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Response to Hill: Conspiracy Theorizing, Ordinary Usage and Integrity

Lee Basham, South Texas College, [labasham@southtexascollege.edu](mailto:labasham@southtexascollege.edu)

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Scott Hill's most recent defense of the *Le Monde* declaration against conspiracy theory is welcome.<sup>1</sup> It's an enjoyable and thoughtful piece with a high spirit to it. He also shares a disturbing revelation. Most important, it represents another opportunity to make clear conclusions that were established years ago clear again, and how the *generalist/pathologizing* position of the *Le Monde* declaration proved a great benefit to the larger epistemic debate, albeit by the declaration's reduction to absurdity. Hill appears to agree that evidentially impoverished or internally incoherent conspiracy theories should not be accepted until new evidence is found or logical inconsistencies resolved. The opposite is equally true; evidentially superior and internally consistent conspiracy theories should be embraced on that basis. The motive for the search for evidence either way is one of salience; some matter to our lives, some do not. Like all of life, this attention keeps us aware of the expansion of evidence and its interactive dynamics. This is social epistemology.

### Historical Context

We enjoy a trip down memory lane. This response will at several points discuss a history of interactions between social scientists and philosophers that have been beneficial to both. It is, in that, a small but important moment of intellectual history. What it also helps us understand that a revisionist understanding of what came to be called "the *Le Monde* declaration" misses the point of the discussion. Hill's attempt at revisitation, revisionism and rescue is misdirected. Revisionist time travel is an enjoyable fantasy, but the present is what defines discussion. What the *Le Monde* declaration did, in its excesses and pathologizing method, was to create an opportunity to redefine an entire discussion. It proved to be an unintended, wholly sincere self-parody of a stance to conspiracy theorizing that was deeply flawed and from perspective of democratic self-governance, even dangerous.

The *Le Monde* declaration begins with indiscriminate generality. At no point does it depart from it,

Let's fight conspiracy theories effectively. The Ministry of Education [of France] must test its pedagogical tools against conspiracy culture. The wrong cure might only serve to spread the disease.

There is no "some" modifier. We are introduced to an entire "culture". One without discernment of its many rational forms and beneficial elements. We're also told this "culture" should be medicalized, it represents a pathology, a *disease*. It's rather like someone endorsed a program, "Let's fight anthropogenetic climate change (ACC) theories effectively. The Ministry of Education must test its pedagogical tools against anthropogenetic climate change culture. The wrong cure might only serve to spread the disease." A fully general, all-encompassing, pathologizing thought. Hill explicitly grants this.

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<sup>1</sup> Others understandably found the attempt at resurrection regrettable, "disheartening". See J.C.M. Duetz, and M R.X. Dentith. 2022. "Reconciling Conceptual Confusions in the *Le Monde* Debate on Conspiracy Theories." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 11 (10): 40-50.

The goal of pathologizing projects is to disqualify, silence and eliminate a group from admission to public discussions. To vanish them from the realm of discourse. It both creates and then isolates *dissident citizens*. A simple formula: Pathologize, disqualify, silence, disappear. This sequence today is leveraged against communities of rational concern; conspiracy theorists. These are suspected of being influential in society and contrary to certain political and ideological pieties, pieties such as the relative unlikelihood of organized deceit or its near inevitable mass-revelation. These pieties are clearly misplaced. And the “disease” of recognizing this is spreading. I argue, for the common good, the *Le Monde* declaration’s project has not succeeded. It’s good that epistemologists were there to support this outcome.

A more sophisticated approach to conspiracy theorizing emerged. Not a defense of an antediluvian, pathologizing editorial with a “what they really meant but didn’t say” defense, one that rests on the idea the *Le Monde* signators were, without stating so, referring to a vaguely defined and potentially self-serving class, “stereotypical conspiracy theories”. At best, that claim would be the realm of historians, not epistemologists, and involve a number of interviews and other research. Future-looking work is what would be most helpful as our literature continues to grow. This should encourage Hill to direct his attention to the future where his abilities can help make progress.

