

AUTHORITARIANISM AS A DEVELOPMENT DISORDER

Unable to deal with a complex world

Dr. Tjeerd Andringa

Unable to deal with a complex world

The root of authoritarianism



Authoritarianism

Unable to deal with a complex world

(Andringa et al., 2013)

(Stenner, 2005)

"authoritarianism [...] is heavily determined by cognitive incapacity to deal with complexity and difference"

"authoritarians are not endeavoring to avoid complex thinking so much as a complex world.

(Stenner, 2009)

Authoritarian dynamic

Solution to reduce world complexity

Narrowness of comfort zone

Perceived challenge to authorities or the consensus

Intolerance to diversity

= Degree of Normative authoritarianism x threat level

threat level

(Stenner, 2005)

Unable to deal with a complex world

"authoritarianism [...] is heavily determined by cognitive incapacity to deal with complexity and difference"

"authoritarians are not endeavoring to avoid complex thinking so much as a complex world.

Stenner, K. (2005). The authoritarian dynamic (New York; First Edition). Cambridge University Press.

Canceling

Cancel: knowledge exploration
Promote: shared facts and rules

Make "the world" simpeler

Intolerance to diversity = Degree of authoritarianism x Normative threat level

In-group

Unable to deal with a complex world

Hide your inability

Promote: social mimicry

Cancel: sources of complexity & difference

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(Denham & Andringa 2021)

My colleagues

"authoritarianism [...] is heavily determined by cognitive incapacity to deal with complexity and difference"

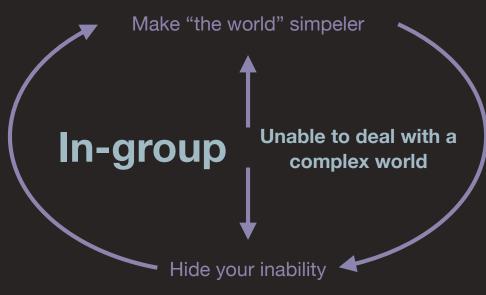
"authoritarians are not endeavoring to avoid complex thinking so much as a complex world.

Two approaches to learning

Most courses

Cancel: knowledge exploration

Promote: shared facts and rules



Promote: social mimicry

Cancel: sources of complexity & difference

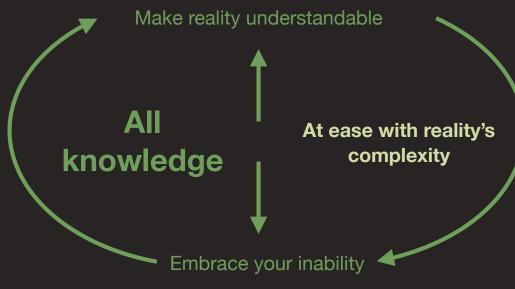
Learning to produce the expected behavior, on command

Training

Systems view on Life

Promote: knowledge exploration

Challenge: shared facts and rules



Promote: self-development

Challenge: sources of simplicity and uniformity

Learning to trust the quality of your knowledge assessment skills

Education

Two strategies → two perceived worlds -

Avoid

complexity

8

difference

No development

(Denham & Andringa 2021)

A brutal and unpredictable world

earning to trust the quality of you knowledge assessment skills

Embrace

complexity

&

difference

Developing understanding

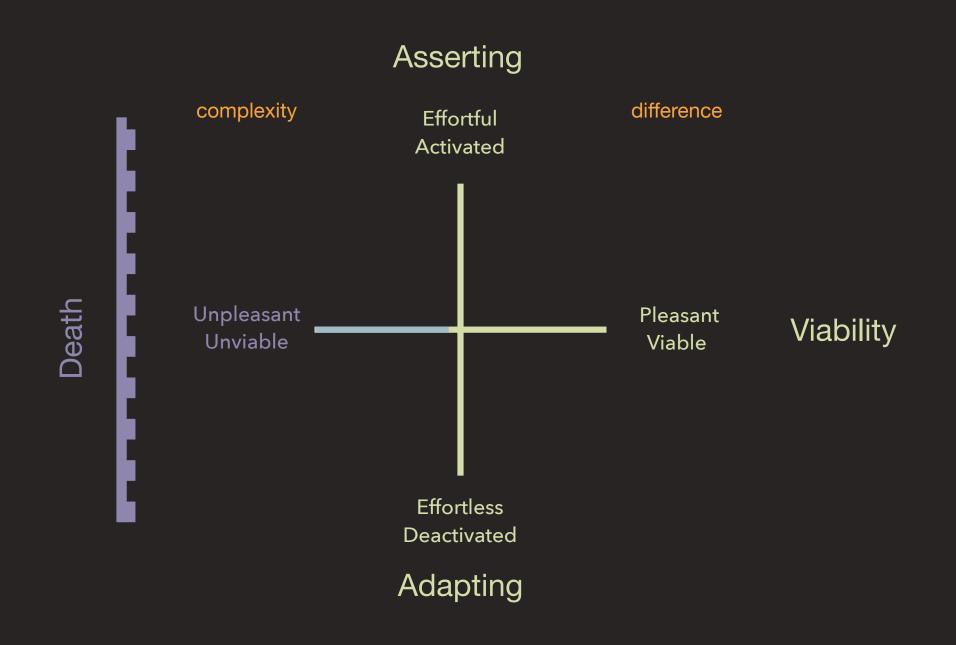
An interesting and dependable world

Core cognition

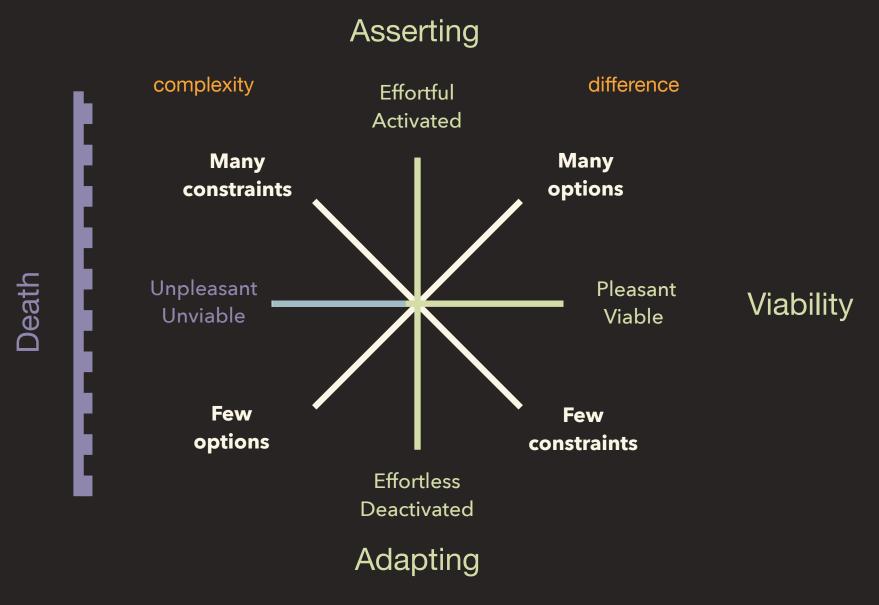
How life learns to deal with complexity & difference



Life: behaviors that maximize viability-

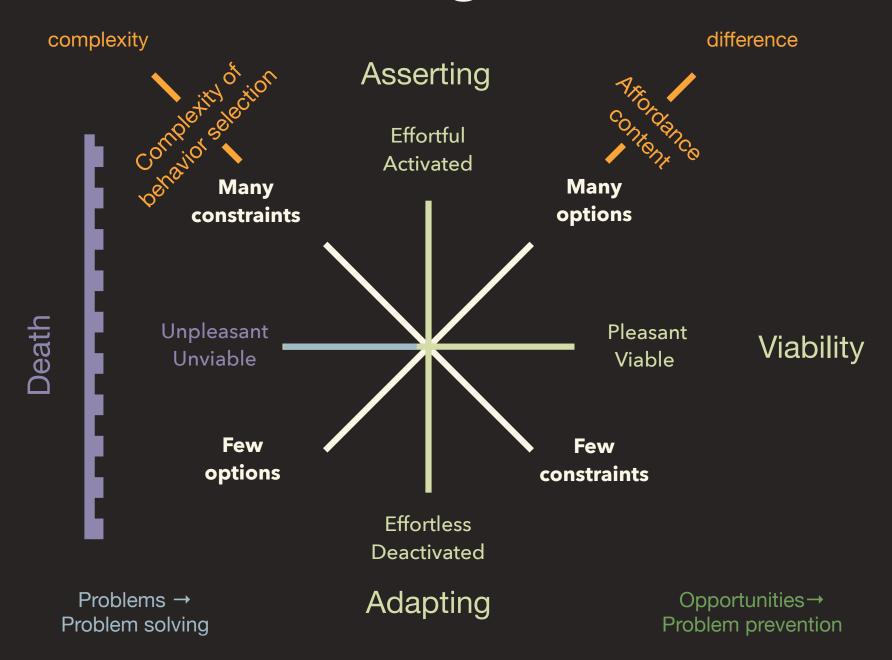


Life: constraints & options



(van Den Bosch et al., 2018)

Core cognition

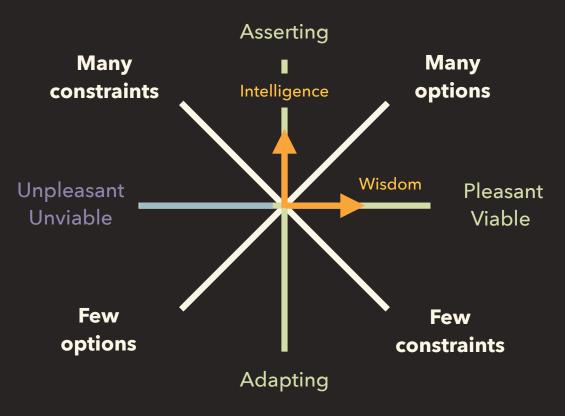


Intelligence vs Wisdom

Intelligence as in IQ-test:

