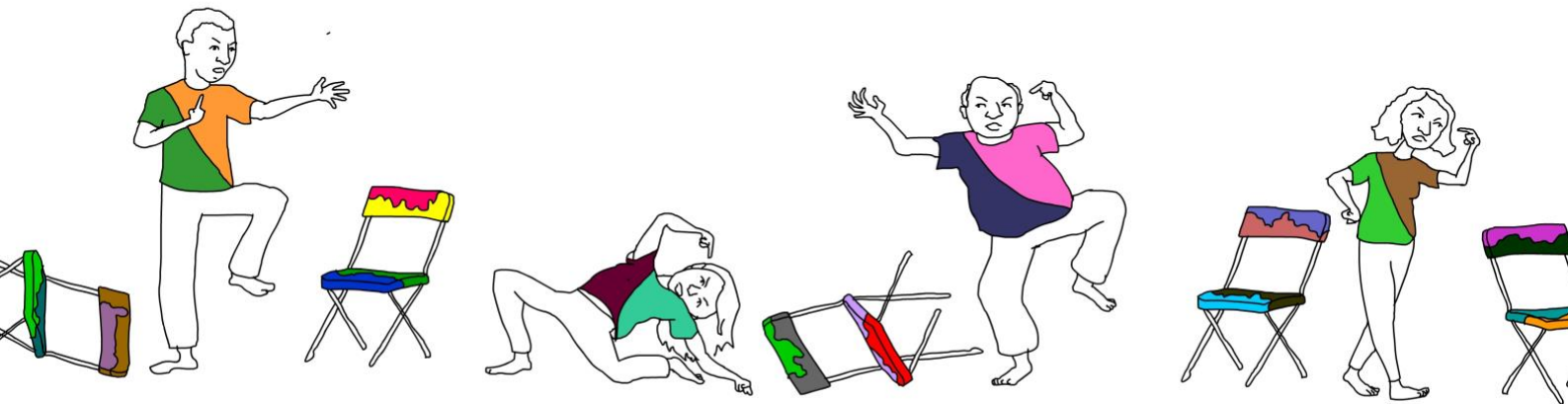


BOTH SUSPICION AND TRUST AT ALMOST THE SAME TIME



IN THE SPACE ARE FOLDING CHAIRS PAINTED IN BRIGHT PATTERNS, A PROJECTION AGAINST ONE WALL, THE WORKS OF OTHER ARTISTS, AND THE AUDIENCE. PERFORMERS WEARING A SELECTION OF LANYARDS ENTER. THEY SET UP THE CHAIRS IN A CIRCLE. THEY TAKE THEIR POSITIONS AND READ FROM COLOURED PIECES OF PAPER.

ALL: *(Read)* I'm a fighter. You're a pacifist. We trust. You win. I'm a diplomat. We're in the middle of things. They are a third party mediator. I'm a negotiator. You're steadfast. We're impartial. I'm part of various institutions. I have knowingly been wrong. You see both sides. You frequently make mistakes. I'm a liar. We're indifferent either way. They're fallible. They're undecided. You let unbreakable commitments lead your argument. I'm a defender of faith. We resort to violence. I take it on the chin. I break through. You let other people speak. They have unfounded beliefs. I use arguments like blunt tools. We give up. You bang the table. I throw my emotions around. You're provocative. I'm vicious. They shuffle their papers. You're a talented speaker. I'm a participant. I help other people to make their points. We're part of a cross-department working group. I prove my point with facts. You report on the proceedings. We reflect and then we speak. I know the background. You support other people. I'm a debater. I'm an advocate. They bring their life experience to the table. I hold a metaphorical hidden card that my opponent cannot see, which will win the argument outright. You batter through the door of good manners. We say 'no' like there's no tomorrow. I say 'fuck it'. They don't like certain people. We are just observers. You hold together every belief, principle, justification, shred of evidence, scrap of testimony, and glimpse of perceptual data you have, see how they balance out, and then make an informed decision about what you should do. I rip up the agreement I have forged with my peers. They have many disagreements.

THE CHAIRS ARE REARRANGED, THE PERFORMERS SWAP PLACES, SWAP LANYARDS, SWAP COSTUMES ITEMS, AND BEGIN AGAIN, READING FROM THE NEXT PIECE OF PAPER.

