

"A wonderfully intelligent, witty, and riveting account of the politically correct madness engulfing our society. *The Parasitic Mind* is a must-read for anyone concerned about victim politics, cancel culture, and the assault on reason. Saad not only expertly diagnoses the malady, he also points the way to a cure."

—**CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS, PH.D.**, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and co-author of *One Nation Under Therapy*

"A virus is sweeping through our civilization—a mind virus corrupting the brains of students, professors, and the public at large—and *The Parasitic Mind* is the vaccine that will counter this pernicious pandemic. Professor Gad Saad has emerged as a heroic public warrior fighting for reason and science in the search for truth. That he has developed such a fearless following clamoring for a work like this is a testimony to its necessity and why I think its broad readership will help stem the tide of unreason and anti-science."

—**MICHAEL SHERMER, PH.D.**, publisher at *Skeptic* magazine and author of *Giving the Devil His Due*

The Parasitic Mind

who proclaim that in the spirit of fairness, high school students need to be taught evolution and intelligent design as competing theories. Intellectual consistency does not require that I critique the full universe of idiotic ideas. I am a parasitologist of the human mind, seeking to inoculate people against a class of destructive ideas that destroy our capacity to reason.

Upon reading this book, I hope that readers will walk away with a renewed sense of optimism. We may have fallen into an abyss of infinite lunacy, but it is not too late to grab hold of the rope of reason and hoist ourselves back into the warm light of logic, science, and common sense. Thank you for coming on this journey. Truth shall prevail.

CHAPTER ONE

From Civil War to the Battle of Ideas

I am often asked why I am an outspoken academic, willing to tackle thorny and difficult issues well beyond my areas of scientific interest. Given the stifling political correctness that governs academia, it would be advisable from a careerist perspective to be the proverbial “stay in your lane” professor. So why do I stick my neck out repeatedly? As is true of most human phenomena, the answer lies in the unique combination of my personhood (genes) coupled with my personal history (environment). On a personal level, I am a free thinker who is allergic to go-along, get-along group think. The ideals that drive my life are freedom and truth, and any attack on these ideals represents an existential threat to all that I hold dear. I am also the product of my unique life trajectory shaped by two wars. While few people will ever experience the horrors of war, I have faced two great wars in my life: the Lebanese Civil War and the war against reason, science, and logic that has been unleashed in the West, especially on North American university campuses. The Lebanese war taught me early about the ugliness of tribalism and religious dogma. It likely informed my subsequent disdain for identity politics, as I grew up in an ecosystem where the group to which you

belonged mattered more than your individuality. With that in mind, let us return to my homeland in the Middle East.

Growing Up in Lebanon

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1964 and spent the first eleven years of my life in the "Paris of the Middle East." My family was part of the dwindling Jewish community that had steadfastly remained in Lebanon despite the growing signs that Lebanese Jews had a bleak future. My father had nine sisters and a brother, while my mother had six sisters, all of whom, with the exception of one paternal aunt, had emigrated from Lebanon long prior to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. My maternal grandparents died prior to my birth; my paternal grandparents left for Israel around 1970. A similar immigration pattern occurred within my immediate family. I have two brothers and one sister, all much older than I (the closest to me in age is ten years older). My eldest brother married a Christian woman of Palestinian origin, and they immigrated to Montreal, Canada, in 1974. My sister also moved to Montreal prior to the outbreak of the civil war, both to pursue her studies and to escape the looming dangers. Finally, my other brother who had been crowned Lebanese champion of judo on multiple occasions was forced to flee our homeland due to ominous threats that he should retire (for it was not good optics for a Jew to repeatedly win a combat sport). He heeded that "advice" and moved to Paris, France, around 1973 to continue his studies and judo career. The breathtaking irony is that he eventually represented Lebanon at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Hence, the Jewish judoka who was no longer welcomed in Lebanon only a few years earlier was "embraced" when it suited the relevant authorities.

Growing up as a Jewish boy in Lebanon had its existential challenges. I vividly recall when the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser died in 1970, a few weeks shy of my sixth birthday. Nasser's Pan-Arabism (unification of the Arab world) had made him a hero in the region, and as often happens in the Middle East, thousands of people took to the streets to publicly

lament his passing. Why would this event constitute an episodic memory for a five-year-old boy? As the angry procession made its way down our street (aptly named *Rue de l'Armée* or The Military's Street), the terrifying chant "Death to Jews" left an indelible mark on me as I cowered in hiding next to our balcony. You see, even in "progressive, modern, and pluralistic" Lebanon, endemic Jew-hatred was always ready to rear its ugly head. All calamities in the Middle East are ultimately due to the diabolical Jew. It rained today. Blame the Jews. The economy is weak. Blame the Jews. Tourism is down. Blame the Jews. You contracted a stomach bug. Blame the Jews. The Christians and Muslims in Lebanon are not getting along. You guessed it, blame the Jews. And contrary to current attempts at revisionist history, this existential disdain for the Jew precedes the founding of modern Israel by 1,400 years. I can still remember sitting around the table on Yom Kippur (the holiest day in Judaism) in 1973 watching the worried look on my parents' faces as word broke that a combined Arab army had attacked Israel on that holy day. Existential genocidal hatred is not something that one magically and suddenly contracts as an adult; rather, it is instilled insidiously and repeatedly in the minds of otherwise pure and innocent children. I was the only one of my four siblings not to attend a Jewish elementary school. I must have been nine or ten years old, in class at the *Lycée des Jeunes Filles*, when the teacher asked pupils to state what they wanted to be when they grew up. Typical responses were uttered uneventfully (policeman or soccer player) until one student said, "When I grow up, I want to be a Jew killer," after which the class erupted in raucous laughter and gleeful claps. I still have the class photos from that era, and that boy's face is forever etched in my memory.

In sharing these stories, I don't wish to imply that our daily lives in Lebanon prior to the civil war were hellish. My parents were well entrenched within Lebanese society. The fact that we were part of the last wave of Jews to leave Lebanon was a testament to my parents' overall attachment to our homeland. Most of my childhood friends were Christian and Muslim (one of whom recently reached out to me, as his daughter was

about to start college in Montreal). Any hope of long-lasting peaceful coexistence was shattered once the civil war broke out in 1975. This conflict remains the standard by which the butchery of all other civil wars is gauged. Neighbors who had lived next door to one another for decades became instant prospective enemies. Death awaited us at every corner. If the endless shelling did not kill you (we learned to take cover or not depending on the whistle signature of the bombs), the snipers might if you appeared within their field of vision. Civilians were kidnapped and killed. They were also mowed down while waiting in long bread queues (two of my family members evaded such a death by going out late to buy bread during a ceasefire). Various militia set up roadblocks at which point they'd check to see your internal ID (which had one's religion written on it). If you were of the "wrong" religion, you could be executed. Our religious heritage was written as "Israelite" rather than "Jewish," which meant we had few Muslim friends at roadblocks. Of the innumerable terrifying moments that I experienced during the civil war, one sticks out in my mind as uniquely eerie and ominous.

Prior to the start of the war, my parents had contracted a hand dryer service that provided a roll of washable textile which was installed on the wall of our kitchen. This was a precursor of the subsequent models of disposable hand drying tissues found in public bathrooms. Periodically, the same individual would come to our house to remove the dirty roll and replace it with a clean one (I believe his name was Ahmad or perhaps Mohammad). I thought that this was a rather strange service then, and even more so now as I recount the story. One evening, in the middle of the otherwise endless street-to-street fighting and continuous bomb shelling, I heard a knock at our front door. I walked to the door and asked who was there. The reply came: "It's me Ahmad [Mohammad], the guy who changes your kitchen roll. Open the door, kid." I delayed, and his insistence grew more sinister and forceful: "Open the door now!" I ran to my mother. If memory serves me right, there were four occupants at our house that evening: my mother, my sister (who had returned to Beirut to visit us and was now stuck there), a male friend of

my parents (who was also stuck at our house even though he lived a short drive away), and myself. My father was not at home; I believe he was outside the country, but I can't remember why he was away. He eventually returned to Beirut and narrowly escaped death on the drive back to our home. My mother approached the door and talked through it with Ahmad who was accompanied by one or more men. The exchange grew tense, and my mother fetched the male friend who was cowering in another room. She hoped he might frighten them away, and I recall the disgust and anger that my mother expressed for this male friend's breath-taking cowardice in refusing to help.

Within the brutality and chaos of the civil war, there remained some semblance of law and order. As a last-ditch effort and against all odds, my mother phoned the police (the Arabic word for the outfit was "sixteen"), and they took the call—remember that this is during a full-blown war. Once they arrived at our house, we opened the door and let everyone into the kitchen. The lead policeman asked the men why they were there and who they were. Ahmad replied: "Oh, my friends and I were in the mountains, and we brought back a basket of pomegranate with us, and so we stopped by to give it to this family." After the policeman (I recall his impressive rifle by his side) checked to confirm the contents of the basket, he stared coldly at Ahmad and said: "Your connection to this family is that you change their hand drying roll, and you decided to brave the street fighting and come in the middle of the night to offer them pomegranate. If I ever find you here again, you'll have serious problems." What happened next still gives me shivers down my spine. Ahmad looked at us and said very coldly and menacingly: "I'll be back for you." We did not stay much longer in Lebanon after that incident, and so Ahmad never had the chance to "visit" us again.

It was clear that we needed to leave Lebanon as soon as possible. The day of our escape from Lebanon was straight out of a shoot 'em up movie. On that fateful day, some armed Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) militia picked us up at our home. They had been contracted to get us safely to Beirut International Airport; the risk was that they might drive us to a

ditch and execute us. The PLO controlled the area around the airport, so there was little chance of clearing the checkpoints if the appropriate militia did not accompany you. One of the armed men asked me if I wanted to hold his machine gun, which I did with excited trepidation. On the way to the airport, I recall my father proclaiming that he had forgotten his money belt at our house and that we needed to return to get it. The militiamen rejected my father's plea, and we proceeded on our precarious journey. The next memory that I have is perhaps one of the most poignant ones of my life: the flight captain declared that we were out of Lebanese airspace, at which point my mother took out a chain with a Star of David (or it might have been a Chai, a Hebrew symbol for *life* or *living*), placed it around my neck, and said: "Now you can wear this, not hide your identity, and be proud of who you are." Several years later, I asked my parents to fill in my memory lapse: Why could I not remember any other details from our drive to the Beirut International Airport? Apparently, as we drove through the various neighborhoods, our militiamen exchanged fire with unsympathetic local militias. We were crouched in the car with luggage over our heads. I have no memory of that incident.

My first impression of Montreal was how cold it was. I had never experienced such a climate. That said, I recall thinking that it was better to face falling snow than falling bombs. I vividly remember being driven by my parents to Iona Elementary School. It was a dark and dreary day. The teacher graciously asked me to stand in front of the class and introduce myself. This was an English school, and I knew very few English words (other than whatever I might have learned while watching spaghetti westerns growing up in Beirut). I began: "Mon nom est Gad Saad. Je viens du Liban." [My name is Gad Saad. I come from Lebanon.] I faced the dreaded collective blank stare. Using my hands, I gestured a machine gun mowing down people while stating "Liban, Liban." I recently ran into a classmate who was present on my infamous first day at school, and he confirmed that this episode was also etched in his mind. It is perhaps poetic that we ran into one another at my daughter's elementary school year-end BBQ.

Even though we had safely arrived at Montreal in 1975, our Lebanese nightmare continued well beyond that point. My parents found it difficult to adapt to their new lives in Canada, and so they did not fully sever their ties with their homeland until 1980. This was the year that my parents made one of their imprudent return trips to Beirut and were kidnapped by Fatah. They were held captive for several days during which time they faced a very unsavory reality. During their disappearance, I was kept in the dark about their circumstances (in a bid to protect me), and only found out what had really happened once my parents were freed (via high-level political figures who intervened on their behalf). One of my high school classmates, who was also Lebanese-Jewish, was fully aware of my parents' kidnapping (his parents and mine were lifelong friends). He later recounted to me that he had found it very odd that I appeared so carefree and joyful during my parents' disappearance. He did not know that I was unaware of their lot as the tragic events were unfolding. As my parents were about to embark on their final flight out of Lebanon, their friends reminded them that while they were very sad to see them go, they should never return. Their sage advice was heeded. The gravity of the situation hit me hard upon being reunited with them in Montreal. I will never forget the trauma in their eyes as well as my father's temporary asymmetric facial paralysis. I also recall being haunted by the possibility that my mother might have been gang raped by her captors.

That I miraculously escaped from Lebanon offered me some temporary respite for the next fifteen years or so. The ugliness of ideological tribalism, however, returned to haunt me on university campuses. But before I get to that, I want to discuss the two life ideals that best explain why I fight against the enemies of reason.

My Life Ideals: Freedom and Truth

I was only ever interested in two possible occupations, professional soccer player and professor. The plan was to pursue my athletic career full throttle and once I retired, I would complete my studies and become

a professor. While it is quite rare for professional athletes to complete advanced degrees, Socrates, the captain of the Brazilian national soccer team at the 1982 World Cup, was also a physician. While not an athlete, Brian May, the guitarist of the legendary British rock band Queen obtained a Ph.D. in astrophysics from Imperial College London in 2007 (three decades after abandoning his studies to focus on his musical career). It was certainly not a pipe dream to aspire to both careers. Regrettably, a devastating injury coupled with other life obstacles ended my soccer career, and so, I dove into my studies. I completed an undergraduate degree in mathematics (I recently found out though that mathematics is "racist"¹) and computer science, which catered nicely to my bent for perfectionism and analytical purity. After all, a mathematical proof is either correct or not. Programming code is either free of bugs or not. Immediately after completing my B.Sc. degree at McGill University, I enrolled in the two-year M.B.A. program at the same institution. During my second year as an M.B.A. student, I was one of a handful of fortunate students picked by Professor Jay Conger for his Group Dynamics course. In each class we delved into psychological principles that illuminated our personal lives. In one of our assignments, we had to identify the scripts that defined our life trajectories (a framework originally developed by psychiatrist Eric Berne, who established the theory and practice of transactional analysis). Berne argued that parents give their children scripts for their lives somewhat in the way that actors receive scripts in order to play their roles. While I concede that parents do wield sizeable influence in shaping their offspring, psychoanalytic theories overestimate such forces while ignoring the unique combination of genes that defines an individual. Some people might indeed be commandeered by life scripts. ("Be a good boy and do us proud. Don't dishonor the family.") Others might be driven by a desire to meet certain guiding ideals and/or objectives. ("Make the world a better place.")