Problems → Problem solving

The ability to provide (known) answers to self-contained problems



Opportunities→
Problem prevention

Wisdom:

The ability to contribute to a flourishing world unproblematic

(Fontaine er al. 2008)

Appraisal: state of self & situation-

Intelligence:

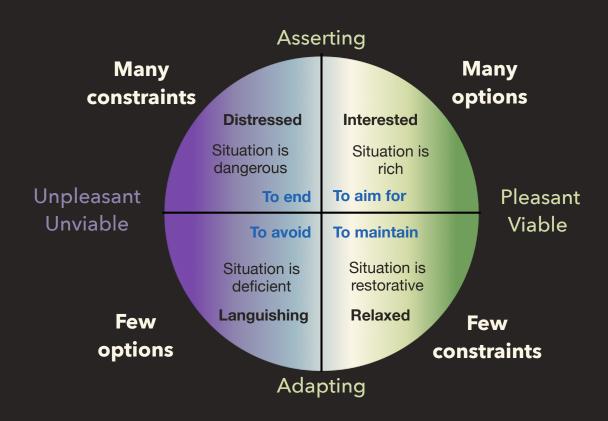
The ability to provide (known) answers to self-contained problems

Wisdom:

The ability to contribute to a flourishing world

Allow everyone, as much as feasible, to follow its natural/innate dynamics

Improving conditions for survival



Improving conditions for flourishing

(Andringa&Lanser, 2013)

Coping — Co-creation

Intelligence:

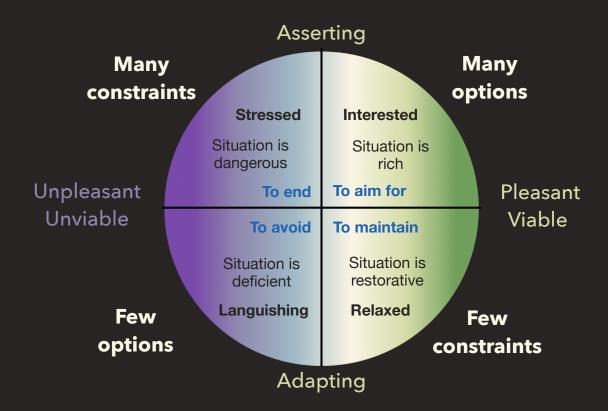
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Improving conditions for flourishing

(Andringa et al., 2015)

Focus on a problematic situation



End of a problematic situation

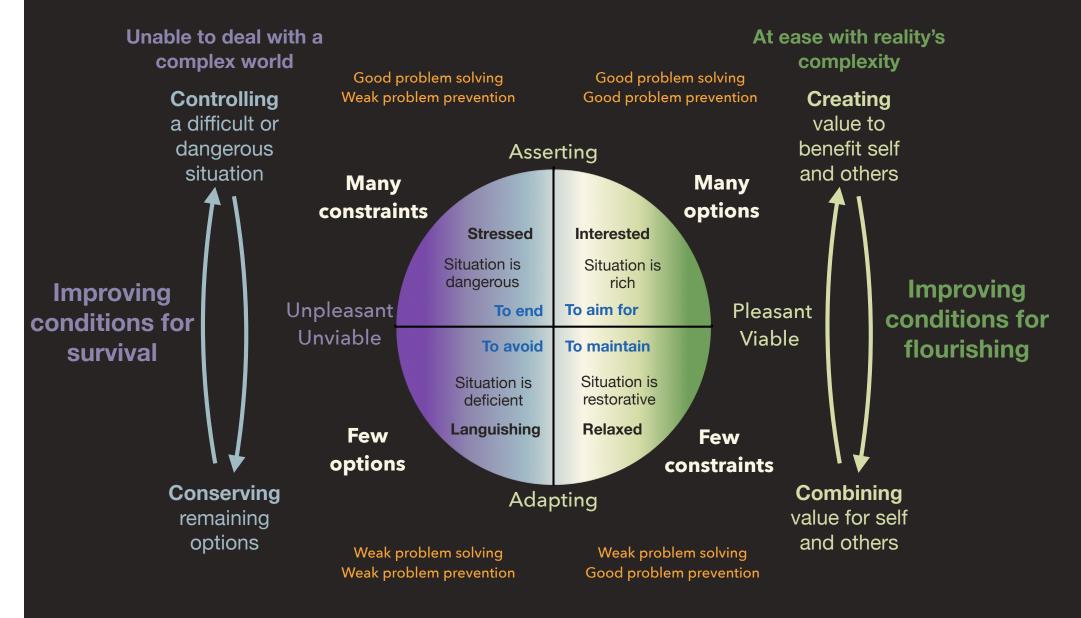


Focus on viable futures

(Andringa&Denham, 2021

Coping mode

Co-creation mode



Different worlds

Controlling

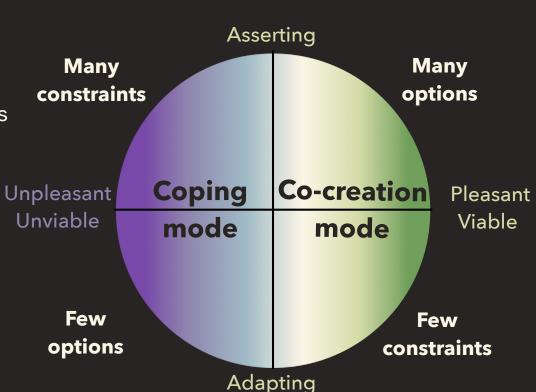
a difficult or dangerous situation

A self-contained world defined by many constraints

A self-contained world with limited known options satisfying known constraints

A world with few options

Conserving remaining options



Creating

value to benefit self and others

A world with unlimited options to benefit self and others

Combining value for self and others

Two closed worlds

Controlling a difficult or dangerous situation

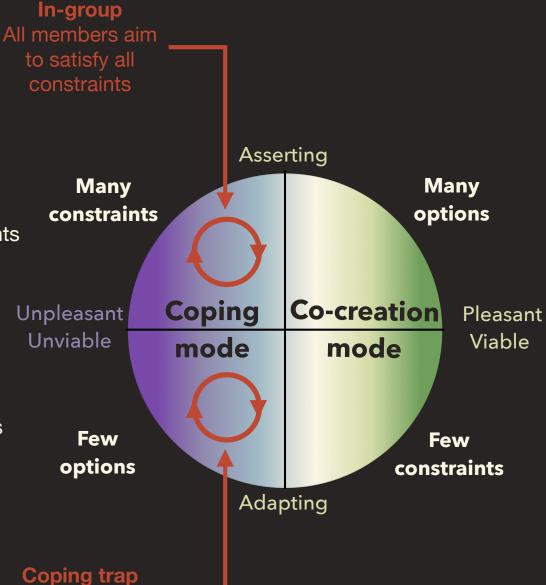
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A world with few options

Conserving remaining options

Solutions fail or lead to new problems



Creating value to

benefit self and others

A world with unlimited options to benefit self and others

Combining value for self and others

Autonomy development

Problem solving:

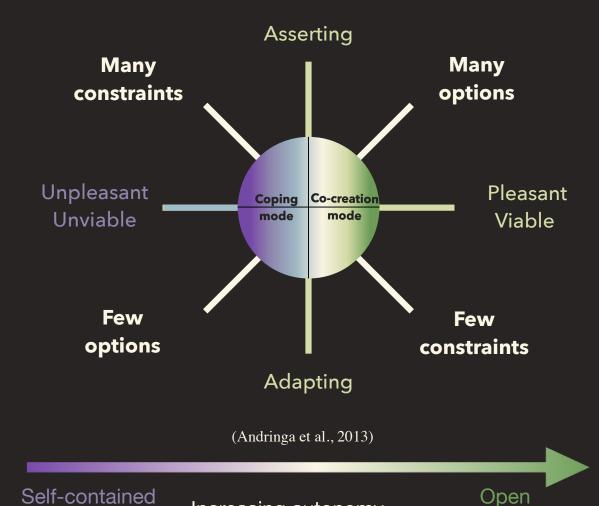
Finding the most viable and least damaging options to self, given all constraints

Many Few constraints options

External locus of control

Severe limitations are imposed

world



Increasing autonomy

(Andringa & Angyal, 2019)

Responsible autonomy:

Using the many options to freely improve viability while minimizing negative side effects (harm)



Internal locus of control

Freedom to select co-creative futures

world

Knowledge vs understanding-

Rationality

Declarative knowledge:
Facts
Procedural knowledge:
IF conditions
THEN actions

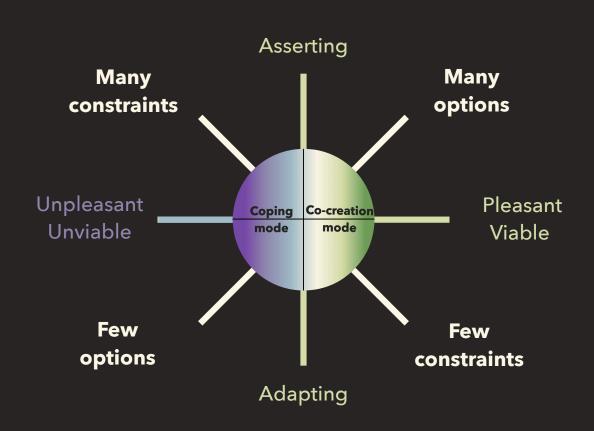
Problem solving:

Finding the most viable and least damaging options to self, given all constraints

Many Few options

External locus of control

Impose severe limitations



Understanding

How to promote innate dynamics at all scales and build on that?

