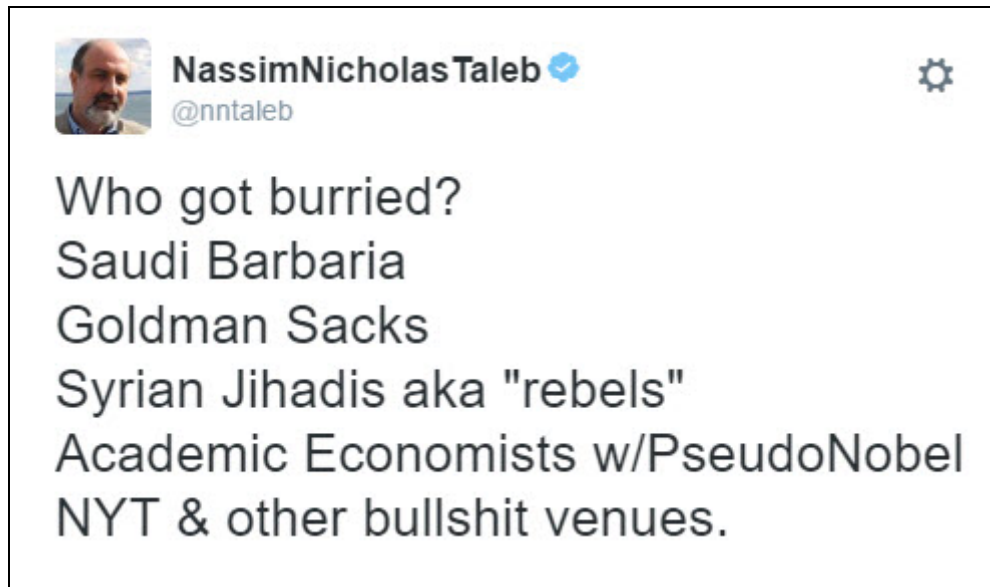


## Nassim Taleb Explains Who Just Got Buried

The **world's "intellectual yet idiot" class** just took another blow to the chin, but **who really got buried?** Nassim 'black swan' Taleb explains...



Simply put, as Taleb recently explained via Medium.com, The "Intellectual Yet Idiot" class... (see: <https://medium.com/@nntaleb/the-intellectual-yet-idiot-13211e2d0577#.xwhrwn5r2> )

What we have been seeing worldwide, from India to the UK to the US, is the **rebellion against the inner circle of no-skin-in-the-game policymaking "clerks" and journalists-insiders**, that class of paternalistic semi-intellectual experts with some Ivy league, Oxford-Cambridge, or similar label-driven education who are telling the rest of us 1) what to do, 2) what to eat, 3) how to speak, 4) how to think... and 5) who to vote for.

**But the problem is the one-eyed following the blind: these self-described members of the "intelligenza" can't find a coconut in Coconut Island**, meaning they aren't intelligent enough to define intelligence and fall into circularities -- but their main skills is capacity to pass exams written by people like them. With psychology papers replicating less than 40%, dietary advice reversing after 30 years of fatphobia, macroeconomic analysis working worse than astrology, the appointment of Bernanke who was less than clueless of the risks, and pharmaceutical trials replicating at best only 1/3th of the time, people are perfectly entitled to rely on their own ancestral instinct and listen to their grandmothers (or Montaigne and such filtered classical knowledge) with a better track record than these policymaking goons.

**Indeed one can see that these academico-bureaucrats wanting to run our lives aren't even rigorous, whether in medical statistics or policymaking.** They cant tell science from scientism -- in fact in their eyes scientism looks more scientific than real science. (For instance it is trivial to show the following: much of what the Cass-Sunstein-Richard Thaler types -- those who want to "nudge" us into some behavior --

much of what they call “rational” or “irrational” comes from their misunderstanding of probability theory and cosmetic use of first-order models.) They are prone to mistake the ensemble for the linear aggregation of its components as we [saw in the chapter extending the minority rule](#).

**The Intellectual Yet Idiot is a production of modernity hence has been accelerating since the mid twentieth century, to reach its local supremum today, along with the broad category of people without skin-in-the-game who have been invading many walks of life.** Why? Simply, in many countries, the government’s role is ten times what it was a century ago (expressed in percentage of GDP). The IYI seems ubiquitous in our lives but is still a small minority and rarely seen outside specialized outlets, social media, and universities -- most people have proper jobs and there are not many opening for the IYI.

**Beware the semi-erudite who thinks he is an erudite.**

**The IYI pathologizes others for doing things he doesn’t understand without ever realizing it is his understanding that may be limited.** He thinks people should act according to their best interests and he knows their interests, particularly if they are “red necks” or English non-crisp-vowel class who voted for Brexit. When Plebeians do something that makes sense to them, but not to him, the IYI uses the term “uneducated”. **What we generally call participation in the political process, he calls by two distinct designations: “democracy” when it fits the IYI, and “populism” when the plebeians dare voting in a way that contradicts his preferences.** While rich people believe in one tax dollar one vote, more humanistic ones in one man one vote, Monsanto in one lobbyist one vote, the IYI believes in one Ivy League degree one-vote, with some equivalence for foreign elite schools, and PhDs as these are needed in the club.

**More socially, the IYI subscribes to The New Yorker.** He never curses on twitter. He speaks of “equality of races” and “economic equality” but never went out drinking with a minority cab driver. Those in the U.K. have been taken for a ride by Tony Blair. The modern IYI has attended more than one TEDx talks in person or watched more than two TED talks on Youtube. Not only will he **vote for Hillary Monsanto-Malmaison because she seems electable** and some other such circular reasoning, but holds that anyone who doesn’t do so is mentally ill.

**The IYI has a copy of the first hardback edition of The Black Swan on his shelves, but mistakes absence of evidence for evidence of absence.** He believes that GMOs are “science”, that the “technology” is not different from conventional breeding as a result of his readiness to confuse science with scientism.

**Typically, the IYI get the first order logic right, but not second-order (or higher) effects making him totally incompetent in complex domains.** In the comfort of his suburban home with 2-car garage, he advocated the “removal” of Gadhafi because he was “a dictator”, not realizing that removals have consequences (recall that he has no skin in the game and doesn’t pay for results).

**The IYI is member of a club to get traveling privileges;** if social scientist he uses statistics without knowing how they are derived (like Steven Pinker and psycholophastrs in general); when in the UK, he goes to literary festivals; he drinks red wine with steak (never white); he used to believe that fat was harmful and has now

completely reversed; he takes statins because his doctor told him so; he fails to understand ergodicity and when explained to him, he forgets about it soon later; he doesn't use Yiddish words even when talking business; he studies grammar before speaking a language; he has a cousin who worked with someone who knows the Queen; he has never read Frederic Dard, Libanius Antiochus, Michael Oakeshot, John Gray, Amianus Marcellinus, Ibn Battuta, Saadiah Gaon, or Joseph De Maistre; **he has never gotten drunk with Russians**; he never drank to the point when one starts breaking glasses (or, preferably, chairs); he doesn't know the difference between Hecate and Hecuba; he **doesn't know that there is no difference between "pseudointellectual" and "intellectual"** in the absence of skin in the game; has mentioned quantum mechanics at least twice in the past 5 years in conversations that had nothing to do with physics; he knows at any point in time what his words or actions are doing to his reputation.

**But a much easier marker: he doesn't deadlift.** -- *emphasis, zero hedge* --