The Wretched Nurseries of Unceasing Discord
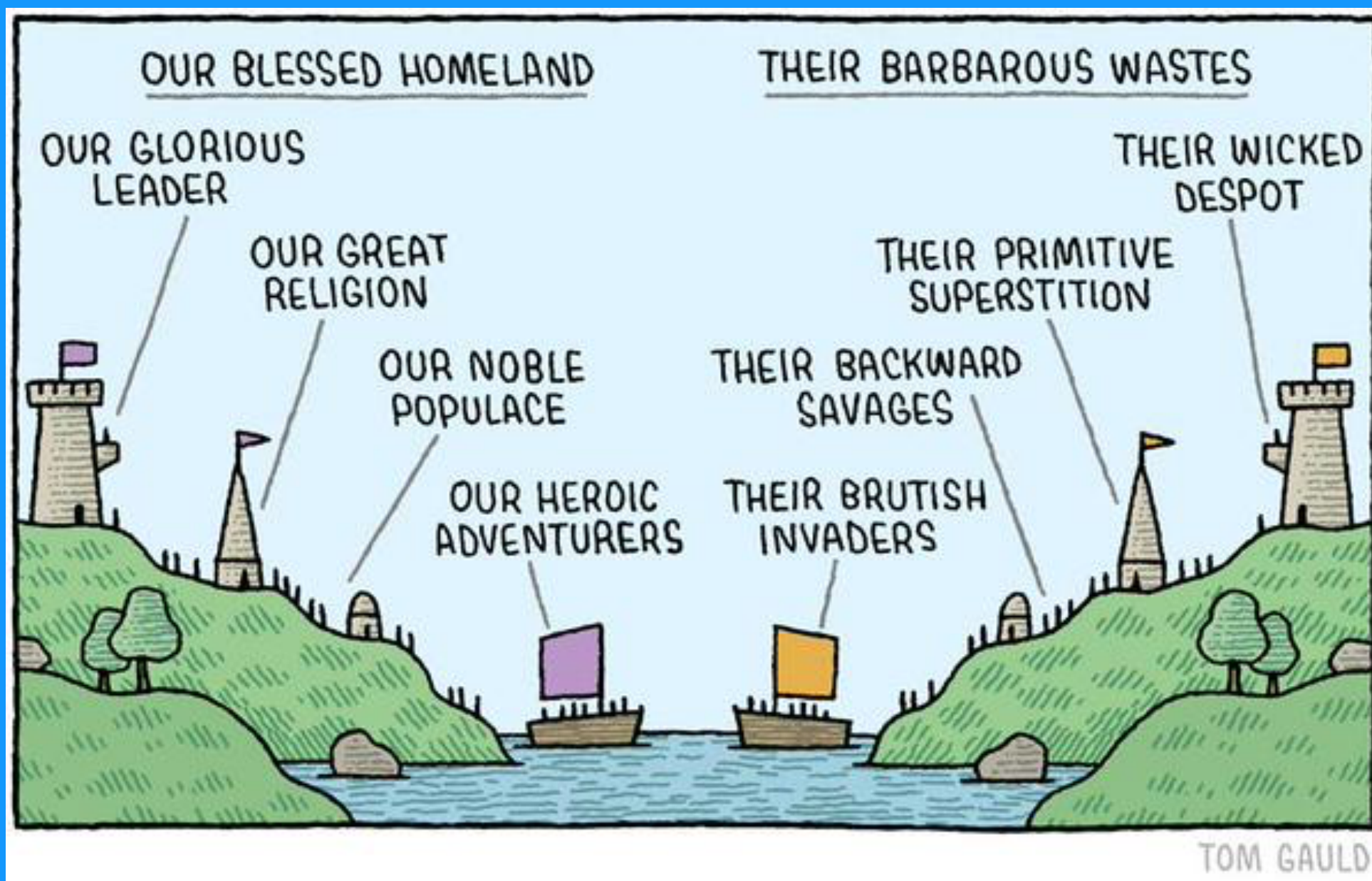
Tribalism, political conflict, and person communities

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"Oh, the white folks hate the black folks.

And the black folks, hate the white folks

To hate all but the right folks

is an old established rule." Tom Lehrer

*Critics declare Tribalists ignore and distort facts

*Tribalists are driven to win for their side

*Tribalists invalidate the perspective of the other side

Alexander Hamilton (1787) reminded New Yorkers that political groups would become "the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord ".

Political Pundits and Tribalism

"There's virtually no phenomenon in public life that someone hasn't tried to discredit as tribal." -Geoff Nunberg

One of the great attractions of tribalism is that

you don't actually have to think very much."

