

BAD THINKERS, BAD WRITERS, BAD DEBATERS



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GetPocket.com keeps republishing a 2015 **Aeon** article by Quassim Cassam (above) entitled [*Bad Thinkers*](#). It is about Conspiracy Theorists, whom Cassam has obviously been hired to blackwash. He does a terrible job, of course, since—like everyone else in academia and mainstream media now—he is grossly and ludicrously incompetent. So I have hired myself to do the reverse hatchet job. We will see if I can make better sport of it.

Cassam is a professor of philosophy at the University of Warwick in Coventry, so he should know better, but he nonetheless leads his argument by *explicitly* creating a strawman. He even gives him a name: Oliver. Arguing against strawmen has been seen as a fallacy and a dishonest method since the time of Aristotle. But if you are going to do it, you generally wish to hide the fact you are doing it. You don't prop him up on a stick and give him a fake name like Oliver. Cassam creates Oliver *in the first sentence*: “Meet Oliver”. So we are alerted by the first period that we will not be in the presence of a master polemicist here.

Next, Cassam pre-defines everything Oliver believes as “peculiar”, “gullible”, and wrong, without once showing any evidence it is wrong. This is called begging the question, or leading with your conclusion. So, again, philosophy or debating 101. What this tells us is that Cassam believes his audience knows nothing. Not only does his audience know nothing about logical fallacies, it must know nothing about 911 or any of the other conspiracies he is addressing. Only in this way could that audience swallow anything Cassam says here.

By paragraph three, Cassam is already heavily padding his article with *ad hominem*s. That is a method of argument that ignores the argument on the table and goes for cheap shots against the people involved. Cassam isn't man enough to insult any real persons, so he just insults Oliver and “people”.

By the end of paragraph two, Cassam has already graduated to bald lies. He says:

It's obvious why people believe it's raining when they have compelling evidence, but it's far from obvious why Oliver believes that 9/11 was an inside job when he has access to compelling evidence that it *wasn't* an inside job.

Not even a footnote for us, Quassim? Where is that compelling evidence? I have been looking for it for over 18 years and haven't found it. Don't tell me: the *911 Commission Report*? *Popular Mechanics*? Cue laugh track.

But *Popular Mechanics* was rigorous and well written compare to Cassam—which is not to say it was rigorous or well written. Cassam's argument is not really an argument. It is just a watery, meandering compilation of transparent debating tricks strung together, misused, and ultimately backfired due to Cassam's ineptness.

We see this most clearly in paragraph four, where Cassam has exhausted for the time his bag of fallacies, and decides to move on to “creating new theory”. Yes, we are in the presence of an innovator here. He says he “wants to argue for something that is controversial”. And that is? Conspiracy theory is a sign of a lack of “intellectual character”.

Problem is, at no time in the article does Cassam actually get down to arguing that, showing that, or proving that. In fact, **he just states it and immediately drops it.** The section ends with that claim. We then get three little asterisks, some double spacing, and a new tack.

That new tack flops around for a while, but ends up here:

Those who know him well say that he is easily duped, and you have independent evidence that he is careless in his thinking, with little understanding of the difference between genuine evidence and unsubstantiated speculation.

But wait, Oliver is just a strawman. He doesn't exist, and Cassam admits that. So who are “those who know him”? Where is the “independent evidence”? Oh, that's right: nowhere. Cassam is just pulling this stuff out of a rabbit's hat. So while we have no evidence about Oliver, since he is just a scarecrow, we have evidence right in front of our eyes that Cassam is wildly dishonest. Every word we have read in his article has *proved* that he will piece together a pretend argument with zero content and maximum uncton. We have no evidence about Oliver's character, but hundreds of words standing as proof of Cassam's character.

Cassam seems to have some inkling that his argument is weak to the point of absurdity, so he returns to his handbook for help. What is the one thing he hasn't stirred in yet? Ah, **shaming**, that's what he needs:

The only hope of overcoming self-ignorance in such cases is to accept that other people - your co-workers, your spouse, your friends - probably know your intellectual character better than you do. But even that won't necessarily help. After all, it might be that refusing to listen to what other people say about you *is* one of your intellectual character traits. Some defects are

incurable.

Here we have the great philosopher telling you not to trust logic, reason, or years of research. Instead, just do what those around you do. They know more about everything than you do: they watch TV and believe everything they are told. In this way, they even know you better than you know yourself. Despite being on their phones all day—when they aren't watching *Game of Thrones* or *The Bachelor*—these people have you, and everything else, pegged. Why not just go with the flow?