It requires deep (and difficult) self-reflection to consider whether and how one's life has been governed by a recurring life script or by a recurrent assertion of certain ideals. Many realities that you've faced might seem

disconnected but upon further scrutiny, you might discover that they are linked via a common script or ideal that you value. One of the benefits of psychotherapy is to precisely identify such patterns for patients. In my case, my life has been shaped by a commitment to two foundational ideals: freedom and truth. The pursuit of these two ideals was not imposed on me by my parents; rather, it is a manifestation of my personhood as inscribed in my genes. I'll address each of these ideals in turn.

The Freedom Ideal

My love of freedom became apparent as a young child being dragged to synagogue in Beirut, Lebanon. I found the rote prayers and herd-like rituals very alienating. My inquisitive nature felt stifled by religious dogma. I found no freedom in religious practice. You simply belonged to the group and mimicked their behaviors. I suspect that many children find religious services unappealing, but I had a more visceral repulsion. My strong individuality, even at such a young age, rebelled at the pressure to conform, and I was delighted to have been the only one of four children in my family never to attend Jewish school. In my forties, my father shared with me his deep regret that I did not receive a Jewish education. I told him that I was thankful that he had not forced such an education on me. My friendships and romantic interests have spanned races, ethnicities, and religions, and I am richer for it. Fast forward to my teenage years when I developed into a very competitive soccer player with the potential to head to Europe to pursue a professional career. I played the number ten position, which is typically reserved for a skillful playmaker who is given free rein to roam the field. Whenever I had a coach who placed constraints on my movements, I was devastated. My playing style required complete freedom of movement, and anything short of that had a deleterious effect on my performance.

The pursuit of freedom is also at the root of my professorial career. This holds true on two very different levels. Academia grants me the freedom to spend my time throughout a given day as I see fit. I often work very long hours, albeit at my discretion as to when and where I do

so. Having to attend two or three scheduled meetings in a given week suffocates me, but I'm perfectly relaxed at the prospect of spending twelve hours at a café working on my next book. Having occupational freedom is good for me. People who possess less occupational freedom have higher cortisol levels (a higher stress response). The social epidemiologist Michael Marmot has documented the relationship between individuals' health and the extent to which they possess control over their job responsibilities.² More freedom equals better health.

There is a second element of freedom that has defined my scientific career, and that is the freedom to navigate radically different intellectual landscapes. For most academics, the road to glory requires a commitment to hyper-specialization. Develop expertise in a small niche and stay in your lane. Most academics build their entire professional reputations on research of very narrow areas of interest. I do not have the intellectual temperament for such careerist shackles. As a truly interdisciplinary scientist, I traverse disparate intellectual landscapes as long as they tickle my curiosity. This is why I have published in varied disciplines including consumer behavior, marketing, psychology, evolutionary theory, medicine, economics, and bibliometrics. The anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko famously authored a book titled *I Write What I Like*. In my case, I research what I like (and I am thankful to my university for having implicitly supported my broad academic interests). You might imagine that I do not take too well to those who argue that there are some research questions that should never be tackled—*forbidden knowledge*.³

My desire for intellectual freedom is also the reason that I am a professor who is deeply engaged in social media. Unlike the great majority of my highfalutin colleagues who take great pride in being ivory tower-dwellers, I am a professor of the people. I consider it part of my job description to engage with the public. During a recent visit to give a lecture at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, I had a telling conversation with a Stanford colleague who epitomizes the "ivory tower" bias. He was aware that I had appeared on the Joe Rogan podcast (an extraordinarily popular platform) but was clearly disdainful of such

public engagement. He seemed to think that one could either publish in leading scientific journals or appear on Rogan's show. I disabused him of this false either-or proposition by pointing out that a complete academic should strive to do both. Many professors forget that their professional responsibility is not only to generate new knowledge but also to seek to maximally disseminate it. Social media offers endless such opportunities by allowing ideas to spread quickly and to a very large number of people. No rational intellectual should oppose such a possibility, and yet many succumb to what I refer to as the *garage band effect*. If you are a struggling band that plays in your parents' garage only to be heard by them and a few annoyed neighbors, you are legit. If your band becomes a smashing success with a number one hit on *Billboard* and now plays in front of large stadium crowds, you're a "sellout." This is precisely the mindset of many academics. They prefer to publish only in peer reviewed journals (play in the garage) and look with derision at appearing on Joe Rogan (number one *Billboard* hits and filled-out stadiums). I reject this intellectual elitism for reasons similar to why Donald Trump leapfrogs the mainstream media and engages the electorate directly via social media. Take the message directly to the people. We have the tools to do so.

The Truth Ideal

Without the necessary freedoms, it would be impossible to instantiate my second life ideal, namely the pursuit of and defense of truth. There is a bidirectional relationship between truth and freedom such that the truth will set you free (John 8:32), and only in being free can one aspire to uncover the truth. Clearly though, few people stay up at night worrying about injuries to the truth. But I do and always have. Growing up, my mother repeatedly warned me that the world did not abide by my punishingly strict standards of intellectual, ethical, and moral purity, let alone follow my pathological commitment to honesty and probity. She was imploring me to recognize that the world was made of multiple shades of grey rather than black-or-white dichromatic coloring (though she did not use these terms). When I am exposed to intellectual

dishonesty and ideological dogma, I respond in a manner that is akin to someone being punched in the face. I experience an adverse emotional and psychological reaction that compels me to fight back. While I am a jovial and warm person, I can become a combative brawler when I witness departures from reason that stem either from willful ignorance or from diabolical, ideologically driven duplicity.

The quest for truth should always supersede one's ego-defensive desire to be proven right. This is not an easy task because for most people it is difficult to admit to being wrong. This is precisely why science is so liberating. It offers a framework for auto-correction because scientific knowledge is always provisional. An accepted scientific fact today might be refuted tomorrow. As such, the scientific method engenders epistemic humility. I grew up in a household where this quality was sorely lacking. Several members of my family are classic know-it-alls who seldom exhibit any deference to someone who might possess greater knowledge or wisdom on a given topic. They know more about the heart than the cardiologist, more about teeth than the dentist, more about mathematics than the mathematician, and more about academia than the academic. Also, they were seldom, if ever, willing to admit to being wrong. When it came to epistemic humility, they were not reincarnations of Socrates. I was always deeply troubled by this family dynamic for I viewed their epistemic grandiosity as a deep affront to the truth. A personal anecdote that took place more than two decades ago perfectly captures this reality.

A family member remarked to me that the Ancient Greeks were anti-Semitic Christians to which I gently retorted that they were not Christians. The individual in question insisted that of course they were Christians. At that point, I explained that the time period in question was labelled "BC" in reference to its being "before Christ" (prior to Christianity). Once it was clear to this person that my position was unsailable, what do you think he did? Did he grant me the courtesy of admitting that he was wrong? I have recounted this tale on a few occasions and asked people to guess what his reaction was. No one has successfully cracked that mystery yet. When all hope that he might be proven

correct was extinguished, he looked me in the eyes and stated with a straight face, "Yes, I said that they were not Christians, and you said that they were. So I am right." Of course, we both knew that this was a grotesque lie but in his narcissistic and delusional bubble, his perfect record of superior knowledge remained intact.

My mother's admonition about the incongruity between my notions of intellectual and moral purity and the real-world was ironically on full display in my interactions with family members who possess zero epistemic humility. My intellectual probity was repeatedly violated by these individuals who cared only about signaling to the world that they knew more than you did about anything and everything. This family dynamic might explain why I am so offended by individuals who exhibit the Dunning-Kruger effect, that is, a self-assuredness and supreme confidence despite one's idiocy (David Dunning was my professor at Cornell University). Social media is infested with such types. I, on the other hand, am perfectly comfortable admitting to my undergraduate students that I do not know the answer to a posed question. This builds trust because students quickly learn that I care about the veracity of information that I share with them. On topics I know well, I lecture with confidence, on others, such as, say, the pros and cons of legalizing cannabis, I exhibit necessary humility. Confucius was correct: "To know what you know and what you do not know, that is true knowledge."

Given my love for pursuing and defending truth, academia is both the best and worst profession to be in. As I progressed through my university education, I quickly recognized a great paradox: universities are both the source of scientific truths and the dispensers of outlandish anti-truths.

Universities: Purveyors of Truth and Ecosystems of Intellectual Garbage

Once I completed my M.B.A. in 1990, I moved to Ithaca, New York, to continue my education at Cornell University where I obtained an M.S.

and a Ph.D. in 1993 and 1994 respectively. During my first semester, my doctoral supervisor, the famed mathematical and cognitive psychologist J. Edward Russo, suggested that I enroll in Professor Dennis Regan's Advanced Social Psychology course. This course would wield an inestimable impact on my eventual scientific career as this is where I first encountered the extraordinary elegance of evolutionary psychology in explaining human phenomena. Since I was interested in the study of consumer behavior, I had found my academic path. I would combine evolutionary psychology and consumer psychology in founding the field of evolutionary consumption. That said, my doctoral dissertation was on the psychology of decision-making. I examined the cognitive processes that people use when making decisions. Specifically, how do we know when we've acquired enough information to commit to a choice between a pair of competing alternatives? Beyond the incredibly rigorous training that I obtained at Cornell from many of the world's leading psychologists and economists, this is where I was also first exposed to some of the nonsensical gibberish that I critique in this book. I recall taking Professor Russo's doctoral seminar during which he exposed us to the increasing number of postmodernist papers that were being published in the leading consumer research journals. One in particular exemplified this anti-science lunacy. In 1991, Stephen J. Gould (not to be confused with the late Harvard paleontologist) authored a paper in one of the most prestigious journals of the field of consumer research. The paper was titled "The self-manipulation of my pervasive, perceived vital energy through product use: An introspective-praxis perspective."⁴ He began the article by lamenting the following: "Much of consumer research has failed to describe many experiential aspects of my own consumer behavior, especially the everyday dynamics of my pervasive, self-perceived vital energy." Narcissist much? He then proceeded in an outlandish exercise of the postmodern methodology of autoethnography (a fancy way of saying he wrote a "dear diary" entry couched in pseudo-intellectual drivel). Here are two passages wherein he shares an "academic" take on his erection and orgasm.

For example, I remember experiencing sensations running throughout my body, including my genitals, so that I felt something akin to sexual feelings through eating. I am not saying that eating feelings were exactly the same as sexual feelings, but that they overlapped. For example, I did not have erections over food, but I did experience excitement akin to sexual arousal in terms of electric feelings and hot-cold flashes that registered from my genitals upwards when I actually did eat something.⁵

Deliberate charging involving an erotic film creates a more intense flow state of excitement so that my heartbeat is noticeable and fast, I feel very warm, and my body is quivering with such intensity that I may actually shake. This state sometimes is heightened even more when my wife and I use certain Asian orgasm control techniques that heighten and prolong pleasure in periods spread over days or weeks (Gould 1991b), and then watch an erotic film to create a culminating crescendo of energy—arousal feeding arousal.⁶

Houston, we have a problem.

Beyond being briefly exposed to postmodernism and associated movements, it became clear to me during my doctoral training that much of the social sciences were bereft of biological-based thinking. Most human phenomena were viewed through the lens of social constructivism (the belief that our preferences, choices, and behaviors are largely shaped by socialization). This struck me as a nonsensical notion. Surely, the environment matters but so does our biological heritage. I left Cornell in 1994 with a newly minted Ph.D. and joined Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, as an assistant professor in the business school. Over the next few years, I settled into my tenure-track position and eventually obtained tenure in 1999. I lived two separate professional realities. Amongst my colleagues in the natural sciences, my attempt to Darwinize

the business school was considered laudable. This was not the case with my colleagues in the social sciences, most of whom viewed such attempts with great derision. According to them, biologically-based theorizing was too reductionistic in explaining consumer behavior. And, to postulate that sex differences might be rooted in evolutionary realities was simply "sexist nonsense." I quickly learned that most academic feminists were profoundly hostile to evolutionary psychology. I was respected among evolutionary behavioral scientists and was derided by many marketing scholars. This biophobia (fear of biology in explaining human phenomena) has been a recurring form of science denialism that I've experienced throughout my academic career.

Beyond being purveyors of anti-science (postmodernism) and science denialism (biophobia), universities serve as patient zero for a broad range of other dreadfully bad ideas and movements. In the immortal words of George Orwell, "One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool."⁷ The proliferation of many of these bad ideas has yielded reward mechanisms in academia that are upside down. The herd mindset is rewarded. Innovative thinkers are chastised. "Stay in your lane" academics are rewarded. Outspoken academics are punished. Hyper-specialization is rewarded. Broad synthetic thinking is scorned. Every quality that should define intellectual courage is viewed as a problem. Anything that adheres to leftist tenets of progressivism is rewarded. Those who believe in equality of outcomes receive top-paying administrative jobs. Those who believe in meritocracy are frowned upon. If they go unchecked, parasitic idea pathogens, spawned by universities, eventually start to infect every aspect of our society.

Idea Pathogens as Parasites of the Human Mind

When asked which animal they fear most, the great majority of people are likely to either mention a large predator (great white shark, crocodile, lion, bear) or perhaps scorpions, spiders, or snakes (humans

have evolved a preparedness to learn such phobias). Conspicuously absent from any such list is the animal that has killed by far the greatest number of humans throughout history: the lethal mosquito. I happen to suffer from a deep phobia of mosquitoes. The number of nights that I have kept my wife awake in a hotel room (typically on a Caribbean vacation) as we've hunted an elusive mosquito is considerable. I often remind my wife that this is a perfectly adaptive phobia. It makes a lot more sense to fear the mosquito than to obsess about an attack by a great white shark. Mosquitoes kill by transmitting to their victims one of several deadly biological pathogens including yellow fever (virus) and malaria (parasite). More generally, one of the greatest threats that humans have faced throughout our evolutionary history is exposure to a broad range of pathogens including tuberculosis (bacterium), leprosy (bacterium), cholera (bacterium), bubonic plague (bacterium), polio (virus), influenza (virus), smallpox (virus), HIV (virus), and Ebola (virus). The good news is that we have found ways to temper if not eradicate many of these dangers with improved hygiene and sanitation, vaccines, and at times easy to implement solutions such as mosquito nets.