### **Venus: Reference and Conspiracy Theorizing**

In pursuit of the “what they really meant” thesis, Hill turns our attention to the sky, the morning star. Hill opens his discussion with this analogy about reference,

Consider the planet Venus. We once thought it was not a planet but a star. And we once thought it was not one star but two stars-the Morning Star and the Evening Star. We once used Venus to navigate. Under the guise of the Morning Star it would guide our navigation during one cycle. Under the guise of the Evening Star it would guide our navigation during a different cycle. Now we think Venus is a planet rather than a star. Now we think it is one thing rather than two things. Now we use our phones to navigate and we use Venus to appreciate beauty and learn about space. We have very different purposes for Venus than we did in the past. And we have very different theories about the nature of Venus than we did in the past. Nevertheless, both people today and people of the past have been talking about Venus all along.<sup>2</sup>

In the same way, my view is that even though social scientists and philosophers have very different ideas about the nature of conspiracy theories and very different uses for them, they might nevertheless be talking about the same thing when they use ‘conspiracy theory’. And I think one disagreement between them is this question: “What do ordinary people call to mind when they think of conspiracy theories?”

In short: Much of life, writ both socially and personally. Hill’s mistake appears to be that reference exhausts meaning. So, let’s turn to meaning; representational, cognitive content. For many in the past the meaning of Venus was a Goddess of beauty that traveled the

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<sup>2</sup> Hill, Scott. 2022. “Substantive Disagreement in the *Le Monde* Debate and Beyond: Replies to Duetz and Dentith, Basham, and Hewitt.” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 11 (11): 18-25, page 21.

Heavens. That we now know that it is the second planet from the sun and probably a lifeless, inhospitable sphere changes the meaning. Science has made progress. In the last 20 years, so has philosophy as concerns the meaning of “conspiracy theory”. An incorrect definition will lead to flawed presuppositions and subsequent mistakes.

Also notice social scientists and philosophers really don’t have very different views about the nature of conspiracy theories. Hill writes,

It would be one thing if philosophers and social scientists each introduced ‘conspiracy theory’ in their own ways as distinct technical terms divorced from the ordinary meaning of ‘conspiracy theory’. In that case, I would agree that they are talking past one another and that the debate has no real substance. But I don’t think that is what is going on. ‘Conspiracy theory’ is an ordinary term that ordinary people use.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed. And “ordinary people” do not mean stereotypes by the phrase “conspiracy theory”. Humans are acute students of reality. Setting aside the unfortunate historical innuendo of “ordinary”—perhaps “working class commoners”—luckily we have a thoughtful populace. Philosophers and social scientists have converged in the last 20 years with significant success on the side of philosophers who have advocated ordinary usage. Hill concedes this. The social scientists have become rather sensitive to the error of pathologizing conspiracy theorists and more open to the idea that conspiracy theories should be judged evidentially on a case-by-case basis; that is, particularism. This is also commonplace, and not regarded as pathological. In other terms, the philosophers have largely won the debate. Occasionally, newcomers to it, and we welcome for their attentions, resurrect past chapters of this discussion. This is to be expected and embraced in any such interesting, socially and personally important topic. Though it may be redundant.

It's also important to note that the term “conspiracy theory”, “conspiracy theorist” and “conspiracy theorizing” vary in connotation in different cultures and nation states. For instance, in the United States, given my experience, it has little no pejorative connotation with most. In Bavaria (Southern Germany), it has some. In Northern Germany, seemingly significantly more, in Commonwealth societies it has been a struggle to overcome a more pronounced aggressive disdain; political piety is a favored virtue. This façade of a “all is well and proper” mentality appears to dominate according to several commentators, most significantly physicist and social researcher Brian Martin.<sup>4</sup> So who precisely are “ordinary people”? Hill never says.

We must ask: What do these ordinaries think? Hill misses what would be obvious from a cosmopolitan and social science perspective: The category is useless if unarticulated. Unless it is carefully situated to a place and time. This is a critical *empirical* issue Hill misses. Hill’s current framework of “stereotypes” is one of unfettered and so meaningless generalization.

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<sup>3</sup> Hill, 18.

<sup>4</sup> See Martin’s classic, *Suppression Stories*, his extensive website of scholarship and most recent his research on forced vaccination; search “Brian Martin Suppression Stories” (retrieved 10/23/2022).

This can only be addressed by descriptive research without what psychologists term a “experimental manipulations”. That is, a survey.

### **“Conspiracy Theory”, Ordinary Usage and Rationality**

In human experience, in our everyday lives, across the canvass of the political and corporate, and within the quite personal, conspiracy and so conspiracy theory is normal, natural, ordinary and rational. This is what ordinary people appear to think in my own culture.

