



OPINION: 2017 Constance Holden Memorial Address: Liberal Creationism

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It's an honour to be giving the 2017 Constance Holden Memorial Address and I want to thank Tim Bates and the Board of ISIR for inviting me here, as well as Sherif Karama for being such a gracious host.

Tancy Holden did more than perhaps any other science journalist to communicate the growing scientific understanding of the genetic and biological underpinnings of the human mind, something she was honoured for by the National Mental Health Association in 2004. In their words: “She took seemingly complex subject matter and wrote it clearly, so that the public could understand it and get excited about it.”

I want to start with an actual example of science journalism – the recent editorial in *Nature* entitled ‘Intelligence research should not be held back by its past’, which I’m sure most of you have read.¹ It lamented the fact that the study of Intelligence is not included on the undergraduate psychology courses of many leading American universities and attributed this to its association in the minds of students and faculties with elitism and racism. According to the editorial, that is due to the misuse of intelligence research in the past by eugenicists and ‘race scientists’. The editorial expressed the hope that this toxic baggage could be discarded and intelligence rehabilitated as an important strand of psychology.

This optimism is often shared by scholars who study the genetic basis of different psychological traits and who can blame them? It's not much fun to be branded a ‘Nazi’ or ‘white supremacist’ on Twitter or anywhere else.

Among behavioural geneticists, evolutionary psychologists, sociobiologists, neurobiologists, cognitive neuroscientists, biosocial criminologists, and so on, there is a fairly widely-held belief that the only reason their disciplines are looked on with suspicion by their academic colleagues is due to ignorance and prejudice – the erroneous view that there is something inherently conservative about their understanding of human nature and the role that evolution has played in shaping it or the equally mistaken belief that various progressive political ideals, such as equal rights and the welfare state, depend upon thinking of man as a piece of clay entirely moulded by his environment – a myth that Steven Pinker was at pains to debunk in *The Blank Slate*.

The editorial suggests that clearing up these misunderstandings simply involves these scholars becoming better communicators after which they will be welcomed into the bosom of the academy – or, at least, not provoke angry demonstrations whenever they're invited to speak at American liberal arts colleges.

As you've probably guessed, I think the *Nature* editorial was a tad optimistic. I am going to set out a more cautious position, look at some examples of scientists and science writers who have got into trouble for talking about the genetic basis of intelligence and other psychological traits and suggest some general rules you might think about observing to avoid that happening to you. Having said that, I am not all that confident these controversies can be avoided.

Opponents of the human sciences can be divided into two broad types: the original variety dating back to the protests against Arthur Jensen, Richard Herrnstein and EO Wilson in the 1960s – who I will refer to as ‘Liberal Creationists’ – and a more virulent, recent strain who we have seen at work in the protests against Charles Murray, Jordan Peterson and Bret Weinstein and who I will call ‘Post-Modern Creationists’.

While it may be reasonable to expect a cessation of hostilities between intelligence researchers and the first set of political opponents – a rapprochement based on a clearing away of historical baggage and misunderstandings, as the editorial in *Nature* suggests – it is naive to expect any such détente with the adherents of the neo-Marxist intersectionality cult.² No United Nations peacemaker can broker a ceasefire on that front. As far as these Social Justice Warriors are concerned, intelligence researchers are the enemy – indeed, anyone who believes that human differences are rooted even in part in biology rather than socially constructed is the enemy – and I am afraid they won't rest until they have removed the last remaining copy of the Minnesota Study of Identical Twins Reared Apart from your cold, dead hands.

So, let us start with the ‘Liberal Creationists’ – a phrase coined by William Saletan in a series of articles for *Slate* in 2007, in which he compared those on the progressive left who reject the findings of intelligence researchers to Christians at the beginning of the 20th Century struggling to reconcile their beliefs with the Theory of Evolution.³

As Pinker argues in *The Blank Slate*, many of the anti-hereditarians who rejected the theories of Arthur Jensen, Richard Herrnstein, EO Wilson, Napoleon Chagnon, Richard Dawkins, Charles Murray and others, and who wrote joint letters to newspapers and periodicals denouncing them, did so in the mistaken belief that their liberal values were threatened.

I'll summarise these heretical ideas as follows:

- that there is such a thing as human nature

¹ ‘Intelligence research should not be held back by its past’, *Nature*, May, 2017

² ‘Intersectionality’ is the theory, devised by civil rights activists Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, that different social identities – gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, etc. – intersect in an overlapping system of discrimination and oppression.

³ ‘Created Equal’, W. Saletan, *Slate*, November, 2007.