The central focus of this book is to explore another set of pathogens that are potentially as dangerous to the human condition: parasitic pathogens of the human mind. These are composed of thought patterns, belief systems, attitudes, and mindsets that parasitize one's ability to think properly and accurately. Once these mind viruses take hold of one's neuronal circuitry, the afflicted victim loses the ability to use reason, logic, and science to navigate the world. Instead, one sinks into an abyss of infinite lunacy best defined by a dogged and proud departure from reality, common sense, and truth. While parasites can target and reside in different body parts, neuroparasitology deals with the class of cerebral parasites that manipulate hosts' behaviors in different ways. The animal kingdom is replete with examples of biological pathogens that, once they infect an organism's brain, yield some rather macabre outcomes including a host's reproductive death (parasitic castration) if not actual death (hosts commit suicide in the service of the parasite). Take for example the spider

wasp, which engages in a truly morbid behavior. It stings a much larger spider rendering it in a zombie-like state at which point the wasp drags it to a burrow and lays its eggs on it.⁸ The offspring eventually devour the hapless spider in vivo. *Parelaphostrongylus tenuis* is a parasite that infects the brains of ungulates (moose, deer, elk) causing afflicted animals to at times engage in circling behavior (going around in a small circle endlessly). This robotic behavior will continue even as looming predators approach the ill-fated animal. A third example of a brain parasite is *toxoplasma gondii*, which when it infects a mouse's brain causes it to lose its otherwise adaptive fear of cats. Finally, *nematomorpha* constitute a class of suicide-inducing parasites that afflict a broad range of insects including crickets, cockroaches, and praying mantises. For example, the Gordian worm gets its host (cricket) to jump into a body of water (which it would usually avoid) so that the parasite can leave its host's body and look for a mate.⁹ In the same way that brain parasites have evolved to take advantage of their hosts in the furtherance of their evolutionary objectives, parasitic viruses of the human mind (devastatingly bad ideas) function in a similar manner. They parasitize human minds, rendering them impervious to critical thinking, while finding clever ways to spread across a given population (for example, getting students to enroll in women's studies departments).

Some of the parasitic viruses of the human mind that I tackle include postmodernism, radical feminism, and social constructivism, all of which largely flourish within one infected ecosystem: the university. While each mind virus constitutes a different strain of lunacy, they are all bound by the full rejection of reality and common sense (postmodernism rejects the existence of objective truths; radical feminism scoffs at the idea of innate biologically-based sex differences; and social constructivism posits that the human mind starts off as an empty slate largely void of biological blueprints). This general class of mind viruses is what I have coined Ostrich Parasitic Syndrome (OPS), namely various forms of disordered thinking that lead afflicted individuals to reject fundamental truths and realities that are as evident as the pull of gravity. In a similar vein to how all forms

of cancer share a mechanism of unchecked cell division, these mind viruses all reject truth in the defense of a pet ideology. The ideological tribe to which one belongs varies across the mind viruses, but the commitment is always to the defense of one's dogma—truth and science be damned. All is not lost though. OPS need not be a terminal disease of the human mind. Recall that many biological pathogens are defeated by targeted intervention strategies (like the polio vaccine). The same applies to those afflicted with OPS and associated mind viruses. The inoculation against such cancerous mindsets comes in the form of a two-step cognitive vaccine: 1) providing OPS sufferers with accurate information, and 2) ensuring that OPS sufferers learn how to process information according to the evidentiary rules of science and logic.

In his 1976 classic *The Selfish Gene*, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins famously introduced the concept of the meme to our public consciousness. Memes are packets of information that spread from one brain to another.¹⁰ In reading this book, your brain is infected by my memes. If you then discuss my ideas within your social circle, my memes are further propagated. Not all memes are created equal though, be it in terms of their valence (positive, neutral, or negative) or their virulence (how quickly they spread). The ice bucket campaign to combat amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (colloquially known as Lou Gehrig's disease) yielded rapidly viral YouTube clips, all in the pursuit of a worthy cause. On the other hand, other memes might take longer to spread (for instance, a death-cult religious belief) though they yield astonishingly dire consequences (convincing people that it is a divine act to fly airplanes into skyscrapers). From this perspective, OPS is a memetic disease of the human mind. When facing a pathogenic epidemic, we call on modern-day dragon slayers, namely infectious disease specialists and epidemiologists to intervene. They defend us against a broad range of monstrous pathogens dead set on infecting us. Part of their job description is to understand where a pathogen originates, the manner and speed by which it spreads, the identity of the first person to be infected (patient zero), and how to eradicate it. This is precisely the approach that must be taken

in defeating parasitic viruses of the human mind. Where do these infectious bad ideas come from? How are they spread? Which ecosystem do they flourish in? How do we inoculate people against their devastating effects? That is the task of this book. It is an exploration of the epidemiology of mind pathogens and the intervention strategies that will allow us to wrestle back reason from the enemies of truth.

Death of the West by a Thousand Cuts

The greatness of the West stems in part from its protection of fundamental freedoms and its commitment to reason and the scientific method (where appropriate). Over the past few decades though, several nefarious forces have slowly eroded the West's commitment to reason, science, and the values of the Enlightenment (see Figure 1 below). Such forces include political correctness (as enforced by the thought police, the language police, and social justice warriors), postmodernism, radical feminism, social constructivism, cultural and moral relativism, and the culture of perpetual offense and victimhood (microaggressions, trigger warnings, and safe spaces on campuses, as well as identity politics). This has created an environment that has stifled public discourse in a myriad of ways. Academics shy away from investigating so-called forbidden topics (such as sex differences or racial differences) lest they be accused of being rabidly sexist or racist. Professors are intimidated into using nonsensical gender pronouns when addressing students lest they otherwise be committing a hate crime (see for instance Canada's Bill C-16). University students demand that they be "protected" from ideas that are antithetical to their own while being warned by administrators about wearing "offensive" Halloween costumes. Politicians are fearful to critique Islam or open-border immigration policies lest they be accused of being bigots. More generally, people are deathly afraid to espouse any opinion that might get them ostracized from the politically correct club (try being a conservative Republican in Hollywood or on a university campus). These trepidations are weakening our culture because we are no longer able to talk with one another using rational and reasoned discourse that is otherwise free from a dogmatic and tribal mindset. In

this book, I set out to describe the confluence of forces that are endangering the West's commitment to freedom, reason, and true liberalism (hence, the death of the West by a thousand cuts). Ultimately, any attempt to limit what individuals can think or say weakens the defining ethos of the West, namely the unfettered commitment to the pursuit of truth unencumbered by the shackles of the thought police.

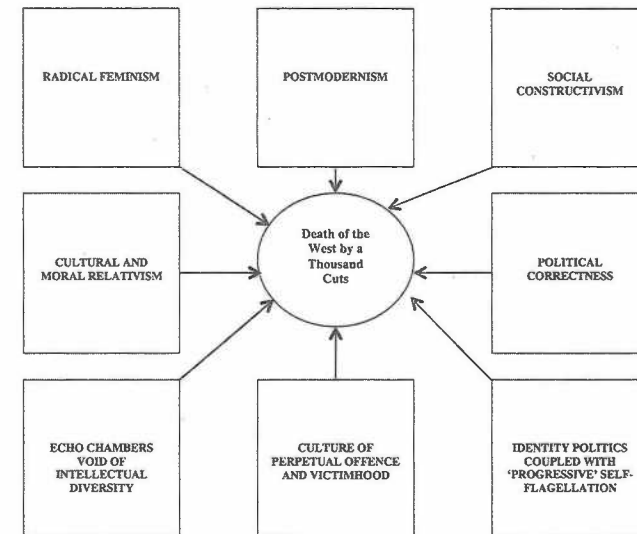


Figure 1. Death of the West by a Thousand Cuts

A few books have addressed the spread of anti-intellectual, anti-reason, anti-science, and anti-liberal sentiment¹¹ and the specific movements that give rise to them (postmodernism, radical feminism, multiculturalism as a political philosophy, and identity politics).¹² This book weaves together all of these nefarious forces, along with new ones, to explain how they gave rise to the current stifling political correctness, which is enforced by the thought police along with its army of social justice warriors (a recent phenomenon). It offers an up-to-date examination of the current cultural zeitgeist on campuses and in public discourse. Finally, it highlights how these anti-freedom, anti-honesty movements have substantive consequences in the real world. They explain the West's inability to have a frank and reasoned discussion about the place of Islam

within our secular, liberal, and modern societies. They also help explain the popular reaction *against* political correctness—and its threats to freedom and honesty—that we saw in the stunning ascendancy of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States.

Unless we win the battle of ideas, the enemies of reason, along with the mind viruses that they promulgate, will lead our free societies to lunatic self-destruction.

CHAPTER TWO

Thinking versus Feeling, Truth versus Hurt Feelings

“Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.”

—David Hume¹

“I always felt that a scientist owes the world only one thing, and that is the truth as he sees it. If the truth contradicts deeply held beliefs, that is too bad. Tact and diplomacy are fine in international relations, in politics, perhaps even in business; in science only one thing matters, and that is the facts.”

—Hans J. Eysenck²

In describing a debate on the existence of God with Doug Geivett, currently a professor of philosophy at the Talbot School of Theology of Biola University, my good friend and founder of The Skeptics Society Michael Shermer remarked:

Geivett concluded his initial presentation by explaining that we are confronted here with an either-or-choice: Either God exists or He does not; either the universe was created or it was not; either life was designed or it was not; either morality is natural or it is not; either Jesus was resurrected or he was not.

I opened up my rebuttal by explaining that there are only two types of theories: Those that divide the world into two types of theories, and those that do not.³

Shermer's brilliant levity carries an important epistemological message—namely that the pursuit of knowledge does not always neatly fit into clean dichotomies. The penchant of many researchers to map phenomena onto binary realities is what I've coined *epistemological dichomania*.⁴ It stems from a desire to create a workable and simplified view of the world that is amenable to scientific testing. Of note, the dichotomies are at times largely false such as the nature-nurture debate. In the words of the biologist Matt Ridley, "Nature versus nurture is dead."⁵ Much of who we are arises from an indissoluble amalgam of our genes and our environments.⁶ Furthermore, universal patterns of socialization (nurture) exist in their forms because of biological imperatives (nature). The desire to divide the world into binary forms is at the root of the thinking versus feeling dichotomy, and this creates a false either-or mindset. We are both thinking and feeling animals. The challenge is to know when to activate the cognitive (thinking) versus the affective (feeling) systems.

When you think of perfume commercials, what comes to mind? You are unlikely to see a Harvard chemist in a lab coat explaining the chemical equation of the aromatic recipe used in making the product. Similarly, the brand's name is unlikely to be a technical name such as Anisaldehyde-Eugenol X2000. Instead, the typical perfume commercial sells sex, romance, fantasy, and passion. A beautiful woman with long flowing hair might be shown riding a horse followed by a one-word brand name such as *Obsession*, *Escape*, *Allure*, *Mystère*, or *Désir* (all actual brand names). Perfumes are hedonic products, and as such they must engage our emotions. If one were designing a commercial for a mutual fund, the commercial's content as well as the fund's brand name would be radically different. In this case, given that a mutual fund is a functional and utilitarian product, the commercial must engage the viewer's cognitive system. A

beautiful endorser might convince you to purchase a perfume but not to invest in a mutual fund. The Elaboration Likelihood Model posits that consumers use one of two routes of persuasion when processing a message.⁷ The central route involves cognitive effort, namely the consumer will carefully evaluate the message's substantive informational content (such as the seven reasons why a particular mutual fund is the best one to invest in). The peripheral route on the other hand relies on the use of non-substantive cues in arriving at an attitude (using an endorser's physical attractiveness in forming an attitude toward investing in a mutual fund). In this case, the peripheral cue is not directly relevant in judging the logical merits of the message. The route that is activated depends on a consumer's motivation and ability to process information. Generally speaking, an attitude wherein the affective and cognitive components are consistent with one another will be more resistant to change (see for example Rosenberg's affective-cognitive consistency model⁸). The negative hysteria surrounding Donald Trump is rooted in peripheral processing ("his mannerisms disgust me"). Trump's detractors should perhaps be spending more effort engaging their central route of persuasion by evaluating his policy positions in a dispassionate and detached manner.

Hierarchy of effects models have been used in marketing and advertising to describe the cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and conative (behavioral) stages that consumers go through after seeing or hearing an advertisement. Products that require a high level of involvement (choosing a mutual fund) will have a different sequence of effects from their low-involvement counterparts (buying a candy bar). For the former, the operative sequence is thinking–feeling–behavior: an informed opinion leads to liking the product; hence, its purchase. On the other hand, for impulse products it is feeling–behavior–thinking: a positive feeling leads to an impulse purchase, and the opinion is formed post-purchase. Inherent to the various sequences is the recognition that both cognition and emotions matter in the decision-making process. In other words, we do not need to construe thinking and feeling as antithetical to one another. They are both fundamental components of decision-making. Problems

arise when we use the wrong sequence to make a decision. For example, choosing which presidential candidate to vote for should be construed as a high-involvement decision, and accordingly a rational voter should first engage his cognitive system rather than his affective system. And yet, many hysterical anti-Trump voters begin with a visceral emotional hatred of the man and then process subsequent information in a manner that supports their a priori affective position.

The classic saying “don’t let your emotions get the best of you,” is an apt descriptor of how many people regard sound decision-making. From this perspective, a rational person thinks; an irrational person feels. Classical economists have traditionally thought of human beings as hyper-rational agents who make cost-benefit decisions. The archetype of a good decision-maker is Mr. Spock from *Star Trek*: a hyper-logical agent without emotional distractions. I recall an address by the economist George Loewenstein at the 1995 *International Association for Research in Economic Psychology Conference* in Bergen, Norway, wherein he implored economists to incorporate visceral states such as lust, anger, hunger, and fear into our understanding of human decision-making. In listening to his lecture, I kept thinking: “No kidding! Who doesn’t know this?” As a young assistant professor at the time, I was astonished that this should be news to anyone, let alone to sophisticated economic psychologists. It seems self-evident to me that it is perfectly rational to be an emotional being, when one’s emotions are applied in the proper context.