Andrew Sullivan

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"People who think with their epidermis or

their genitalia or their clan are the problem to begin with."

Christopher Hitchens

Nick Kristof (2018) of the New York Times explained,

"we all suffer a cognitive bias that makes us inclined to seek out news sources

that confirm our worldview."

The Politically Motivated Research Paradigm

MC theorists claim to have evidence that person's act irrationally

*The basic structure of the studies described.

—"confirmation bias"

—-"backfire effect".

* System 1 and System 2 processing

— Intuitive, affective processes drive persons to misperceive.

—-System 2 is generally too weak to override System 1.

*A sense that elites, trusted sources, peers all can be influential,

*"Original sin" of humans being prone to irrational thought.

Problematic PMRP

1. **Irrational Persons:** The explanation depends on describing persons as acting impulsively, emotionally, and more generally irrationally without regard to the facts.

2. **Degrading Groups:** The concept of tribal has been associated with such notions as uncivilized or savage in the past and has served as a degradation for particular groups.

3. **Non-reflexivity trap:** The argument from pundits who regard the MC research as support for tribalism undercuts itself since this way of talking indicts the critic as well as those observed to be acting tribally.

Tribes and Tribalism: A different perspective

"Some people seem to think tribalism is an unmitigated evil, but it is not. Every ethnic group has its own cultural features and may, therefore, have something of value to contribute to the way of life of the country or region of which it forms a part. " -S.O. Adebo

"The ethnic zone was feared and stigmatized by state rhetoric precisely because it was beyond its grasp and therefore an example of defiance and an ever-present temptation to those who might wish to evade the state." -James Scott
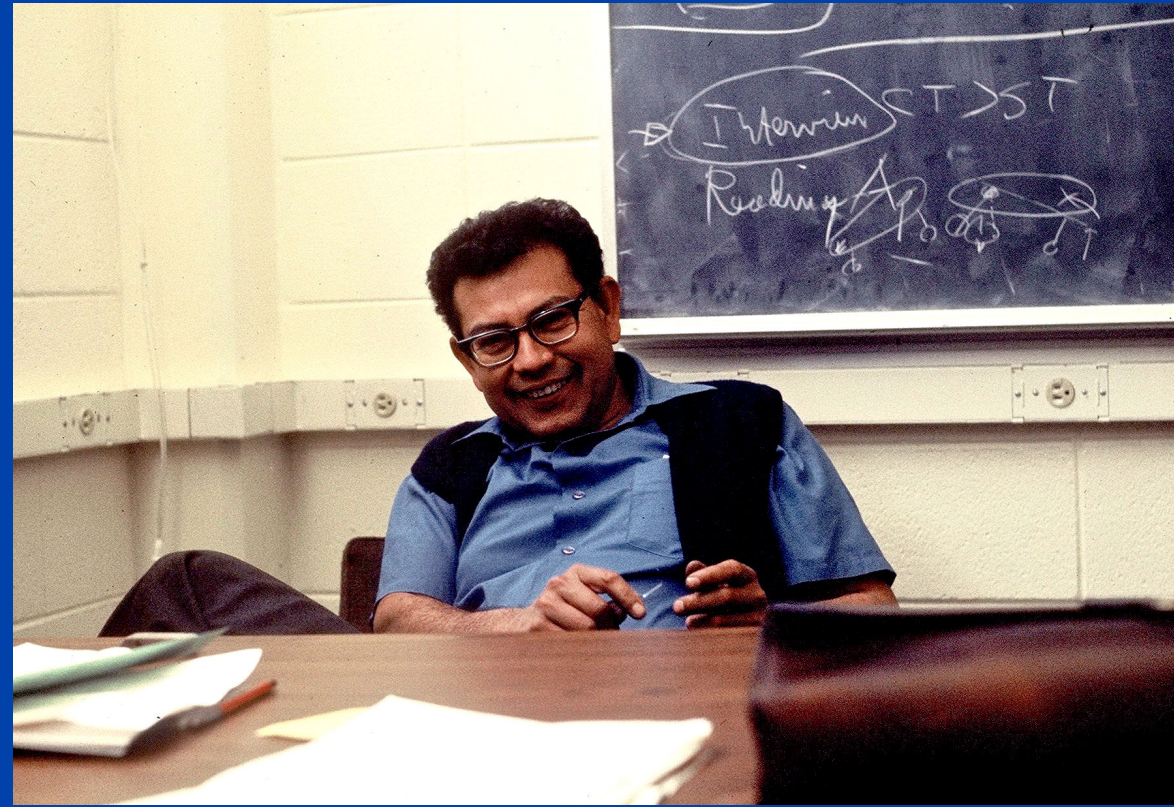
"To find a more accurate vision of these United States, we must resist pat narratives about any group — including the working class on whom our current political situation is most often pinned. The greatest con of 2016 was not persuading a white laborer to vote for a nasty billionaire with soft hands. Rather, it was persuading a watchdog press to cast every working-class American in the same mold."-Sarah Smarsh