There is nothing contrary to ordinary use when a spouse laments;

“I discovered that my husband and his friends had conspired to get a prostitute while I was on a trip.” That is perfectly ordinary *and* fully acceptable usage. That “plotted” or “planned” might also convey the same meaning notwithstanding.

In a court of law, when speaking to a jury of our peers,

“The prosecution will show that the defendants in this case conspired to import enough fentanyl to kill the entire population of our city.” The jury will hardly be surprised by the usage. It is ordinary *and* correct. It would not startle or puzzle them.

In the mode of history,

“The Japanese conspired to distract the American navel forces from their planned attack on the pacific atoll of Midway by an attack on the US Aleutian Islands” Again, an ordinary and correct usage and claim.

Or in the mode of some religions, a conspiracy of goodness,

“God and his angels conspired to bring me to this liberated point in my life, where I could recall the purpose for which I was created.” A commonplace among those with certain religious beliefs.

All of these are conspiracy theories and common ones. Hill is mistaken. They, by reference to causes, explain events by reference to, among other things, a conspiracy. Here, “theory” means “explanation”, as in “quantum mechanical theory”, “neoMarxist theory”, “learned helplessness theory” and so forth. All of this is not just consistent with ordinary usage, it commonplace in it.

This is our good fortune, because “ordinary usage” arguments if contrary to sound analysis are, on their own, notoriously weak; both in the empirical sciences and philosophy. No one informed in basic astronomy calls Venus a star, unless poetically, “the morning star is my guide in life...”. And reference does not exhaust meaning.<sup>5</sup> The question is what something really is, and that should guide our definitions. Not what we would like it to mean or sometimes abusively, even if it violates political pieties. For instance, contrast “That’s just a

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps some acquaintance with the work of Hilary Putnam might help here. I recommend it for a clearer understanding of the issues. Saul Kripke’s early work is also relevant. They are quite interesting.

conspiracy theory!”, spoken with derision; a typically pathologizing, *generalist* usage that presupposes there is in the very nature of conspiracy theorizing some intellectual or moral defect (or both, as Karen Douglas would, in a nuanced manner, have it) to “That’s an interesting conspiracy theory.”, spoken dispassionately, “Let’s review the evidence.”. This reflects the position of the *particularist* concerning conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories, if salient to us, must be judged on their evidential merits. They are frequently rational. Hill has not undermined this understanding. Hill’s thesis, instead, is to resurrect a failed editorial, one obsolete even in its time.

The fact that anyone prefers a generalist, pejorative usage is little argument that it is the correct usage. It raises the question, “Does that accurately capture the meaning of the term, ‘conspiracy theory?’”. I have interviewed, without any indication of the desired response, ~1000 people. When asked the question, “Have several people cooperated to conspire against you?”, the answer is almost universally “yes”. So these “ordinary people” are conspiracy theorists.

Regrettably, a small faction of social psychology exploring conspiracy theorizing still finds conspiracy theorizing pathological when it appears, instead, to often be rational. Hill does not address this. Nor does the *Le Monde* declaration. Humans are properly at times concerned that for others have agreed and intentionally cooperated to harm them; that they conspire *against* them. We also see that humans conspire to benefit others. This is entirely commonplace. Ordinary humans know this. We are, and ought to be, on all levels of society, cognizant of conspiracy and in that, recognize that “ordinary people” understand this, even personally.

All of us can be honest to our own experience and see that these simple observations don’t just characterize “ordinary people”, but in that all of us. When questions of organized, intentional deception by multiple actors arise, we are all ordinary. They characterize all of us if we are self-cognizant, rational and historically literate. Des Hewitt takes a *particularist* position on the invasion of Iraq,

I take issue with Hill as well as Basham and Dentith (2016) and Dentith (2019; 2020), as all discuss the disaster that was the invasion of Iraq. In a review I wrote last year for SERRC called ‘The Deadly Consequences of Wish Fulfilment’ ([Hewitt 2021](#)), I argued the reasons for going to war then were far more complex than simply a belief (or conspiracy) that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq because a sexed-up, dodgy dossier said so, or because the allies were after oil.<sup>6</sup>

Point taken. The conspiratorial element is not dismissed, but mixed with other factors.