- that it has been shaped by evolution
- that it creates a proclivity for various forms of anti-social behaviour, including predation, cruelty, warfare, sexual enslavement and homicidal violence
and:
- that there are group differences between human beings that have emerged as a result of differential evolution that has taken place since *homo sapiens* emerged from their ancestral homelands in Africa some 40,000 to 100,000 years ago.

I do not particularly want to get into why progressive academics reacted so defensively when scientists started articulating these ideas – or, in some cases, reviving them. As the editorial in *Nature* says, they are tainted by association with the eugenics movement, including the compulsory sterilization in various Western countries of the mentally ill, the disabled, young women, blacks, Native Americans, and so on, as well as with Social Darwinism, racism and Nazi-ism. After half a century of these horrors, left-wing intellectuals understandably did not want to see them repeated.

Instead, I want to focus on why these anti-hereditarians were wrong to think of these ideas as inextricably bound up with these toxic political movements and fundamentally incompatible with liberal values.

At this point, it is probably helpful to distinguish between the study of those psychological traits that all human beings have in common, and those that set us apart from each other – between evolutionary psychology and differential psychology.

Take the example of Napoleon Chagnon, the anthropologist and socio-biologist, who has devoted his life to studying the Yanomamö, an Amazonian tribe that exists on either side of the Brazilian-Venezuelan border. In Chagnon's telling, the Yanomamö, whom he christened 'The Fierce People', are a far cry from the romantic cliché of rainforest Indians as innocent tree-huggers menaced by Western capitalists. As he told a Brazilian journalist, "Real Indians sweat, they smell bad, they take hallucinogenic drugs, they belch after they eat, they covet and at times steal their neighbour's wife, they fornicate, and they make war."⁴

In other words, they are just like us.

In describing the Yanomamo like this, Chagnon breached a sacred taboo in contemporary anthropology, whereby mankind in his natural state is supposed to be a Noble Savage, untainted by the West's evil ways. To acknowledge that the Yanomamo are guilty of Original Sin, that they suffer from all the same vices as we moderns in their Rainforest idyll, is to imply that there's something 'natural' about those vices and that, in turn, is to legitimise them. At least, that is the groupthink among the liberal progressives who dominate the field of anthropology.

An example of the sort of book anthropologists are supposed to write about indigenous people is Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, which portrayed adolescent Samoan males as gentle, fawn-like creatures – they made love, not war.

Chagnon had to be punished for this transgression and, as Alice Dreger related in her Holden Memorial Lecture in 2015, various anthropologists collaborated with a science writer called Patrick Tierney in a systematic effort to destroy his reputation. Tierney published a book called *Darkness in El Dorado* (2000) accusing Chagnon and his collaborator, the geneticist James Neel, of fomenting wars among rival tribes, aiding and abetting illegal gold miners, deliberately infecting the Yanomamö with measles and paying subjects to kill each other.

Not surprisingly, these charges were taken at face value and widely reported by science journalists in liberal publications like *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, who were all too ready to believe that a predatory white male had exploited these poor, oppressed people. (A

headline in *The Guardian* read: "Scientist 'killed Amazon Indians to test race theory'.") Many of Chagnon's colleagues turned on him, including the American Anthropological Association, which set up an 'El Dorado Task Force' to investigate his thought crimes. He was not allowed to defend himself and the task force published a report confirming several of the allegations. As a result, Chagnon was forced into early retirement.

Luckily, the doughty Alice Dreger came to his aid. In a 50,000-word article published in 2011 in a peer-reviewed journal called *Human Nature* she painstakingly rebutted all the charges against Chagnon and detailed the various ways in which Tierney had fabricated and misrepresented the evidence.⁵ Chagnon has now been exonerated and resumed his career.

But why did Chagnon's left-wing colleagues react in the way they did? To describe a particular form of human behaviour as 'natural' is not to suggest that it is morally right. To do so would be to break Hume's Law – to infer an 'ought' from an 'is'. In moral philosophy this is known as the naturalistic fallacy and, with a few exceptions, Darwinian anthropologists, socio-biologists and evolutionary psychologists are not guilty of this. On the contrary, it is far more likely to be committed by progressive social scientists like Margaret Mead, who have difficulty disentangling the 'scientific' aspects of their ideas from 18th Century romanticism, with its idealised conception of 'primitive' man. This is the paradox of modern progressive thought identified by Steven Pinker: it simultaneously maintains that man is a *tabula rasa* and essentially good.