Emotions such as happiness, fear, lust, disgust, or envy serve as solutions to recurring evolutionary challenges that our ancestors have faced.⁹ Take romantic jealousy. Which of the following two scenarios is more emotionally painful for you to imagine: Your spouse committing sexual infidelity or committing emotional infidelity? Evolutionary psychologist David Buss and his colleagues showed that men respond more harshly to sexual infidelity (as this raises a fear of uncertain paternity about children), while women are more upset by emotional infidelity (as this serves as a greater predictor of a man’s lack of commitment to a long-term union).¹⁰ Men and women respond to infidelity according to the

mating challenges of their sex. The triggered emotions are perfectly rational when viewed through an evolutionary lens.

In his 2011 bestselling book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman argued that humans are endowed with two systems of thinking: System 1 composed of fast, intuitive, automatic, unconscious, emotional, and instinctive processes; and System 2 made up of slow, deliberate, analytical, logical, and conscious processes. It is hardly surprising that humans are endowed with the capacity to use a broad range of cognitive and affective strategies when making decisions. Nor is it surprising that people differ in the extent to which they rely on feelings versus thinking when making choices.¹¹ The problem arises when domains that should be reserved for the intellect are hijacked by feelings. This is precisely what plagues our universities: what were once centers of intellectual development have become retreats for the emotionally fragile. The driving motto of the university is no longer the pursuit of truth but the coddling of hurt feelings.

Truth versus Hurt Feelings

On October 15, 2017, with Wikipedia as my research tool, I conducted a quick, and obviously informal, analysis of university mottos. I found that there were one hundred twenty-eight matches for the word *truth*, forty-six matches for the word *wisdom*, sixty-one matches for the word *science* and zero matches for the words *emotion* or *feeling*. For example, Harvard’s motto is *Veritas* (truth) and Yale’s is *Lux et veritas* (light and truth). These venerable institutions of higher learning were not founded on an ethos of *feelings* but on the dogged pursuit of *truth*. And yet, across all our institutions—from universities to the media to the judicial system to the political arena—truth is increasingly taking a back seat to feelings. This is true in the United States, it is true in Canada, and it is true across most of the western world.

An extraordinarily chilling and instructive example of this dreadful trend occurred in the Netherlands in 2010. Geert Wilders, a Dutch

parliamentarian, was charged with a slew of crimes for having the temerity to criticize Islam and its growing influence in his country. Any freedom-loving reader should be appalled that criticism of a religion is now considered hate speech in many Western countries. As part of his defense strategy, Mr. Wilders sought to call on expert witnesses to validate the veracity of his stated public positions. The response from the prosecutor's office (*Openbaar ministerie*) was truly breathtaking: "It is irrelevant whether Wilders's witnesses might prove Wilders's observations to be correct. What's relevant is that his observations are illegal."¹² In a free society, people should have the right to criticize a religion; they should have the right to do so, and of course their criticisms are themselves open to criticism; that is the essence of freedom of speech and thought. In this case, the prosecution was beyond Orwellian, stating flatly that *telling the truth could be illegal*. This mindset is increasingly prevalent in academia, and it falls under the rubric of forbidden knowledge (see the recent case of Noah Carl who dared to support researchers' right to study the relationship between race and intelligence).¹³

In August 2017, I made my fifth appearance on *The Joe Rogan Experience*. For those of you unfamiliar with the podcast, it is a conversational marathon that typically lasts just shy of three hours. During our conversation, Joe asked me about the scientific pursuit of potentially sensitive topics. Here is the relevant excerpt:

Me: When I was on Sam Harris's show you know earlier this year about six or seven months ago, he asked me: "Is there any research question that you would not tackle in your scientific career, that is too taboo?" And my answer is "no." As long as you address the question honestly and objectively there is nothing that should be off limits. Because then it becomes very easy to say "sex differences, we shouldn't study that because it might marginalize one sex or the other. Race differences, we shouldn't study them for the same reasons" and so on. That becomes forbidden knowledge. No. The highest

ideal that any honest person should pursue is the pursuit of truth.... So don't be encumbered by political correctness, just pursue the truth. And I think that one of the reasons that Jordan Peterson's message and my message have resonated now with a lot of people is because at least they see that we are ascribing to that ideal to the best of our abilities.

Rogan: What if that truth hurts your feelings?

Me: Fuck your feelings.

Rogan: [Gasping] Oooohhhh!

There are two fundamental ethical orientations that guide people's daily behaviors: deontological and consequentialist ethics. The former is an absolutist view of ethical standards (it is never correct to lie) whereas the latter evaluates the ethical merits of an action based on its consequences (it is at times acceptable to lie to spare someone's feelings). The reality is that most people operate under both systems. For example, if your wife asks you if she looks overweight, you will likely utter "no" without flinching, whatever you actually think. On the other hand, most people consider it morally wrong under all circumstances to make sexual advances on children. A deontological view regarding the pursuit of truth asserts that it is never justified to violate or suppress the truth. A consequentialist perspective asserts that the truth must at times be altered, fudged, or suppressed to avert such bad consequences as hurt feelings. Much of the lunacy that we see from the "progressive" camp is a result of consequentialism when it comes to the truth.

Any human endeavor rooted in the pursuit of truth must rely on facts and not feelings. Legal proceedings constitute one such domain. We do not establish the innocence or guilt of defendants using feelings; rather, we rely on a broad range of available facts in making a case. The threshold for establishing guilt is set purposely high: the cumulative evidence must be beyond a reasonable doubt to convict someone. The evidentiary threshold for uncovering scientific truths is even more stringent than those expected within the legal arena.

One problem we face today is that consequentialists make a virtue of having emotions cloud our judgments, not only to avoid hurt feelings but because emotion is seen as a sign of authenticity. As British prison psychiatrist Theodore Dalrymple observed: “[I]s it not the case that we live in an age of emotional incontinence, when they who emote the most are believed to feel the most?”¹⁴ Remember though that one’s heartfelt outrage seldom says anything about the truth or falsehood of one’s position.

Donald Trump Is Going to End the World

When Donald Trump won the 2016 U.S. presidential election, I was bewildered at the mass psychogenic hysteria that engulfed my academic colleagues and the great majority of folks within my social circle. The stock market was going to crash and never recover. Trump was going to abolish democracy. Minorities were going to be endangered. He was about to usher in a nuclear holocaust. His supposed ties to white supremacists would marshal a new wave of genocidal anti-Semitism across North America. I decided to satirize this profound idiocy by releasing a clip on my YouTube channel showing me hiding under the table (in my study) to avoid being caught by Trump’s Jew-hating death squads.¹⁵ I have since released several other installments of “hiding under the table” clips, including one upon the confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court, and another shortly prior to hosting Professor Rachel Fulton Brown on my show. She had the “audacity” to write a blog post that lauded white men (since they were instrumental in leading the charge in founding the emancipatory freedoms that we now possess in the West, including women’s rights).¹⁶ This led to her being accused of being a white supremacist and a merchant of hate by many of her colleagues, including Professor Dorothy Kim, who was supposedly existentially threatened by Brown’s remarks since Kim is a “person of color.”¹⁷

What explains such irrational hysteria especially when promulgated by supposedly sophisticated academics? I’ve argued that Donald Trump represents a deep and visceral aesthetic injury to the sensibilities of those

who reside in the highfalutin ivory tower. Trump is the antithesis of the restrained diplomat who delivers polished and seemingly eloquent messages of platitudinous hope. Can you think of a recent U.S. president who was a world champion at delivering such messages and who was revered by the intelligentsia as the last and final messiah? Perhaps a hint might prove helpful: that president won a Nobel Peace Prize largely for having enriched the world with his message of love, peace, and hope. The nominations deadline for the prize was eleven days after he was inaugurated. As such, his Nobel Prize was awarded for “accomplishments” that he achieved prior to becoming president. Some people win Nobel Prizes by being held prisoner for twenty-seven years in their quest to fight apartheid (Nelson Mandela). Others win it for sporting a winning, radiant smile of sunny hope. They are equally worthy winners, and if you think otherwise you are a racist. Barack Obama is majestic in his personal style. He is tall, thin, and elegant. His elocution and speech cadence are melodious. He is polished in a way that appeals to those who become drunk by merely smelling the cork of a wine bottle (an Arabic expression). Donald Trump on the other hand is a brash and cantankerous brawler. The unhinged “progressives,” best exemplified by the utterly deranged Robert De Niro, are irrevocably and perpetually outraged by him. They are viscerally disgusted. They possess no theory of mind that might allow them to place themselves in the shoes of the nearly 63 million Americans who voted for Trump. Perhaps the ensuing analysis might help them see the light.

Subsequent to the historic political upset that shook the world, I witnessed innumerable people, many of whom are supposedly rational and educated individuals, aping Hillary Clinton’s “deplorables” position. According to this viewpoint many of the nearly 63 million people who voted for Donald Trump are racist, toothless, redneck simpletons who sleep with their siblings. Of course, nowhere was this perspective more rampant than in the halls of academia. It is bafflingly moronic that sophisticated intellectuals could actually believe such nonsense. I offer an alternative account to explain Trump’s victory using principles from

behavioral decision theory.¹⁸ In short, if your average voter had five key issues in mind, scored each candidate on them, and weighted them in order of importance, it was easy to understand how perfectly reasonable and rational people might have voted for Donald Trump without being deplorable bigots. Or take a much simpler decision process, the Lexicographic Rule, which states that a voter will solely examine the issue most important to him and choose the candidate who scores higher on it. It is perfectly conceivable that if a voter were using this rule, he could have voted for Trump in a multitude of possible ways.¹⁹ Those who viscerally hated Trump could not see that on issues ranging from immigration policy to tax policy to regulatory policy to trade policy to foreign policy to the appointment of federal judges, Trump took positions that appealed to many thinking Americans who wanted, for instance, stronger border enforcement, an "America First" foreign policy and trade agreements, "constitutionalist" judges, and deregulation and tax cuts. Trump campaigned on these policies, while Hillary's campaign focused on the evil of the Orange Man Bad (and his supporters). Those suffering from Trump Derangement Syndrome cannot see that for 63 million Americans, voting for Trump was an obviously rational decision.

The Brett Kavanaugh Debacle

Oftentimes when I comment about American politics, I remind people that I'm Canadian and do not have a dog in that fight. My positions are always based on first principles and are not in the least bit biased by a desire to be loyal to any political tribe. As an impartial observer of the Brett Kavanaugh affair, I was bewildered by the duplicity of Democrat politicians and their eagerness to dispense with a presumption of innocence as a non-negotiable legal standard (in a twist of gargantuan Democratic hypocrisy, the outlandish #BelieveAllWomen tenet apparently does not apply to the more credible accusation recently levied against Joe Biden). Several decades of scientific research have cast doubt on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony and the accuracy of human

memory in legal settings.²⁰ And yet, Democrat politicians were perfectly willing to ignore first principles (including a presumption of innocence) and a large corpus of scientific evidence and instead were decidedly eager to unequivocally believe testimony about an event that may or may not have taken place nearly four decades earlier. Political tribalism fueled by emotional indignation superseded logic, science, and reason. Once it became evident that the FBI could not uncover any corroborative evidence in support of Christine Blasey Ford's accusation, the Democrats moved the goalposts. The new deal-breaker regarding Kavanaugh's candidacy was his supposed lack of "judicial temperament." He was too emotionally labile, too unhinged to be a sober member of the highest court in the land. In other words, his detractors were now arguing that he did not possess the appropriate disposition to be a Supreme Court justice. His righteous indignation and justifiable disgust were not attributed to the situation at hand but were wrongly placed on the shoulders of his innate character. This is precisely what psychologists refer to as the fundamental attribution error, namely exaggerating the extent to which an individual's internal traits (his personality) are responsible for an observed reality while failing to take the circumstances into account. In the case of Kavanaugh, he was accused of horrifying crimes (without any concrete evidence) that were devastating to his personal and professional reputation. Imagine his having to explain these accusations to his wife and young daughters. His irate impatience when interacting with some of the Democrat senators was not properly attributed to the grotesque injustice that had been levied against him, but to his "volatile" personality. I doubt that this misattribution was anything but willful on the part of his detractors.

I have faced a similar misattribution whenever I've rolled up my sleeves and gone after someone forcefully on social media (typically on Twitter). I let loose and accordingly engage in rhetorical sparring that at times can be quite spicy, albeit nearly always in the spirit of fun jabbing. It always amazes me when some buffoon writes me to share his surprise at my "belligerent" disposition after having seen how restrained, polite,

and warm I appear in countless other settings. Well, how I might respond if accosted by violent muggers in a dark alley is radically different from how I behave when affectionately tucking my young children to bed. My personality does not magically change across the two scenarios; the situation does. Returning to the Kavanaugh case, no fair-minded individual could fail to attribute his understandable anger to anything but the situation at hand, and yet the Democrats placed the full blame on Kavanaugh's "intemperate" temperament. In a ploy that would make Sigmund Freud beam with pride, the Democrats managed to project their emotional hysteria onto Kavanaugh.

I'm Outraged! I'm Offended!

In 2005, Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, delivered a lecture at the National Bureau of Economic Research Conference on diversifying the science and engineering workforce.²¹ During his talk, he intimated the possibility that intrinsic sex differences might explain why women are underrepresented in these disciplines. Notwithstanding the fact that there are robust findings in the scientific literature that supported his contentions, he had committed a fatal error. To argue that men and women might exhibit dispositional differences is blasphemous within most halls of academia. Despite the fact that world-renowned Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker defended Summers's positions, he was forced to resign from Harvard. Shortly after Summers's lecture, *The Harvard Crimson* (a student newspaper) asked Pinker, "Were President Summers's remarks within the pale of legitimate academic discourse?" to which the psychologist brilliantly replied "Good grief, shouldn't everything be within the pale of legitimate academic discourse, as long as it is presented with some degree of rigor? That's the difference between a university and a madrasa."²² Incidentally, that there are fewer female faculty members in STEM fields is hardly due to sexist hiring practices. The exact opposite holds true as evidenced by the 2:1 preference exhibited by both male and female faculty members for

prospective female hires (in comparison to equally well qualified male candidates).²³ And yet, the victimhood narrative persists, unencumbered by facts.

