



# SAFS Newsletter

*Society for Academic Freedom and  
Scholarship*

Maintaining freedom in teaching, research and scholarship  
Maintaining standards of excellence in academic decisions  
about students and faculty

Number 81

[www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca)

January 2019

## In This Issue

<i>P.A. Sullivan, Reflections On My Career At The University Of Toronto</i> . . . . .	2
<i>Grant Brown, Twists And Turns</i> . . . . .	7
<i>Denis Rancourt, Why Did The University Of Ottawa Secretly Destroy My Large Collection Of Unique Scientific Samples?</i> . . . . .	9
<i>Nirmal Dass, Intellectual Leprosy – Or What Is University For?</i> . . . . .	14
<i>Christina Behme, The Colourful Doors Of Privilege</i> . . . . .	17
<i>Philip Carl Salzman, Sympathizing With Minorities</i> . . . . .	20
<i>Frances Widdowson, Let's Call The SJWs What They Actually Are: Politically Correct Totalitarians</i> . . . . .	24
<i>Philip Backman, Nuclear Fusion And Safe Spaces</i> . . . . .	26
<i>Robert Grant Price, Should I Tell Writers What To Say?</i> . . . . .	31
<i>Kris Larsen, Review of Jordan Peterson, 12 Rules For Life</i> . . . . .	33
<i>John E. MacKinnon, Indigenize This</i> . . . . .	36
<i>Jack Edwards, Catastrophic Anthropogenic Censorship: Part III</i> . . . . .	39
<i>Mark Mercer, The Academic Irrelevance Of Lived Experience</i> . . . . .	43
<i>Heinz Klatt, Phryné – The Betrayal Of The Judges</i> . . . . .	45

FRANK FUREDI  
Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Kent

“THIRTY YEARS AFTER THE FATWA AGAINST SALMAN RUSHDIE”

Wednesday 3 April 2019

7 – 8:30 pm

Scotiabank Auditorium

Saint Mary’s University

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Free of charge; everyone welcome.

REFLECTIONS ON MY CAREER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

*P.A. Sullivan*

Tenure is essential for a university dedicated to the advancement of knowledge. That is the principal conclusion I draw from my experience as a member of the University of Toronto’s (U of T) Institute for Aerospace Studies (UTIAS) from 1965 until retirement in 2003. By tenure I mean that faculty are not subject to periodic reappointment even at intervals as long as a decade, and with dismissal for cause being possible only after an appropriately balanced formal process.

In this account I explain why I hold this opinion, focusing particularly on my variegated research career and the lessons I learned from it. I also comment on other matters arising from my experience that may be of long term value for university life. These include: problems associated with the evaluation of teaching; the corrosive nature of close research cooperation with industry in the hard sciences; and the rise of questionable scholarship in certain disciplines. I conclude by suggesting that SAFS might wish to engage more forcefully with this issue.

When I joined UTIAS my research interests were largely a consequence of my youthful passion for space flight, namely in the mechanics of hypersonic fluid flows. As that term suggests, these are flows at speeds much greater than the local speed of sound; they are encountered by spacecraft passing through the upper atmosphere. I established a research programme based on a hypersonic wind-tunnel. There were some achievements leading to the necessary archive journal publications; for example, my first doctoral student, the late Walter Koziak, proved feasible an idea I proposed for the difficult task of measuring fluid densities in such flows. Also—germane to a major theme of this essay—I published, a “pencil-and-paper” solution to the flow about a simple geometry then seen to be of marginal interest. A quarter century later, this solution,

which relied on physical insights of a type now often glossed over or ignored by digital computer methods, played a key role in validating a difficult-to-interpret experiment.

But, its romantic nature notwithstanding, even at that time, the subject was becoming unfashionable, leading to funding difficulties. Furthermore, other circumstances prevented me from fully exploiting the prospects opened up by Koziak's development, causing a dearth of the publications desirable for both senior promotion and obtaining continued research funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). Influenced by UTIAS's strong tradition of intellectual versatility, I sought other areas. Imbued with the idea that academic engineering researchers should seek projects that might foster development of Canadian industry, I accepted a challenge to develop a programme investigating the dynamics of air cushion vehicles (ACV), also known as hovercraft. At the time certain Federal Government agencies responsible for promoting transportation and industrial development saw promise in these vehicles, especially for sparsely populated Northern regions of Canada. Our work focussed on the flexible elastomer skirts that are a characteristic feature of the modern ACV. Inflated by the pressure of the cushion air, they enable ACVs to traverse a variety of overland and marine environments inaccessible to conventional vehicles or ships.