Okay, say the Blank Slate-ists/Rousseauian Romantics. Maybe this warts-and-all conception of man, propped up by biology, does not logically entail that predation, sexual enslavement and homicidal violence is morally right. But if man's true nature is so base how can we hope to create a more just society? The answer is: quite easily. The fact that we have certain proclivities doesn't mean we have to follow them. And the progress we have made since we emerged from the primeval forest, wooden club in hand, is proof of that.

The writer Kingsley Amis, who was a notorious philanderer, said he felt as if he had lived the first 50 years of his life tethered to a goat – and that is as good a description of the human condition as any. We may be inseparable from our animal nature, but that does not mean we have to do its bidding at every turn. It is unrealistic to say we have complete freedom, but nonetheless there is a huge variety of political arrangements compatible with a Darwinian conception of human nature, including Scandinavian social democracy.

Having said that, I do think our nature places some constraints on what is politically possible – or, at least, means a heavy price has to be paid in terms of human freedom to realise some political ideals – and I will come to that in a minute.

Alright, that is enough about what we all have in common. What about that which divides us?

Let us start with individual differences. One of the reasons the claims of intelligence researchers so often provoke a hostile reaction is because their assertions about the heritability of *Spearman's g* are often mistakenly understood to be a defence of the status quo.

How does this misunderstanding occur? When a progressive liberal listens to a behavioural geneticist talk about the biological basis of IQ and the positive correlation between IQ and socio-economic status, what they think they are hearing is a Social Darwinist argument in favour of the current distribution of wealth and power. The poor deserve their low SES because of their low polygenic scores and the rich deserve their high SES because of their high scores. That is, they assume the intelligence researcher is breaking Hume's Law: because something is, it ought to be. But rather than attack the inference – which would be difficult, because few intelligence researchers ever make that inference

⁴ Quoted by A. Dreger, *Galileo's Middle Finger: Heretics, Activists and the Search for Justice in Science* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), p.162. In fairness to Chagnon, he concluded this statement by adding: "They are normal human beings. This is reason enough for them to deserve care and attention."

⁵ 'Darkness's descent on the American Anthropological Association: a cautionary tale', A. Dreger, *Human Nature*, September, 2011.

– they attack the premise and, in doing so, *unconsciously make the false step themselves*.

This mistake is so common among critics of intelligence researchers, it really ought to be included on Linda Gottfredson's list of 'Logical Fallacies used to Dismiss the Evidence on Intelligence Testing'.⁶ It involves ascribing to your opponent a faulty form of reasoning that they are not guilty of and accusing them of reaching a conclusion that they have not in fact reached. It is a form of projection: seeing evidence where none exists that confirms your jaundiced view of your opponent – a way of rationalising your contempt for them.

Nowhere is this mistake more prevalent than when it comes to the liberal left's reaction to any discussion of group differences.

Take sex differences.

A couple of days ago I asked David Lubinski why there were fewer women than men in the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth and the Talent Identification Programme cohorts. He calmly explained that while there was no difference in the mean IQ scores of males and females, there was more variance among the male scores. He cited various pieces of research that had established this, including a paper published by Ian Deary and others,⁷ and described this finding as 'robust'. He said this as if it was the most natural, uncontentious thing in the world – only an ignoramus would dispute it.

Why, then, was Larry Summers forced to resign as President of Harvard for saying exactly the same thing? In 2005 at a conference on Diversifying the Science and Engineering Workforce sponsored by the National Bureau of Economic Research, Summers speculated that one reason women were under-represented in tenured positions in STEM subjects at top universities was because there was greater variability in the cognitive abilities of men than women.

One of the professors present immediately walked out in disgust and it snowballed from there. Distinguished alumni withheld donations, Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences passed a motion of no confidence in Summers and he was forced to apologise – over and over again – like a supplicant at a Chinese show trial. In the end, he had no choice but to tender his resignation – all for saying something that is, as David Lubinski said, scientifically incontestable. It also cost him the job of Treasury Secretary in the first Obama administration.

Why did Summers have to pay such a price? After all, the claim that there is more variance in the cognitive abilities of men than women means there are more men at the left-hand tail of the IQ distribution curve, as well as more male outliers in other personality tests, such as the Hare Psychopathy Checklist. If anything, it is men who should be complaining about this 'dangerous', 'so-called scientific' hypothesis, not women.

Okay, that was 12 years ago. Would similar remarks be less controversial today, as the *Nature* editorial suggests? Is this one of the findings of intelligence researchers that has gone mainstream?