Amazingly, Cassam finally dumps Oliver only to replace him with **the underwear bomber**. He says that Oliver is fictional, but real-world examples of intellectual vices in action are not hard to find. Cassam tells us Abdulmuttalab was taken in by Anwar al-Awlaki sermons due to his intellectual character. You have to laugh. Cassam really thinks we were born yesterday, doesn't he? Sorry, bub, we know Abdulmuttalab and al-Awlaki were *also* fictional. Yes, they existed and exist, but only as CIA agents manufacturing events. Concerning al-Awlaki, even Wiki admits,

U.S. government officials say that, as well as being a senior recruiter and motivator, he was centrally involved in planning terrorist operations for the Islamist militant group al-Qaeda, [\[7\]](#) [\[8\]](#) [\[9\]](#) [\[10\]](#) [\[11\]](#) but have not released evidence that could support this statement.

That's sentence number two on his page. You may also be interested in the next four sentences:

Al-Awlaki became the first U.S. citizen to be targeted and killed by a U.S. drone strike without the rights of due process being afforded. [\[12\]](#) [\[13\]](#) President Barack Obama ordered the strike which was effectively ordering the execution of a U.S. citizen without a trial. [\[14\]](#) His son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki (a 16-year-old U.S. citizen), was killed in a U.S. drone strike two weeks later. [\[15\]](#) On January 29, 2017, al-Awlaki's 8-year-old daughter, Nawar al-Awlaki, was killed in a U.S. commando attack in Yemen that was ordered by President Donald Trump. [\[16\]](#) [\[17\]](#) [\[18\]](#) [\[19\]](#)

Cassam may answer that I shouldn't get my information from Wikipedia. And I don't, as you are about to see. But Wikipedia is part of the mainstream media. No one has accused Wikipedia of being anything else.

In fact, I don't believe any of those people were killed, and there is no evidence they were. But that doesn't make the mainstream story less shocking. American citizens accept that story without blinking an eye, which is very concerning in itself. It means they don't care that those Presidents are not only ignoring the Constitution, they are ignoring the foundations of the legal system that go back to the Magna Carta and before. They are apparently murderers, since they are ordering executions without trials.

This is more interesting than anything in Cassam's pathetic article, so I will allow myself to digress into it for a while. There are many good **reasons** I don't believe anything about al-Awlaki, and I will share them with you. To start with, he is actually a **Nasser**, which is a Jewish name. In that way, it is sort of like the name **Hussein**—always a pointer to hijinx. In my previous papers, we have seen many people with the name Nasser in the Middle East and the US, and they normally turn out to be Jews in turbans, pretending to be Egyptians, Palestinians, Syrians, Saudis or Iranians. They are very versatile. See for example Nasser **Judeh**, Abdelkarim al-Nasser, Fu'ad Nassar, and many others. We even saw one involved in the [US Gymnastics fake event](#).

On the news, al-Awlaki was always sold as a dangerous imam from Yemen, but he was actually born in

New Mexico, just down the road from Los Alamos. His father was a Fulbright Scholar who got a PhD in economics from the University of Nebraska. They are close relatives of Yemen's Prime Minister Ali Mujur, and al-Awlaki's father was in the cabinet of the previous Prime Minister Ali Saleh. So these people were not revolutionaries or from the fringe in any way. The government of Yemen was a close US ally from 1990 on, due to the grovelling of Saleh. Saleh had gotten his start back in the 1960s, when he was involved in the **Nasserist**-inspired* army coup that overthrew King al-Badr. There's that name again. Just a coincidence, right?

Nasser, I mean Al-Awlaki graduated from Colorado State University, which he illegally attended on a foreign student's visa, claiming to have been born in Yemen. While still at CSU, he (allegedly) went to Afghanistan to train with the *mujahideen*, where he was allegedly radicalized. Seems like he would have needed to have been radicalized *before* he went, but we aren't told how this rich boy was radicalized in Colorado. Despite being a radical, he then went to George Washington University to work on his PhD in education. As radicals and imams do.

The mainstream admits al-Awlaki was an imam by 1994, when he was just 22, despite having no religious qualifications or education. Hmmmm, what could it mean?

Al-Awlaki was caught more than three times soliciting prostitutes. The first two times he was convicted, but given light sentences. The other times were after 9/11, and he was allowed to skate altogether. This indicates his position as an imam was a fraud, since real Muslims are obviously not allowed to visit prostitutes. He should have been fired as an imam after the first conviction. He wasn't.