“Sexed-up” etc. appears to mean a Mae West style of flirtation and exaggeration. Agreed. Few have claimed conspiracy is the sole cause of the Iraq invasion. That would be an offense

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<sup>6</sup> Hewitt, Des. 2022. “Reflections on Scott Hill’s ‘A Revised Defence of Le Monde Group’: ‘Never Again?’” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 11 (9): 7-18, page 10.

to presidential megalomania and dozens of other factors. Conspiracies have never been portrayed as the only force in the political sphere, including the mass-murder in Iraq, or lesser conspiracies in our personal lives, but they are one force, often *decisive*, which is why the broadly accepted basic definitions of conspiracy and its theory are,

Conspiracy: Two or more persons intentional cooperating to deceive others (through omission or commission)

Conspiracy Theory: Any theory that refers to a conspiracy as *a* cause of events, past, present or future.<sup>7</sup>

Add the epistemic dimension,

Generalism: Conspiracy theories are intrinsically defective, rationally or morally.

Particularism: Conspiracy theories are not intrinsically defective, rationally or morally, but judged on a case-by-case internal logical coherence and empirical evidential basis.<sup>8</sup>

In both the empirical and analytic sciences, there is a convergence. There is no claim that all events are conspiratorial, just that some are, and an orchestrated, deceptive public and political campaign was one critical condition—a necessary condition, or simply a significant one—for the post-9/11 invasion of Iraq. The legitimacy of conspiracy theory as identifying an important factor is something we all agree on.

Duetz and Dentith advocate a subtle distinction between those who comment and apply sound epistemology, and those who try to establish correlations in a bid to pathologize rational persons.<sup>9</sup> The defective premise of the latter is those who suspect conspiracies are true are unusual, cognitively and morally defective, when they are by far the majority. A more interesting line of study would be to explore those who appear incapable or strongly unwilling to entertain suspicion of organized deception. While the distinction is important if one is familiar with the literature, we should note that both are now so intertwined as to make it difficult to apply, unlike it would be when the *Le Monde* declaration was published. A simpler distinction—pathologizing and not pathologizing—perhaps is clearer, more helpful and enduring. I suspect a history of this vast, controversial debate extending far beyond SERRC will be written: *How conspiracy theory became intellectually legitimate in public discourse*. The distinction Duetz and Dentith provide might play an important role in it.

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<sup>7</sup> David Coady and Kurtis Hagen add, "...that is contrary to the official story". The issues here do not impact our discussion. My view is that many conspiracy theories do not appear to have an official story to be contrary to and when they do this simply increases their public salience.

<sup>8</sup> Salience plays a role here, as some are of greater concern if warranted or not than others.

<sup>9</sup> In the thread.

## Surprising Revelations After a Few: Academic Integrity

Hill continues with another analogy, one I would have a fine time doing with Hill, *sans* any portrayal as anyone being clueless that beer is commercially available. Of course, I caution all who read it that one should not drive drunk. Hill writes,

The *Le Monde* declaration is a paradigm instance of a political pathologizing project. There are no limits set here; it is applied to conspiracy theorizing and theorists *in general*. Which includes all of us (original emphasis, 64-65).

Basham thinks that if the *Le Monde* group did not explicitly place a restriction on the scope of their claim, then they meant to use the broadest sense of ‘conspiracy theory’ possible.<sup>10</sup>

We do think that. They offer no restriction. If we want to imagine one now, we are having a John Lennon moment. Hill continues,

But imagine Basham and I are drinking beers together. I say “There is no more beer.” Basham then runs to the grocery store, comes back with five cases of beer, and says “You lied to me Scott. You said ‘there is no more beer’. But I found a lot of beer at the grocery store!” I then say “You know that’s not what I meant. I meant there is no more beer *in the fridge*.” Then Basham says “No. What you said is ‘there is no more beer’. It is entirely *general*. It includes no restriction on being in the fridge. If there is beer somewhere in the totality of existence and you knew about it, then what you said is a lie!” This would be a misguided thing for Basham to assert. And it is equally misguided in the present context.<sup>11</sup>

Imagine there’s been a murder and the police come to your house and ask, “Where have you been tonight?” You reply, “Here at home, officer.” Later they discover you have been all over town, including at the scene of the crime. Your defense is, “I did not say *only* at home.” Imagine you’re going to jail for providing false information to law enforcement and you should. Imagine your trial. You will likely be convicted of the first crime, too. That’s how weak the beer analogy is. A serious demand for profound censorial, mental manipulation “targeting youth” as the declaration puts it, should be precisely stated, restrictions and all: When, where, what and why. Hill concedes there were none in the *Le Monde* declaration. Sadly, it was and remains a call for cognitive warfare on children.