The experience of Sir Richard Timothy Hunt would suggest not. Tim Hunt is an eminent scientist – in 2001 he won a Nobel Prize for his work on cell division – who made an unfortunate, off-the-cuff toast at the World Conference of Science Journalists in Seoul two years ago.

"Let me tell you about my trouble with girls," he said, having introduced himself as a 'chauvinist monster'. "Three things happen when they are in the lab: you fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticise them they cry. Perhaps we should make separate labs for boys and girls?"

He was obviously joking – he began his next sentence, in which he called for more women to pursue careers in science, with the words, "Now seriously..." – and his impromptu remarks even got a polite laugh

⁶ 'Logical Fallacies used to Dismiss the Evidence on Intelligence Testing', L. Gottfredson, *The True Measure of Educational and Psychological Tests*, ed. R. Phelps, American Psychological Association, 2009

⁷ 'Sex Differences in Variability in General Intelligence: A New Look at the Old Question', A. Curuthers, I. Deary, W. Johnson, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, November, 2008.

from the predominantly female audience. But after some edited highlights were put on Twitter by a female science journalist who didn't see the funny side, he suddenly found himself at the centre of a global media storm. He was forced to give up his position as an honorary professor at the University of London's Faculty of Life Sciences, resign from the Royal Society's Biological Sciences Awards Committee and stand down from the European Research Council.

"I have been hung out to dry," he told *The Observer* newspaper.

Would David Lubinski have to resign as professor of psychology at Vanderbilt University if someone stuck his remarks to me on Twitter? Almost certainly not. Male Nobel Prize winners in the life sciences are held to a higher standard and context is important. Larry Summers was speaking at a conference on diversifying the workforce and Tim Hunt was addressing a group of female science writers, not intelligence researchers.

But there is another, more important reason why Summers and Hunt were "hung out to dry" which is that they both used words that seemed to confirm what it is that women's groups believe they believe, rather than what they actually believe.

In Summers' case, it was the phrase "intrinsic aptitude". By this, he simply meant that there was more variation in IQ scores between men and women, not that women had lower mean scores than men. But because people who believe in gender equality are convinced that powerful white men think women are genetically inferior – even though they don't, obviously – if you say anything that can be misconstrued as corroborating that suspicion you will be crucified.

Which leads me to my first rule of the nature-nurture fight club: Don't say or write anything with a view to making yourself better understood. Rather, avoid saying or writing anything that can be misunderstood. *If in doubt, say nowt*.⁸

In Hunt's case, his mistake was to jokingly call himself a "chauvinist". He thought he was being charming and self-deprecating, but it was taken by at least one woman in the audience as a moment of candour.

And that leads me to rule number two: never say anything self-deprecating because someone, somewhere, will take it at face value and use it against you. Indeed, jokes in general should be avoided. Remember, none of the signals you send out when saying something you do not really mean, such as a change in register or a mischievous, twinkly-eyed grin, are easily translatable in print. We live in a brutally literal age. There is no font called 'Irony'.

Tim Hunt also invoked a gender stereotype about women being more emotional than men which, again, seemed to confirm the worst suspicions of equal rights activists about the attitudes of white men towards women. They are absolutely, 100% convinced – and this is one of those sacred beliefs it is taboo to question – that the *real* reason there are fewer tenured female STEM professors at top universities, as well as fewer female billionaires and CEOs, is entirely due to the fact they are discriminated against by their male colleagues, whether consciously or unconsciously. By seeming to confirm that – by playing up to the fictional stereotype of the Neanderthal, knuckle-dragging Nobel Prize-winning male scientist – Hunt sealed his fate.

Rule number three: Don't let yourself be cast as a cartoon villain.

Incidentally, this feminist orthodoxy was questioned by Susan Pinker, who gave the Holden Memorial Address in 2014, in her book *The Sexual Paradox: Men, Women and the Real Gender Gap* (2009). That took courage and it is an honour to be following in her footsteps.

If those discussing the differences between men and women have to tread carefully, the same goes double for anyone foolish enough to raise the subject of racial differences in IQ. In this field, merely being a member of a beleaguered victim group yourself – a female scientist – does not protect you, as Linda Gottfredson discovered when the University of Delaware refused to let her and Jan Blits take up a grant to

⁸ 'Nowt' is a British dialect word meaning "nothing".

continue their research in 1990. It took her two-and-a-half years to get her funding reinstated.

I discovered just how cautious scholars in this field can be when I was invited to attend a two-day conference on intelligence at University College London by the academic and journalist James Thompson earlier this year. Attendees were only told the venue at the last minute – an anonymous antechamber at the end of a long corridor called ‘Lecture Room 22’ – and asked not to share the information with anyone else. One of those present, on discovering I was a journalist, pleaded with me not to write about the fact that he was there – he didn’t want his colleagues to find out.