In early 2001 al-Awlaki was in the DC-area, where he “led academic discussions frequented by FBI Director of Counter-Intelligence for the Middle East [Gordon M. Snow](#).” No really. His Wiki page admits it. Notice it doesn't say that these academic discussions were infiltrated by Snow in disguise. So my assumption is that al-Awlaki was an FBI/CIA asset. In support of this, they admit the FBI knew about al-Awlaki from at least 1999, but never did anything. More support comes from his actual location in the DC area: Falls Church, which is just south of Langley. It is about two miles south of McLean. Then there is this:

In 2010, [Fox News](#) and the [New York Daily News](#) reported that some months after the 9/11 attacks, a Pentagon employee invited al-Awlaki to a luncheon in the Secretary's Office of General Counsel. The U.S. Secretary of the Army had suggested that a [moderate Muslim](#) be invited to give a talk. [\[85\]](#) [\[86\]](#)

They give you all the dots, and only stop short of connecting them for you.

In 2002 al-Awlaki was charged by a Colorado judge for passport fraud, based on the story I told you above about his time at CSU. However, the US Attorney's Office stepped in and *voided the charges*. They then lied, saying this was due to statute of limitations running out, but that was later proved false in a 2012 investigation by FoxNews. So the government was just protecting its asset. They even give us the numerology, when there is no need to. At Wiki we learn the motion for rescinding the arrest warrant was filed **October 11**. Aces and eights. Chai. Ask yourself why they included that trivial information on al-Awlaki's page?

They now admit al-Awlaki received more than \$20,000 in scholarship money illegally, and skated. Proving once more he was a protected asset from the beginning. The rest of al-Awlaki's bio is the

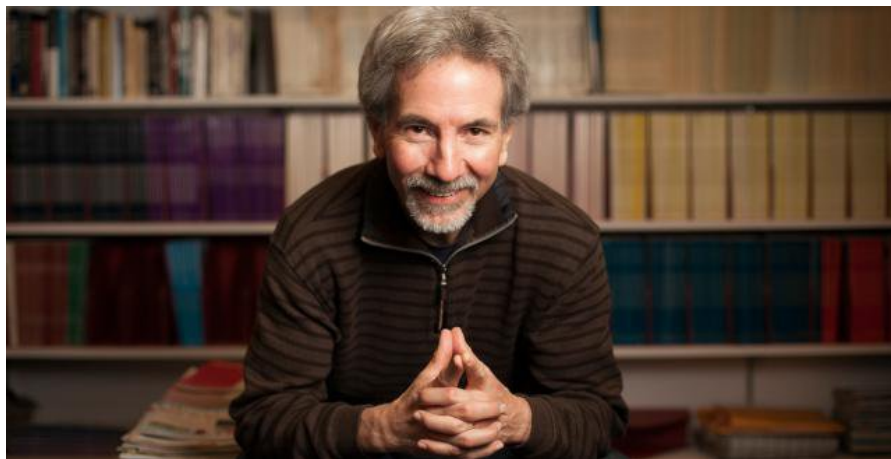
usual joke, and requires no more comment.

Since we are off looking at names and connections, you may be interested to know that Wiki admits Quassim Cassam is a Gujarati from Mombasa. These Indians in Kenya are the very highest merchant class, basically running the place, which explains why Cassam is so heavily promoted despite having no talents. Wikipedia conveniently puts it this way:

All throughout history [24] Gujaratis have earned a reputation as being India's greatest merchants, [25] [26] [27] industrialists and business entrepreneurs [28] and have therefore been at forefront of migrations all over the world, particularly to regions that were part of the British empire such as Fiji, Hong Kong, New Zealand, East Africa and countries in Southern Africa. [29]

Note the British Empire, which means we are being told this is British East India Company, or the Phoenician Navy. Everywhere you go, there they are, peddling their artistic, scientific, and humanistic disabilities as fascinating.

In the next section, Cassam begins waffling and backpeddling, as these academics usually do. They get halfway into something, realize they have painted themselves into a corner, and panic. For example, Cassam quotes Rosenfeld professor of psychology at Cornell, Thomas Gilovich,



who thinks questionable beliefs *aren't* caused by people being stupid or gullible. Rather than argue against that directly—as he needs to—Cassam retreats even further into Gilovich's own examples, one of which is the “hot hand” in basketball. Gilovich uses statistical analysis to “prove” the hot hand doesn't exist. Each shot is totally random. But Cassam doesn't analyze that claim, either. Instead, he backs up *another* step into Gilovich, telling us Gilovich presented his analysis to basketball coaches, who dismissed it as counter to all their experience. Does Cassam have anything intelligent to say about that? No. He just moves back *another* step, taking umbrage at the coaches along with his colleague Gilovich. They are both offended that the coaches didn't bow down before the computer. Which finally brings Cassam to his point: these coaches are closed-minded, and therefore they are another example of a lack of intellectual character.