The object of our research was to develop, as a design aid, mathematical models of the dynamics of these skirt systems. For those not familiar with the "hard" sciences, it is essential to understand that one cannot proceed by directly expressing the applicable laws of physics in appropriate mathematical form, and then by solving the equations. Modern computer developments notwithstanding, this is not now feasible, nor is it likely even in the distant future. To obtain a tractable model one must use both past experience and physical insights to simplify the problem, with the insights often obtained from theoretical and experimental investigations of simplified configurations. This is a key point often lost on those promoting university-industry collaboration.

At first my decision to embark on the air cushion dynamics programme seemed wise: given a Federal Government agency's interest in ACVs, I was able to secure substantial funding enabling construction of test facilities, the most prominent of which was a 43 meter diameter circular test track enclosed in a mushroom-shaped dome that is a feature of the UTIAS campus. My research group was awarded research contracts having sufficient funds to enable us to investigate air cushion systems then under development.

Absent tenure I would not have had the courage to embark on the air cushion dynamics project. Given the protracted period involved in bringing it from conception to production of results having lasting value, and given its later history, it is clear that, without tenure, such a move would indeed have been foolhardy.

At times the problems seemed endless. For example, it was not a traditional

aerospace field so that I had difficulty recruiting graduate students having the requisite talents. Also there were difficulties in finding high quality journals that would accept papers on ACV projects. For these and other reasons, even with an employment contract lasting a decade, my continued employment might have been at the whim of an ambitious administrator who saw new funding prospects for another topic.

#### SUBMISSIONS TO THE SAFS NEWSLETTER

The SAFS Newsletter is published three times a year (September, January, and April) by the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship and is edited by the Society's president, Mark Mercer.

ISSN: 1704-5436

The editor welcomes articles, case studies, news items, book reviews, and letters. Send submissions by email to [president@safs.ca](mailto:president@safs.ca) or by letter mail to SAFS, PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre, Halifax, NS B3L 4T6.

Adding to these problems are those arising from close collaboration with industry. Perhaps the most serious is related to the crucial distinction to be made between investigations of configurations proposed for industrial development, on the one hand, and those chosen to provide insight into the physics involved, on the other. The complexity of the former usually makes them extremely difficult to interpret. Eventually the work that turned out to be publishable—and thus of lasting value—was based on data obtained from simplified configurations that one government official dismissed as suitable only for undergraduate demonstrations.

Not least among the difficulties arising from industrial collaboration were attempts by contract liaison officials to impose management techniques suitable to industry but completely out of place in thesis-based research. These caused me much personal stress; not having an established reputation in the field, I could not tell them where they should file their prescriptions. An amusing incident illustrates the point; it occurred during a review of progress in a project involving electrical engineering developments. One official asserted that he would manage a doctoral candidate by having the student, at an early stage, compile a list of thesis chapter titles, and then hand in the completed chapters at suitable intervals. The principal electrical engineering collaborating researcher, U of T's respected Gordon Slemon, responded "That is the definition of a project too simple for a doctoral thesis."

The 1984 election of the Mulroney Government led to effective termination of our support. Among other things we were unable to complete the experiments based on the 43 metre circular test track, obtaining in the process only one journal publication. One project, however, continued for a few years: it investigated

a novel Canadian invention that held promise for materials handling and warehouse storage. We collaborated with the inventor's company, but the inventor died suddenly, following which the new management terminated support. Thus my air cushion vehicle research terminated long before it could achieve its full potential.

I initially thought that the problems I encountered in these industrial collaboration projects were peculiar to the nascent air cushion technology industry, but for all the reasons I cite, I have since learned that almost all industrial collaboration projects involve these difficulties, even to the point of being counterproductive. As a former director of UTIAS familiar with such projects observed, it is "fitting a square peg into a round hole." The recent Harper Government's emphasis on promoting such arrangements is a prescription for descent into mediocrity.