In July 2017, I delivered a lecture at the prestigious *Talks at Google* series in Mountain View (the main Google campus) on my scientific work at the intersection of evolutionary psychology and consumer behavior.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, the now infamous Google memo written by James Damore went viral. In it, Damore argued that innate sex differences might explain why women were less likely to be interested in a career in high tech. Some thought that Damore had attended my Google lecture and that it might have emboldened him to release the memo. Alas, he confirmed to me that he was away in China when I had delivered my talk. Shortly after the memo went viral, Damore and I had our first communication, which was to set up a chat on my show. In a truly Orwellian moment, I was advised that if I wanted my Google lecture to be seen on the Internet, I should wait until it was uploaded on the Google platform before I interviewed Damore.²⁵ In any case, Damore was fired by Google despite the fact that Google had expressly solicited comment on their diversity policies—and notwithstanding that Damore's positions were well supported by the scientific literature.²⁶ If the truth hurts, it must be suppressed for the sake of diversity, inclusion, equity, and of course community cohesion.

Still, apparently not all academics have received the memo that scientific data cannot be used to question a politically correct narrative. Alessandro Strumia, a professor of physics at the University of Pisa and a fellow at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) learned this lesson the hard way.²⁷ He delivered a lecture at an inaugural event organized by CERN titled "Workshop on High Energy Theory and Gender." He presented several bibliometric analyses that questioned the prevailing victimhood narrative in physics, namely that women were discriminated against. For example, he found that across eighteen countries, men had an extraordinarily higher number of citations than women when being hired for the same position (ratios of male-to-female citations

across the countries varied from 2.96:1 to 12.5:1). It would be perfectly reasonable to challenge his conclusions if one had competing data to present, but he was condemned, essentially, as a blasphemer and metaphorically burned at the stake. Several thousand scientists under the obnoxious banner of *Particles for Justice* signed a statement condemning Strumia.²⁸ Their statement of condemnation contained countless misrepresentations unbefitting of supposedly unbiased and objective scientists including the following lead sentence [bold in original] of the second paragraph: “We write here first to state, in the strongest possible terms, that the humanity of any person, regardless of ascribed identities such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, disability, gender presentation, or sexual identity is not up for debate.” This is a grotesquely dishonest tactic as Strumia did not question anyone’s humanity let alone mention any of the listed identities.

A powerful and brilliant rebuttal letter to that statement was penned by a physicist and published in *Areo Magazine*.²⁹ The letter is precisely what one might expect of an intellectually honest and non-hysterical academic. It lays out the logical and scientific errors in the statement as well as many of the mischaracterizations of Strumia’s positions. It also conceded, even-handedly, that Strumia had, on occasion, been less than collegial. The long rebuttal was published anonymously because the author felt that “...anonymity is the wisest course. Although I am a genuinely liberal person, and although I have striven to be fair and conscientious, I fear attaching my name could harm my career and my relationships. I know there are many other physicists who were also put off by the polemical nature of the response, and who would at least be willing to discuss these things privately, but the social atmosphere is toxic right now.”

That this physicist felt the need to publish his rebuttal anonymously is the most important take away from this whole debacle. While I commend the author for writing such a trenchant reply, I admonish him for lacking the testicular fortitude to channel his inner Martin Luther: *Here I Stand*.³⁰ I have weighed in on countless occasions about the Strumia

case, including inviting him for a chat on my show and have commented about matters that are extraordinarily more fear-inducing than this matter (such as critiquing Islam), and I’ve never done so under the cloak of anonymity.³¹ An honest signal of one’s commitment to truth, reason, and justice must be costly for it to carry any weight. Still, one can understand the temptation of anonymity. A new journal, *The Journal of Controversial Ideas*, has announced that it will permit authors to publish their works under pseudonyms.³² The journal has many leading academics on its board, but that such a journal is required in supposedly free societies in the twenty-first century speaks volumes about the extent to which we are approaching the abyss of infinite intellectual darkness.

That darkness will not be lightened by humor because jokes and levity are also forbidden by “progressives” in academia. Sir Tim Hunt, a 2001 Nobel Prize winner, was giving a toast at the 2015 World Conference of Science Journalists in Seoul, South Korea, when he jokingly referred to the emotional predicaments that take place in mixed-sex labs: “Let me tell you about my trouble with girls. Three things happen when they are in the lab. You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticize them, they cry.” He then facetiously recommended same-sex labs to eliminate such pitfalls. The tsunami of outrage was swift and deadly. He was forced to resign from University College London and from the European Research Council.³³ It did not matter that many leading female scientists came to his defense, as did Richard Dawkins, a scientist and one of Britain’s leading public intellectuals.³⁴ The reputation of this extraordinarily accomplished scientist who had been a champion of women’s participation in science for several decades was shattered because of flippant comments made during a toast. That his own wife is a prominent scientist and a feminist did not give pause to the perpetually faux-outraged and their lust for blood.

Lazar Greenfield is a distinguished surgeon with a long list of scientific and clinical accomplishments. While serving as editor-in-chief of *Surgery News*, he authored an editorial in 2011 discussing research that women exposed to sperm via unprotected coitus had lower depression

scores than their counterparts who engaged in protected sex.³⁵ Greenfield concluded with a quip: "So there's a deeper bond between men and women than St. Valentine would have suspected, and now we know there's a better gift for that day than chocolates." Cue the Taliban of faux-outrage. This monster had to pay for his unforgivable humor. He was forced to resign as editor of *Surgery News* as well as step down as president-elect of the American College of Surgeons.³⁶ Steven Platek, whom I know well, and who is one of the three authors of the paper that Greenfield had cited, penned a reply letter on behalf of his collaborators: "How can someone be asked to resign for citing a peer-reviewed paper? Dr. Greenfield was forced to resign based on politics, not evidence. His resignation is more a reflection of the feminist and anti-scientific attitudes of some self-righteous and indignant members of the American College of Surgeons. Science is based on evidence, not politics. In science knowing is always preferable to not knowing."³⁷ But today in academia, progressive ideology trumps scientific facts.

Matt Taylor is another scientist who crossed paths with the perpetually offended and rabidly outraged. In 2014, while being interviewed during a livestream about a breathtaking accomplishment of human ingenuity, he wore a rather obnoxious and frankly inappropriate shirt that included drawings of scantily clad women in various poses.³⁸ Taylor had been working for the European Space Agency as an astrophysicist and was part of the team that landed the Philae probe on a rapidly moving comet located nearly 300 million miles away from our planet. The scientific and engineering expertise needed to pull off such a feat is truly astounding. This should have been his crowning moment. Alas, he is more likely to be remembered for his sartorial crime and his subsequent sobbing apology than for a truly momentous achievement. Of note, the shirt was made by Elly Prizeman, a female friend who had given it to Taylor as a gift. When interviewed about the matter, she replied: "Everyone is entitled to have an opinion. We would all be very boring if we felt the same way about everything. I can see both sides of the coin in this debate, but as it is a style I am into, I don't see it as offensive. But that is

just my view. It is up to us to empower ourselves. We can achieve anything we want to if we have the skills and put our minds to it."³⁹

The angry feminists who are willing to ruin the career of an accomplished scientist because of his idiotic shirt choice are also the ones likely to argue that the male gaze is a form of "visual rape." They are the ones who posit that the patriarchy promulgates a beauty myth that compels women to beautify themselves. When parasitized by such a conspiratorial and delusional mindset, the bikini becomes a sexist tool of the patriarchy whereas the burqa is liberating and freeing since it averts the male gaze.⁴⁰ To satirize this astonishing departure from reason I began to use the #FreedomVeils hashtag in reference to this garb. Religious attire such as the hijab, niqab, and burqa that stem from profoundly patriarchal societies and are imposed on millions of women, are liberating according to many Western feminists. Bikinis, which under second-wave feminism might be construed as empowering if used in the pursuit of sexual liberation, apparently are manifestations of the West's patriarchal misogyny. To recapitulate, bikinis, cosmetics, and miniskirts are bad. Shirts with whimsical drawings of scantily clad women are a capital offence. The burqa, niqab, and hijab represent feminist liberation from the male gaze. No satire can compete with progressive buffoonery.

During my appearance on Sam Harris's podcast, I recounted how my wife and I had taken our daughter to play at a local children's park. Standing in the middle of the play area were some individuals so fully covered in black niqabs that we could not tell if they were women, men, or any of the 873 "genders" that now constitute the rich fluidity of "gender expression." The image was so jarring that we decided to leave. Since sharing this story, I have been derided by some Western bien-pensants for our "silly" overreaction. After all, what could be more engaging and fun than walking into a play area with a very young child and having ghosts in ominous black robes stare at your child? Surely only racist bigots would feel uncomfortable at such a symbol of secularism, modernity, and true liberalism. Of course, I am being sarcastic because this is the only possible way to process such suicidal stupidity. Vision is the

dominant sense for humans. We have evolved a highly specialized visual system that permits us to read a broad range of nonverbal cues including facial features. Once a person's identity and humanity are hidden behind black robes of "freedom and liberation," it is only natural for most sane people to feel uneasy about such a reality. And yet the virtue signalers mock, deride, and condemn those who exhibit perfectly rational responses to an otherwise disturbing stimulus.

Clear-thinking people know that there is a place for both emotions and intellect, for humor and seriousness, and understand when to activate their emotional versus cognitive systems as they navigate life. But people who have fallen prey to idea pathogens have lost control of their minds and their emotions—and those pathogens are spreading rapidly and threatening our freedom.

CHAPTER THREE

Non-Negotiable Elements of a Free and Modern Society

"But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."

—John Stuart Mill¹

What are the essential features that a society must possess in order to be truly liberal and modern? Niall Ferguson, the Harvard historian, proposed "Six Killer Apps" that define the greatness of the West, namely competition, scientific revolution, property rights, modern medicine, consumer society, and work ethic.² In this chapter, I offer a more distilled set of factors. I posit that the guaranteed right to debate any idea (freedom of speech and thought) coupled with a commitment to reason and science to test competing ideas (the scientific method) are what have made Western Civilization great.

Social Media Companies and Free Speech

Many people in the West have a poor understanding of the concept of free speech. Whenever I mute or block someone on social media, a

a reflection of how market forces work. Perhaps we could get Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to use her economics degree to explain this point to Gillibrand.

Given that they are so wrong, how do the ideologues defend their idea pathogens? Under totalitarian regimes, the solution is direct. You criminalize if not violently suppress (or kill) any dissenting voices. In the West, the ideological indoctrination is subtler. It is achieved by an ethos of *political correctness* and best enforced by creating university campuses that lack *intellectual diversity*. Political correctness is like the sting of the spider wasp. Recall that the afflicted spider is dragged to the wasp's burrow in a zombie-like state and is subsequently eaten in vivo by the wasp's offspring. Political correctness achieves the same macabre objective—it allows nefarious ideas to slowly consume us while we sit quietly in a zombie-like state, too afraid to speak out. Political correctness echoes the words that Mohamed Atta, the leader of the 9/11 plot, gave to the doomed passengers of the plane he hijacked: "Nobody move. Everything will be OK. If you try to make any moves, you'll endanger yourself and the airplane. Just stay quiet. . . . Nobody move, please. We are going back to the airport. Don't try to make any stupid moves."⁶⁹ Similarly, intellectual terrorists instruct generations of gullible students to remain quiet in their classroom seats while they inculcate them with anti-science nonsense. Please refrain from asking questions. Please do not engage your faculties of critical thinking. Intellectual resistance is futile. Memorize the content of my indoctrination and be quiet. Universities serve as the training ground of the politically correct thought police and their social justice warriors.

CHAPTER FIVE

Campus Lunacy: The Rise of the Social Justice Warrior

"I'm a liberal professor and my liberal students terrify me. I have intentionally adjusted my teaching as the political winds have shifted. . . . Hurting a student's feelings, even in the course of instruction that is absolutely appropriate and respectful, can now get a teacher into serious trouble."

—Edward Schlosser¹

*"The tyranny of the minority is infinitely more odious and intolerable and more to be feared than that of the majority."*²

—President William McKinley

Student-activist social justice warriors (SJWs) might be outnumbered on campuses, yet they rule via the tyranny of the minority, backed by "progressive" professors and campus administrators. Together, they enforce a stifling climate of political correctness that we associate with things like "trigger warnings," "safe spaces," "microaggressions," and campus speech codes, all of which empower the perpetually indignant and outraged.³ To progressives, feelings trump truth; empirical statements are no longer judged by their veracity but by whether they are potentially "bigoted"—in which case they must be suppressed in the name of inclusiveness. Given that feelings are the engine by which one's existence is validated, a *culture of offence* has taken shape where it pays to be a member of the perpetually aggrieved. This creates the competitive

urge to be positioned advantageously in a *victimhood hierarchy*. The Oppression Olympics (also known as Victimology Poker) is the arena wherein this competition of victimhood takes place, using identity politics and intersectionality (“I am a Queer Fat Muslim Disabled Transgendered Black Feminist”) to establish the “winners” of this grotesque theatre of the absurd. I propose that SJWs exhibit a form of Collective Munchausen Syndrome (a psychiatric disorder where an individual feigns a medical condition to garner sympathy). Ultimately, the ethos is *I am a victim therefore I am*. This fetishizing of victimhood was alluded to long ago by the eminent British philosopher Bertrand Russell in his essay aptly titled “The Superior Virtue of the Oppressed.”⁴

Even if you hold a strong hand in Victimology Poker, do not presume that the progressive mob of SJWs won’t come after you. The bestselling author Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Somali woman born into the Islamic faith who faced personal hardships at the hands of a deeply patriarchal and misogynist society. The political host Dave Rubin is a gay Jew who used to be a proud member of the left. The journalist Andy Ngo is a gay Asian man. Once they violated central tenets of progressivism (criticizing Islam or the radical left), they lost their protective identity shields. They became fair game to the tornado of progressive rage. Ngo was violently attacked by Antifa agitators, leading to his hospitalization. This was apparently acceptable to many progressives because Ngo held “incorrect” views.⁵ Many liberal professors have had to learn this lesson the hard way, including Laura Kipnis (Northwestern University), Rebecca Tuvel (Rhodes College), Bret Weinstein (Evergreen State College), and Michael Rectenwald (New York University). They had the gall to raise, respectively, questions about rape culture on campus, transgenderism, race-based leftist activism on campus, and the radical left on campus. This triggered the ire of the progressive priesthood. When there are no longer scary MAGA hat-wearing Trump supporters to tar and feather on campus, the progressive mob will turn against its less pure members. The radical snake always ends up eating its tail. ISIS kills all Muslims who are not Muslim enough. Progressives denounce all those who are not progressive enough.