"…strangers step ahead of you in line, making you anxious, resentful, and afraid. A president allies with the line cutters, making you feel mistrustful, betrayed. A person ahead of you in line insults you as an ignorant redneck making you feel humiliated and mad. Economically, culturally, demographically, politically, you are suddenly a stranger in your own land."-Arlie Hochschild

Facts, Worlds, and Communities

"**… we go from the idea that everyone has a unique status (in the scheme of things) to the idea**

that everyone has a unique perspective to the idea that ultimately, everyone lives in his own unique world. " -Peter
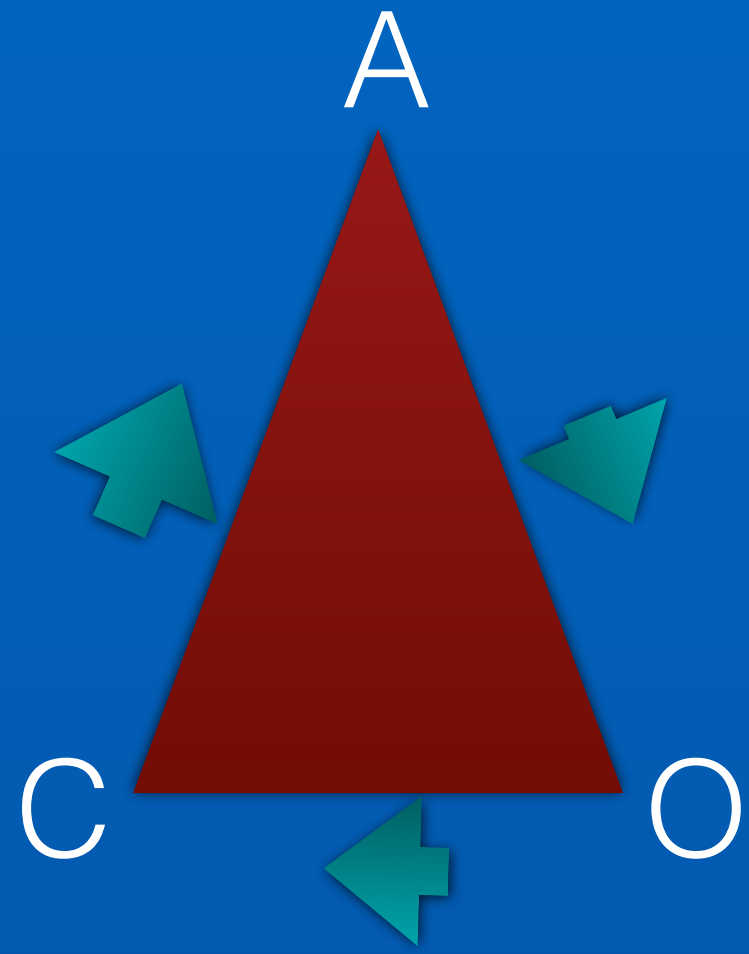
Ossorio

"…every community sees their

world as *the* world."- Tony Putman

"This concept of the real world is fundamentally different from the kind of real world that we learned to take as given in school. We were taught …that we do not have anything to do with the real world being what it is. The real world is simply, transcendentally, "out there", and in no way depends on us." - Mary Roberts