My concern about the usefulness of student rating of teaching effectiveness initially arose as a result of a UTIAS policy of periodically rotating the teaching of basic undergraduate courses such as introductory mechanics amongst faculty. In a three or four year cycle, one would have expected ratings to improve with practice at presenting the material. But this was often not the case, both for me and other colleagues. For one course, introductory fluid mechanics, I spent considerable effort preparing handouts in form giving explanatory text, with the students expected to write in mathematical developments I presented on the blackboard. Given that writing out mathematical expressions is an effective way of inculcating understanding, I considered this to be an advance in my technique. Besides, it allowed a more relaxed mode of presentation, giving among other things, more time for both appropriate lecturer-student interaction and the presentation of interesting background material. Preparing such notes was very time-consuming and, to my dismay, it had little effect on my ratings. Out of curiosity I devised my own diagnostic questionnaire, which I asked the students to fill out at the time when they were expected to fill out the standard Faculty instrument. The student responses to mine were bimodal; many students liked it, but there was usually a large fraction who disliked it. Needless to say I discontinued the practice.

My concern about the dubious value of the faculty questionnaire was heightened as a result of work I performed as chair of the Faculty's Teaching Methods and Resources Committee. I prepared a report which surveyed the psychological and related literature on teaching evaluation through questionnaires (Sullivan, 1975). In sum, this literature indicated that—to use the appropriate psychological terms—student questionnaires are *reliable* but not *valid*. That is, they were measuring something about the personality of the lecturer or the psychodynamics of the particular classroom presentation, but not anything related to student learning. Although I prepared this essay in 1975, and have not followed the literature since, I believe that this disturbing conclusion remains correct. For example, a colleague recently informed me of evidence showing that the results of questionnaires administered at the end of a term-long course differed little

from those obtained near the commencement. My concern is that, at a time of increasing government demands for accountability, use of these questionnaires by ill-informed administrators could affect morale and, possibly, harm careers.

My encounter with questionable scholarship was precipitated by the 1989 Montreal Massacre, in which a male refused admission to the École Polytechnique murdered fourteen women students. In the ensuing outcry, because—in marked contrast with other disciplines—female engineering school enrolment seemed stuck at traditionally low levels, engineering schools were subject to extensive criticism. As a member of a Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering committee established to find ways of making our student experience more hospitable to women, I sought a deeper understanding by reading certain feminist critiques. To my dismay, much of this literature seemed both technically incompetent and corrupted by advocacy. Further reading led me to similar concerns about the quality of the scholarship in related disciplines, such as the sociology of science and anthropology. Much of this literature seems to be suffused with notions of postmodernism which, *inter alia*, rejects “the picture of knowledge as accurate representation [and of] truth as correspondence to reality” (Magnus, 1999).

For me, a key related question revolves around the issue of whether social values contaminate scientific knowledge. It seems to me that a convincing demonstration of the presence of social values in the content of such knowledge requires showing that it occurs in disciplines where the knowledge has become stable, or has a record of accurate prediction. In an anthology expressing concerns about the postmodernist project, I described two studies of this type: a feminist critique of fluid mechanics, and an analysis by a prominent Edinburgh sociologist of an early 20th Century dispute between two prominent statisticians on ways to interpret the effectiveness of vaccination data (Sullivan, 1998). I argued that both studies are fatally flawed. The first is riddled with elementary technical errors, making its subsequent case for male bias meaningless. The second ignores fundamental mathematical questions at issue in the dispute, leading its author to cast about for implausible sociological explanations. In a second essay (Sullivan, 2005), I expressed further concerns about related broader issues.

To conclude, as a SAFS member since 1992, I continue to admire and support its work on academic freedom. Nevertheless I have occasionally felt that SAFS pays insufficient attention to the scholarship aspect. In this respect, a recent [op-ed piece](#) in the *National Post* (December 7, 2018) suggests that, especially for the humanities, it could become a political issue. A 2003 conference at the University of Toronto organized by former SAFS president John Furedy and entitled “[Excellence through equity: Confronting tensions in universities](#)” provides an example of activities that SAFS might wish to repeat.

