

Ignorance and the Community of Knowledge

Steven Sloman

Cognitive, Linguistic, & Psychological Sciences

Brown University

Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics survey

- Over 80 percent of Americans support:
 1. labeling of GMO foods “produced with genetic engineering”
 2. “mandatory labels on foods containing DNA”

The Knowledge Illusion

Rozenblit & Keil procedure applied to policy:

– National flat tax; Cap and trade; Unilateral sanctions on Iran

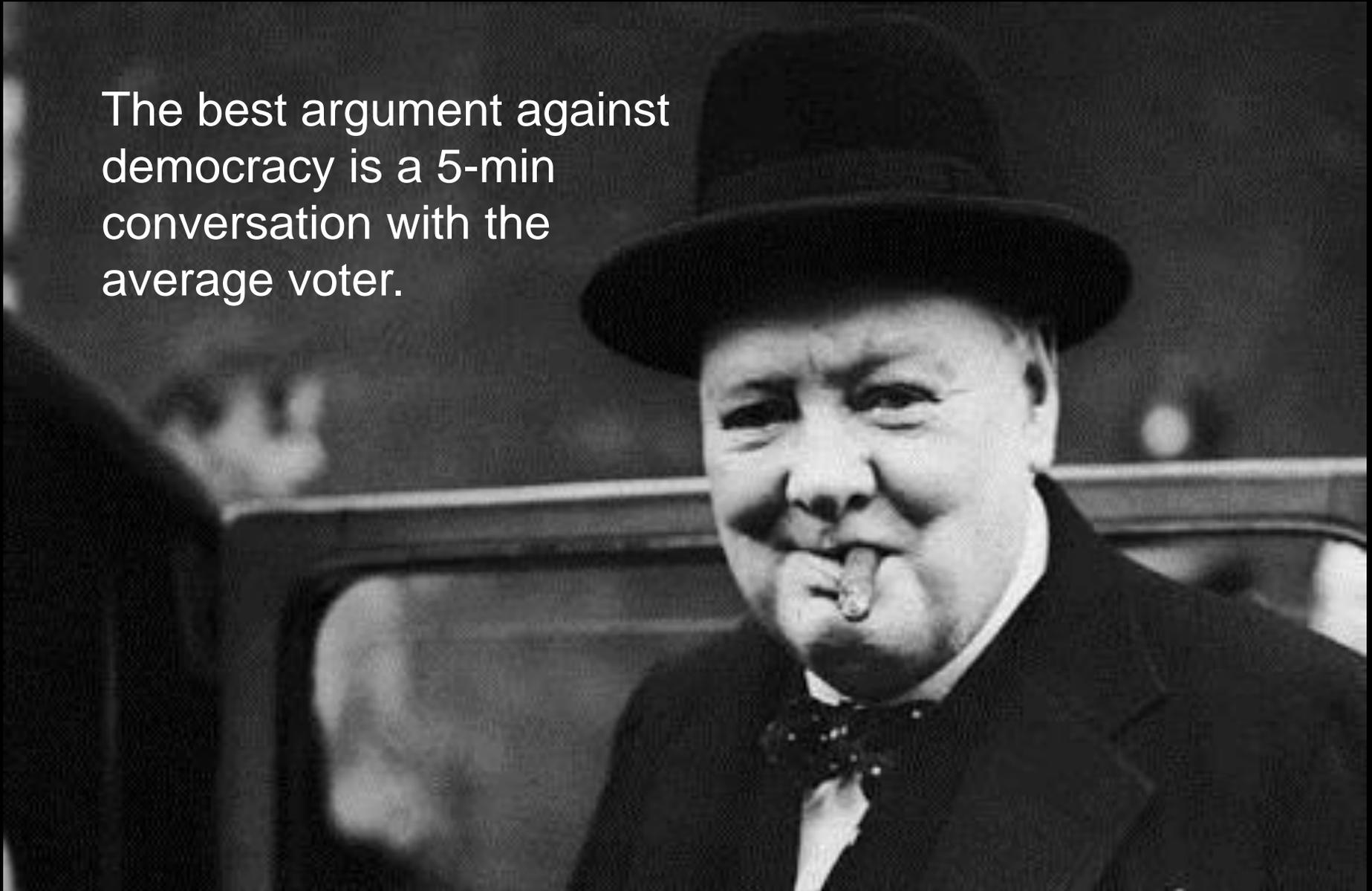
→ Causal explanation reduced

1. sense of understanding

2. hubris

• Reasons did not

The best argument against democracy is a 5-min conversation with the average voter.

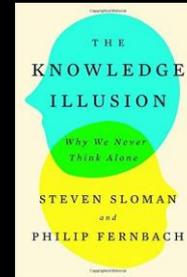


People aren't storage devices

A Few Hundred
Thousand Verbatim
Copies



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= 16 x



The Community of Knowledge



- Ideology as a house of cards
- Emotion, not just thought



Division of Cognitive Labor

Babak Hemmatian: Single-Phrase Explanations

A person observes a number of stars whose brightness varies greatly over time. **She decides by herself to use the name Evans star for stars with this quality.** She realizes that nothing else is known about these stars.

Later, while with a friend, she observes a new star whose brightness varies greatly over time. Her friend asks: “Why is this star like this?,” to which she responds: “Because it is an Evans star.”

To what extent has the friend answered the question (1-7)?