Safe Spaces and Echo Chambers Are Maladaptive

SJWs push the victim narrative by saying that opposing viewpoints constitute a form of “violence” from which they need protection, which is why they believe it is perfectly acceptable to force university administrators to disinvite speakers with whom they disagree. With the combination of SJW student activists and the lopsided political leanings of the professoriate, one has the perfect recipe for the creation of the sterile ideological echo chambers that universities have become. Neuropsychiatrist Steve Stankevicius has pointed out the dangers inherent in the intellectual sterility of academia by comparing it to the dangers children face if they grow up in allergen-poor (sterile) environments.⁶ Such children are more likely to develop respiratory ailments because the human body requires exposure to allergens in order to jump-start its immunological defenses. An analogical process is taking place among the current generation of university students as they receive their education within intellectually sterile settings. They do not develop the critical thinking skills, let alone the emotional maturity, to navigate through disagreements.

Evolution has endowed us with mechanisms of behavioral adaptation. Evolutionary scientists, for example, explain that people in warmer climates tend to have spicier cuisines, because spices offer antimicrobial protection against foodborne pathogens, which are more likely to be present in warmer climates.⁷ This demonstrates how cultural forms (national cuisine) serve as adaptive responses to biological challenges (exposure to microbes). Behavioral ecologists examine such cross-cultural differences as adaptive responses to local contingencies. The capacity to be adaptable, though, does not solely take place at the cultural level. It also occurs within an individual’s body. Take our immune system, for example. It has evolved to be adaptable precisely because it needs to combat rapidly mutating pathogens. If our immunological defenses had been selected to solely destroy a fixed set of pathogens, humans would have all died out a long time ago. Instead, the immune system is extraordinarily flexible in its capacity to find “on the fly” solutions when defending against mutated versions of different pathogens. Similarly, our behavioral immune system

consists of adaptive responses to distinct conditions.⁸ For example, an increase in the extent to which one's immune system has been compromised by illness over a given time period, the more likely one is to prefer spicy foods.⁹ Hence, evolution has endowed us with adaptability within an individual (immune system), across individuals (behavioral immune system), and across cultures (antimicrobial use of spices). Our bodies and minds expect exposure to novel and unfolding situations, but when it comes to our critical thinking faculties, we are shutting them down. So many university graduates today are unable to debate because they have never been exposed to opposing viewpoints, and they consider opposing viewpoints simply as heresies to be met with protest and hysterical fits. To function optimally, our evolved faculty for critical thinking expects to be challenged by contrary positions.

Creating sterile safe spaces is not restricted to the university campus. I recently hosted the founder of Twitter, Jack Dorsey, on my YouTube channel.¹⁰ During our conversation, I made the point that it was suboptimal for Twitter to be monitoring people's language on the platform. Healthy human beings are anti-fragile. In other words, people have to be exposed to the ugliness of social interactions. They cannot be protected in a sanitized bubble expecting that all interactions will be polite, uplifting, and enriching. Just as immunotherapy against food allergies exposes young children to minute traces of the allergens so that, with an incremental increase in the exposure dosage, the body will build immunity against that particular allergen, so too do people need to be exposed to the full repertoire of human interactions so that they can develop as intellectually and emotionally healthy individuals.¹¹ And yet today, we are creating a generation of young people who are too brittle to handle opposing opinions, and who fold into a fetal position of feigned victimhood when confronted by so-called "microaggressions," a concept that lacks scientific validity.¹²

The fostering of emotional fragility is further assured by the use of trigger warnings, which are meant to protect university students from potentially upsetting stimuli. Recall my personal history in Lebanon.

Few people have experienced the horrors that I have lived through, and yet I learned to overcome my past without needing trigger warnings to navigate through life. Needless to say, such distressing experiences of inhumanness have left an indelible mark on my psyche. I may have left Lebanon long ago, but it has never left me. One of the recurring nightmares that has haunted my sleep comes in two forms: 1) I am barricaded in our house and am about to engage (or am engaging) the incoming "bad guys" with my weapon when I realize that I am out of ammunition; 2) The same dream but my weapon jams, and I'm unable to fire it. Notwithstanding this childhood trauma, I have not wallowed in my past. I do not require trigger warnings prior to seeing a war movie. Rather, as any therapist would surely advise, one must overcome negative experiences and move forward. Trigger warnings infantilize human resilience by coddling young adults into thinking that they do not possess the psychological strength to face life. Of course, there are unique situations that require humane and gentle care, and in such instances, a caring and kind professor should consider the matter with due sensitivity. But the wholesale codifying of trigger warnings as a default policy is a grotesque overreach. In a 2015 HuffPost article, I highlighted the extraordinary range of topics that are potentially "triggering" and hence that might necessitate trigger warnings.¹³ These include:

- Abuse (physical, mental, emotional, verbal, sexual), child abuse, rape, kidnapping
- Addiction, alcohol, drug use, needles
- Blood, vomit, insects, snakes, spiders, slimy things, corpses, skulls, skeletons
- Bullying, homophobia, transphobia
- Death, dying, suicide, injuries, descriptions, and/or images of medical procedures
- Descriptions and/or images of violence or warfare, Nazi paraphernalia
- Pregnancy, childbirth

- Racism, classism, sexism, sizeism, ableism, other “isms”
- Sex (even if consensual)
- Swearing, slurs (including words such as “stupid” or “dumb”)
- Anything that might elicit intrusive thoughts in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder sufferers

Really, the list is endless, which is why I have suggested the following Universal Trigger Warning: “Using your brain to navigate the real world should not entail a trigger warning. This course will assume that you possess the cognitive and emotional acuity of an adult. Life is your trigger warning.”

Trigger warnings are antithetical to a fundamental principle of exposure therapy, a well-researched therapeutic approach for combatting generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, phobias (like arachnophobia), panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁴ Under this approach, patients are exposed to their triggering stimulus with the hope that they will learn strategies for coping with their phobias and fears. The few studies that have empirically tested the efficacy of trigger warnings indicate that they make students more likely to avoid “triggers,”¹⁵ hinder emotional resilience,¹⁶ and were ineffective even for people with prior trauma.¹⁷ Even though trigger warnings might offer a temporary reduction in painful emotions, they do not promote a healthy mindset for traversing the stochasticity of life.

What Are Universities For?

Leonhard Euler, the great eighteenth-century mathematician proclaimed: “For since the fabric of the universe is most perfect and the work of a most wise Creator, nothing at all takes place in the universe in which some rule of maximum or minimum does not appear.”¹⁸ Many times we need to identify some optimal real-world course of action (such as

whether to *maximize* profit or *minimize* wait time). Operations research (or management science) is the academic discipline that uses analytical techniques to find these optimal courses of action. In some instances, natural selection has programmed optimal behavior into an organism’s brain. This is the idea behind optimal foraging theory, which examines how animals optimize their foraging behaviors to maximize their caloric intake while minimizing the caloric expenditure.¹⁹

During my undergraduate studies in mathematics and computer science, and subsequently as an M.B.A. student, I worked as a research assistant at GERAD (*Groupe d’études et de recherche en analyse des décisions*, which in English translates to Group for Research in Decision Analysis). The center is composed of applied mathematicians and computer scientists from across several Montreal universities dedicated to solving optimization problems using a slew of algorithmic approaches. At GERAD, I worked on the *Two-Dimensional Cutting Stock Problem*, a classic optimization challenge. Suppose that a wood, glass, or metal company receives an order to cut specific numbers of rectangles and squares of varying sizes using standard sheets of the raw material in question. How should the guillotine cuts be made so that the order is filled while minimizing the amount of waste in the original sheets? Another minimization problem is the *Travelling Salesman Problem*. Suppose that a salesman is tasked with visiting a given number of cities only once each and return to the starting point. What is the shortest path that would allow the salesman to complete this objective? These are minimization problems, but there are also maximization problems. For instance, consider a firm that produces four different products with four different selling prices, raw materials used, and machine time. The challenge is to identify the optimal product manufacturing mix that will maximize the firm’s profits.

The optimal solution to any such problem hinges on which variable one chooses to optimize. An architect might choose to minimize the total cost of erecting a building and/or its time of completion. This might yield drab architectural designs akin to the housing projects found in many

large American cities where the objective is to offer a maximal number of dwellings as cheaply and as quickly as possible. Alternatively, an architect might seek to optimize a building's biophilic imprint (maximizing the number of design features that cater to our innate love of nature). The choice of which variable to optimize will yield radically different architectural designs. To further complicate matters, many complex, real-world problems require the concurrent optimization of several discordant variables (such as pursuing an investment strategy that maximizes returns while minimizing risk, which results in a diversified investment portfolio). The challenge then becomes to identify the optimal trade-off between the conflicting variables.

If companies seek to maximize profits while travelling salesmen seek to minimize total distance travelled, which variables should a university be trying to optimize? Surely, universities exist to create and disseminate new knowledge. But this is no longer true. Today the minimization of hurt feelings among preferred groups is fundamentally more important (at least in some disciplines) than the pursuit of truth. The creation of safe spaces supersedes free speech and intellectual enrichment. Social justice activism trumps the quest for truth. To put it in the language of operations research, historically a university's objective function was to maximize the intellectual growth of students and professors subject only to the constraints of university budgets. Today, many universities are driven by a multi-objective optimization problem: maximize intellectual growth while minimizing hurt feelings, or maximize intellectual growth and social justice activism while minimizing hurt feelings.

A case in point is Palo Alto University, a small regional institution that came into national prominence during Brett Kavanaugh's Senate confirmation hearings. This is the university where Christine Blasey Ford, who accused Kavanaugh of a sexual assault that supposedly had taken place thirty-six years earlier, held an appointment as a professor of psychology. I decided to visit the institution's website to gauge its core mission, thinking that it would be a hotbed of social justice warrior

activists. I was not disappointed. Here are the first three of its eight listed core values:²⁰

1. Social justice, cultural competency, and diversity
2. A student-centered and culturally responsive environment
3. High quality scientific research and scholarship that advances the state of knowledge and practice

If you want to know what's wrong with higher education, this reversal of traditional university priorities—with social justice now at the top and scholarship lower on the totem pole—is a good place to start.

The Homeostasis of Victimology

Bear with me as I provide a little background on the ubiquity of homeostasis, how we study it, and its implications, because it will help illustrate an important point about victimology. Many biological and man-made systems are governed by processes that seek to maintain a set or optimal equilibrium level. For example, a room thermostat regulates the flow of cold or hot air such that a set temperature is maintained. The human body contains several such homeostatic systems including processes that control one's body temperature, glucose levels, and arterial pressure. Homeostatic systems are not restricted to physiological processes. Several influential psychological theories are based on the idea of homeostasis.²¹ The psychologist John M. Fletcher drew a parallel between physiological and psychological homeostasis: "The rise of temper against an insult is not essentially different from the rise of temperature against infection. Both represent the attempts of an organism to maintain status; in the one case it is a body status, in the other it is a social status that is to be maintained."²² Drive-reduction theory posits that humans are compelled to reduce the discrepancy between a current state and a desired state in order to meet a physiological or psychological

need. For example, when hungry or thirsty, an individual will act to slake their hunger or thirst. Drive reduction theory can explain a very broad range of human phenomena. Homeostatic comparisons are also the key element in what is known as multiple discrepancies theory, which focuses on how people measure satisfaction with elements of their lives.²³ For example, I might gauge the discrepancy (if any) between my current income and what I expected to have at this stage in my career. Or I could contrast my current income to that of my relevant peers. The bottom line is that there are multiple ways by which one might establish a discrepancy between a current and desired state, and accordingly be motivated to close that gap.

Homeostatic processes are operative in many applied contexts including in my own field of consumer psychology. According to optimal stimulation level theory, individuals' behaviors are driven in part by a desire to achieve a set threshold of stimulation in their daily lives, with the threshold determined by personality type. For example, consumers who are high sensation seekers are more likely to explore a wider variety of products.²⁴ Homeostatic processes can help explain cultural differences in consumption patterns. For example, aggregate consumer choices (like a taste for coffee or alcohol) can be linked to a country's climate (temperature and sunlight) and be seen as adaptive homeostatic responses to local environments.²⁵

Homeostatic processes can yield unwelcome consequences. Risk homeostasis theory holds that people will alter their behaviors to maintain a desired level of risk in their lives, which is why mandatory safety features on cars—like seat belts, antilock brakes, and airbags—cause some individuals to drive more recklessly.²⁶ More than twenty years ago, I was approached by two researchers to investigate links between running shoes and various injuries. Specifically, they had found that more expensive running shoes (with ostensibly superior injury-prevention features) yielded greater injuries because of altered gaits.²⁷ This was likely a manifestation of a gait homeostatic process, where runners subconsciously increased the force with which their feet were hitting the pavement because their shoes had thicker protective padding.

Homeostasis also plays a part in what researchers call the prevalence-induced concept change effect.²⁸ Suppose that you are asked to identify whether a dot is blue. This should not depend on how many blue dots you've previously been exposed to—but it does. When there are fewer blue dots, people will code purple dots as blue. Researchers replicated this finding using pictures of threatening faces. When participants were shown fewer threatening faces, they judged neutral faces as threatening. In short, I posit that this is a form of homeostasis, namely people are driven to maintain the frequency of a stimulus at a set level, even if they have to engage in perceptual distortions to do so. This is precisely what has led to the spike in the number of exaggerated victimhood narratives, if not outright hate and harassment hoaxes. The narrative that we live in a hate-filled society, where marginalized groups fear for their lives, must be protected at all costs.