*Phil Sullivan (psullivan@utias.utoronto.ca) is Professor Emeritus, Institute for Aerospace Studies, University of Toronto.*

*References*

- Magnus, B. 1999. Postmodern. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Robert Audi, general editor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 725-726.
- Sullivan, P. 1975. An Essay on Student Evaluation of Teaching. Unpublished report.
- . 1998. An Engineer Dissects Two case Studies: Hayles on Fluid Mechanics and MacKenzie on Statistics. *A House Built on Sand: Exposing Postmodernist Myths about Science*. Noretta Koertge, editor. New York: Oxford University Press, 71-98.
- . 2005. Are Postmodernist Universities and Scholarship Undermining Modern Democracy? *Scientific Values and Civic Virtues*. Noretta Koertge, editor. New York: Oxford University Press, 172-190. (Originally presented at the 2003 SAFS conference noted above.)

## TWISTS AND TURNS

*Grant Brown*

To summarize the story so far: On November 1, 2017, Wilfrid Laurier teaching assistant Lindsay Shepherd played for her class a short clip of a TVO discussion wherein University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson explains his opposition to being compelled by the government to use the pronouns of choice of transgender persons. On November 7, Shepherd was summoned to a meeting by the instructor of the class, her supervisor, Nathan Rambukkana. Also attending were the head of her department, Herbert Pimlott, and Adria Joel, the acting manager for gendered violence prevention and support. Shepherd took the precaution of recording the meeting on her computer. Although the others in attendance did not know she was recording, they were aware that her computer was open and that she appeared to be taking notes. During the course of the meeting, which lasted almost an hour, Shepherd was accused, among other things, of promoting hatred by allowing students to be exposed to Peterson's views without condemning them. Peterson was roundly condemned by the two professors throughout the meeting. Feeling abused, threatened, and vulnerable, Shepherd chose to defend herself by taking her story to the media. Eventually, Shepherd released the full recording of the meeting. In June 2018, Peterson filed a statement of claim against the two professors and WLU, alleging over a dozen defamatory statements made during the recorded meeting.

Rambukkana and Pimlott have since filed a statement of defense, denying that their statements are defamatory. In the latest development, they have issued a third-party action against Shepherd, claiming that if the statements they made were found to be defamatory, then she is responsible for disseminating them.

According to the *National Post*, Howard Levitt, Shepherd's lawyer, says that "the professors" argument makes no sense considering the conversation was also shared by media outlets and others. "Why don't you sue all the news agencies... that published it, if that's really your position?" (*National Post*, 28 December 2018.)

Now, it has never been a defense recognized in law that the plaintiff isn't suing everybody he or she may be entitled to sue - or everybody who is similarly situated to the one they did choose to sue. The plaintiff is entitled to pick and choose whom they wish to sue, even if their selection is discriminatory. In this context, the two professors who are third-partying Shepherd have no legal obligation to sue any or all of the news media who propagated the story, even if they have a sound case to do so. Levitt's argument isn't going to defeat the third party action; but he does have a valid point. In cases where liability is "joint and several," it does no good to third-party an impecunious student. Even if Shepherd were to be found partly liable for disseminating the two professors' defamatory statements, Peterson can still collect full damages from the two professors; they will be left to recover what they can from Shepherd. Nothing but short-sighted malice could motivate the two professors to go after an impecunious student rather than news media which have assets and liability insurance to help defray the damages.

In any case, Shepherd probably has a complete defense to the third-party action. To begin with, the two professors are not protected by qualified privilege, as they would have been were they pursuing a legitimate university function in good faith. On December 18, 2017, WLU President Deborah MacLatchy summarized the conclusions of a fact-finding report she had commissioned about the incident, stating that there had never been a formal or informal complaint and that the meeting should never have taken place. In legalese, the two professors were "on a frolic of their own." What they said to Shepherd at the meeting was therefore fair game for publication - whether they expected that or not.

Nor does it matter that Shepherd recorded their words without their knowledge. If they were on a frolic of their own, they had no legal expectation of privacy, period. She had every legal right to tell the world what she had experienced in that meeting, and if the two professors didn't know that, well, ignorance of the law is no excuse. Whether Shepherd merely quoted what they had said at the meeting (as she originally did), or played a recording of it (as she later did), is a matter of form not substance.