It was like a meeting of Charter 77 in Václav Havel’s flat in Prague in the 1970s.

But these precautions were not unreasonable, considering the reaction that any reference to between-group differences in IQ provokes.

A case in point: the differing fortunes of James Watson and Francis Crick, who jointly received the Nobel Prize in 1962, along with Maurice Wilkins, for discovering the DNA molecule.

George Osborne, Britain’s ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, likes to boast that the proudest achievement of his six-year reign at Her Majesty’s Treasury was securing the funding for the Crick Institute, a £660 million new bioresearch facility in North London that sits alongside the newly refurbished St Pancras Station and which opened last year. It is the largest biomedical laboratory in Europe, a magnificent monument in glass and steel to one of the 20th Century’s most accomplished scientists. Incidentally, Crick also has two medals named after him, two plaques, a sculpture, a bust and a series of graduate lectures at Cambridge.

What of James Watson, his no less distinguished colleague? Alas, no statues have been erected to him. Watson made the mistake of sharing his views on black-white IQ differences in an interview with *The Sunday Times* magazine in 2007 while promoting his book *Avoid Boring People*. He told the interviewer he was “inherently gloomy about the prospects of Africa” because “all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours – whereas all the testing says not really”.

To put this in context, Watson had said other things that, set alongside these, made it look as if he thought black people in general were incapable of performing cognitively demanding tasks – and my reason for including this example is not to excuse Watson’s behaviour or to suggest he was the victim of a liberal witch-hunt. Rather, it is to illustrate the sort of repercussions scientists can face if they claim there are racial differences in IQ. After these remarks were published, and the other, similarly inflammatory things Watson had said were raked over again, he was forced to cancel his book tour, resign as Chancellor of the Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory and in 2014 was reduced to auctioning off his Nobel Prize medal so he could pay his living expenses.

When it comes to the live rail of black-white IQ differences, it is still idiotically stupid to express the views that Watson did. The Federation of American Scientists described his remarks as “racist, vicious and unsupported by science”. Indeed, it is inadvisable to be *neutral* on the question, or to allow that there is still insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions.

The unacceptability of the ‘wait-and-see’ approach is implicitly acknowledged in the *Nature* editorial which stated that “the gap between the average IQ scores of black and white people in the United States has been *falsely attributed* to genetic differences between the races”. (My emphasis.) It compared this *false attribution* to “historical measurements of skull volume and brain weight” – in other words, junk science.

So intelligence researchers can come in from the cold, just so long as they denounce Cyril Burt, Hans Eysenck, Arthur Jensen *et al* as being flat out wrong on this point.

Refusing to do this in *The Bell Curve* (1994) is why Charles Murray came unstuck on his trip to Middlebury earlier this year. Even though the talk he was due to give was not about intelligence, he was shouted down by a student mob and, when he tried to leave, surrounded by a group of angry protestors who physically assaulted his host, Alison

Stranger, sending her to the Emergency Room.

Murray’s sin was to have included a section in *The Bell Curve* about the differences in mean IQ scores between racial groups without claiming they are wholly due to environmental differences. The book was careful not to say, definitively, they are partly due to genetic differences, but it did include a measured discussion of the evidence for and against that hypothesis and concluded it was “highly likely... that both genes and the environment have something to do with racial differences”. For this, Murray was branded a ‘white supremacist’ by the protestors, as well as a ‘homophobe’ and a ‘sexist’, even though, to the best of my knowledge, Murray has never written about homosexuality and only written explicitly about gender differences once, in an essay for *Commentary* 12 years ago.⁹ It is a safe bet that none of the student protestors had read it.

Did Murray and Herrnstein need to venture into this minefield? *The Bell Curve*’s central hypothesis – that a meritocratic society will eventually degenerate into a biological caste system – could perfectly well have been presented without the controversial chapter on race (although it probably would not have sold so many copies).

Which leads me to rule number four: In this field, if you court controversy, expect it to continue to dog your career for at least a quarter of a century.

Researchers of group differences have pointed out until they are blue in the face that believing in equal rights is not contingent on believing all people are born with the same abilities and that merely by discussing the causes of group differences in mean IQ they are not intending to question the moral basis for sexual or racial equality. You can believe that there are between-group IQ differences – you can even believe that these differences are 80% heritable – and still remain committed to equal rights. As the philosopher Alan Ryan put it, “A belief in the importance of inherited differences need not lead to apocalyptic conservatism.”