ALL: *(Read)* You're a fighter. They're pacifists. I trust. We win. I'm a diplomat. You're in the middle of things. We are a third party mediator. I'm a negotiator. You're steadfast. I'm impartial. I'm part of various institutions. We have knowingly been wrong. They see both sides. I frequently make mistakes. You're a liar. You're indifferent either way. They're fallible. I'm undecided. We let unbreakable commitments lead our argument. I'm a defender of faith. They resort to violence. You take it on the chin. I break through. We let other people speak. We have unfounded beliefs. You use arguments like blunt tools. They give up. I bang the table. You throw your emotions

around. They're provocative. I'm vicious. We shuffle our papers. I'm a talented speaker. You're a participant. We help other people to make their points. They're part of a cross-department working group. You prove your point with facts. I report on the proceedings. They reflect and then they speak. I know the background. I support other people. We're debaters. I'm an advocate. They bring their life experience to the table. I hold a metaphorical hidden card that my opponent cannot see, which will win the argument outright. You batter through the door of good manners. I say 'no' like there's no tomorrow. We say 'fuck it'. I don't like certain people. They are just observers. I hold together every belief, principle, justification, shred of evidence, scrap of testimony, and glimpse of perceptual data I have, see how they balance out, and then make an informed decision about what I should do. You rip up the agreement you have forged with your peers. I have many disagreements.

ONE MORE TIME THE CHAIRS ARE REARRANGED AND PLACES, LANYARDS, AND COSTUMES ARE SWAPPED. THE PERFORMERS BEGIN AGAIN, THIS TIME A BIT MORE TIRED.

ALL:

(Read) We're fighters. I'm a pacifist. You trust. You win. I'm a diplomat. They're in the middle of things. I'm a third party mediator. I'm a negotiator. I'm steadfast. You're impartial. I'm part of various institutions. We have knowingly been wrong. You see both sides. They frequently make mistakes. I'm a liar. I'm indifferent either way. You're fallible. I'm undecided. We let unbreakable commitments lead our argument. I'm a defender of faith. They resort to violence. You take it on the chin. They break through. We let other people speak. I have unfounded beliefs. They use arguments like blunt tools. I give up. We bang the table. They throw their emotions around. I'm provocative. I'm vicious. You shuffle my papers. You're a talented speaker. I'm a participant. We help other people to make their points. They're part of a cross-department working group. You prove your point with facts. We report on the proceedings. They reflect and then they speak. I know the background. You support other people. I'm a debater. I'm an advocate. You bring my life experience to the table. They hold a metaphorical hidden card that their opponent cannot see, which will win the argument outright. We batter through the door of good manners. I say 'no' like there's no tomorrow. You say 'fuck it'. We don't like certain people. They're just observers. I hold together every belief, principle, justification, shred of evidence, scrap of testimony, and glimpse of perceptual data I have, see how they balance out, and then make an informed decision about what I should do. I rip up the agreement I have forged with my peers. We have many disagreements.

THE CHAIRS ARE FACED TOWARDS EACH OTHER. THE PERFORMER TAKE THEIR SEATS. EACH PERFORMER STANDS AND PRESENTS THEIR STATEMENT TO THE AUDIENCE. AS THE STATEMENTS CONTINUE OTHERS MOVE THEIR CHAIRS AROUND, SWAP CHAIRS, TRY TO INTERRUPT, LOOK BORED, LIE ON THE FLOOR, PLAY THEIR LINES DIRECTLY TO MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE, GO STAND IN OTHER PLACES, KICK CHAIRS AWAY, GO READ THE PROJECTOR TEXT, ETC.

