

## War on Sensemaking Daniel Schmachtenberger 2019 classic (second listen 2022)

Notes from Dr Vasquez posted to <https://healthythinking.substack.com>

1. Most of the so-called “news” that is distributed to the public is propaganda and narrative warfare.
2. High-signal low-noise
3. **Intact/broken information ecology:** We can’t make good choices without good sensemaking and we can’t have good sensemaking without good information.
4. Spoon-feeding people with 1) simple ideas and 2) small quantities of information at a time will keep them intellectually limited (“stupid”) and thereby becomes a vicious cycle because the only way to expand their minds is to give them complex ideas within a large context for which they have to exert effort to maintain conceptual fragments within working memory.
5. “If I want to be able to make sense of the world well, then I have to work at that.”
6. The ability to focus and maintain attention requires that one engage in **conscious training to develop the ability** to focus and maintain attention.
7. Provocation of an intellectual hormetic response.
8. “If I want to have any type of nuanced view then I have to be able to hold multiple partial views within working memory.”
9. A manipulative technique to gain and maintain power is to make topics appear more complex than they are so that people will resign in insecurity or frustration and thereby defer **sensemaking authority** to the other person/group.
10. He describes this approach as being anti-nihilistic because it forces people to “grow the depth of their care.”
11. Breakdowns in truthfulness, distortions of reality, lying:
  - a. Overt—totally lying
  - b. Omission—excluding important information or context
  - c. Emphasis—distorted truth to mislead
12. **True** versus **truthful** versus **representative**
13. Paradox of our time is that we have increased choice making coupled with decreased since making.
14. Neuroplasticity is the key advantage of humans as it is the basis of learning and adaptation.
15. Limbic hijacks are sticky and optimize for time-on-site, ultimately advertising and sales. Virtually by definition these will be sensational, short, stupid and promote simple-minded fundamentalist ideologies that radicalize the world.
16. Meme complex is include a central meme surrounded by a protector Memes, which for example simplify the worldview to decrease cognitive ability and analysis to thereby protect the central meme.
17. For Memes to have social and cultural potency they have to propagate but also endure and resist change.
18. Defensive memes
19. Propagator Memes
20. Animism to polytheism to monotheism is increasingly centralized, undemocratic, and authoritarian
21. We all receive payoff (social and financial) from resigning our consciousness to groupthink. We get to be part of the group (even if they’re complete idiots hell-bent on their own destruction [or better yet: some other ethnic or religious group that we can project our hate and vulnerability onto]), and we don’t have to extend the effort necessary for actual thinking.
22. Ingroup/outgroup selective pressures
23. “If you choose not to decide you still have made a choice.” The song “Freewill” by the Canadian rock band Rush
24. Game theory selects/optimizes for distortion
25. We live in conceptual worlds that are increasingly decoupled from base reality

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26. **The cognitive complexity of current events has already exceeded collective human capacity in general and certainly individual human capacity. Paradoxically, this forces us to resign sensemaking at a time when we need to engage in more sensemaking.**
27. Our individual desires and survival needs compel us to ignore the biggest problems facing the survival of our communities and species.
28. We make individual decisions based on convenience and survival, such as for example purchasing items made by slaves in China rather than purchasing locally produced goods, while our choices further lead to the destruction of the environment and our local economies.
29. Most people don't have the luxury of contemplating the bigger issues. Like Henry David Thoreau said, "The finer fruits cannot be plucked by them."
30. **Most people are not trying to make sense of the world because they are focused on their own survival (proletariat, working class) or focused on profit (bourgeois/managers, aristocrats/owners).**
31. What is important is selected from what we perceive as real, and if we give up on sensemaking then we're denying ourselves the opportunity to perceive reality and therefore we lose any sense of what's important. This obviously feeds nihilism which then most likely perpetuates the reality and perception of a chaotic world.
32. Schmachtenberger says **giving up on sensemaking is an expression of nihilism and it feeds into further nihilism.** Some people live their entire lives lost in a self-made fog.
33. The reconciliation of **thesis** with **antithesis** is **synthesis**. He uses the example of perceiving a cylinder either as a rectangle or a circle when in fact it is neither and the accurate conceptualization requires a level of thinking on a higher order than that which can perceive a circle or a rectangle. The novel insight is a higher order of thinking not contained within the thesis or the antithesis.
34. "Partiality of perspective" as the basis for conflict
35. The synthesis comes from novel insight which can be described as an order of magnitude greater than that which perceives either the thesis or the antithesis.
36. 1h27m-1h32m: Really excellent description of left/right rhetoric at 1 hour and 28 minutes
37. 1h32m: seeing people as nouns versus seeing them as verbs (dynamism)
38. The impulse that we each have to feel and be perceived as though we are "right" facilitates the blockage to perceiving the truth in another person's perspective or argument. This assumes that we have bought into the **game theory paradigm and which one person wins and another person loses.** Giving up the win/loss paradigm enables me to actually connect with another human being rather than using their words as leverage to my own victory.
39. Truthful, true, representative
40. Parallax: "displacement or difference in the apparent position of an object viewed along two different lines of sight, measured by the angle of inclination between those two lines"
41. Here again uses the example of left eye and right eye contrasted with the higher order of error correction and depth perception and peripheral provision.
42. Interesting conversation about the lack of game theory and the obvious synergy between organs, e.g. the heart and lungs are not in competition with each other but actually function better together

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