As a *reductio* Hill’s beer story is flat. Appeals to analogy are always tricky and hard to make convincing. Disanalogies often overwhelm parallels, unless the comparison is quite simple, as in the ACC example we began with. The *Le Monde* declaration said, “No beer allowed.” A call for intellectual prohibition. And one “targeting the youth”, the subjects of the Ministry of Education. One we can expect to extend for the rest of their lives. Naturally, thoughtful

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<sup>10</sup> Hill, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Hill, 23.

people typically dislike governmental projects like this. If the “they didn’t mean it” defense is to be taken seriously, it is an act of intellectual dishonesty. Which is a disservice to the people Hill is supposedly trying to help. Hill continues with a surprising report. Hill contacts the signators of the *declaration*. Take a deep breath,

... one member of the *Le Monde* group, Sebastian Dieguez, wrote: “This part of the ‘tribune’ [the journal] as well as the title was *written by the editorial team* at *Le Monde* (which is usual in this journal). But yes, Basham is mistaken, and of course, he knows it.”<sup>12</sup>

I don’t know this and we don’t either.<sup>13</sup> Trans-Atlantic mindreading does not make for sound epistemology. We might be skeptical of Dieguez’s report but should also be concerned: It is an indictment of *Le Monde* as a world-class news outlet, their attribution policies and those who willingly involved themselves in these attributions. What we know is what the declaration stated and those who signed it as collaborative authors; a number of gifted social scientists who at that time had helped established their careers by attempting to pathologize conspiracy theorists.<sup>14</sup> What Dieguez asserts is scandal. If the *Le Monde* declaration was plagiarized from the newspaper’s editorial team—ghost-written—this is both surprising and to my mind, given the professionalism of the scientists who put their names to it, stunning. At no point are staff writers referenced as the actual authors. We should have confidence that those who signed it contributed its structure, language, content and ambition.

I like to think what Dieguez intends is not it was “written by the editorial team”, as he says, but it was perhaps edited by them, post-submission. This edit would be reviewed by the social scientists and corrected before publication. But the above quote denies this. Dieguez’s claim must be brought to the attention of the social scientists involved.<sup>15</sup>

What we do know: We can only judge a document by its statements, not some psychic reading of the unspoken and very different intentions of those who presumably contributed to it, reviewed it and signed it. There was no limit to the claims in the *Le Monde* declaration. No “not in the beer fridge” clause. “We must fight conspiracy theorizing effectively” was the thesis, and in the subsequent discussion the signers of the declaration did not respond that they only meant something much less ambitious; just a few conspiracy theories they disliked. They instead defended their general prohibition project justified as such. This is a matter of record, and of course, when you publish an article that says, “The French government must

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<sup>12</sup> Hill, 23.

<sup>13</sup> The legal phrase is “hear-say”. For some reason Dieguez doesn’t believe journalists who interview the public are themselves members of the public. For an overview of the *pathologizing approach* in what reads as a difficult retreat, see, “Why Healthy Conspiracy Theories are (Oxy)morons”, *SERRC*, 8, no.3, (2019): 50-67. The editorial remarks that Dentith and Basham only list one true conspiracy theory and then in the same sentence provide many more tragic conspiracies and their theories which we reference, then acknowledge that we reference them, and then acknowledge these theories as correct. It’s also of interest that the author list in “(oxy)Morons” dwindled to five from the original *Le Monde* list of a dozen. A good sign.

<sup>14</sup> One section of the declaration appears to be written by Social Psychologist Karen Douglas in its concern for unintended consequences of educational intervention. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boomerang\\_effect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boomerang_effect) for a brief explanation of “reactance”; denial (often illegitimate) feeds defiance (retrieved 11/19/2022).