(Andringa & Angyal, 2019)

Responsible autonomy:

Using the many options to freely improve viability while minimizing negative side effects (harm)



Internal locus of control

Freedom to select co-creative futures

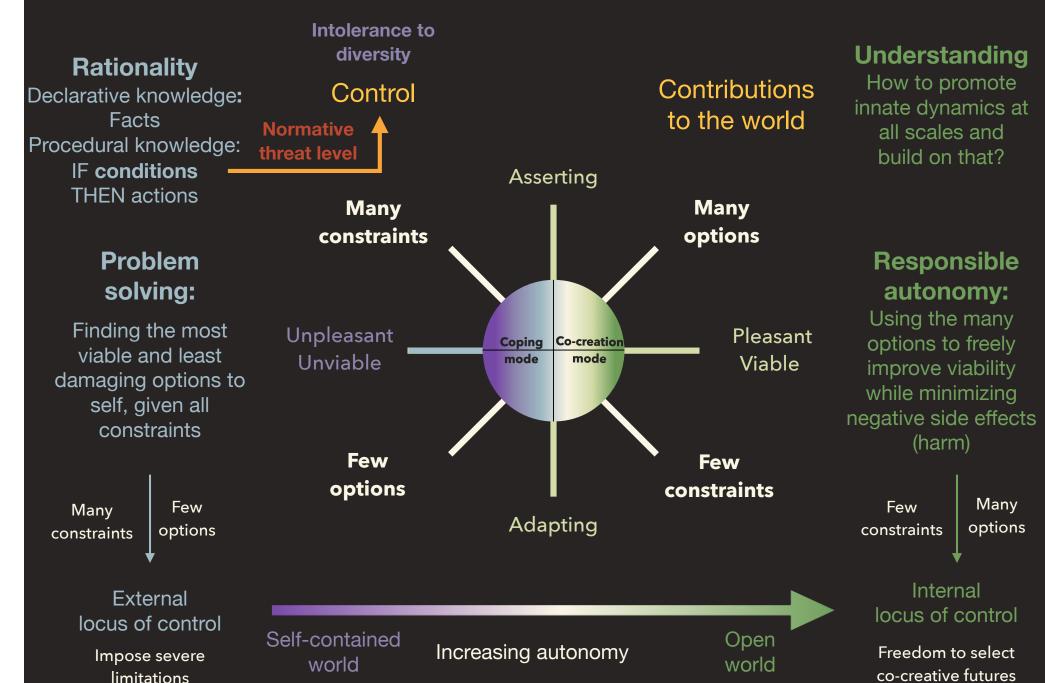
Open

world

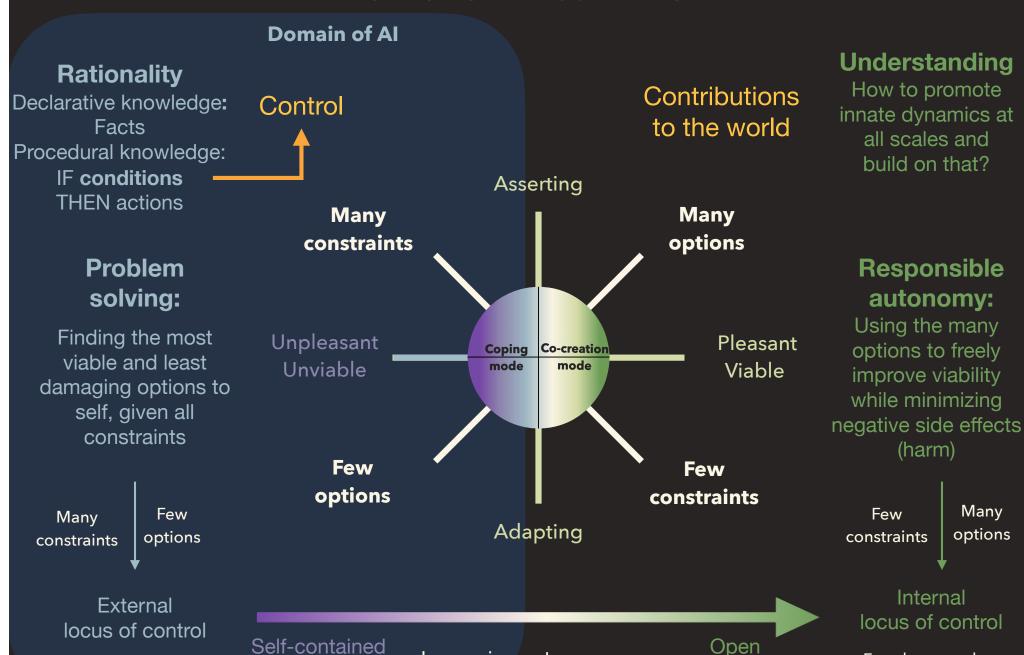
Self-contained world

Increasing autonomy

Basis of the authoritarian dynamic



The domain of Al



Increasing autonomy

Impose severe

limitations

world

Many

options

Freedom to select

co-creative futures

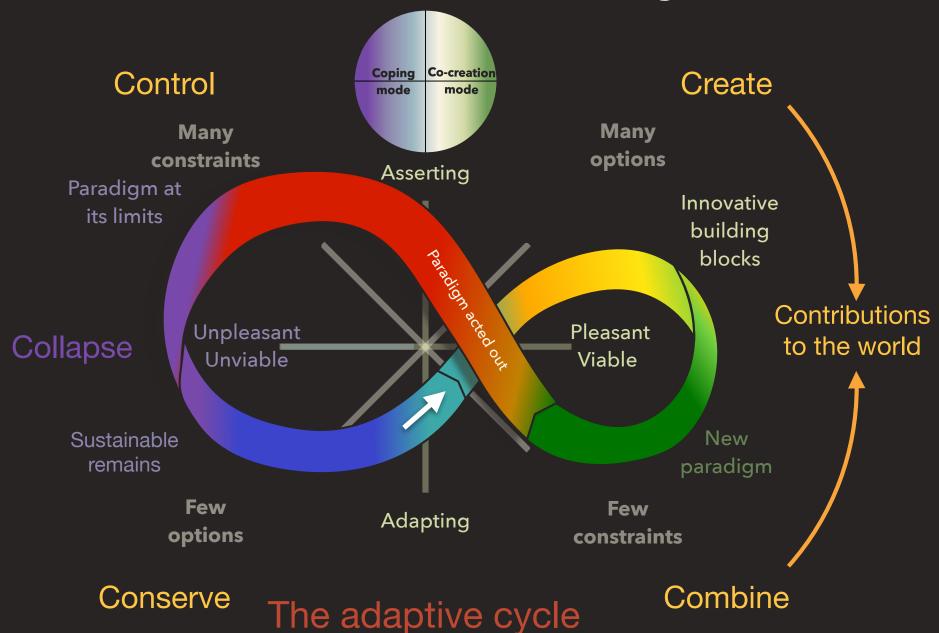
world

Many Many constraints options **Evolution of** Unpleasant Pleasant Co-creation Coping Unviable mode mode Viable complex systems Few Few options constraints Adapting



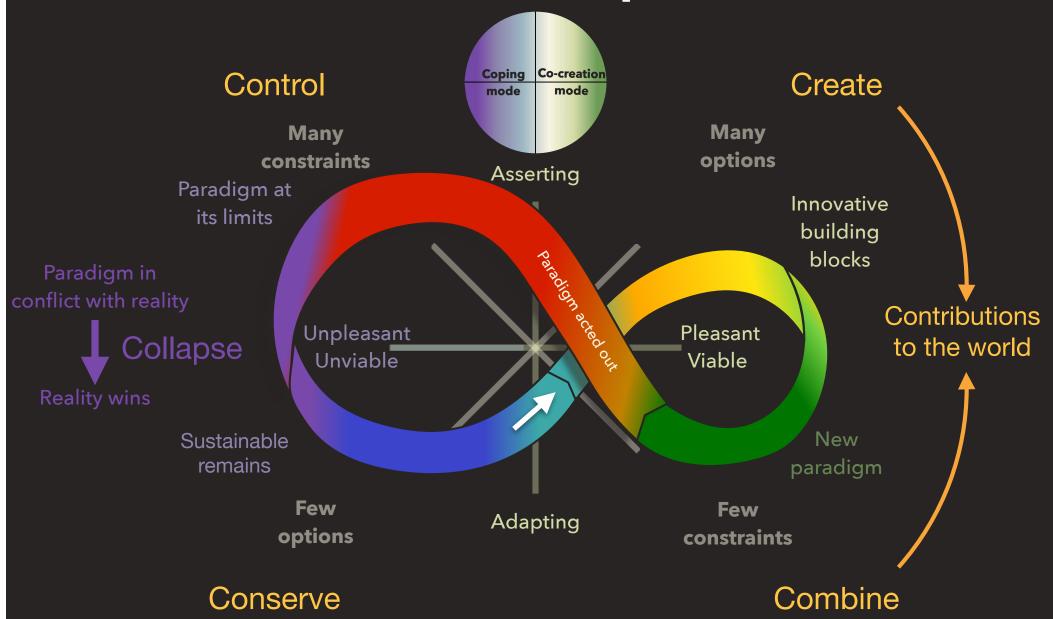
Asserting

Evolution of complex systems

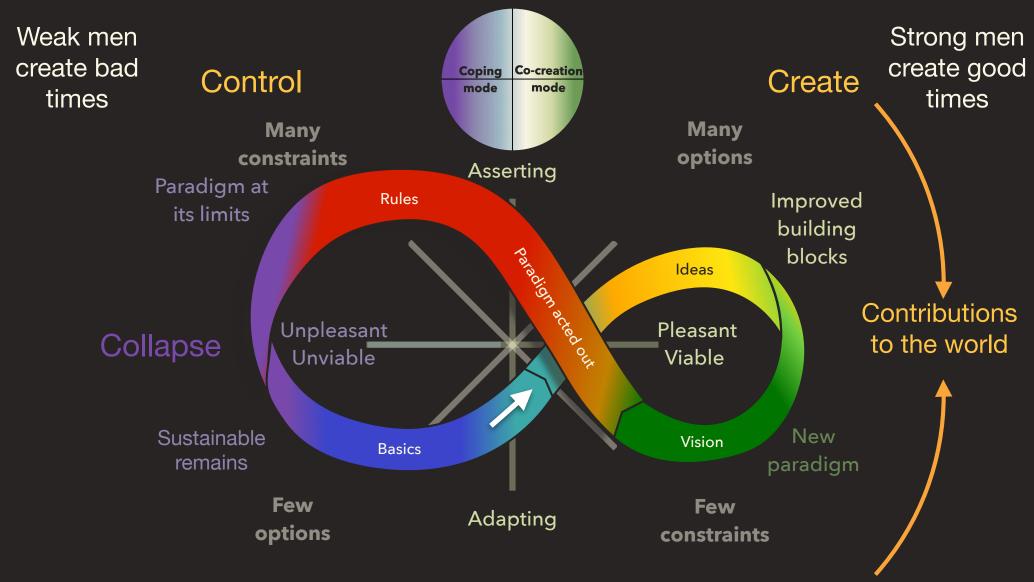


(Angeler et al., 2015)

