



<https://doi.org/10.23939/shv2022.02.051>

ЧОМУ ЛЮДИ ВІРЯТЬ УСІЛЯКИМ НІСЕНІТНИЦЯМ?¹
(Рецензія монографії Н. Леві “Хибні переконання: чому раціональні люди притримуються їх”. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 188 с.)

Аліна Пухир

Національний університет “Львівська політехніка”

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4335-6782

alina.pukhyr.pv.2020@lpnu.ua

(Отримано: 02.06.2022. Прийнято: 09.08.2022)

© Пухир А., 2022

Розглянуто книгу Н. Леві “Хибні переконання: чому раціональні люди притримуються їх”, яка надзвичайно актуальна в умовах постковідної ситуації як у глобальному вимірі загалом, так й в українському вимірі зокрема. Встановлено закономірності того, чому сучасні люди піддаються впливу неперевіраних чуток та конспірологічних теорій, забобонів. Найважливіший висновок авторки рецензії: обґрунтованість переконання повинна засновуватися на знанні (епістемі), а не на тому, як люди повинні мислити.

Ключові слова: віра, конспірологія, причина, забобони, знання

WHY PEOPLE BELIEVE ALL KINDS OF NONSENSE?²

Review of: Levy, N. (2022). *Bad Beliefs: Why They Happen to Good People*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press. 188 p.

Alina Pukhyr

Lviv Polytechnic National University

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4335-6782

alina.pukhyr.pv.2020@lpnu.ua

(Received: 02.06.2022. Accepted: 09.08.2022)

The author of the review analyzes the N. Levy's book. N. Levy consider reasons of beliefs, and conspiracy theories. He has established why modern people agree an unreliable idea. The main conclusion about N. Levy's book that the improvement of beliefs should focus on the epistemic environment, not on how well people should think.

Key words: belief, conspiracy theories, reason, superstitions, knowledge.

As for the book itself, it suggests that people are considered to be more rational than we are used to think. This book gives us a new interpretation of well-known psychological conclusion and what exactly it should be focused on, but not how good that opinion is.

If to speak briefly about the book, Professor Neil chose strange beliefs and why people used to accept them. One of such problems was COVID-19, especially a vaccine, and why most people think it is safe.

The author also suggests in the book that people have to deal with bad beliefs namely by focusing on the evidence. According to the book, N. Levy himself claims that we are rational agents and our beliefs serve us as proof of a rational reaction but also first-order evidence that proves true statements.

¹ Рецензія підготовлена під керівництвом доцента кафедри філософії А. Кадикала.

² The review is prepared under supervision of Assoc. Prof. A. Kadykalo.

N. Levy assures that this book is about beliefs good and bad ones, about how they are created and how best to improve them. Epistemology, a subdiscipline of philosophy that deals with beliefs and their justification, is ancient.

More recently, however, modern epistemology has focused on theoretical issues; in particular, on the analysis of knowledge. Also, the author shows that his examples in the book will be controversial, as examples of anthropogenic climate change, evolution, and safety and efficacy of vaccines.

They were chosen because there is a consensus of experts on these issues, but many people reject expert opinion. Hence the author's question is: Are they rational in this? Is it worth trying to change their mind, and if so, how to do it?

In addition, you may draw your attention to Levi's statement of what he means by "bad beliefs". Here is what the author says: "There are many ways in which beliefs can be bad. Faith can be morally bad. What worries me is not moral evil, but epistemic evil; it is a bad attitude of faith to the evidence and to the world it seeks to reflect. Epistemic evil itself has various forms. In one way faith can be epistemically bad is to be wrong. My main examples of bad faith are false: denial of climate change, anti-waxer beliefs, creationism, and so on. But not all misconceptions are bad in the sense that worries me. I am an atheist: I do not believe that any religion is true. But I don't think theists have a bad faith in my understanding. Thus, a bad belief, in my opinion, is not a false belief, but an unjustified belief" [Levy 2022: x].