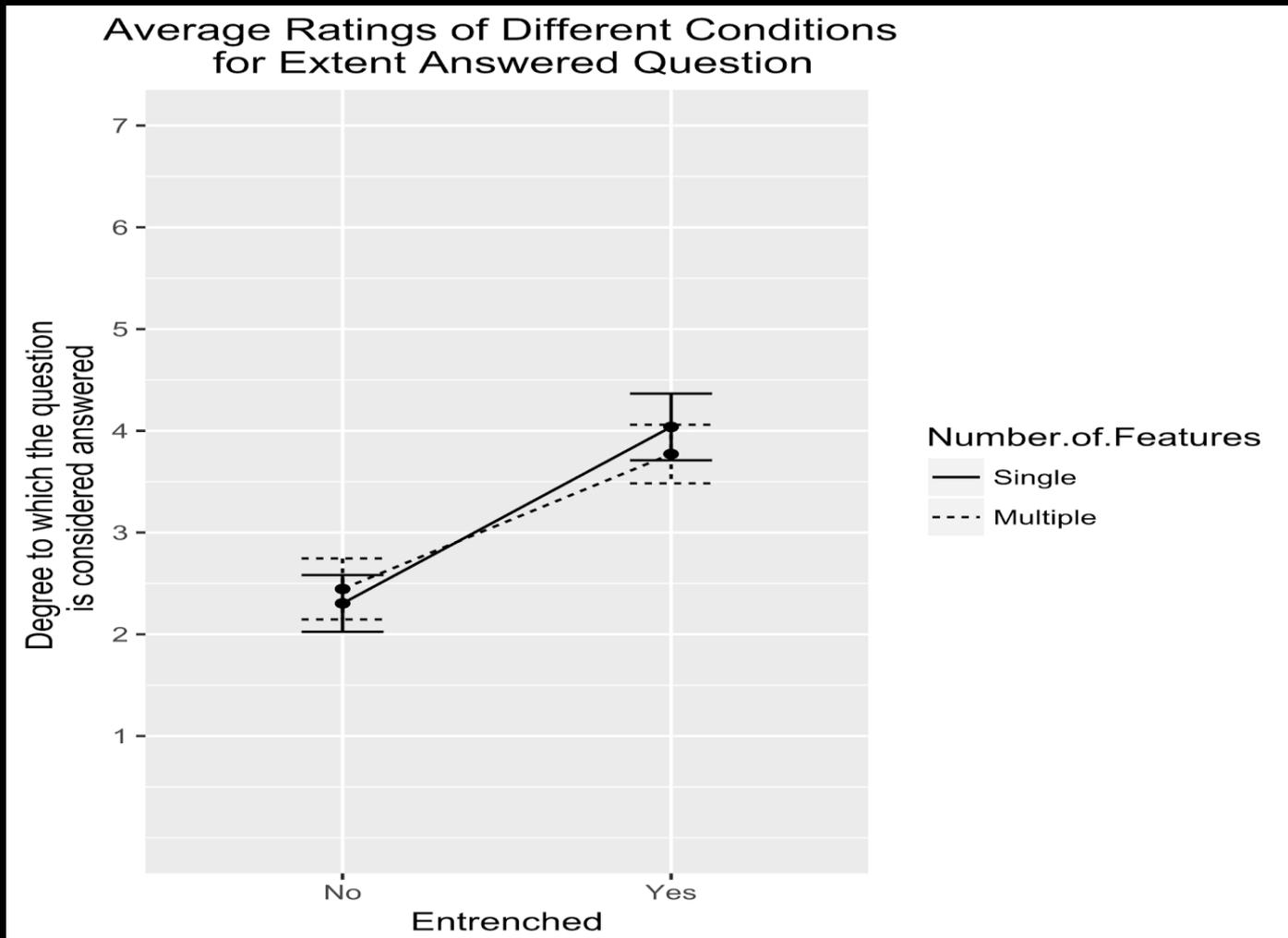
Entrenching the Explanation

A person observes a number of stars whose brightness varies greatly over time. **She learns that the accepted name for stars with this quality is Evans star.** She realizes that nothing else is known about these stars.

Later, while with a friend, she observes a new star whose brightness varies greatly over time. Her friend asks: “Why is this star like this?,” to which she responds: “Because it is an Evans star.”

To what extent has the friend answered the question (1-7)?

Goodness of Explanation as a Function of Label Entrenchment



Disrupting the Echo Chamber

- Knowledge bubbles
 - need a more inclusive community.
- A community of expertise:
 - Expertise is everywhere
 - About collaboration.

Harnessing Technology to Increase Buy-in

➔ New technologies allow broad, dynamic epistemic communities

1. Crowdsourcing to aggregate diverse expertise.
2. Blockchain technologies: Sophisticated methods for effectively sharing reputation, risks, and rewards even in the absence of trust.

Conclusions

1. Humility is appropriate.
2. Thinking is a communal enterprise.
3. So is explaining.
4. Ignorance enables a form of bliss:
Outsourcing cognitive tasks.
 - Must appeal to anyone who has knowledge or a stake

THE
KNOWLEDGE
ILLUSION

*Why We Never
Think Alone*

STEVEN SLOMAN
and
PHILIP FERNBACH

Raffaello Cortina Editore

Steven Sloman
Philip Fernbach
**L'illusione della
conoscenza**

Perché non pensiamo
mai da soli



SCIENZA
E IDEE

Collana diretta
da Giulio Giorello