<sup>15</sup> It would be helpful if Hill supplied/supplies a complete list and full text of the replies he received. Transparency matters in academic exchange and research.

fight conspiracy theories effectively”, not “The French government must fight *certain* conspiracy theories effectively”; the meaning is entirely general. Which is what is wrong about *generalism*. It proposes that conspiracy theorizing is intrinsically, in one or more ways, a pathology. Most of the discussion was then arguments that conspiracy theorizing is in some manner pathological, and counter-arguments that it is not.<sup>16</sup>

### Some Recommendations

These include,

1. The French Ministry of Education should help students understand and enjoy reasoning that is not constrained by political pieties. They should know how to apply this in an open-minded way to conspiracy theories, with the fullest ability to tell which are not the best evidenced and others the best-evidenced explanations available. Some conspiracy theories will certainly be the latter. Education is not to sabotage the mind but enable it. That’s the emerging common-ground of which the *Le Monde* discussions left us with.

Much to the credit of all. Since Hill’s is a revisionist historical piece, we have some history to clarify,

2. If the *Le Monde* declaration was intentionally hyperbolic, as even some of the signators appear to concede, this is good news. It is progress. However, that was not the defense given for its generality by the apparent authors at the time, nor did they attribute its authorship to others unknown. They did not issue or offer a correction of its sweeping generality, either in their professional works or more importantly, in *Le Monde*. This retraction is what we would hope for, both out of professionalism and intellectual honesty. One they should provide if their declaration was simply an exaggerated editorial. So, given Hill’s defense, I call upon them to reconsider and refine their earlier remarks and issue a studied retraction, a clarification of some kind referring to the original, in *Le Monde*.<sup>17</sup> Let informed public participation continue.

3. A clarification of actual authorship is also necessary, given one of the listed authors, Dieguez, now claims the editorial was not written by those who signed it but was independently penned by *Le Monde* staffers and names simply added. It was written by *others unknown*. This is a question of academic integrity. Yet those who signed it still attributed it to themselves both in

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<sup>16</sup> It’s of interest that most of those who do research within the pathologizing approach are paid by various government institutions to do so. We should not doubt the researchers’ sincerity, like we might doubt the sincerity of researchers once paid by cigarette companies. But there is a significant if vague background understanding of what is expected and funding is rare. We are all subject to these forces, often without any significant, self-articulated conscious encounter with them.

<sup>17</sup> Except for remarks by Karen Douglas about the “boomerang effect”, which appear correct and in this context, *apropos*. Personal correspondence.

signing and in their various defenses of it.<sup>18</sup> If it is a piece of ghost-writing, as Dieguez claims, this should be publicly acknowledged by each who signed it, ideally in *Le Monde* where it first appeared.<sup>19</sup>

The irony is many of the critics who view conspiracy theory as irrational and immoral now appear to be entwined in a rational and moral one. God's speed.

## Conclusion

In the *Le Monde* declaration's defense, it provided a welcome avenue for the demonstration of the rationality of conspiracy theorizing. In that it succeeded brilliantly.

The subsequent retreat of many social scientists from *generalism*, even if reluctant and in rare cases begrudging, is heartening and progressive. The discussion has almost always been convivial and enlightening. The debate appears to be closing and we're almost all *particularists* now. Again, Hill graciously grants this. That said, the allegation that scholars knowingly plagiarized the work of others unknown is deeply troubling in this and any context. In the context of a publication of such reach as *Le Monde*, it is intensely. The brink of public academic scandal is not easily side-stepped. Closets with skeletons are best left closed. Hold that thought.

In short, Hill's revisionist essays on the *Le Monde* declaration have proved both interesting and revealing. Hill has taken the first step well. His gifts are best applied to a balanced and appreciative understanding of the beneficial role of conspiracy theory as normal, rational and ordinary. Watchfulness, suspicion and subsequent correction are the foundations of functional democracy. The future awaits. The day is bright and the horizon wide.

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<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, the Dieguez et al., reply in SERRC. Dieguez, understandably, claimed authorship in part of the *Le Monde* declaration. In the second piece he (see "Why Conspiracy Theories are (Oxy)morons" his authorship role in the *Le Monde* piece. So his more recent remarks are surprising. My personal hope is that it was guided in direct ways by those who put their names to it. I hope what Dieguez meant to say is the staff were in close contact with him and the others, the result in some direct manner echoed their communications and substantive revisions had been made, by the stated authors even if he denies all this; perhaps because the content was problematic.

<sup>19</sup> A necessary corrective to source-uncertain journalism.