Moreover, releasing the recording to the media was a reasonable measure for Shepherd to take to vindicate her rights as a TA, a student, and a member of WLU's academic community. The two professors were clear about the dire consequences Shepherd faced - she was lead to believe that she faced legal jeopardy for propagating "hate," possible loss of a TA-ship, maybe even expulsion from her course of studies. (Why else would the department head and the acting manager have been involved?) It is entirely foreseeable that someone who is threatened with such legal and academic consequences would seek a lawyer's



advice and defend herself if some action against her were pursued. In Canada, we have public trials and public tribunals, at which the two professors' words would certainly be expected to be relevant. It was unreasonable for the two professors to think that they had Star Chamber immunity.

The third-party action is almost certainly an act of desperation by the two professors' lawyer. The best defense the two professors could mount would be on the grounds of academic freedom: we don't want the courts to be intervening willy-nilly in academic disagreements over the relative merits of professors' opinions. That is properly the realm of peer review. The reason an academic freedom defense is so unlikely to succeed in this case is that the two professors were not commenting responsibly on Peterson's academic arguments - not by any reasonable standard of peer review. Comparing Peterson to Hitler is the very epitome of irresponsible academic discourse. What is abundantly clear from the recording of the meeting is that the two professors were more concerned about suppressing academic discussion than promoting "better speech." It would be nice if our legal system were to set a precedent and recognize that there are limits to the character assassination that even tenured professors can engage in, in the name of academic freedom. Professors should not be exempt from the normal laws of defamation.

*Grant A. Brown ([drgrantbrown@gmail.com](mailto:drgrantbrown@gmail.com)) has a DPhil in political philosophy from Oxford University and a law degree from the University of Alberta. Dr Brown runs the Oxford Inn, a bed-and-breakfast in Stratford, Ontario.*

#### WHY DID THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA SECRETLY DESTROY MY LARGE COLLECTION OF UNIQUE SCIENTIFIC SAMPLES?

Labour tribunal starts fresh hearings, while 2009 dismissal case continues in  
judicial review

*Denis Rancourt*

"APUO has been informed that a toxic waste company had been retained by the University in 2008. The company emptied your lab and destroyed your materials," my union told me in 2017.

Labour tribunal arbitrator William Kaplan will decide the matter. Hearings start in Ottawa in January 2019.<sup>[1]</sup>

The university's position is that the "grievance regarding destruction of scientific samples received on June 8, 2017" cannot be brought by the APUO (Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa) because I am no longer an employee, a position that itself is grieved as a violation of binding agreements.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

I was fired on March 31, 2009, under the false pretext of having assigned all A+ grades in an advanced physics course. The university administration was

angry at me, because I was an outspoken critic and published a blog (U of O Watch) that questioned the honesty and ethics of many administrative actions. The union (the APUO) is still litigating my dismissal.<sup>[4]</sup>

The union's demand is full restitution. Nothing irreplaceable is supposed to be destroyed. Therefore, destroying unique documents and samples is obstruction of justice.

Furthermore, not disclosing the covert destruction of the samples during the lengthy dismissal arbitration process is a contravention of natural justice. The information could have changed the outcome of the dismissal arbitration<sup>[5]</sup>, which is now under an appellate-court judicial review that is blind to the new facts.

Moreover, there is harm to science itself, which the university has a mission to advance, not sabotage. And the destruction of the samples is an egregious violation of academic freedom, which the university has a mission to protect.

#### *Background about my scientific career*

The public has heard only about the A+ grades and less about the administration's disproportionate reactions to my outspokenness and opposition to administrative overreach.<sup>[6]</sup>

Another dimension not known by the public is that I am an internationally recognized scientist and featured conference speaker, as echoed by my current Google Scholar profile.<sup>[7]</sup>

When I was fired, I was winding down the largest Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Strategic Project Grant (SPG) funding term that the faculty of science had ever received and starting a new research funding cycle. Furthermore, my teaching, community work and supervision were exemplary.<sup>[8]</sup>

The university administration summarily and permanently banned me from teaching, from supervising my research students on campus, and from accessing my laboratories and offices, on December 10, 2008.

As we now know, the university administration was not satisfied to merely lock me out, but immediately covertly destroyed my scientific samples that I had secured by painstaking efforts over decades.

#### *Description of the scientific samples that were destroyed*

I first learned of the destruction in 2017 when I asked my union to arrange access to some of my samples after scientists at a leading high-technology firm asked me to collaborate on a new state-of-the-art nanoscopic measurement of a unique meteorite in my collection.