Psychologist Nick Haslam's idea of "concept creep" is very relevant to my homeostatic argument.²⁹ He argues that what constitutes harm and pathology has been massively expanded, and he uses six examples to demonstrate this (abuse, bullying, trauma, mental disorder, addiction, and prejudice).³⁰ In the abstract to his excellent article, Haslam warns: "Although conceptual change is inevitable and often well motivated, concept creep runs the risk of pathologizing everyday experience and encouraging a sense of virtuous but impotent victimhood." While he offers some speculative explanations for this trend, I would argue that my homeostasis of victimology is the simplest. A set level of victimhood must be achieved. If an insufficient number of victimhood cases exist, alter the definition of victimhood and turn banal daily interactions into "exciting" data supporting faux-victimhood.

The homeostasis of victimology, concept creep, and political correctness can at times lead to truly baffling moral hypocrisy. The Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau was unwilling to concede that ISIS had committed genocide but was willing to accept the word "genocide" in a report documenting that indigenous women were murdered at a higher rate than the Canadian national average.³¹ The great majority of these

murdered indigenous women were murdered by indigenous men, but the self-flagellant-in-chief laid the blame on "genocidal" Canadians. The government of Turkey has steadfastly refused to accept the existence of the Armenian genocide while the Canadian government confesses to a fictitious genocide. Both engage in a grotesque murder of the truth, albeit for different reasons.

The homeostasis of victimology can result in truly bewildering cases of feigned outrage and manufactured victimhood. In 2017, Lorne Grabher had his vanity plate "GRABHER" revoked by the Nova Scotia Registrar of Motor Vehicles because of its "inappropriate" nature.³² The case was heard by the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia and that judgment is now in the hands of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.³³ The Nova Scotia government (the defendant) issued an expert report produced by Carrie Rentschler, an associate professor of feminist media studies at McGill University (one of my alma maters), declaring that the license plate condones violence against women and perpetuates rape culture. Rentschler even found a way to link the issue to Donald Trump (as per his leaked interview with Billy Bush wherein he uttered the now infamous phrase "grab them by the pussy"). This is not satire. A man's actual surname is now considered to be a form of violence against women. In 2016, Humanities dean Jodi Kelly of Seattle University was removed from her administrative post when she uttered the word "nigger" in a conversation with a student.³⁴ This sounds awfully bigoted and inappropriate until one finds out that she was recommending a book of that title written by black civil rights activist Dick Gregory. She was responding to a request for a greater diversity of authors in assigned readings! It is truly soul crushing to see that our society has reached this level of political correctness and faux-outrage. In the immortal words of Voltaire, "Common sense is not so common." The list of faux-outrage is truly endless and includes the temporary removal of weighing scales at a Carleton University gym (as these might be triggering to those with body image issues)³⁵ and the renaming of an otherwise "sexist" sandwich (Gentleman's Smoke Chicken Caesar Roll by Waitrose).³⁶ My theory on the homeostasis of

victimology is perhaps best captured by a quote from feminist Anita Sarkeesian, "Cause, like, when you start learning about systems, everything is sexist, everything is racist, everything is homophobic, and you have to point it all out to everyone all the time."³⁷

Case in point, there is a growing trend on university campuses to identify white supremacy everywhere. If there aren't enough rabid racists around, just make them up to maintain the homeostasis of victimology. The Campus Reform website maintains an excellent repository of campus lunacy. In searching their site using the term "white supremacy," I found that pumpkins, white marble in artwork, milk, university mascots, Halloween costumes, Disney, MAGA hats, statues of Thomas Jefferson, the GOP, Donald Trump, voting for Donald Trump, taking exams, saying "all lives matter" instead of "black lives matter," having white children, calling for civility, refusing to partake in identity politics, promoting diversity of thought, meritocracy, capitalism, the United States Constitution, freedom of speech, Western literature, Medieval studies, scientific objectivity, science, and mathematics are among the many things that have often been "linked" to white supremacy by progressive professors.³⁸ Incidentally, if you are a non-racist white person who does not appreciate being accused of supporting white supremacy, you undoubtedly suffer from white fragility (according to author Robin DiAngelo, that is).

The Weaponizing of Collective Munchausen

In 2010, I authored a paper in a medical journal offering a possible Darwinian explanation for Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (MSbP).³⁹ Unlike Munchausen Syndrome, where a person feigns illness in order to get sympathetic attention, MSbP is when a caretaker harms a child (or sometimes an elderly person or even a pet) to make the victim appear sick and thus gain sympathetic attention for the caretaker. Whereas the majority of sufferers of Munchausen syndrome are women (66.2 percent), nearly all perpetrators of MSbP are women (97.6 percent).⁴⁰ Given my familiarity with these two forms of Munchausen disorder, I coined

a new condition that captures the faux-victimhood mentality that has taken root in our societies: *Collective Munchausen*.⁴¹ Rather than feigning a medical condition or inflicting an injury, sufferers of Collective Munchausen seek attention, sympathy, and empathy by advertising their supposed victimhood status (or piggybacking on the victimhood of others, *Collective Munchausen by Proxy*). When Donald Trump won the United States presidential election in 2016, I began noticing a hysterical form of Collective Munchausen wherein faux-victims were feverishly vying for top spot on the prospective victimhood hierarchy. A hypothetical but illustrative Facebook post might look as follows: "Hi Gang, I am a bisexual woman of color, and now that Trump is going to be president, I don't feel safe attending my college campus in rural Maine." This might be followed by a cacophony of fake hysteria wherein members of various identity groups would testify as to how deathly afraid they too were of their eventual demise at the hands of Trump's death squads.

Many progressives have as one of their highest aspirations, to sit on top of the victimology pyramid. Forget about becoming a surgeon, a professor, a lawyer, a professional athlete, an artist, or a diplomat. Those pursuits are laden with the dreadful possibility of personal responsibility and hard work. Let the cries of faux-victimhood open the doors for you. Jussie Smollett, the otherwise minimally known actor of the series *Empire*, was unhappy with his "meagre" salary (more than \$1 million per year). He was also undoubtedly displeased with his lack of fame. Only one solution remained to address this grave personal injustice: to orchestrate a fake hate crime attack on himself and ascend the victimhood hierarchy. Unfortunately for Smollett, he paid off the two Nigerian-Americans he had hired to "attack" him by check. If he had been smarter and paid in cash, he might be reaping all the societal rewards that befall Noble Victims. The political scientist Wilfred Reilly has documented several hundred "hate crime" hoaxes and analyzed the perpetrators.⁴² Unsurprisingly, the hoaxers invariably hold a strong hand in Victimology Poker.

Let us contrast Smollett's chosen path to glory via feigned victimhood to a poignant personal story. When I completed my M.B.A. in

1990, I was trying to decide which doctoral program to enroll in. One of the universities that had accepted me was UC-Irvine, which happened to be close to my brother's office. In the 1980s, he had built a very successful software recruiting company, and he suggested that I explore the possibility of working with him for a few years prior to embarking on my Ph.D. I visited the UC-Irvine campus, met some of the professors, and spent time at my brother's office. I quickly realized that academia was the only path for me and decided against my brother's kind invitation. Upon returning to Montreal, my mother, who had heard of my brother's offer but was unaware that I had rejected it, took me aside for a quick chat. She was very concerned that I might decide against pursuing my Ph.D. and reminded me of the "shame" that might befall me if people were to find out that I had dropped out of school! I had a B.Sc. in Mathematics and Computer Science and an M.B.A. (both from McGill University, one of the world's leading universities) and yet this might be construed as a "drop out." That I pursued a Ph.D. had nothing to do with any parental influences, but the moral of the story is the expected threshold of success that my mother had set for me. The goal was to *achieve* through personal responsibility, hard work, and merit, not to wallow in "victimhood" (which we theoretically could have done as Jewish refugees from Lebanon). Instead, we welcomed the opportunities offered by liberal, democratic countries like Canada and the United States.

All Roads Lead to Bigotry—I Am a Victim Therefore I Am

Fat acceptance activists and transgender activists are two groups questing for victimhood status via claims that offend reason and common sense. The fat acceptance movement has adeptly created a narrative of faux-victimhood by blatant lies on two fronts. First, the activists push a mantra of "healthy at any size" and deny that obesity is linked to a wide variety of serious diseases. Second, they propose that many overweight people (especially women) get ignored in the mating market

because of “fatist” attitudes that stigmatize obesity. Some trans activists are just as creative in their rejection of reality. Two popular YouTube trans activists (Riley J. Dennis and Zinnia Jones) have proclaimed that it is “cissexist” for people to restrict their mating preferences to “cishnormative” individuals; or in other words, heterosexuality is bigoted.⁴³ It would seem that my marriage is transphobic because I never considered a transgendered individual as a prospective wife.⁴⁴

Of course, all roads lead to bigotry. If you are a white man *not* sexually attracted to black women, you are guilty of sexual racism (yes, the term exists). If you are a white man who *is* attracted to black women, you are a racist bigot who stereotypes black women as sexually voracious and objectifies their bodies. Plug any victim group into this equation and it works out the same. We all know that institutional racial segregation constitutes bigotry, but now so too does seeking to immerse yourself in the cultural practices of others—that makes you guilty of the bigotry of “cultural appropriation.” The homeostasis of victimology ensures that all roads lead to bigotry, thus violating the philosopher of science Karl Popper’s falsification principle (no data could falsify the victimhood narrative).

The list of faux-outrage stemming from cultural appropriation is a long one. The actress Lena Dunham was concerned that her alma mater Oberlin College served sushi in the cafeteria, a clear case of cultural appropriation.⁴⁵ A self-described queer woman of color, chef Mithalee Rawat was aghast that white people had violated her Indian heritage by using bone broth, which she deemed colonialist theft.⁴⁶ In the immortal words of the Soup Nazi on *Seinfeld*, “No soup for you!” Gastronomic appropriation is hardly the only road to bigotry. Sartorial bigotry can rear its ugly head at any moment, as evidenced by the singer Katy Perry, who had to apologize for having dressed as a geisha in her performance at the 2013 American Music Awards.⁴⁷ Keziah Daum, a white high school student, wore a Chinese dress known as a qipao to her prom, and this triggered the faux-outrage brigade.⁴⁸ Beware of how you wear your hair, especially if you are white, for this too could be a signal that you

are a bigoted Nazi. Katy Perry made that mistake by wearing cornrows and later apologized for it.⁴⁹ Kendall Jenner stirred controversy by sporting an Afro during a *Vogue* shoot.⁵⁰ And a white male student at San Francisco State University was angrily accosted by a black woman who was outraged that he had dreadlocks.⁵¹ Other examples of faux-outrage over cultural appropriation stemming from the land of the insane (university campuses) include the University of Ottawa cancelling a yoga class,⁵² a resident assistant at Pitzer College angered by white people wearing hoop earrings,⁵³ and Lynne Bunch, a student at Louisiana State University who wrote an op-ed in *The Daily Reveille* (LSU’s student newspaper) proclaiming that the thickening of one’s eyebrows is a form of cultural appropriation.⁵⁴

Halloween is an event replete with dangerous traps of cultural appropriation and sartorial bigotry. Many universities have taken it upon themselves to warn their adult students to be culturally sensitive when choosing their Halloween costumes—this is best exemplified by what transpired in 2015 at Yale University. Erika Christakis, a lecturer in developmental psychology, wrote an extraordinarily meek and polite email to the Yale community questioning whether institutional warnings regarding Halloween costumes were a good idea, which led to a tsunami of outrage for not recognizing how bigoted Halloween costumes could be, ending ultimately in her resignation. The destructive appetite of the Halloween SJWs was not satiated. More blood had to be spilled so they next turned on her husband, Nicholas Christakis, a physician and professor of sociology, and intercepted him in one of the quads. When it became clear that he was in disagreement with their position (but was willing to engage in a conversation), they swore at him and tried to intimidate him. At one point, an indignant student proclaimed: “Then why the fuck did you accept the position [master of residential life at Silliman College]? Who the fuck hired you? You should step down! If that is what you think about being a master you should step down! It is not about creating an intellectual space! It is not! Do you understand that? It’s about creating a home here. You are not doing that!”⁵⁵ Apparently, the primary objective

of an education at Yale University is not to expand one's intellect and knowledge but to create "safe spaces." In 1944, young men stormed the beaches of Normandy to their near-certain deaths in a quest to combat true evil. Today, social justice warriors brave the evils of Halloween costumes and the diabolical professors who allow such sartorial bigotry to go unchecked.

Never one to miss an opportunity to satirize the naturally lobotomized, I produced a clip on my YouTube channel wherein I offered temporary clearance to those wishing to culturally appropriate classic Lebanese dishes.⁵⁶ I also implored my followers to send me their culture-specific clearances and to include a photo of their passports so I could be sure they truly belonged to the cultures they claimed. The responses were astoundingly funny and heartening in that they confirmed that there still remain innumerable sane people who can see through this mass hysteria of faux-outrage.⁵⁷ Having cultural appropriation hanging over one's head makes it harder to experience the full richness afforded by a multicultural and pluralistic society.

If there ever were a genuine case of cultural appropriation, Senator Elizabeth Warren is guilty of it. She literally appropriated Native American culture as her own by constructing a false narrative about her ancestry. A subsequent genealogical test revealed that she was somewhere between 1/64 to 1/1024 Native American, making her less of that ancestry than the average white American. And yet, she benefitted for several decades from this false narrative both in her academic and political career. Warren's stunt was a manifestation of Collective Munchausen by Proxy. Piggyback on the tragic history of Native Americans to garner sympathy and gain all of the advantages of being a "victim." Rachel Dolezal constitutes another case of genuine cultural (racial) appropriation. Recall that Dolezal is a white woman who for years presented herself as African American. When her ruse was discovered, she argued that she was transracial (she self-identifies as a black woman even though she is white). I look forward to explaining to my physician that I'm TransGravity, namely I self-identify as a thin

person even though I'm overweight. I hope he can stop nagging me about needing to lose weight. Continuing with the trans theme, we now have the term *transabled* to refer to individuals who are born able-bodied but who experience a desire to be disabled; so desperate are they to be victims that they will actually disable themselves through self-harm, an emerging condition known as Body Integrity Identity Disorder.⁵⁸ Whether individuals manufacture a faux-narrative of victimhood or literally engage in actions that render them disabled, these are not manifestations of healthy and well-adjusted minds.