"worlds are not essentially individual matters. A world requires a community, a community is made up of members … and to act in that world in a way that makes sense requires a person to be a member of that community." -Tony Putman
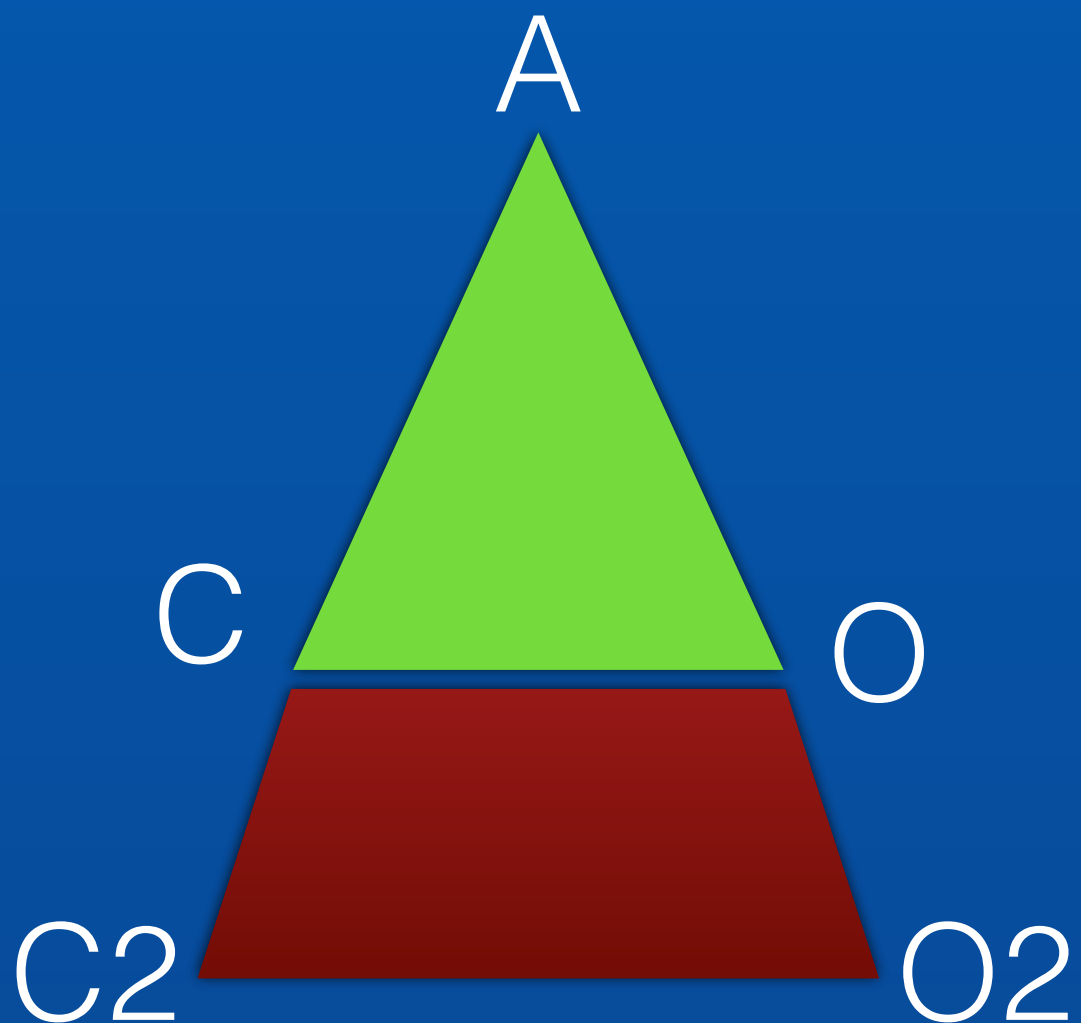
Conflict, Criticism, and Trusted Sources

"**"The critic speaks for Us."-Peter Ossorio**

Although persons live in their own worlds, they live in communities, act within sets of relationships,

which allow for mistakes to be corrected and worlds and world views to change.

Communities have members with statuses that help check, regulate,

and otherwise manage the social practices of the community.

Although persons disagree all the time about matters of fact, it's these self regulatory and

community regulatory social critics that allow person relationships, person communities, person cultures, to work.

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Emotional Relationships and Rational Choices

"Within the first half second after hearing a statement, partisan brains are already reacting differently. These initial flashes of neural activity are the elephant, leaning slightly, which then causes their riders to reason differently, search for different kinds of evidence, and reach different conclusions. Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second." -Haidt, Jonathan

"…in cases of fear and anger, immediate action is often the difference between
success and failure, between life and death. Which is not to say that we act blindly-only quickly." -Peter Ossorio