The particular sample was an unoxidized piece of the Santa Catharina meteorite, in which I co-discovered the new meteoritic metallic mineral “antitaenite”. My group then went on to prove that antitaenite is an iron-rich alloy that is perfectly non-magnetic, a situation that had been theorized by quantum mechanical calculations but never proven or detected in nature. This led to advances in understanding the metallic cores of primordial planets and it led my group to eventually propose a solution to the longstanding “Invar problem” of metal physics, thereby explaining how the synthetic magnetic alloy “Invar” can have its bewildering near-zero thermal expansion over a broad range of temperatures.

The university claimed to have destroyed everything.

My coveted meteorite sample, one of the most studied pieces of a primordial planet ever measured by scientists, was gone.

This was not the only precious and irreplaceable sample that the university would have destroyed. There were hundreds.

The study of science at microscopic scales relies on specimens and samples. Likewise, the necessary reproducibility of science relies on access to the samples as an available resource.

Much of my work for decades was dedicated to locating, accessing, and synthesizing unique samples that could unlock vital questions of science, and to safeguarding the samples for other researchers.

I kept detailed catalogs and laboratory notebooks on all the samples and on all the exchanges or movements of the samples. The university in 2018 says it “has not located” any of my twenty or so laboratory notebooks about the samples. It would seem that the university has negligently lost or destroyed the most probative documents about the samples.

Solely on the metal physics “Invar” question, I had entire suites of samples of synthetic alloys, made by varying the alloy composition, the synthesis quench rates, and the alloying method, such as impact alloying. These were made by leading scientists specifically for our collaborations. Many were unique in the world and had provided the first examples of artificially made “antitaenite”, for example.

On the meteorite front, in addition to the Santa Catharina specimen and various other meteorites, I had the largest collected purified remnant (tens of milligrams) of the meteorite that may have killed the dinosaurs, preserved in my laboratory in an inert atmosphere, awaiting the opportunity for advanced study. A researcher had first discovered such remnants (micrograms) at the Cretaceous–Paleogene (K/T) boundary in sedimentary rocks in France and had studied them by electron microscopy and microanalysis. I convinced the researcher to extract the first large amount of these remnants for study by advanced characterization methods perfected in my laboratory. He did. To destroy this sample, the university had to break the large, sealed, glass inert-atmosphere container.

The university destroyed my collection of synthetic covalent-network-forming metallic alloys based on Fe-Cr-As. Fortunately, many of these samples had been transferred to researchers at the University of Toronto prior to the university's destruction, and the samples continue to enable fundamental physics discoveries related to cooperative transitions and superconductivity, while most of them have not yet been studied.

One of my most scientifically profitable career-long collaborations was with a French researcher who is widely considered the leading expert in the synthesis of complex rock-forming minerals, especially in the family of layer silicates. He has been able to make synthetic minerals beyond the capabilities of other laboratories, and I became one of his main collaborators. Using the samples that he provided, my research group demonstrated the possibility of developing the first single-mineral geothermometer/oxygen-geobarometer, and we elaborated the crystal-chemistry of layer silicates in unprecedented depth. One of my then students involved in this work is a researcher at the National Research Council of Canada (NRC), while another went on to become a space-program scientist. The university destroyed hundreds of samples in a dozen solid-solution series of synthetic layer silicates that the NRC wants to study but now cannot. It was probably the most impressive collection of synthetic layer silicates in the world, including many specimens that have never been observed in nature.

My laboratory had a leading expertise in iron oxyhydroxides, which are important in both natural and industrial processes. Our paper on hematite-hydrohematite elucidated the distinct roles of water and hydroxyl groups in that material and is one of the most cited papers in the remote study of Martian soil. The university destroyed all of those samples, including many synthesised at great cost by government laboratories.

I also had a unique and diverse collection of nano-particulate iron oxyhydroxides, synthesized both in my laboratory and by several laboratories in the USA and Europe. These had great value in the study of environmental processes related to the so-called "cycling" of iron and nutrients in both soils and lake and marine sediments. These samples enabled fundamental discoveries by my research group and collaborators, such as proving that the dominant reactive oxyhydroxide in lake and marine sediments is nano-goethite and showing that oxidative cycling in soils increases iron oxyhydroxide crystallinity, thereby decreasing reactivity. Both of these discoveries are highly cited. The samples also allowed my group to develop a new magneto-granulometry method. The university destroyed everything: hematites, goethites, ferrihydrites, magnetites... everything.