Wow. So what did we learn from that? Nothing, beyond the fact that Cassam doesn't know how to write or think. Remember, Cassam was supposed to be telling us why Gilovich is wrong in thinking questionable beliefs aren't caused by people being stupid or gullible. Instead, he sidetracked us into the

hot hand, statistics, and coaches who aren't interested in egghead statistics. But other than confusing us, he hasn't achieved anything for any of his theses. The only reason I can think of that he mentioned any of this was to drop Gilovich's name. Maybe Gilovich paid him for this product placement? Or maybe Cassam thought he could save his article with a lot of quotes and quickly changing stories? Who knows?

What I do know is that this kind of writing couldn't have made it past my highschool English teacher. She would have sent it back to Cassam with large sections red-pencilled. She would have struck a bold line through this entire paragraph, as well as the next.

Thinking we aren't confused enough, Cassam drops that and pulls in the Situationists. Situationists also believe things aren't caused by character flaws. They are caused by situations. Cassam tells us of an experiment on campus where hurrying determined reactions, but dismisses the Situationist argument as flawed since “examples such as Oliver and Gilovich’s basketball coach suggest that intellectual character traits *do* explain a person’s intellectual conduct in an important range of cases.” Again, nothing is going on there that could be called an argument. Cassam just mentions something and then dismisses it. Basically, he is saying the Situationists are wrong because he had already created a gullible strawman and a basketball coach. I really can't believe this man has a university job.

After three more little asterisks, Cassam really starts to implode. He realizes he has just entered his last section without scoring even a tiny point, so it is now time to try to predict the response. What will people say when they read this garbage? No real author from the past would have stooped to trying to predict a response, one because it can't be done, two because it is unnecessary, and three because it is so sad. It is a transparent sign of weakness, so no self-respecting person would do it regardless. But modern writers almost always do. He says

In practical terms, one of the hardest things about dealing with people such as Oliver is that they are more than likely to accuse you of the same intellectual vices that you detect in them. You say that Oliver is gullible for believing his 9/11 conspiracy theory; he retorts that you are gullible for believing the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission.

And Cassam's answer is?

That doesn't excuse Oliver. The fact is that his theory is no good, whereas there is every reason to believe that aircraft impacts did bring down the Twin Towers.

Begging the question again, isn't it? I guess that Cassam—being a philosophy professor—felt he needed to bookend his article with logical fallacies, just to be sure. Better to just state “there is every reason” than to give us even one reason, since there is in fact no good reason to believe it. Only those who haven't studied the evidence believe it.

Cassam also bookends with the strawman, bringing Oliver back, since that is all he had from the beginning. Good old Oliver, the guy who is too dumb to believe the experts, when they tell him things that contradict each other and all the laws of physics. Smart people are smart enough to know you have to believe what experts who are hired by the government say, and that contradictions don't matter as long as experts say them.

But Cassam has scared himself by allowing Oliver to talk back to him even for a moment. He has to close by asking us what can be done about poor old Oliver. Oliver who has just been convicted in the court of bad writing. Oliver, who has committed the cardinal sin of thinking for himself and doing his own research. Cassam has already told us we should pity him, shame him, and ostracize him, but Cassam wants to end on a note of “humility” and inclusiveness—playing to the audience of boobies he thinks he has. He says we should educate Oliver and teach him to think critically. Yes, by all means, enroll poor Oliver in one of Cassam's classes, where he will be educated in the art of logical fallacies, shallow Mesmerism, bowing to all authority, and literary self-destruction. He will then fit right in to the Modern world, and his family and friends will love him immensely.

But that isn't the funniest thing here. The funniest thing is that since this article was published by Aeon and promoted heavily, it means someone in the CIA passed this article for release. Some committee somewhere read this thing and thought Cassam had completed his assignment. Maybe they sent Cassam a memo: “Cherished comrade Cassam, salutations and highest regards for your brilliant piece. You really laid one on the hated conspiracy theorists. The committee will be glad to use you for future similar projects, and also for promoting face masks and hand sanitizer”.

But I have to wonder what Gilovich thinks about being included in this. I wonder if he asked for his money back. Probably not, since he is on the same level—and from the same background**—as Cassam. He probably bought Cassam a beer Shirley Temple in the Intel rec-room.

*That Nasser was Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein, second President of Egypt. Notice that we get both names with him: Nasser *and* Hussein.

**Gilovich is a fellow at the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, proving he is a spook. That was founded in 1976 by Paul Kurtz, remember: Jewish of course, from Columbia University and the Army. It connects us to CSICOP, James Randi, Michael Shermer, and all the other usual suspects. We may assume this is where Cassam's article came from.