Several years ago, Tal Nitzan, then a doctoral student at Hebrew University, authored an award-winning paper that examined the incidence of rape as perpetrated by Israeli Defense Forces on Palestinian women. Undoubtedly, the goal was to uncover an epidemic of rape to demonstrate how diabolical those evil Jews truly were. When no such empirical reality was found, it was concluded (you might need to sit down for this) that this was proof of the extent to which the Israelis *dehumanized* the Palestinians.⁵⁹ They were so hateful that they did not even consider the Palestinian women worthy of rape! If rapes are uncovered or if none are discovered, the same conclusion is reached: the Israelis are diabolical. All roads lead to self-flagellation and self-loathing. It's the hallmark of a true "progressive."

Merchants of faux-outrage can not only ascribe victimhood status to Palestinian women for *not* being raped, but they can also construe kindness as a form of Islamophobia. Anisa Rawhani conducted an experiment at Queen's University: she wore a hijab for eighteen days to examine people's reactions to her.⁶⁰ Undoubtedly, the working hypothesis was that bigotry and prejudice would be ubiquitous. She was taken aback by the fact that people were very kind and polite to her. In an extraordinary attempt to salvage the victimology narrative, she concluded that this manifest tolerance and kindness was a means by which people overcompensated for their concealed bigotry. If you are unkind to a Muslim woman, you are an Islamophobe. If you are kind to a Muslim woman, you are an Islamophobe. All roads lead to

Islamophobia. Being kind and tolerant is a form of racism in the ecosystem of the university campus.

Male Social Justice Warriors as Sneaky Fuckers

In their infinite desire to appear empathetic, compassionate, and sensitive, many male SJWs are pursuing a duplicitous mating strategy that has been documented in the zoological literature as the sneaky fucker strategy. Among *Homo sapiens*, especially on university campuses, this is the guy who is the most ostentatiously kind and progressive because he thinks it might give him a better shot with a pretty girl. This is supported by some rigorous and compelling science.

Deception manifests itself in many distinct ways in the animal kingdom. Let us begin with the evolution of deceptive warning signals. Unlike the evolution of camouflaging (to avoid predators), aposematic coloring is an adaptation that makes an animal very visible to prospective predators. The Amazon is a dangerous neighborhood where it pays to be invisible, and yet several frog species have evolved extraordinarily bright colors that serve the exact opposite function. These colors serve as the following warning to looming predators: "If you can see me, it's probably because you don't want to mess with me. I'm poisonous. Stay away." In some instances, completely harmless species will evolve a mimicry of the aposematic coloring. This is known as Batesian mimicry. For example, the coral snake and king snake both have very similar tri-color markings (yellow, red, and black). However, one is very venomous (the coral snake) while the other is harmless. Mnemonics have been used to remember the differences in markings between the two species ("Red on yellow, kills a fellow. Red on black, venom lack").⁶¹ I have argued somewhat facetiously that the colored hair of many social justice warriors (often bright red or pink or blue) is akin to a form of Batesian mimicry.⁶² It communicates ideological fierceness.

There are many other forms of animal deception including brood parasitism. This is when one species deceives another into raising its kids,

as occurs with the cuckoo bird. But perhaps not surprisingly, the arena where deception is most rampant is within the domain of mating. The grand struggle of life for all sexually reproducing species involves having to survive (natural selection) and to reproduce (sexual selection). In order to reproduce, organisms have evolved a bewildering number of morphological and behavioral traits as a means of gaining sexual access to prospective mates. Let us take human males as an example. Women hold a universal preference for men who exhibit cues associated with high social status, including intelligence, confidence, ambition, the ability to procure and defend resources, and social dominance. Few women throughout our evolutionary history were driven to sexual frenzy at the prospect of mating with an apathetically lazy, pear-shaped, nasal-voiced, submissive, cowardly, whiny man. Not surprisingly, across all known cultures and eras, men have sought to gain status as a means of being attractive on the mating market, but they've done so via a broad range of trajectories as a function of their unique talents and life circumstances. Some will become successful businessmen, diplomats, professional athletes, surgeons, professors, or artists. The definition of status might vary across cultures and time periods (a Harvard degree, for instance, matters little to the Hadza tribe in Africa), but what is universally clear is that status matters to women in choosing men. In instances when men do not possess the desired characteristics, they might "fake it until they make it." Of course, women engage in countless forms of deceptive signaling as well. They are much more likely to lie about their age, weight, and sexual history, as a means of appearing more attractive in the mating market. Several products exist to deceive the male gaze including push-up bras and high heels, both of which create more youthful-looking shapes by lifting women's breasts and buttocks and combating the downward pull of gravity. The harsh reality is that deception is one of several available strategies when seeking to gain an advantage in the struggle for life.

Of all forms of deception in the mating market, perhaps none is as deviously ingenious as kleptogamy (the theft of mating opportunities under false pretense). In the 1970s, a more colloquially vivid term was

introduced in the animal behavior literature to explain this phenomenon, the *sneaky fucker* strategy. Female mimicry is one manifestation of this behavior. This occurs when some males of a species either look or act like females of that species to avoid being attacked by dominant guarding males, and in doing so they can sneak mating opportunities.⁶³ In many instances, the phenotypes of the two types of males is somewhat fixed (some are large and dominant while others are smaller and meeker). This is precisely what makes the giant cuttlefish extraordinary in its implementation of the sneaky fucker strategy, since males are able to alter their physical characteristics on the spot to mimic a female's morphological features.⁶⁴ Even more incredibly, the male mourning cuttlefish alters its body shape and coloring to look at the same time like that of a female and a male. Specifically, the part of its body visible to a rival male mimics that of a female while the other part visible to a female emits male courtship cues.⁶⁵ Talk about sophisticated duplicity!

My familiarity with this form of mating duplicity led me to apply the sneaky fucker stratagem to a specific human context. I posit that many male social justice warriors are akin to the giant cuttlefish. They don the accoutrements of a sensitive and non-threatening male via their ideological commitment oozing with progressive empathy. In a sense, this is akin to the sensitive guy who befriends women and offers them endless emotional support with the hope that it eventually pays off romantically. Back in the 1980s, John Hughes was responsible for many of the iconic teenage-themed movies of that era, including *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and *Pretty in Pink*. In the latter classic movie, Andie Walsh (played by Molly Ringwald), is a working-class teenager with a romantic interest in Blane McDonough (played by Andrew McCarthy), a rich kid from the proverbial better side of the tracks. Andie's best friend, Duckie (played by Jon Cryer, who later gained renewed fame in the TV series *Two and a Half Men*), is the epitome of the sneaky fucker friend. Always there offering his endless sensitive support, hoping that he will eventually be given his due chance at romance. Returning to the male social justice

warriors, it is clear that most do not look anything like Navy SEALs. In other words, they do not exhibit the morphological features associated with physical formidability and social dominance. There is growing scientific evidence that men's economic and political outlooks (what they think about economic redistribution, military intervention, and other topics) are associated with their physical strength. Those who are stronger and more physically formidable are less likely to support egalitarianism and more likely to support military intervention.⁶⁶ Irrespective of whether male social justice warriors truly believe their stated ideological positions or are merely faking it as a sneaker fucker mating strategy, it is clear that men's morphological features do indeed serve as signature of their sociopolitical outlooks.

Self-Flagellating at the Altar of Progressivism

There is another motive or two behind progressivism. Many of the progressive positions espoused by SJWs are a form of self-flagellation meant to atone for some assumed "Original Sin" (most likely being a white Westerner) and to highlight one's virtuous ideological progressive purity. In this sense, SJW progressivism can almost be seen as an alternative religion to Christianity.

The Name of the Rose remains to this day one of my all-time favorite movies. It features Sean Connery and a very young Christian Slater surrounded by a powerful cast of medieval characters. The story takes place in the fourteenth century at an Italian Benedictine monastery where several individuals have recently died under mysterious circumstances. It is a classic whodunnit set against the backdrop of the religious zealotry of the Middle Ages under the ever-watchful eyes of the all-powerful Inquisition authorities. More than thirty years have elapsed since I first saw this brilliant film, and yet many of its iconic scenes remain etched in my memory, perhaps none more so than the assistant librarian Berengar of Arundel self-flagellating as penance for his homosexuality and for the guilt at having caused the suicide of Adelmo of Otranto (with whom

he traded sex for access to a desired book). The theological tenet that one's guilt could be expunged via various form of self-mortification (including self-flagellation) exists in numerous religious traditions. The Catholic flagellants of the Middle Ages engaged in public self-flagellation both to atone for their sins but also as a conspicuous act of extreme piety (and in some cases to ward off great calamities such as the Black Death). Signaling one's religious purity and commitment in this way is costly and handicapping, but done in public it surely makes a more conspicuous case for one's virtue than saying three Hail Marys in a church.⁶⁷

Social justice warriors and various assorted progressive brethren are typically privileged white Westerners. In their warped sense of the world, this is akin to being born with original sin as postulated in Christian doctrine. They must atone for the sin of not having been born poor persons of color in the third world; thus, they might seek penance in a form of ideological self-flagellation. Rather than using a whip or chain to self-harm, they adopt a progressive mindset that is ultimately harmful to them and their society. Take for example the ethos of infinite tolerance. The great philosopher Karl Popper offered perhaps the greatest take on such a mindset.

Less well known is the *paradox of tolerance*: Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them. In this formulation, I do not imply, for instance, that we should always suppress the utterance of intolerant philosophies; as long as we can counter them by rational argument and keep them in check by public opinion, suppression would certainly be unwise. But we should claim the *right* to suppress them if necessary even by force; for it may easily turn out that they are not prepared to meet us on the level of rational argument, but begin by denouncing all

argument; they may forbid their followers to listen to rational argument, because it is deceptive, and teach them to answer arguments by the use of their fists or pistols. We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant.⁶⁸ [*Italics in the original.*]

Infinite tolerance causes Western governments to exhibit reticence to prosecute and ultimately punish returning ISIS fighters. Rather, they seek to reintegrate these brutal individuals into our societies by providing them with job opportunities and enrolling them in "deradicalization" programs. In the words of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who has fought Islamist intolerance: "Tolerance of intolerance is cowardice."

Beto O'Rourke was among a very large contingent of candidates running for the Democratic nomination in the 2020 United States presidential election. O'Rourke exemplifies the mindset of a male social justice warrior. His campaign consisted largely of a grotesque apology tour of self-flagellation. He apologized for being male, for being white, and for being privileged. He announced that some of his ancestors owned slaves, an admission of guilt by intergenerational association. While watching one of his blubbing admissions of "guilt" on the insufferable television show *The View*, my wife turned to me and remarked that she could not understand why anyone would vote for "Beto the Beta." Therein lies the incongruity between progressive self-flagellants and the rest of us. What they consider introspectively virtuous and pious, we view as weak and self-loathing. No leader should exhibit such cowardly traits—and certainly not one who hopes to hold the most powerful post in the world.

Self-loathing is an affliction that plagues many people. It is a recurring theme in psychotherapy where the goal is to alter an individual's mindset such that they develop a healthy sense of self-worth. Innumerable self-help books exist to address this malady in various ways. *Saturday Night Live* satirized the plague of self-loathing via its recurring sketch *Daily Affirmations with Stuart Smalley* played by Al Franken (the Minnesota senator who resigned in 2018 amidst the hysteria of the #MeToo

movement). Perhaps the best-known catchphrase from this series was “I’m good enough, I’m smart enough, and doggone it, people like me.” While the segment was comical, no clinical psychologist worth her salt would posit that self-loathing is a desirable state. And that lies at the heart of the extraordinary contradiction facing the West: while liberals know it is a virtue to overcome self-loathing at the individual level, they believe it is also a virtue to wallow in self-loathing at the group level (“I hate my white identity”; “I hate my Western culture”; “I hate my Christian roots”). Angela Merkel’s astounding open border policy granting close to a million Muslim immigrants entry into Germany could be seen as self-flagellation for Germany’s historical transgressions. Laced with typical progressive lunacy, what better way to make up for the Holocaust than by admitting “refugees” who frequently exhibit genocidal hatred of Jews?⁶⁹ A similar form of self-flagellation is taking place among American progressives when it comes to the current illegal immigration crisis at the U.S. border. Why are Central Americans coming to the United States? According to social justice warriors and their ilk, it’s because the United States caused their societies to collapse via imperialistic meddling. So, in self-flagellating recompense, we owe the noble *undocumented immigrants* free entry into the United States.⁷⁰ Beto O’Rourke went one better than that and suggested that Central Americans were fleeing the ravages of climate change—and the United States is supposedly a key culprit. All roads lead to self-flagellation. It is the only progressive path to redemption.

The reflex to collective self-flagellation is causing several candidates for the 2020 Democrat presidential nomination to proclaim their support for reparations for African Americans, prostrating themselves before such great moral arbiters as Al Sharpton. Senator Elizabeth Warren expanded the discussion of reparations to gay couples. Some entrepreneurial merchants of victimhood have seized on this opportunity. Cameron Whitten has organized a Reparations Happy Hour in (where else?) Portland, Oregon, where white people pay for drinks for black, brown, and indigenous people but don’t attend the event because their white

presence might be too triggering.⁷¹ If paying for drinks does not redress your white guilt, you can enroll in the Race to Dinner program. You get to invite two women of color, Regina Jackson and Saira Rao, to dinner to bear witness to their pain.⁷² If drinks and dinners prove insufficient in curbing your white guilt, you can enroll in a yoga seminar in Seattle to detoxify from your whiteness.⁷³ My family escaped execution in Lebanon, and we escaped from slavery in ancient Egypt. How much am I owed in reparations?

In order to espouse their endless irrational positions while maintaining a straight face, social justice warriors must ignore, deny, or reject reality. Progressivism has become an enemy of reason.