- X: All you can do is sit and stare and shake your head.
- X: I'm the mediator. For the purposes of this exchange I don't have a position. It's dirty work, but someone has to do it.
- X: Everybody should live in small city states or on islands with people that they agree with. This is best the future for our civilisation.
- X: Seeing both sides of the issue does not necessarily lead to any clarity.
- X: Righteous anger might not always be useful, but it does often respond to moral failings.
- X: Stick to something. Make a commitment. Stay committed. Hold to it against the odds. Refine it and strengthen it through research and feeling. Revise your position when appropriate. Be bold and make grand decisions. This is what being in the world requires. You have to decide how things are, publicly claim that they are indeed the way you think they are, and then be ready for the world to act back against you. You might be wrong. The world can be very surprising. But you must take a position in order to be surprised.
- X: Just break it. Don't talk. There's no negotiating. Just fuck it up. Just refuse and refuse and refuse. At a certain point you can't talk anymore. It's too tiring and doesn't lead to anything. Hit back. Or withdraw your labour and speech till whole system collapses. There's no debate about this.
- X: Get outside of it. Go somewhere else like an island or just the middle of the sea. You're only safe if you're completely on your own.
- X: I'm the third party. You say your point of view, then you tell me why you disagree and I'll listen to both sides. I promise not to bring my own opinion into this.
- X: I hope you trust me, even though you don't know anything about me.
- X: We always have cause to doubt.
- X: I am not the same as you.

- X: There is no guarantee that anyone will empathise. There is no guarantee that anyone will be moved.
- X: The most important thing is to talk to each other in the most direct and ordered way.
- X: Let me tell you my deepest held belief. Actually, it would be better if I told you once everyone is gone. Truth requires privacy.
- X: We can always revise our position.
- X: Sometimes when we say 'calm down' it's an exercise in social control. Sometimes it's a genuine attempt to help.
- X: Disagreeing takes time and resources. Holding a contrary opinion comes from free. Stating it forcefully one time takes courage, but can be done with limited cost. However, as I see it, full disagreement involves stating your point multiple times, and running through the same justifications again and again, and meeting multiple objections. There's no guarantee that people will be convinced. You have to work hard to convince them. It can take years. It can take generations. And it can't be sustained by passion alone. It's this long-term investment which is hard to keep up.
- X: I just don't know what to say.
- X: In an alternate world there is a 'shadow self' that holds exactly the opposite opinions to you on every matter. In another alternate world there is another shadow self who has been brought up in completely different circumstances and has formed completely different beliefs. You are a shadow self of these phantoms. We're all in the dark.
- X: I had all my points prepared, but the person I wanted to argue against beat me. At every turn they caused me to doubt myself. They asked me to produce the facts. I didn't have them to hand. I referred to experts, but they politely informed me that the experts were not in the room at the moment, and since I couldn't quote their research or testimony we couldn't accurately assess their claims. This was really frustrating because the more they shut down my support the more I doubted my own position. Where they could provide the facts and testimony I properly had no choice but to accept their point. Obviously I didn't in my heart of hearts. But since I had no counter there wasn't much I could do. It was a public debate. They obviously won out. In my private feelings, I was in the right. What could be more unshakeable than my feelings at every exact point, no matter how changeable they are? However, the defences they wheeled out were so articulate and concise. I couldn't help but lose self-

confidence. Anyone in my position would. They weren't cruel or belligerent. But nor would they suspend their judgment till I had the time to collect all my defence. I think that this was unjust.

X: I will now proceed to hold your hand.

X: The meaning of democracy is up for grabs.

X: Compromise is vital.

X: It is tiring when everyone else is allowed to behave badly and you are expected to be a saint.

PAUSE FOR ACTION.

X: I sit and look at trees and the sky and take so many deep breaths. This is a manageable ideal. My heart is racing and nobody acknowledged it. I was listening so hard.

X: We create rules in order to get along together. But when we disagree with those rules we just have to make new ones.

X: I looked at the form, said 'This is ridiculous', and I still signed it.

X: I say out loud and in the smallest shout the thing nobody should say: "I don't think you should be here because there is no reasoning with you. Now I don't really think that. But you are a vortex of irony and arbitrary hate and irrationality. I don't know where it comes from and I don't think I have the emotional energy to work it out. You have no interest in clarity or fairness or compassion. I don't think you should be allowed to speak and I think most people will agree. But in saying this, I allow our disagreement to be buried and to fester. I just hope that we come into contact again. I really really really hope that there is some time for me to think through what you've said and to work out your position." But who knows if there will be enough time?

X: I am going to tape my leg to you.