The collapse



Societal cycle

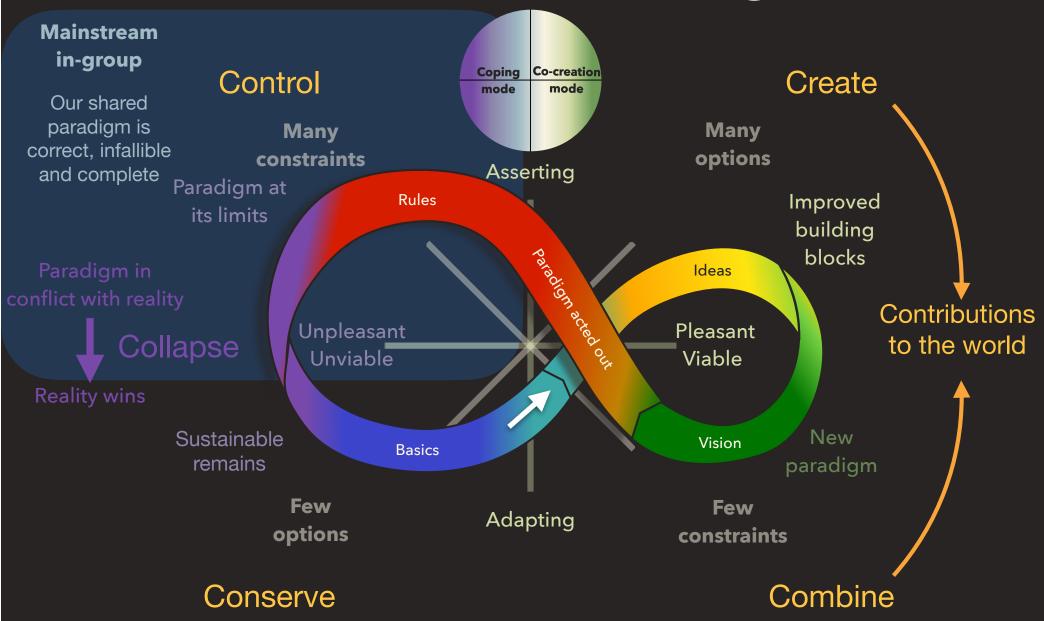


Bad times create strong men

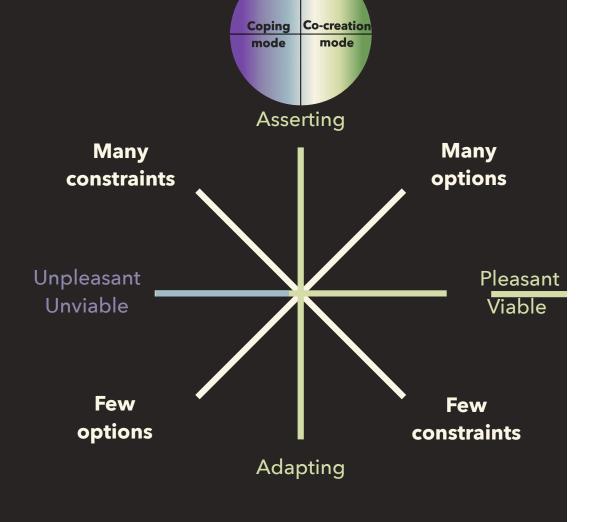
Conserve

Combine Good times create weak men

The mainstream in-group

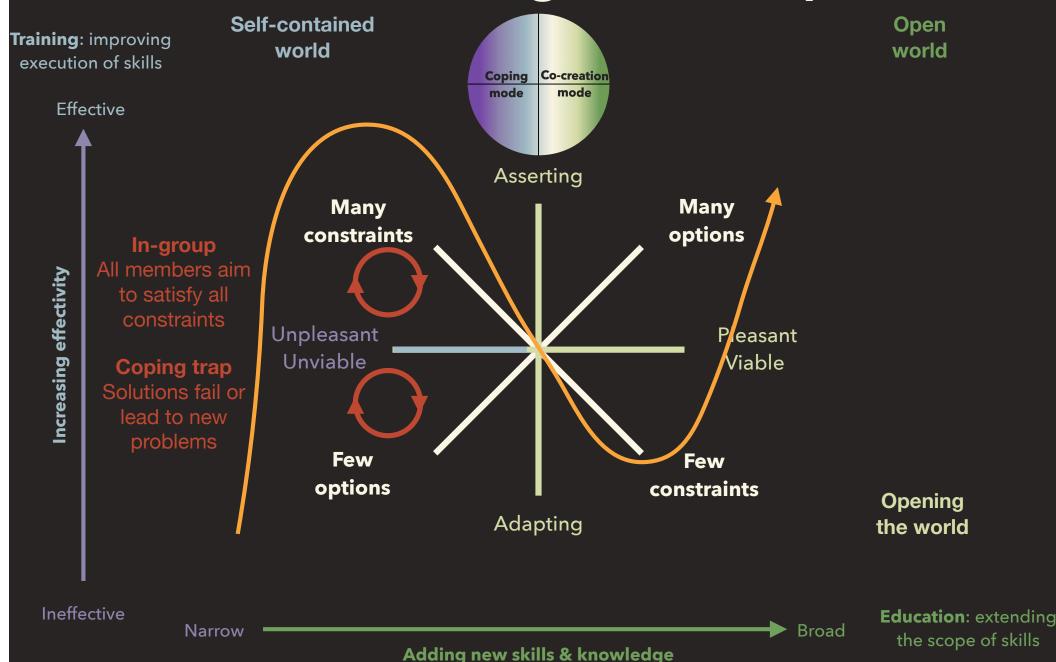


Skill & knowledge development

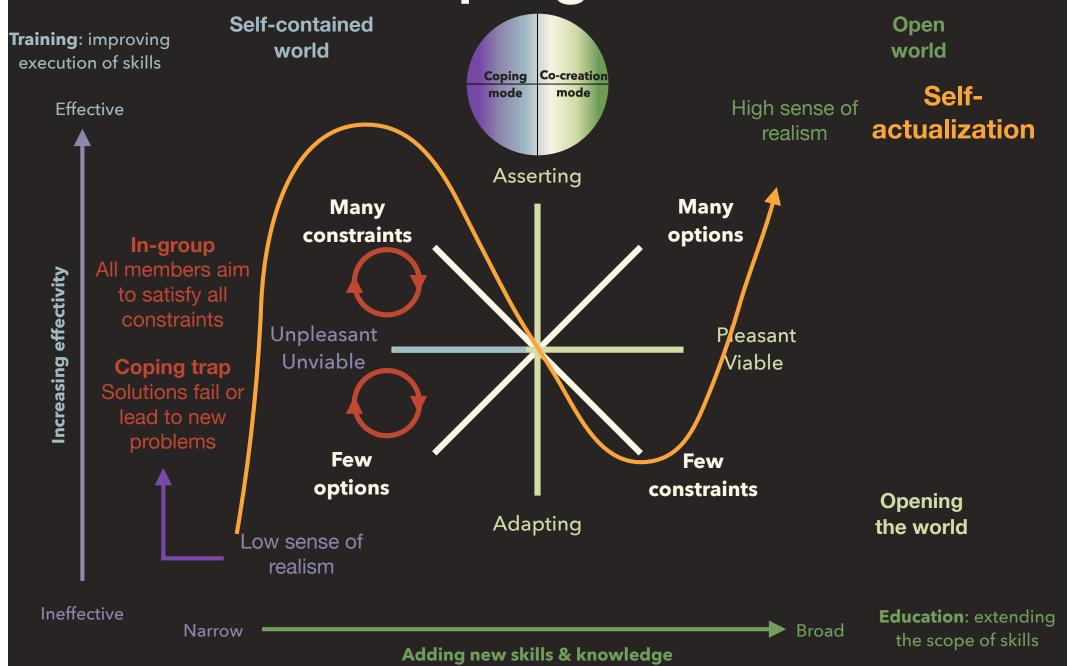




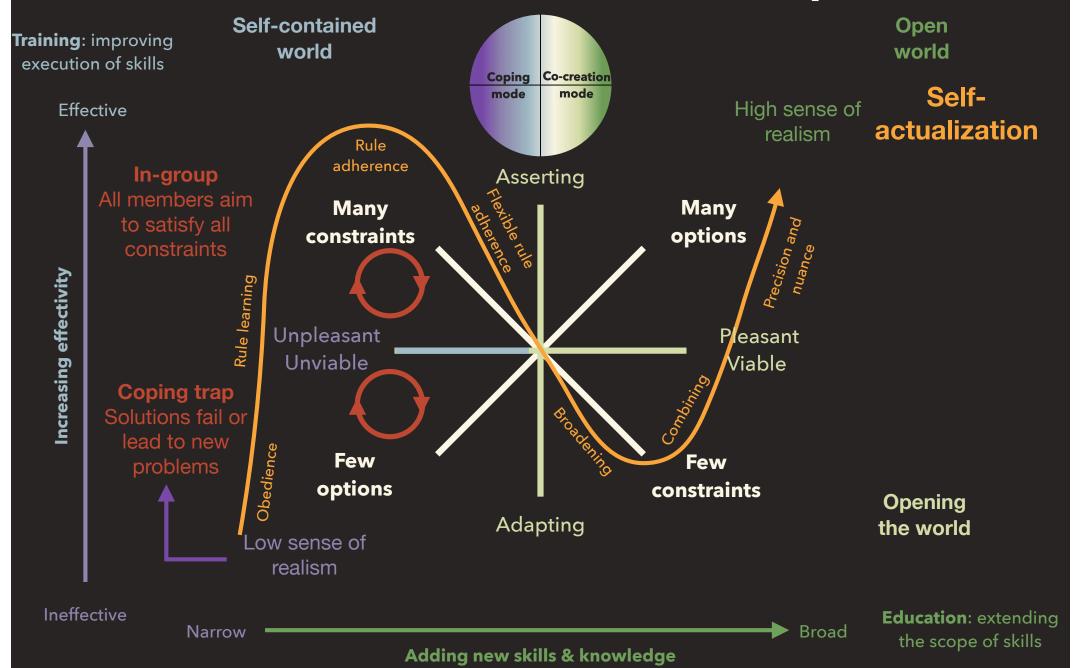
Skill & knowledge development-



Developing realism