The Reality Basis of Emotional Relationships

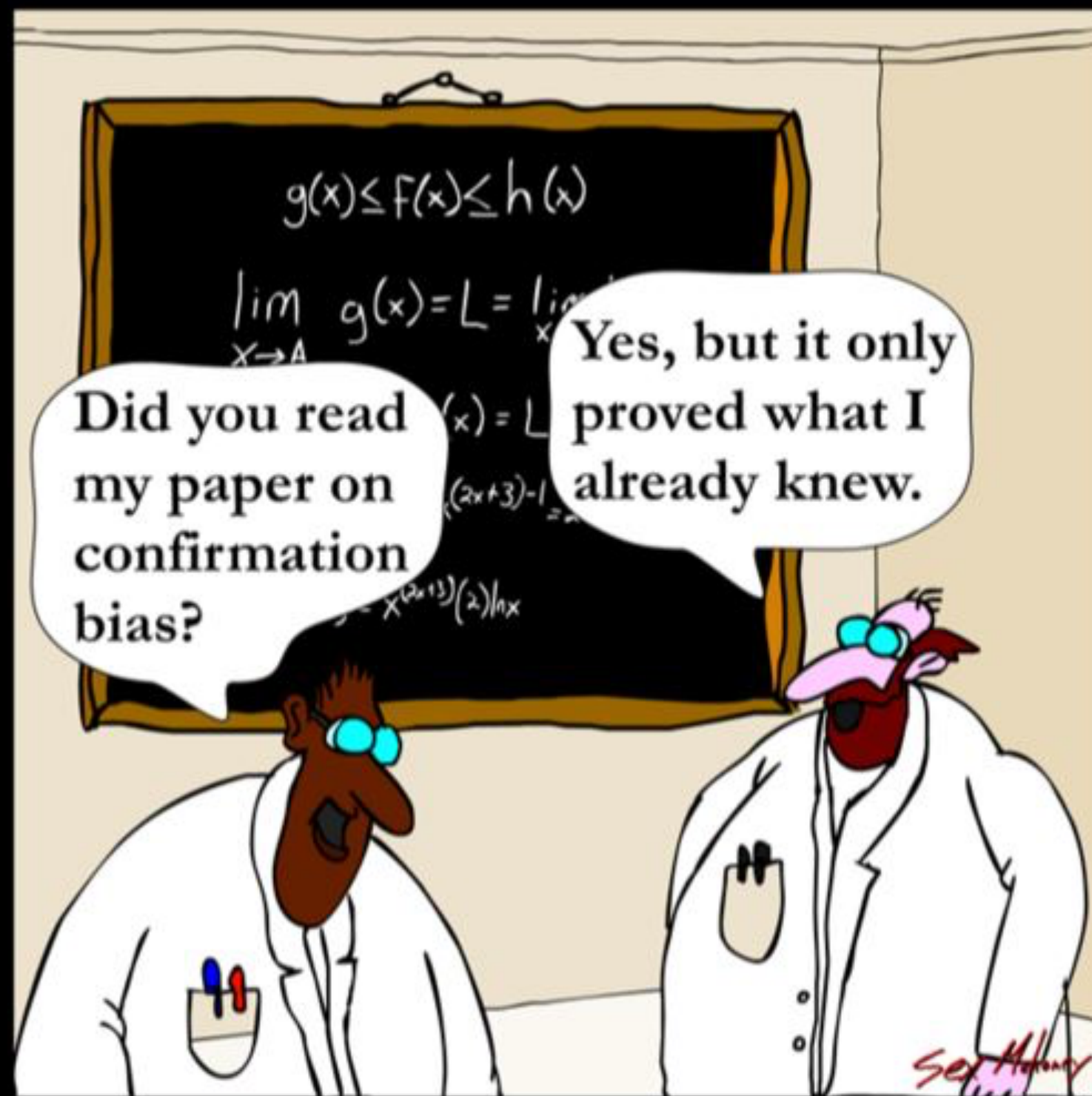**The Sense of Acting without Deliberation**

Persons have practices and statuses, criticism and critics,

in communities devoted to identifying and modifying judgment problems.

Descriptive Psychology Explains PMRP

Redescribing persons as rational actors

*Confirmation Bias

*The Backfire Effect

Tribalism Reformulated

"By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adversed to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." -James Madison

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."
-Abraham Lincoln

"Most of all…
we should see the importance of maintaining (some would say restoring)
civil discourse in our media, allowing for and appreciating differences
rather than criticizing them with inflammatory rhetoric." -TonyPutman

Trump and his Tribes

Degraded Communities, Whistleblowers, and Community Change

Hochschild's Strangers

Tribalism, Factions, and Person Communities
Further Questions

"Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction." -Madison

By taking a perspective that good government's first principle must be empathy for all citizens, all interests are naturally considered.   Such a task is not simple nor easily carried out, but it is, in principle, necessary.

For further inquiry:
1. What makes empathy so difficult (cf. Schwartz,2013)?
2. How does the nature of modern day media and communication exacerbate factional conflict?
3. Examples of citizens working for the "permanent and aggregate interests of the community"?
4. Other?