denial is an unconscious mental state in which an individual, having been given certain information about themselves, others they know or the state of the world, *deny the information* because it frightens them. This is what happens for a 'climate denier', for example. For a fuller explanation, see ['The Psychology of Denial'](#).
2. The 'Magic Rat' is an unconscious mental state in which a person's fear makes them incapable of grappling with certain information, even to deny it, so they completely *suppress their awareness of the information* immediately they receive it. For four examples of this psychological phenomenon, which President Trump exemplifies superbly, see ['You Cannot Trap the "Magic Rat": Trump, Congress and Geopolitics'](#).
3. Delusion is an unconscious mental state in which a person is *very frightened by certain information but the nature of the circumstances make it impossible to either deny or suppress awareness of the information so they are compelled to construct a delusion in relation to that particular reality in order to feel safe*. For a fuller explanation, see ['The Delusion "I Am Not Responsible"'](#).
4. Projection is an unconscious mental state in which a person is *very frightened of*

knowing a terrifying truth so they 'defend' themselves against becoming aware of this truth by (unconsciously) identifying a more palatable cause for their fear and then 'defending' themselves against this imagined 'threat'. Political leaders in Israel do this chronically in relation to the Palestinians, for example. But the US elite also does this chronically in relation to any competing ideas in relation to political and economic organization in other countries. See ['The Psychology of Projection in Conflict'](#).

5. Lies arise from a conscious or unconscious mental state in which a person *fears blame and/or punishment for telling an unpalatable truth (such as one that will self-incriminate) so they unconsciously employ tactics, including lying, to avoid this blame and punishment (and thus project the blame onto others)*. When people lie unconsciously, it means they are lying to themselves as well; that is, constructing a lie without awareness that they are doing so. For a fuller explanation, see ['Why Do People Lie? And Why Do Other People Believe Them?'](#)

So why does this mental disintegration – this disintegration of the mind so that its many components are essentially unaware of the others – happen? In brief, it happens because, throughout childhood, each individual is endlessly bombarded with 'visible', 'invisible' and 'utterly invisible' violence in the name of socialization, which is more accurately labeled 'terrorization'. This is done to ensure that the child is obedient despite the fact that obedience has no evolutionary functionality whatsoever. See ['Why Violence?'](#) and ['Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice'](#).

A primary outcome of this terrorization in materialist cultures is that the child learns to suppress their awareness of how they feel by using food and material items to distract themselves. By doing this, the child rapidly loses self-awareness and learns to consume as the substitute for this awareness. Clearly, this has catastrophic consequences for the child, their society and for nature (although it is immensely profitable for elites and their agents). For a fuller explanation, see ['Love Denied: The Psychology of Materialism, Violence and War'](#).

Beyond this, however, this terrorization ensures that the human mind is so disintegrated that virtually all humans have no problem living in denial, delusion and projection and using 'magic rats' and lies on a vast range of issues because they simply have no awareness of reality in that context. Different parts of their disintegrated mind simply hold one element of their mind separately from all others (thus obscuring any denial, delusion and projection and the use of 'magic rats' and lies), consequently precluding any tendency to restore integrity from arising.

This is why, for example, most people can lie 'outrageously', including under oath, without the slightest awareness that they are doing so and which, as an aside, is why oaths to tell the truth in court, and even lie detector tests, are utterly meaningless. If the person themselves is unaware they are lying, it is virtually impossible for anyone else – unless extraordinarily self-aware – to detect it. And, of course, judges and juries cannot be self-aware or they would not agree to perform their respective roles in the extraordinarily dysfunctional and violent legal system. See ['The Rule of Law: Unjust and Violent'](#).

In essence then, the process of 'socializing' (terrorizing) a child into obedience so that they will 'fit into' their particular society has the outcome of scaring them into suppressing their awareness of reality, including their awareness of themselves. In this circumstance, the

individual that now 'survives' does so as the 'socially-constructed delusional identity' (that is, obedient and, preferably, submissive individual) that the significant adults in their childhood terrorized them into becoming.

To reiterate: Because social terrorization destroys the emergence of an integrated mind that would enable memory, sensing capacities, thoughts, feelings, conscience, attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours to act in concert, the typical individual will now invariably act in accord with the unconscious fear that drives every aspect of their behavior (and 'requires' them to endlessly seek approval to avoid the punishment threatened for disobedience when they were a child).