My research group led a large study of lake and marine sediments, including sediments from one hundred lakes in the Canadian boreal forest. The boreal forest sediments were collected at large cost by government researchers and shared with me for advanced analytic measurements. Many of our techniques had never been applied to lake sediments. Marine sediments were provided by European scientists. This led to our above-noted "nano-goethite" discovery, and

most of our measurements have not yet been published. Some other sediments of industrial and environmental relevance were stored in the frozen state in my laboratory. The university destroyed everything. No new analytic methods will ever be used to probe the sediments.

I also had two large depth-profile suites of “loess-paleosol” samples, one from China and one from Eastern Europe. Such depth-profiles are records of ancient climatic variations in which continuously wind-deposited material alternates between forming dry sandy soil (loess) and rich humid soil (paleosol). They are records of both climate periods and complex soil-formation mechanisms. Our preliminarily published work on a select loess-paleosol couplet proved the promise and utility of our unique analytical methods. We had embarked on a large study of these samples, starting with the Chinese sequence. It is shocking that the university destroyed these impressive and unique samples, collected and catalogued at great cost by collaborators.

My sample collection, housed in a special room, also contained many other specimens, such as various other minerals, industrial samples, environmental samples, synthetic graphite-intercalation compounds, a large collection of standard reference-material environmental samples, and ultra-pure substances. All were summarily destroyed without notice or consultation.

#### *Grievance hearings for a just remediation*

January 16, 2019, is the first scheduled date for the labour tribunal to start hearing the grievance for the samples destruction, brought by the APUO against the University of Ottawa. The other hearing dates are scheduled over many months, as set by arbitrator William Kaplan.<sup>[1]</sup>

The main question submitted at arbitration is:

“Whether the Employer’s decision to unilaterally destroy all of Denis Rancourt’s scientific samples, which was done without informing or consulting him, directly or indirectly, and without his knowledge or consent while he was employed as a Full Professor at the University of Ottawa, was: i. Contrary to the Collective Agreement or to the obligations of the Employer; ii. Unreasonable; iii. Contrary to the requirements of procedural fairness?”<sup>[2]</sup>

The university not only removed its most successful opponent, able to fill auditoriums with students eager to have and create new courses that generated independent thinking and participatory actions unwanted by the administrators, but also targeted me personally and sabotaged my scientific work.

At the very least, the public institution should explain why it covertly destroyed the large collection of valuable scientific samples. Hopefully, it will be required to pay reparations.

*Endnotes*

1. [Letter of Arbitrator William Kaplan to the APUO and university lead lawyers](#), May 1, 2018.
2. [Supplementary Notice of Arbitration - Denis Rancourt \(G-17-10\)](#), dated September 5, 2017.
3. [Letter of the university to the APUO](#), June 20, 2017.
4. Divisional Court for Ontario, filed in Ottawa, File No. 14-2022
5. [“Denis Rancourt arbitration”](#), Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa, March 10, 2014 (and links therein)
6. [“Did University of Ottawa persecute a professor on its faculty?”](#), *change.org*, March 2018 petition (and endnote background links therein).
7. [“DG Rancourt”](#), Google Scholar profile.
8. [“Statement By Denis Rancourt Regarding His Dismissal By The University Of Ottawa”](#), *ZNET* (zcomm.org), April 16, 2009.

*Denis Rancourt (denis.rancourt@alumni.utoronto.ca) is a researcher with the Ontario Civil Liberties Association. He taught physics at the University of Ottawa and is the author of Hierarchy and Free Expression in the Fight Against Racism (2013).*

## INTELLECTUAL LEPROSY – OR WHAT IS UNIVERSITY FOR?

*Nirmal Dass*

In the coming years, the university will be seriously questioned. This interrogation will stem from the growing distrust of the Western bureaucratic state (what liberal democracy has now become) and transnational corporate monopolies (the predominant form of capitalism today). Both have radically changed the Western world, wherein the political and the non-political, public and personal life, the state and private enterprise, the life of the mind and skills acquisition have all been corrupted or dismantled by bureaucracies and their administrators.