But anti-hereditarians seem to have extraordinary difficulty grasping this point – it is as if they want their opponents to be making this false inference even though, by imagining this sin, they are unconsciously committing it themselves. If you argue that any research into group differences is ‘dangerous’ because it threatens to undermine the basis for equal rights, you are implicitly accepting the twisted logic of the racist’s argument, namely, that if people aren’t equal in their capabilities, then we would be justified in denying some groups their civil rights. It is this inference that is racist, not any claim about group differences, whether true or not, and it is not one that most intelligence researchers are guilty of. No doubt *some* hereditarians *are* racists, but then the beliefs of some cultural determinists are pretty toxic too, such as Joseph Stalin, Chairman Mao and Pol Pot.

And it goes without saying that any claims about between-group differences should not have any bearing on how individual members of those groups are treated. An employer who discriminated against black job applicants, citing Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen’s *IQ and the Wealth of Nations*, would be acting irrationally.

But to say such things is to waste your breath, as Nicholas Wade discovered. In the Preface to *A Troublesome Inheritance* (2014), his book on genetics and race, he said his purpose was “to show how evolutionary differences between human populations can be described without providing the slightest support for racism”. Yet he unintentionally proved how difficult that is, or at least how reluctant the academic left is to accept that it can be done, by provoking yet another tediously predictable controversy, with the inevitable appearance of a ‘we the undersigned’ letter in *The New York Times Book Review* from 143 academics denouncing the book as junk science.

Needless to say, most of them had not read it.

Wade is a science journalist, but that did not mean he got an easy ride from his colleagues. As Alice Dreger said in her Holden Memorial

⁹ ‘The Inequality Taboo’, C. Murray, *Commentary Magazine*, September 1, 2005.

Address, journalists like to put anyone who writes about race into one of two categories: pro-civil rights or racist. If you write a book making an argument against civil rights, or if it sounds as if you might be from just reading the blurb, then you are a racist.

Rule number five: If you use the words “genetics” and “race” in the same sentence, you are a racist.

At least when the practitioners of the human sciences are attacked by Liberal Creationists they can take some comfort from the fact that their opponents are usually being irrational. Christianity survived the teaching of the Theory of Evolution in schools, as Oliver Wendell Holmes argued it would in the Scopes trial, and by the same token humanism will probably survive the inclusion of ‘Intelligence’ in undergraduate psychology courses.

No such succour is available when you are up against the new breed of secular fundamentalists. Unlike the previous generation of liberal anti-Darwinists, the Post-Modern Creationists are not mistaken about the intellectual threat posed by the research findings of evolutionary psychologists and behavioural geneticists to their political orthodoxies.

Why do I say this? For one thing, the entire theoretical edifice of this new campus religion rests on social determinism. Like Marx, Post-Modernists believe that man’s true nature is reducible to the totality of social relations, that individuals are nothing more than the embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests, that everything comes down to the struggle for power. Bourgeois society is a malignant super-organism with an omnipotent ability to ‘construct’ categories of identity, from ‘race’ to ‘gender’ to ‘sexual orientation’.

I do not want to wade too deeply into the murky waters that Toronto Psychology Professor Jordan Peterson found himself in in 2016 when he decided to take a stand against Bill C-16, a proposed amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibiting discrimination based on “gender identity or expression”... but one of Peterson’s reasons for opposing it is that it was predicated on the supposition that gender is not a biological fact but entirely socially constructed. That leaves anyone claiming that the psychological differences between men and women are rooted in genetic differences in quite an uncomfortable position. As Peterson wrote in *The National Post*: “Look out evolutionary biologists. The PC police are coming for you.”

Since then, Bill C-16 has become law.

The Post-Modernist doctrine of ‘social constructionism’ isn’t common-or-garden hostility to hereditarianism; this is super-charged environmental determinism. Any suggestion that society is shaped by human nature, as opposed to shaping it, is to invert the Post-Modern pyramid; any hint that the differences between classes, races, genders, the sane and the mentally ill, and so on, have a scientifically-discoverable basis that is in some sense pre-social – that these group differences are real, as opposed to ‘fictitious’ – is to violate a sacred nostrum.

You are heretics and you must be driven from the Temple.

And there is another, even more fundamental reason why this is a fight to the death as far as they are concerned – their utopian, hard-left political project. Remember, the worshippers at the altar of intersectionality are not mere passive supplicants; they are Social Justice Warriors. They believe in the Marxist ideal of hard, end-state egalitarianism – equality of outcome rather than opportunity – what they call ‘equity’.