At the beginning of his book, the professor compares it to Darwin's long argument, but that is the point where their similarities end. According to the author himself: "I wrote this book to be read" [ibid.: xvi]. It may sound trite, but as N. Levy explained, readers will be able to understand the meaning of the future with the help of the book.

Positioning the project in the philosophical field, N. Levy also explains their connection with the cognitive sciences, namely, says the author: "In recent years, psychology has been rocked by the replication crisis: when experiments were repeated, researchers were often unable to reproduce. For example, one group tried to reproduce 100 experiments that had previously been published in well-known journals, but only 41 were able to be laid. This crisis has forced some philosophers to be reluctant to use the evidence of psychology, while others have rejected the whole branch and philosophy. Caution is justified, but there is no dismissal" [ibid.: xix].

As for my preferences from this book, what I like most about the professor's research is how our thoughts

are formed, and this chapter states that epistemic dependence is a routine and rational part of everyday life.

An example of this study is "Never Trump" – Republicans who renounced Donald Trump but often came to hug him – he says our beliefs are surprisingly fragile because we rely on others and the world to tell us what we believe. In this light, she argues, we should be less concerned than ordinary people sometimes think about important issues: what matters is not whether they know, but whether they know how to know.

N. Levy claims that this thing is not just simplified, it is completely wrong. Relying on our own epistemic powers is epistemically paralyzing. We do not understand anything alone. Knowledge is a social product. In this section, I will focus on our epistemic commitment to gaining and renewing faith.

Having read this section, it is important to say that human prosperity is very important due to our ability to participate in distributed cognition. People are clearly dependent on cultural evolution in the development of tools, methods and practices that allow us to colonize the dizzying diversity of environments.

Well, saying about the conclusion of N. Levy's book, we note that this work is devoted to human decision-making, tended to conclude that rationality is a scarce resource, and most knowledge is rational or irrational.

Proponents of ecological rationality opposed this view. In fact, they acknowledge that our decision-making is irrational because it does not respond to good information, but argue that it is rational in a broader sense: we better achieve our epistemic goals by believing wisely.

It is worth noticing that professor used in the book the heritage of many other works, namely: work on cultural evolution, psychology, social epistemology and other fields. He paid most attention to a thinker like Kant, and he explained this by urging us to change our epistemic strategies, rely more on our individual judgment and less on the judgment of others.

Kant urges us to come out of the "immaturity" he describes as "the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of others". Thus, he encourages us to use our "own understanding". Also, the author noted his conclusions about the book: "In this book, I presented a completely different picture. I assumed that we were more rational than naturalist philosophers thought. We could not see how rational we were because we were looking for rationality in all the wrong places. We looked at individual knowledge and first-order evidence to confirm our view of ourselves as rational agents. Both of these things matter, of course: they matter a lot. But the apparent failure to rely on them often does not indicate a

deviation from rationality. They point to the rational transfer of our knowledge to outsourcing, the reliance on the division of epistemic labor, and the proper use of higher-order evidence" [ibid.: 150].

As for my personal impressions of this book, they are rational, because in my opinion, the professor shows that the improvement of beliefs should focus on the epistemic environment, not on how well people should think.

I would like to draw your attention to the advantages of this book, namely, it offers a new interpretation of psychological conclusions that seem to demonstrate irrationality, and awareness of some true evidence, the belief of which is generally rational.

Regarding the final evaluation of N. Levy's book, on a 5-point scale, it is a solid 4. Because this book is

quite unusual, not all readers will be able to read it and give their assessment. I believe that this book should be read in old age to fully understand its content and sometimes some psychological examples from the author.

Judging by the relevance of the book, it deserves the highest score from me, because it reveals important topics for discussion, and the most interesting for me was to learn about COVID-19 from a specific scientific source, not from news or social networks. Therefore, I would recommend reading this book for myself and my inner understanding.

ЛІТЕРАТУРА/REFERENCES

Levy, N. (2022). *Bad Beliefs: Why They Happen to Good People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192895325.001.0001>.