X: Look. If you want things to go well you can't trust people. OK? Or rather, you have to accept that people are always going to disagree. They aren't automatically on your side. OK? The trick is to make that disagreement as calm as possible. It's an unfortunate fact that people are selfish and stupid and emotional. People respond to rhetoric as much as reason. They are swayed by emotion as much as they are moved by the force of how things are. Since this is the case, here is a different idea: you can only trust structures that are not us. You can only trust things that are not messy, contradictory humans with their obscure social codes and customs. The beautiful calm of the circular

laminated wood table. The neatly ordered binders of facts that everyone has access to. Some are in easy to read fonts, some in large text, some in brail, others available as audio. The flatness of the table. The chairs are at an even height. They can be quickly added or subtracted depending on who is there. Space can be made for wheelchairs. Every kind of person can, in principle, participate. OK? This has been assured by how things are set up, not by our hopes for how people will actually talk to each other. The light is at just the right level. It's quiet, but not too quiet. There is bread and water on the side table. The room is a neutral colour. If a third party mediator is present it won't feel like they're an outsider. They will actually be part of the conversation. This is thanks to the architecture and furniture and the ergonomics. This is of paramount importance, so much so that we often fail to realise it. The whole thing says: "You're welcome. We recognise you. A seat is ready for you. Just calm down and look at someone else and listen and respond." This is a manageable ideal, so slight in its idealism that it barely stirs the heart to flutter. A steady beat enables democracy and justice to flow.

X: I screamed and screamed and screamed. I had no direction. I just had to get it out. I cried. I beat the ground. I was so angry. And I am certain that it is all legitimate. No amount of undermining or good manners can stop me.

X: I believe that if we hold our breath for long enough we will die. Who agrees with me? Everyone? Good. Now, I also believe that I can't say for sure whether the number of stars is odd or even. Are we also agreed that none of us can be certain about that? Good. Now, is there any disagreement about the fact that we can be very certain about some things and completely uncertain about some other things? Good. We are certain about the conditions for death, and we are certain about the quantitative boundlessness of the universe. I firmly believe that this is enough of a foundation. Come at me with anything you like. You cannot shake this ground.

X: I haven't showered. I've walked for miles to be here. I look awful. I feel sick. I haven't got any sleep.

X: We aren't from the same places.

X: Just make a decision.

X: It would be nice to be right. I would be nice to know that you are in the right. It would be nice to be secure about what you say. It would be wonderful to do this in the full knowledge that people might disagree with you. And people probably do in fact disagree with you, even if aren't in any immediate contact with them. There could be someone

half-way across the world who disagrees with you and you don't know it. It would be great if we could openly accept this, and still be able to be certain. It would be wonderful to know all this without being proud, to wield security with justness, to put your certainty to support what is right in all cases, to use your confidence to lift up those who would be in the right if only they knew they were. It would be good to be kind to those that oppose you, and for your kindness to make them kind in turn. It would be ideal if all those that hold contrary opinions to us actually had the same standards as us.

THE PERFORMERS PAUSE, COME BACK TO THE CENTRE, AND TAKE DRINKS OF WATER. THEY CHECK THAT THEY ARE ALL OK. THEY WATCH THE PROJECTIONS.

- X: We've now covered every possible position. Or at least the main ones. We have highlighted our ideals. We are not ourselves and this is not our place. We hold to positions and put together make-shift commitments. We talk with other people and what they say influences us. We don't agree. And we should accept all of this peaceably and find the means to sustain peaceable disagreement. We've modelled situations and emotions.
- X: Who are you? Who are you really? We've been talking all this time and I know nothing about you.
- X: We know there's no resolution to many of our disagreements. But while suspending our judgement seems like the most rational thing to do when neither side will budge, I don't want to do it. Nobody wants to. Some people will benefit from staying silent and not having an opinion. But many won't.
- X: I feel sad and angry. This is very important.
- X: Over the edge some things are resolved whether we like it or not. And we will continue to disagree. And we will justifiably act against people with force without talking about it.
- X: At one point hold still and then push back. We move between these two positions every day.
- X: Let's stop it there. Draw your conclusions. Remember them. We'll pick this up every day of our lives, whether in our current state or in utopia. We've talked enough. This is the end today's session.

PERFORMERS BEGIN TO FOLD UP CHAIRS, TAKE OFF THEIR LANYARDS AND LEAVE THE SPACE.