And if you think I am over-doing the religious metaphors, take a look at the video of the Middlebury protest against Charles Murray, which is disturbingly reminiscent of *The Crucible*. This is what Andrew Sullivan wrote about ‘Intersectionality’ in *New York* magazine, after watching the video on YouTube:

It is operating, in Orwell’s words, as a “smelly little orthodoxy”, and it manifests itself, it seems to me, almost as a religion. It posits a classic orthodoxy through which all of human experience is explained — and through which all speech must be filtered. Its version of original sin is the power of some

identity groups over others. To overcome this sin, you need first to confess, i.e., “check your privilege”, and subsequently live your life and order your thoughts in a way that keeps this sin at bay. The sin goes so deep into your psyche, especially if you are white or male or straight, that a profound conversion is required.

Now, the obvious objection to this fanatical egalitarianism is that it is incompatible with liberal democracy, as we know from the bitter history of the 20th Century. It can only be brought about – and maintained – in a totalitarian dictatorship. This is the paradox of the hard left: they start out wanting to help the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed, and end up herding people on to trains and transporting them to the Gulag.

Why does the attempt to impose end-state equality always end with the curtailment of free speech, the imprisonment and torture of political dissidents, widespread starvation and – in some cases – state-sanctioned mass murder? Because the hard left’s political project is incompatible with everything the human sciences teach us about mankind. I do not just mean socio-biology and evolutionary psychology, with their Darwinian explanations of why selfishness usually trumps altruism, or why we put the interests of our immediate family above those of our extended family and our friends, why we put their interests above those of the tribe, the interests of our tribe or group above that of other tribes or groups, and so on. I also mean everything we know about the differences between us and the inextricable link between our individuating characteristics and our unique polygenic sores.

If it is an unalterable fact about human beings that some are more genetically gifted than others, better able to exploit their environment, to profit where others fail, then the only way to create – and preserve – end-state equality is through the constant use of coercive state power. So long as men are not born equal (in the ability sense, rather than the moral sense), so long as the lucky sperm club retains its exclusive membership policy, the only way to maintain hard equality is through the curtailment of human freedom by an all-powerful state, a state that is constantly intervening to ‘correct’ the *inequities* of nature. To paraphrase Kant, you can only build something straight with the crooked timbre of humanity if you are constantly smashing down heads and cutting off limbs with a hammer and a sickle.

Admittedly, it sounds like I am now breaking Hume’s Law, trying to *rule out* a particular type of hard-left politics by appealing to a body of factual knowledge – drawing a normative conclusion from a particular conception of human nature. This is the slight-of-hand Thomas Sowell is accused of making in *A Conflict of Visions* (1987) in which he distinguishes between ‘constrained’ and ‘unconstrained’ political arrangements and comes down in favour of the former – checks and balances, limited government, the rule of law, etc. – on the grounds that it is more congruent with a historically-informed understanding of the follies of mankind.

So let me be more precise: the picture we have built up of ourselves from the human sciences does not, by itself, mean end-state equality is undesirable. But it sure as hell gives the lie to the claim that it can be achieved without a massive escalation in state power, that after a period of re-adjustment the state can just “whither away”.

It is precisely because the hard left wants to gloss over this cost that it has no choice but to reject the findings of socio-biologists, Darwinian anthropologists, differential psychologists, *et al.* There is nothing new about this. We all know that social determinism was one of the shibboleths of Soviet Science and Russian geneticists like Dmitry Belyaev – the Siberian fox guy – had to practice their dark arts away from the prying eyes of the Communist Party priesthood, like alchemists in Medieval Europe.

But it was one thing to ignore this body of knowledge in Soviet Russia in the middle of the 20th Century. Imagine how much harder the neo-Marxists in the humanities departments of America’s elite universities have to try in the face of all the evidence that has accumulated

since – not just the pitiful failure of every single attempt to create a Marxist utopia, the latest “socialist paradise” being Venezuela, but the ever-growing mass of data being assembled by behaviour geneticists, such as the Genome Wide Association Study reported in *Nature Genetics* that was the pretext for the editorial I began this talk with.¹⁰ That study, involving a sample of 78,308 children and adults, identified 18 genomic regions associated with intelligence that explained up to 4.8% of the variance in intelligence in the sample. You really have to be pretty stubborn to dispute that general cognitive ability is at least partly genetically based, even if you discount the evidence of all the Minnesota twin studies.

