

## Pareidolia

Written by Bob Alexander

Tuesday, 11 March 2014 21:33 - Last Updated Tuesday, 11 March 2014 21:57

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The saying “*There’s a sucker born every minute.*” has been kicking around since the late nineteenth century. The indomitable American “can do” attitude has made that adage an extremely lowball estimate. I watched a video clip on

*Crooks & Liars*

the other day excerpted from

*Cashin’ In,*

a Fox News program hosted by Eric Bolling. It weirded me out so much I had to click on over to the Fox News website and watch the entire segment. I’ve never done that before. I don’t have the stomach lining for Fox. But this was so compelling I had to.

But first ...

We’ve all received the scam email about helping a wealthy Nigerian move his millions out of the country into American banks. If you agree to help the guy out you get to keep a *huge* percentage of the money. The cost to victims of these advance-fee frauds like the Nigerian bank scam went from \$100 million in the U.S. in 1997 to an estimated \$6.3 billion in 2008 and \$9.3 billion in 2009 worldwide.

Mano Singham writing about the scam in Freethought Blogs said, “*I am pretty certain that all the readers of this blog have received similar appeals. I am also certain that all of us have been struck by the sheer crudeness of the messages that make them seem such obvious scams that only an idiot would fall for, and asked ourselves why they don’t try to make it at least a little more sophisticated so that they have a better chance at success? It turns out that a computer scientist at Microsoft ... did a cost-benefit analysis and realized that this crudeness is a **feature**, not a bug.*”

The email is specifically *designed* to weed out everyone who sees the appeal as an obvious scam. The con artists are trolling for the dumbasses who believe somebody they don’t know is willing to hand over a fortune to someone they’ve never met.

Farther down on the sucker spectrum the Asch Conformity Experiments, carried out in the fifties by Dr. Solomon Asch, proved it’s not that difficult to get educated people to make the wrong choice.

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Asch conducted a “vision test” with eight college students. But seven of the students were “in” on the experiment. The group was shown two cards. One had three lines of differing lengths labeled A, B, and C, and the other card had one target line that was the same length as C.

Each person in the room had to state aloud which comparison line (A, B or C) was the same length as the target line. The answer was always obvious. The real participant sat at the end of the row and gave his or her answer last. Asch was interested to see what the real participant would say when the seven confederates gave an obviously incorrect answer. Even though they could clearly see the line the group picked was not the same length as the target line, on average *about a third* of the real participants went along with the group. Overall in the experimental group *75% of the participants* gave an incorrect answer to at least one question.

Now ... what the hell does all that have to do with *Cashin' In* on Fox News? I'll get there ... trust me.

Eric Bolling was joined by the *Cashin' In* crew: Wayne Rogers, Michelle Fields, Kimberly Guilfoyle, and Eboni K. Williams. I knew Wayne Rogers because he used to be on M\*A\*S\*H a million years ago but I had to Google the three women to find out they're “experts” that pop up on FOX all over the place.

The week's topic? *Taught to Take Instead of Make*. I took notes. In 7 minutes and 43 seconds the panel blasted out these talking points:

Poor people were buying lobster with food stamps.

Obama has transformed the country into an entitlement society.

All this “free” stuff is paid for by taxpayers.

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Are you going to raise your child to be a maker or taker because the government will contradict “maker” parents and stifle the entrepreneurial spirit in your child.

“They” have killed motivation.

There should be more regulatory hoops on food stamps.

Children are being taught to be anti-pro capitalism when real freedom comes from competition in the free market.

Food stamps are being used to buy “booze, weed, and lap dances.”

We should cut food stamps. 20% of Americans are on food stamps and that’s too much. People are being incentivized to be lazy in this entitlement society.

Obama care doesn’t work.

Poor people are being taught how to get over on the government.

Poor people get help with their housing, food stamps, heating, and Obama-phones. When will everybody get a free car? Wait ... they already do ... the cash for clunkers program.

There should be stricter guidelines on these gimme gimme gimme programs.

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We've bailed out homeowners but we can't afford this ... it's not sustainable.

These people didn't blink, take a breath, or tell the truth. The *Cashin' In* panel exuded the faux spontaneity of a Popiel infomercial including moments of fake laughter for the fake jokes. This wasn't a *panel* discussion. It was entirely faked. Each head was onscreen for the exact amount of time it took to punch out a talking point. Then cut to the next head and the next talking point. I can't stress enough how *inauthentic* the entire segment was. The point was to cram as many pro-capitalism, anti-poor people statements into the segment under the *guise* of a panel discussion. During this steady barrage of gibberish it turned from an infomercial into something more like Orwell's Two Minutes of Hate. It also differed from a real infomercial in one critical point. The Ronco Rotisserie *actually cooks food*. It does what the infomercial says it will do. The *Cashin' In* crew *never* proved that what they say actually works in the real world. They didn't even try. It was obviously 7 minutes and 43 seconds of rehearsed, tightly scripted propaganda.

Well ... obvious to you or me ... but not to the drones that regularly plug into Fox News. Y'see Fox News isn't designed for us the same way the Nigerian Bank Scam isn't designed for us. We're not the target Fox News goes trolling for. But someone with zero sense of history, and no idea why a record number of households are getting food stamps, could easily be convinced by five "experts" on Fox News relentlessly yelling the incorrect answers. An ignorant viewer would naturally conform and embrace the lies.

Which brings us to the Vocabulary Word of the Day.

Pareidolia ... Pear-eye-dole-ya ... a word I first saw two days ago. It's the psychological phenomenon where we see a pattern or meaning where it does not actually exist. In the clouds, in constellations or in the flakes of Wheaties floating in a bowl of milk. It's why we "see" the face of The Man in the Moon, or the Virgin Mary on a grilled cheese sandwich. It's the instinctive tendency to find familiar shapes in chaotic images.

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And another reason why millions of Americans see Reality on Fox News.