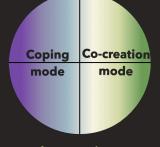


- Human intellectual development



In-group All members aim

to satisfy all constraints



Asserting

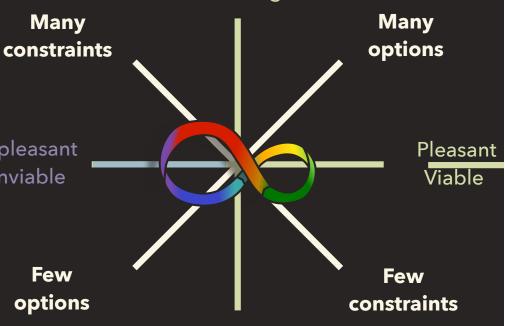
Adapting

The Western Unpleasant Unviable predicament

Few options

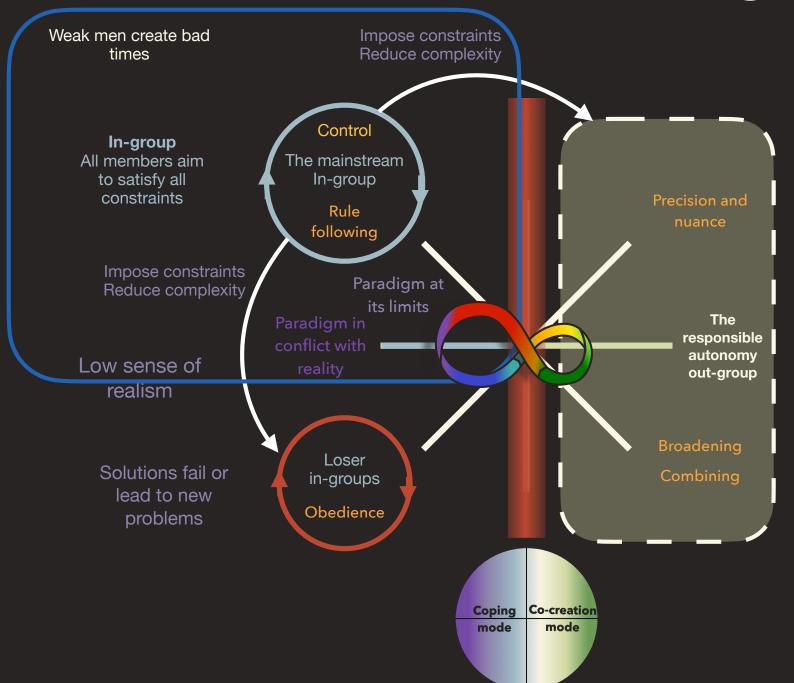
Many

Coping trap Solutions fail or lead to new problems



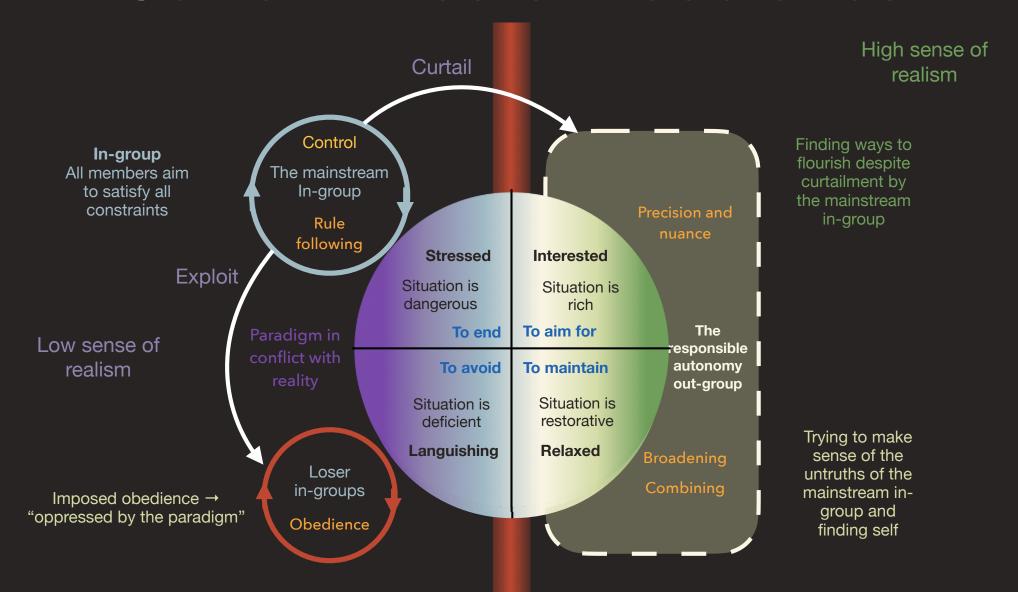


The mainstream in-group

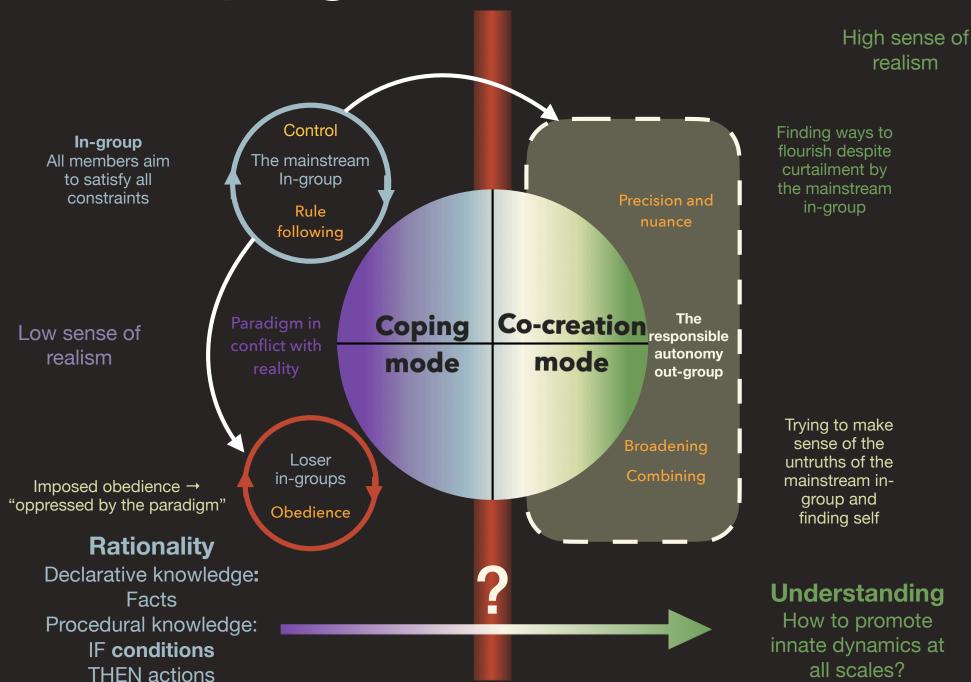