Moreover, this disintegrated mind has little or no capacity to 'observe reality' in any case, such as seek out genuine news sources – like the one you are reading now – that accurately report the biodiversity, climate, environmental, military and nuclear catastrophes and, having done so, *to be truly aware of this news in the sense of deeply comprehending its meaning and implications for their own behaviour.*

So, to elaborate one of the examples cited above, even most individuals who self-identify as climate, environmental, anti-nuclear and/or anti-war 'activists' go on over-consuming (which is highly socially approved in industrialized societies) without any genuine re-evaluation of their own behaviour in light of what should be the observed reality about these crises (or, if their mind allows a 're-evaluation' to commence, to dismiss it quickly with a rationalization that *their* over-consumption is somehow justified).

One obvious outcome of this is that elite-controlled corporations and their governments can largely ignore 'activist' entreaties for change because activist (and widespread) over-consumption constitutes financial endorsement of the elite's violent and exploitative economy. In other words: If people are buying the products (such as fossil fuels for their car and air travel, and hi-tech devices), made possible by fighting the wars and exploiting the people in countries where the raw materials for this production are secured, then why pay attention to calls for change? Dollars speak louder than words.

So what can we do?

Well, given that the above describes just a small proportion of the psychological dysfunctionality of most humans, which is why we remain on the fast track to extinction despite overwhelming evidence of the profound changes that need to occur – see ['Human Extinction by 2026? A Last Ditch Strategy to Fight for Human Survival'](#) – I encourage you to seriously consider incorporating strategies to address this dysfunctionality into any effort you make to improve our world.

For most people, this will include starting with yourself. See ['Putting Feelings First'](#).

For virtually everyone, it will include reviewing your relationship with children and, ideally, making ['My Promise to Children'](#).

For those who feel readily able to deal with reality, consider campaigning strategically to achieve the outcomes we need. See [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#) or [Nonviolent Defense/Liberation Strategy](#). The global elite is deeply entrenched – fighting its wars, exploiting people, destroying the biosphere – and not about to give way without a concerted effort by many of us campaigning strategically on several key fronts.

If you recognize the pervasiveness of the fear-driven violence in our world, consider joining the global network of people resisting it by signing the online pledge of [‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#).

But, most fundamentally of all, if you understand the simple point that Earth’s biosphere cannot sustain a human population of this magnitude of which more than half endlessly over-consume, then consider accelerated participation in the strategy outlined in [‘The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth’](#).

Or, if this feels too complicated, consider committing to:

The Earth Pledge

Out of love for the Earth and all of its creatures, and my respect for their needs, from this day onwards I pledge that:

- 1. I will not travel by plane*
- 2. I will not travel by car*
- 3. I will not eat meat and fish*
- 4. I will only eat organically/biodynamically grown food*
- 5. I will minimize the amount of fresh water I use, including by minimizing my ownership and use of electronic devices*
- 6. I will not buy rainforest timber*
- 7. I will not buy or use single-use plastic, such as bags, bottles, containers, cups and straws*
- 8. I will not use banks that provide any service to corporations involved in fossil fuels, nuclear power and/or weapons*
- 9. I will not accept employment from, or invest in, any organization that supports or participates in the exploitation of fellow human beings or profits from killing and the destruction of the biosphere*
- 10. I will not get news from the corporate media (mainstream newspapers, television, radio, Facebook...)*
- 11. I will make the effort to learn a skill, such as food gardening or sewing, that makes me more self-reliant*
- 12. I will gently encourage my family and friends to consider signing this pledge.*

Conclusion

There is a vast array of ‘professional help’, literature, video material, lecturers and other ‘resources’ from a wide range of perspectives that advocate and ‘teach’ one or a variety of ways that people can use to change their behaviour to get improved outcomes in their lives (whether from a personal, economic, business, political or other perspective). Virtually all of these constitute nothing more than psychological ‘tricks’ to achieve a short-term outcome by ‘working around’ the fundamental truth: As a result of terrorization during childhood, virtually all humans are unconsciously terrified and this makes their behaviour utterly dysfunctional.

The point is this: there is no trick that can get us out of the catastrophic mess in which we now find ourselves. Only the truth can do that. Psychological and behavioural dysfunctions notwithstanding, if we do not address this fear as part of our overall strategy, then this fear will destroy us in the end. And the evidence of that lies simply in the

fact that the daily updates on the already decades-long but ongoing horrific biodiversity, climate, environmental, nuclear, war and humanitarian crises are testament to our ongoing failure to respond appropriately and powerfully. *Because our (usually unconscious) fear prevents us from doing so.*

So if you believe that human beings are going to get out of our interrelated social, political, economic, military, nuclear and ecological crises with a largely psychologically dysfunctional population, I encourage you to re-evaluate that belief (paying attention, if you can, to how your disintegrated mind intervenes to prevent you doing so). And I encourage you to ask yourself if the value we get out of improving the psychological functionality of our species might not be worth considerable effort as part of our overall strategy to avert human extinction.

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