

Conspiracy theories, resistance to evidence, and propaganda

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Whether deliberate or not, appeals to alleged conspiracies seem to advance political causes in an extraordinarily powerful way, and they seem to draw people to extreme ideologies. In this talk, I offer an account of why this is so. I argue that some beliefs in conspiracies are *resilient*, in the sense that they are resistant to being revised, while maintaining the semblance of being rationally held in the face of mounting counter-evidence. On my view, conspiracy allegations work as political propaganda when they contribute to the formation and sustainment of these irrationally resilient beliefs in conspiracies. These resilient beliefs in conspiracies, in turn, structure the social-epistemic environment of their believers and isolate them from dissenting voices. Injecting and sustaining conspiracy narratives in the political discourse can thus be an insidious and effective strategy for advancing political agendas and closing off rational debate.