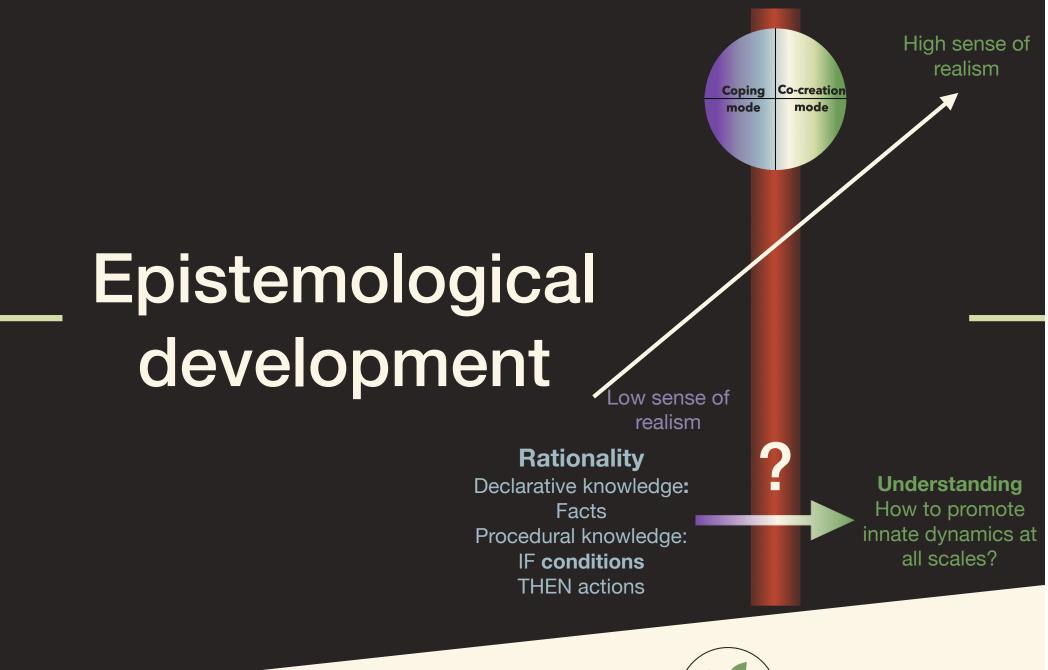
High sense of realism

Current Western societies



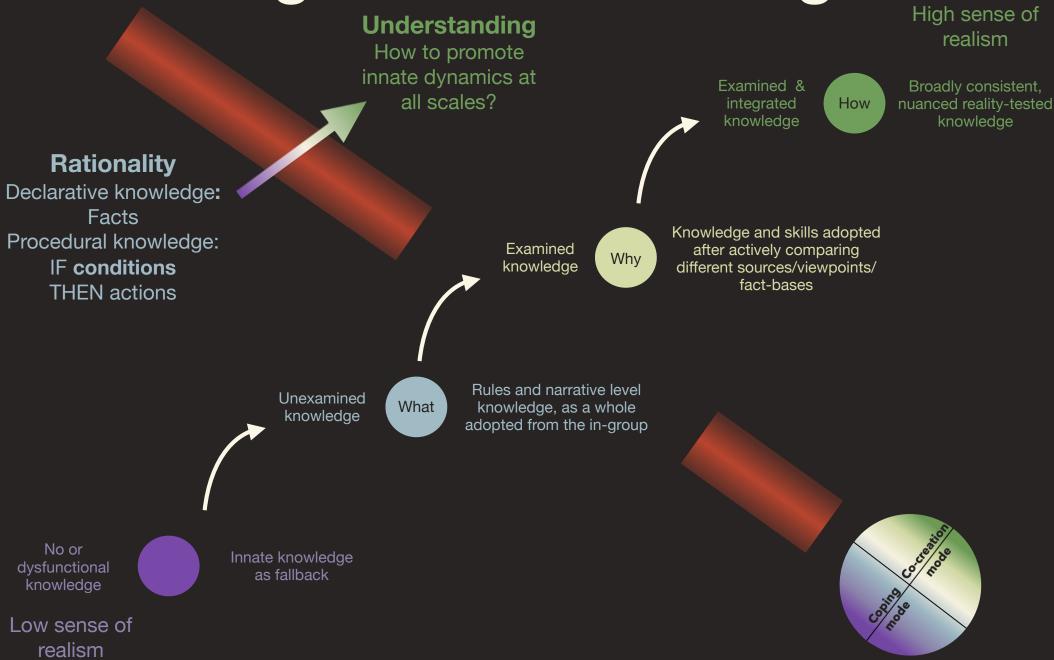
Coping → Co-creation?



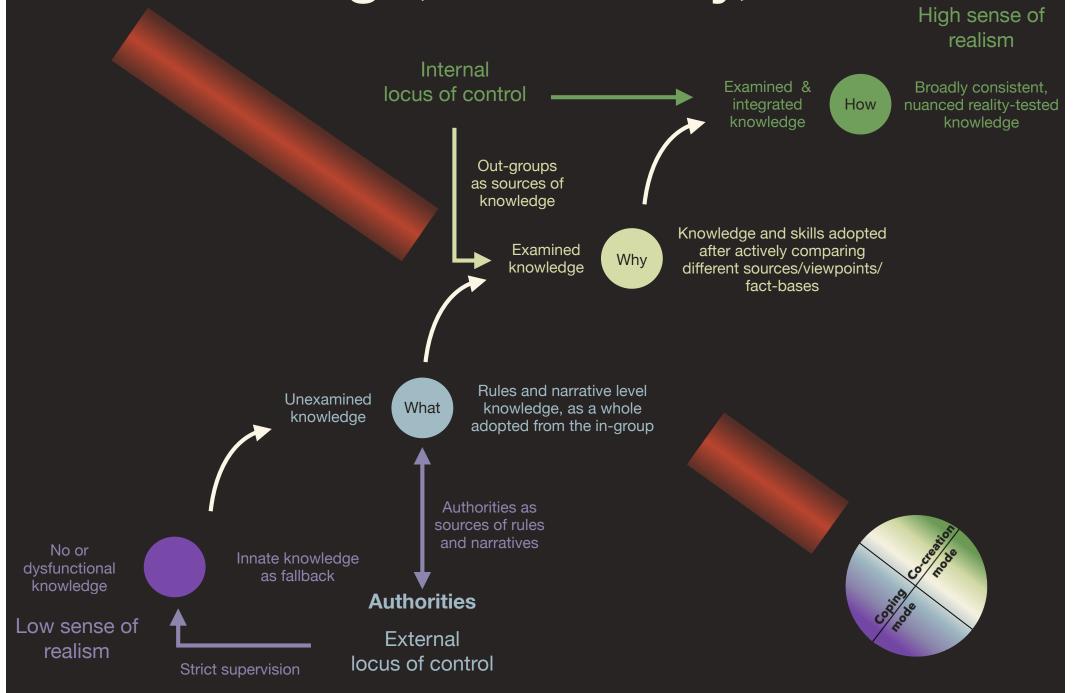




Degrees of knowledge

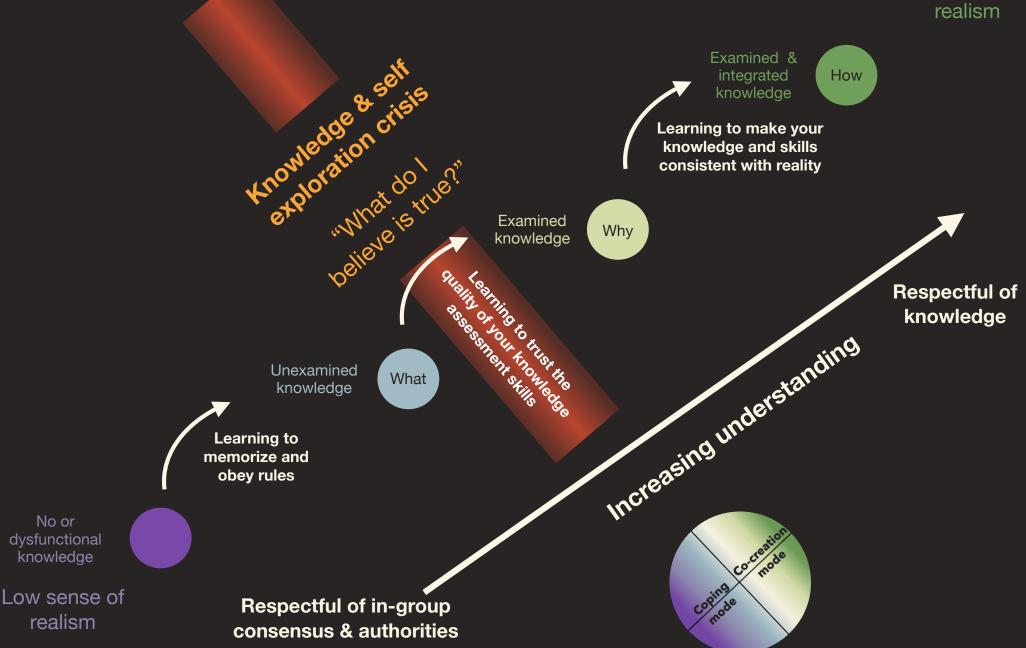


Knowledge, autonomy, realism-

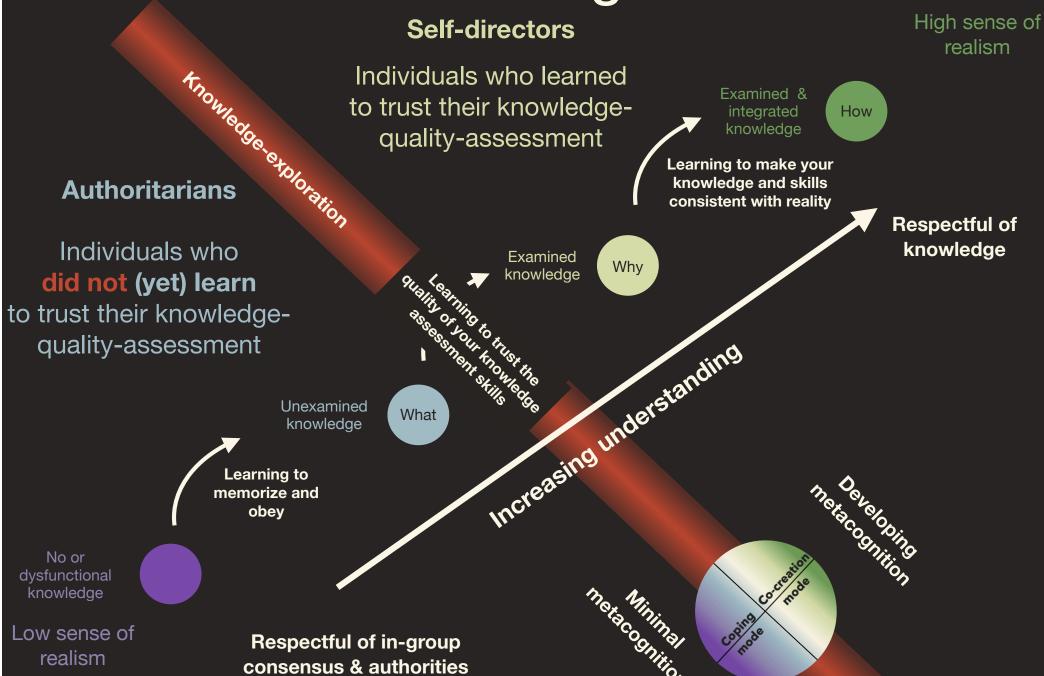


Knowledge exploration

High sense of realism



Domains of knowledge construction-



nowledge etolo.