But dispute it they do. Turns out, Post-Modern Creationists are capable of a degree of cognitive dissonance that would put William Jennings Bryan, the chief prosecutor at the Scopes Trial, to shame. And do not for a second imagine you can reason with them. To point out the role that genes play in people’s behaviour, even if you stress the contribution of the environment as well, is to run afoul of campus blasphemy laws. The fact that the scientific evidence in support of your point of view is overwhelming just strengthens their resolve. That is how cognitive dissonance works: the greater the distance between a person’s beliefs and reality, the more aggressively they react to anyone pointing out the truth. As the student protestors chanted at Middlebury – they literally recited this from a piece of paper, like a liturgical incantation:

Science has always been used to legitimize racism, sexism, classism, transphobia, ableism, and homophobia, all veiled as rational and fact, and supported by the government and state. In this world today, there is little that is true ‘fact’.

The choice you face, then, is whether to stand your ground and fight – or retreat, whether that means applying for a position at a Washington think tank, switching to a less contentious field of scholarship, or keeping your head down and hoping for the best, periodically abasing yourselves at the feet of the cult’s High Sparrows.¹¹

If you do decide to stand your ground, do not expect your opponents to engage in reasoned discussion. As a student protestor said to the evolutionary biologist Bret Weinstein when he tried to debate with him on the Evergreen campus, reason and logic are the tools of “white male privilege”. If everything is reducible to power dynamics, the only possible motive you can have for challenging Post-Modernist dogma is because you have a self-interested reason for preserving the status quo, i.e. maintaining injustice and oppression. Either you are on the side of the oppressed or you are a shill for “the patriarchy” and “white privilege” and if that is the case then they are morally justified in bringing you down *by any means necessary*.

It goes without saying that college administrators will not come to your aid. At Evergreen, the President said he was “grateful” for the “passion and courage” shown by the student protestors who patrolled

the campus with baseball bats, ready to beat anyone who came to the defence of Bret Weinstein whose sin was to refuse to leave the university on a ‘Day of Absence’ in which all white people were expected to make themselves scarce. Shortly afterwards, he was advised to leave for his own safety by the campus police.

Nor can you expect much solidarity from your colleagues. Don’t forget the fate of Napoleon Chagnon whose own professional body – the American Anthropological Association – turned itself into a Kangaroo Court and tried and convicted him *in absentia*.

Would other professional associations behave better? As Jonathan Haidt has pointed out, the social sciences have left no stone unturned in an effort to diversify themselves, apart from in the one area where it matters more than any other: intellectual diversity. According to a study carried out by *Econ Journal Watch* in 2016, which looked at the voter registration of faculty members at 40 leading U.S. universities in the fields of Economics, History, Law, Psychology and Journalism/Communications, Democrats outnumber Republicans, on average, by 11.5 to 1. In psychology, it’s 17.4 to 1; in history, the ratio is 33.5 to 1.¹²

Maybe I am being a bit alarmist. Perhaps the intersectionality cult will fizzle out as quickly as it has sprung up. With a bit of luck, Post-Modernism will be the last gasp of one of the 20th Century’s most toxic ideologies. The *Nature* editorial writer may have a better Zeitgeist antenna than me.

But in case I am not, and you do get into trouble, there are worse options than standing your ground. You can probably count on some of your fellow intelligence researchers, who know what it is to be hounded, coming to your aid. I will do what I can to help and there are some other journalists out there who will take up your cause as well. You might even find you have friends you did not know about. Jordan Peterson now gets an estimated \$20-\$30,000 a month in donations from well-wishers. And he has kept his job!

Think of the truth as being like your oldest friend from school: he is fickle, unreliable and often gets you into trouble. Your more cautious colleagues cannot understand why you still have anything to do with him. But you long since gave up debating whether to be loyal to him: it is who you are.

I wanted to end this talk by quoting Goethe: “Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid.” But when I checked, it turned out he did not actually say it. It was a 19th Century Canadian clergyman called Basil King and his exact words were: “Go at it boldly, and you’ll find unexpected forces closing round you and coming to your aid.”

That will have to do.

Thank you.

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¹⁰ ‘Genome Wide Association Meta-Analysis of 78,308 Individuals Identifies New Loci and Genes Influencing Human Intelligence’, S. Sniekers et al, *Nature Genetics*, May 2017.

¹¹ The High Sparrow is the head of a puritanical religious order in the TV series *Game of Thrones*.

¹² ‘Faculty Voter Registration in Economics, History, Journalism, Law and Psychology’, M. Langbert, A.J. Quain and D.B. Klein, *Econ Journal Watch*, September 2016.