Self-directors

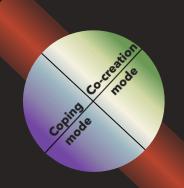
Individuals who learned to trust their knowledge-quality-assessment

The great divide

Authoritarians

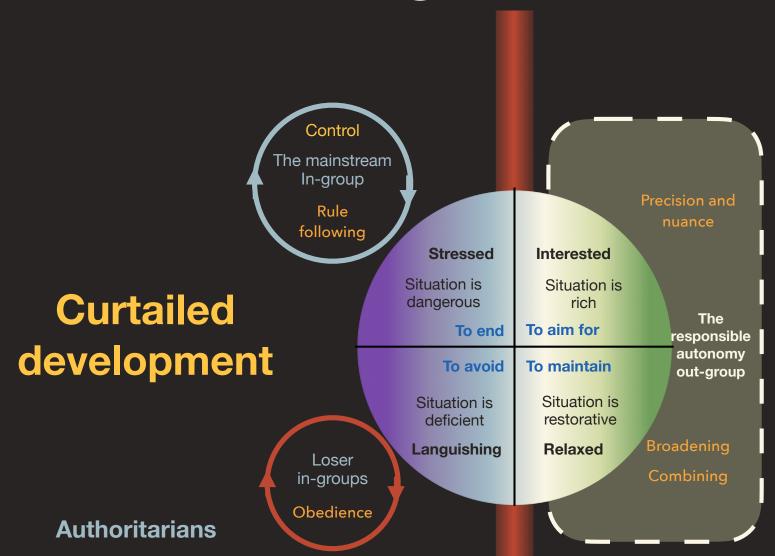
Individuals who did not (yet) learn to trust their knowledge-quality-assessment

Audity of the state of the state of some of the state of some of the state of the s





The great divide



Self-directors

Individuals who learned to trust their knowledgequality-assessment

Healthy development

Individuals who did not (yet) learn to trust their knowledge-quality-assessment

Adoption of beliefs

"Normative style"

"Passively and uncritically adopt and internalize the standards and prescriptions of the in-group"

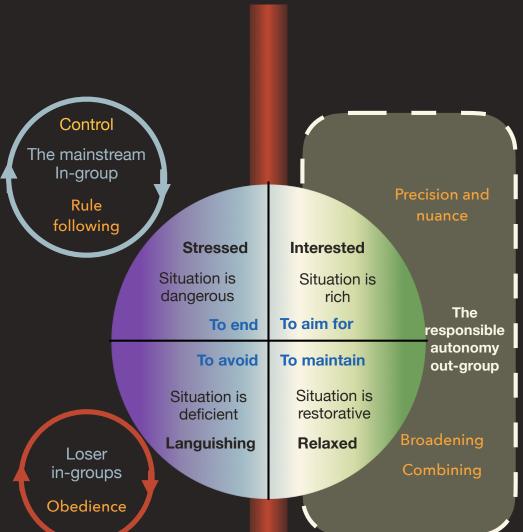
Our opinions are correct, infallible, and complete I believe the mainstream and my authorities I ignore or disparage others The in-group collectively decides on my beliefs

I doubt my abilities to act on my own I avoid having to decide for myself I rather follow examples or obey instructions The social situation decides

"Diffuse-avoidant style"

how I act or think

"Procrastinate and attempt to avoid dealing with choices and problems as long as possible." (Psychology)



"Informational style"

"Intentionally seek out, consider, and evaluate information about knowledge options and alternatives"

I trust my knowledge construction Others contribute useful insights New insights can be enriching or revealing

My experiences in combination with all the knowledge I can find decides on my beliefs

Three identities

"Collective identity"

"Behavior influenced by previously internalized social standards"

Our opinions are correct, infallible, and complete I believe the mainstream and my authorities I ignore or disparage others The in-group collectively decides on my beliefs

I doubt my abilities to act on my own
I avoid having to decide for myself
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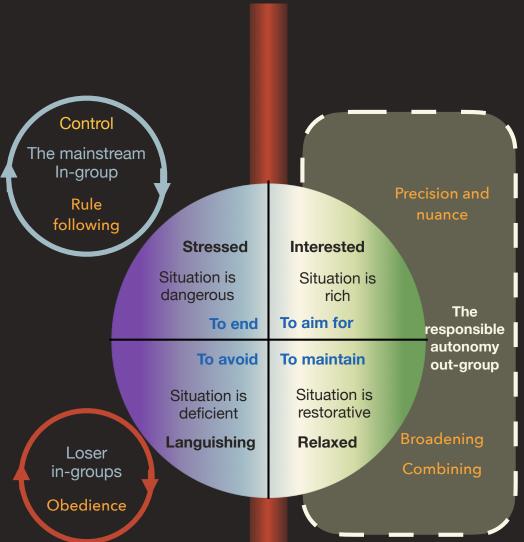
The social situation decides how I act or think

"Social identity"

obey instructions

"Behavior influenced primarily by situational demands and immediate consequences"

(Psychology)



Personal identity"

"Behavior based on all available knowledge"

I trust my knowledge construction Others contribute useful insights New insights can be enriching or revealing

My experiences in combination with all the knowledge I can find decides on my beliefs

Identity origin

Adopted

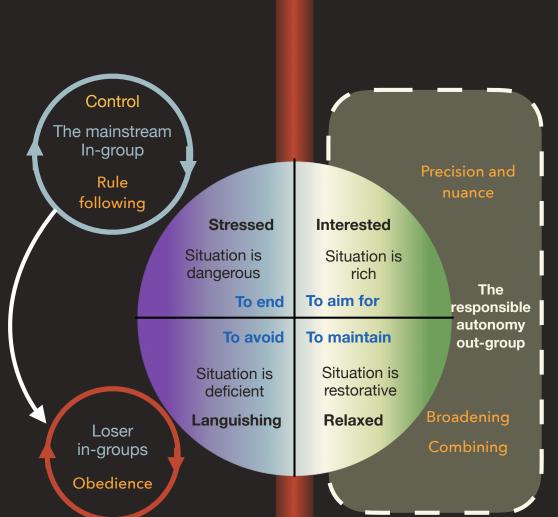
"Collective identity"

"Behavior influenced by previously internalized social standards"

"Social identity"

Behavior and opinions based on the stereotypes about social groups (Sociology)

Happens to you



Self-constructed

Personal identity"

"Behavior based on all available knowledge"

available knowledge"

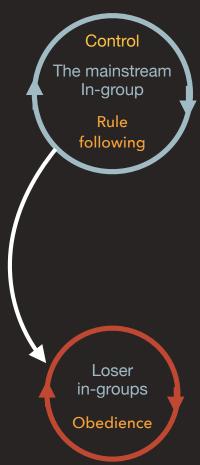
"Collective identity"

"Behavior influenced by previously internalized social standards"

Coping culture

"Social identity"

Behavior and opinions based on the stereotypes about social groups





Woke culture

5 Activism:

actively supporting and standing in solidarity with marginalized communities, listening to their experiences, and using privilege and influence to effect positive change.

Spread the new collective identity (grow the new in-group)

4 Social Justice:

addressing and rectifying systemic inequalities and injustices present in society

Create a improved collective identity (new in-group)

3 Critical Consciousness:

to examine and challenge dominant narratives, power structures, and social norms.

Find flaws in the dysfunctional paradigm

Privilege:

the unearned advantages and benefits that individuals possess solely based on their social identity or membership in a dominant group Social identity based benefits

"Collective identity"

"Behavior influenced by previously internalized social standards"

"Social identity"

Behavior and opinions based on the stereotypes about social groups

2 Intersectionality:

recognizing the interconnectedness of social identity-based oppression, such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and more.

Social identity explains it all

In-group Rule following Many constraints

Constrained by an unrealistic/dysfunctional paradigm

Paradigm at

its limits

Control

The mainstream

Loser in-groups
Obedience

1 Systemic Oppression:

understanding and challenging systemic oppression and structural inequalities that persist in society.

To oppress ≠ to constrain

Woke prospect

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Constrained by an unrealistic/dysfunctional

Paradigm at

its limits

Control

The mainstream

In-group

Rule

paradigm
Few
options

Loser in-groups
Obedience

Coping culture

Unable to deal with a complex world

Straw man representation of out-groups

Narrative adherence

Control

The mainstream

In-group

Rule

following

Rule learning

Obedience

Flexible narrative adherence

Unrealistic/

paradigm is dysfunctional correct, infallible paradigm and complete

Our shared

Self-contained world

Intelligence: solve self-contained problems

Solutions fail or lead to new problems

"Social identity"

Behavior and opinions based on the stereotypes about social groups

> Intolerance to diversity

Degree of authoritarianism Normative threat level

"Collective identity"

"Behavior influenced by previously internalized social standards"

Rationality

Declarative knowledge: Facts Procedural knowledge: **IF** conditions

THEN actions

Loser in-groups

Obedience

No metacognition:

latch on to first explanation that explains your emotion and stick to it

Missing

At ease with reality's complexity

Precision and nuance

Combining Broadening

> High sense of realism

> > Open world

Wisdom

Selfactualization

Personal identity"

"Behavior based on all available knowledge"

Metacognition

Understanding

How to promote innate dynamics at all scales

Disgust culture

Intellectual bankruptcy

Intolerance to diversity

Degree of authoritarianism

Normative threat level

Strong, urgent, & selfprotective reaction to purge the in-group from an effect felt to be toxic Control
The
In-group
Rule
following

Beliefs perceived to challenge the in-group narrative

Beliefs that feel unsafe

Straw man representation of out-groups

+

In-group level disgust:

Reasoning of cancelers
Toxic →

harmful →

evil →

not worthy of protection →

destruction is justified \rightarrow

evil eliminated → no harm done Beliefs, opinions, or arguments interpreted and reformulated in a most disgusting way

Designed to harm and destroy reputation

"Collective identity" "Social identity"

Missing

At ease with reality's complexity

Precision and nuance

Combining Broadening

High sense of realism

Open world

Wisdom

Selfactualization

Personal identity"

"Behavior based on all available knowledge"

Metacognition

Understanding

How to promote innate dynamics at all scales

The subacademic

Straw man representation of out-groups

Has a university degree, but:

Failed to learn to trust the quality of the own knowledge assessment skills

Missing

At ease with reality's complexity

Precision and nuance

Combining Broadening

High sense of realism

Open world

Wisdom

Selfactualization

Personal identity"

"Behavior based on all available knowledge"

Developing metacognition

Understanding

How to promote innate dynamics at all scales

Among subacademics

Failed to learn to trust the quality of the own knowledge assessment skills





Subacademic vs Academic

Failed to learn to trust the quality of the own knowledge assessment skills

I take the shared narrative of the in-group as authoritative

I adopt, as a whole, the narratives endorsed by my in-group

I protect myself and my in-group against toxic out-group insights: I cancel

Correctness is self-evident to me

Our opinions are correct, infallible, and complete I believe the mainstream and my authorities I ignore or disparage others The in-group collectively decides on my beliefs

I doubt my abilities to act on my own I avoid having to decide for myself I rather follow examples or obey instructions The social situation decides how I act or think

Learned to trust the quality of the own knowledge assessment skills

I am respectful of the knowledge created by all of academia

I personally assesses the quality of knowledge before I adopt it as true

I am open to all evidence that may improve my knowledge and worldview

Correctness results from careful deliberation

I trust my wits
Others contribute useful insights
New insights can be enriching
or revealing
My experiences in
combination with all the
knowledge I can find decides
on my beliefs

Self-direction as a threat

One key aspect of Systems View of Life is to help you to reason like an academic.

Our opinions are correct, infallible, and complete

It deepens academic skills like steelmanning, giving and receiving feedback, academic listening, and respecting the (often hard earned) knowledge of experts.

I adopt, as a whole, the narratives endorsed by my in-group

Correctness is self-evident to me

These skills help you to make more of your existing knowledge base and to detect where your knowledge and understanding are underdeveloped.

I take the shared narrative of the in-group as authoritative

I ignore or disparage others

I protect myself and my in-group against toxic out-group insights

Similarly, it helps you to detect expertise in others, make the most of their knowledge, and to discover where they might be weak (while being respectful).

I rather follow examples or obey instructions

It also helps you to approach topics from a higher level of abstraction and from different perspectives.

I avoid having to decide for myself

And it allows you to take a first step towards becoming an autonomous researcher by allowing you to develop a self-generated idea from fragile and unformed to (fairly) robust and defendable: a position.

I doubt my abilities to act on my own

The in-group collectively decides on my beliefs

The social situation decides how I act or think

Students about SVL

Academic year

Response

		percentage	(Scale 1-10)	(scale 1-10)	
2016-2017	7 out of 21	33%	8,86	9.45 (3.79/4)	
2017-2018	5 out of 22	22%	8,25	9,75 (3,90/4)	
2018-2019	9 out of 23	39%	8,44	8,9 (3,54/4)	
2019-2020	8 out of 24	33%	9,29	9,7 (3.88/4)	
2020-2021	4 out of 25	16%	8,75	9,1 (3,63/4)	
Average		29%	8,7	9,4	

Response

Score SVL

Teacher score

"What were you most positive about in the course?"

[&]quot;The positive atmosphere in which ideas were shared freely"

[&]quot;The quality of and attention for group discussions"

[&]quot;The focus on critical and independent thinking"

[&]quot;Multiple perspectives on topics that are rarely questioned"

[&]quot;Contributions to an improved (more nuanced, more precise) world view"

[&]quot;Intellectual development (of adolescents) is central"

[&]quot;Its high academic level"

[&]quot;Its fresh, innovative, and unique karakter"

[&]quot;Assessment focusing on development"

[&]quot;Attention for individual students"

Homework rubric

All homework receives extensive weekly feedback. This feedback helps you to become more proficient in the homework and especially the detection and respectful approach of positions. Growth of this ability is the main criterion during assessment.

Component	Weak <6	Average 6-7	Good 7-8	Excellent >8		
Development in dealing with out of comfort zone information: detection of positions and respectful treatment	Fails to detect positions	Sometimes detects positions	Mostly detects positions	Detects positions		
	Often disrespectful and no growth	Regularly disrespectful with little improvement	Mostly respectful, or becomes more respectful	Is respectful or became respectful		
Soundness of argumentation and awareness of own knowledge state: own informedness or ignorance	Hardly aware of own knowledge state (and ignorance)	Sometimes aware of own knowledge state	Mostly aware of own knowledge state	Always aware of own		
	Often produces non- arguments	Regularly produces straw man arguments	Rarely produces straw man arguments	knowledge state		
Engagement with the material: connection to new and unfamiliar	Always protects self from new and unfamiliar viewpoints	Mostly protects self from entertaining new and unfamiliar viewpoints	Often entertains new and unfamiliar viewpoints	Always entertains new and unfamiliar viewpoints		
viewpoints and potential impact	Narratives or viewpoints ignored	Whole narrative refutation	Sometimes avoids engagement	Plays with impact		

Assessment: Dean, Exam Committee, Investigative Committee

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Soundness of argumentation and awareness of own knowledge state: own informedness or ignorance	Hardly aware of own knowledge state (and ignorance) Often produces nonarguments	Sometimes aware of own knowledge state Regularly produces straw man arguments	Mostly aware of own knowledge state Rarely produces straw man arguments	Always aware of own knowledge state
Engagement with the material: connection to new and unfamiliar	Always protects self from new and unfamiliar viewpoints	Mostly protects self from entertaining new and unfamiliar viewpoints	Often entertains new and unfamiliar viewpoints	Always entertains new and unfamiliar viewpoints
viewpoints and potential impact	Narratives or viewpoints ignored	Whole narrative refutation	Sometimes avoids engagement	Plays with impact

Modern subacademic debate-

Fails to detect positions

Sometimes detects positions

Always protects self from new and unfamiliar viewpoints

Mostly protects self from entertaining new and unfamiliar viewpoints

Hardly aware of own knowledge state (and ignorance)

Often produces non-arguments

Narratives or viewpoints ignored

Failed to learn to trust the quality of the own knowledge assessment skills

Sometimes aware of own knowledge state

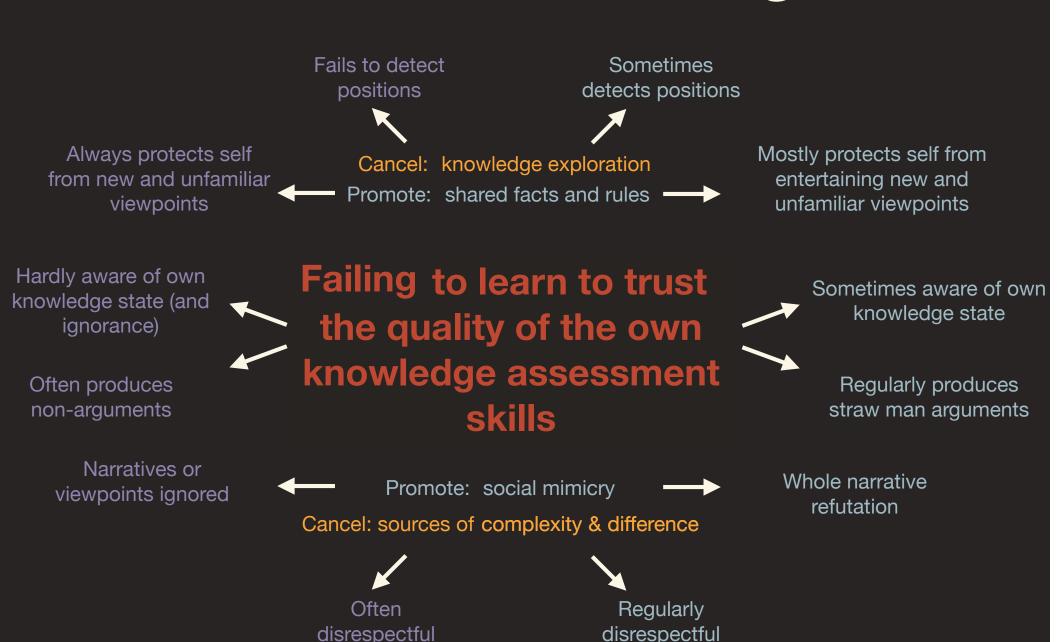
Regularly produces straw man arguments

Whole narrative refutation

Often disrespectful

Regularly disrespectful

Modern schooling



Modern schooling

Fails to detect positions

Sometimes detects positions

Always protects self from new and unfamiliar viewpoints

Cancel: knowledge exploration

Promote: shared facts and rules

Mostly protects self from entertaining new and unfamiliar viewpoints

Hardly aware of own knowledge state (and ignorance)

Authoritarianism

Sometimes aware of own knowledge state

Often produces non-arguments

Regularly produces straw man arguments

Narratives or viewpoints ignored

Promote: social mimicry

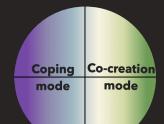
Cancel: sources of complexity & difference

Whole narrative refutation

Often disrespectful

Regularly disrespectful

Development disorder



University default

Cancel: knowledge exploration

Promote: shared facts and rules

Make "the world" simpeler

Authoritarianism

Hide your inability

Promote: social mimicry

Cancel: sources of complexity & difference

Learning to produce the expected behavior, on command

Training

Full development

University exception

Promote: knowledge exploration

Challenge: shared facts and rules

Make reality understandable

All knowledge

At ease with reality's complexity

Embrace your inability

Promote: self-development

Challenge: sources of simplicity and uniformity

Learning to trust the quality of your knowledge assessment skills

Education

Two strategies → two perceived worlds -

University default

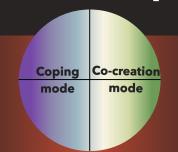
Avoid & suppress

complexity

difference

No development

A brutal and unpredictable world



earning to trust the quality of yo knowledge assessment skills

Exceptions

Embrace

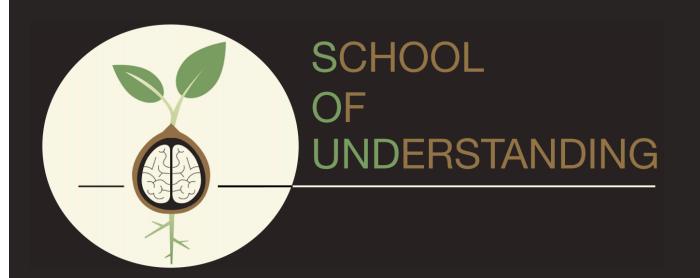
complexity

&

difference

Developing understanding

An interesting and dependable world



Thank you for your attention