Thus, people have come to understand that “liberal” has little to do with their freedom, and “democracy” is not much interested in their will. The old definition of “liberalism,” as the removal of constraints from individual choice, is no longer tenable, because choice means conformity to progressivism, which is the shared ideology of the state and the university, and which seeks to overturn “unjust” distribution of power (aka, social justice). Such is good governance and good education today.

Further, progressivism replaces freedom with rights, which in turn belong only to groups. An individual is meaningless and without rights outside the group.

The state and the university enfranchise groups they deem as “historically marginalized,” while they disenfranchise other groups they regard as “historically privileged.” Thus, the question of liberty vanishes, because freedom is not progressive. The coming years will see the individual fully stifled, while nationalism battles transnationalism (or, post-nationalism) to counter monopolistic capitalism’s devaluation of human labour.

Inside the university, progressivism is the orthodoxy. No matter what the discipline, the same mindset is inculcated – to overthrow privilege. This is not Marxism redivivus. Rather, it is the imposition of group-structure, i.e., “Neo-Tribalism” – in which groups vie for power by demonstrating their marginality. In a deindustrialized economy, class-structure has largely vanished.

Interestingly, this “brave new world” still awaits a vocabulary. The old sociopolitical lexicon is now useless. There is no left-wing, right-wing divide; no far-right to be feared; no Marxism; no “postmodernism” (a pointless term to begin with); no anarchism; no “political-correctness;” no liberalism; no conservatism; no democracy; and no freedom. Progressivism has defeated them all. Those who still deploy the terminology of these erstwhile paradigms are like the blind trying to describe the proverbial elephant.

Those who might want to live without progressivism will have a tough fight ahead, as they will first have to identify the reality they want as an alternative. To do so, they will have to understand that the world has not gotten complex – it has gotten simpler. Technology, which gives the illusion of complexity, functions to simplify everything, especially thinking. Second, progressivism offers nothing more than outrage at privilege, and so is limited in its scope. Third, progressivism cannot say what will come once social justice is finally achieved.

These three problems may develop an anti-progressivist agenda. However, progressivism also dominates the modern mentality, which makes anti-progressivism difficult to attain, in that those who reject progressivism yet adhere to, and use, its “logic” – in that they ignore individuality and profess some version of group-identity. Then, there is the problem of the Neo-Tribal divide, of those at the top, those at the bottom, those victims of progressivism and those left behind by it. There is no middle-class in progressivism.

There remains the possibility of relearning and using pre-progressivist paradigms, especially those of the medieval world. But this will require knowledge that has now been largely lost (starting with grammar, logic and rhetoric, and culminating with Christian thought).

Regardless, the university will have to justify its existence, since instrumentalism and idealism no longer guide it, though the pretense of such alignment lingers. The degrees still “sold” were fashioned for that very world of privilege which the university happily hates and has destroyed. Indeed, degrees themselves are parchment affirmations of that vanished world.

All the while, and without let-up, technology devalues, or replaces, human labour, as monopolistic capitalism overrides any and all sociopolitical configurations. It even overrides progressivism itself. Profit (consumption and production) has little to do with ideology – which is why capitalism can thrive in any civic environment (e.g., China).

And, here lies the essential contradiction of progressivism. It creates “debt-slavery,” by driving the young into the bureaucracy of education, where the university sells them its products (degrees) by way of debt. The young buy these degrees because they are told that they need them for jobs, which the state cannot provide, nor can society supply. But the state can boast of a successful “education system” with metrics of young people “finishing school.” All the while, banking monopolies, who own the debt, gain fresh customers (debt is very profitable). Who wins? In a technologized, deindustrialized society, what power is actually being redistributed? What education is the university dispensing? What benefit does the state derive by increasing the number of debt-laden young people each graduation day? Progressivism comes trailing paths of destruction.

A disturbing prospect emerges – progressivism can only create dominance and subjugation. There are those above and those below. How long can tax-money sustain all this? How long before the good-will of the people runs out?

Perhaps the words of Simone Weil may offer a way forward: “In every school exercise there is a special way of waiting upon truth, setting our hearts upon it, yet not allowing ourselves to go out in search of it. There is a way of giving our attention to the data of a problem in geometry without trying to find the solution or to the words of a Latin or Greek text without trying to arrive at the meaning, a way of waiting, when we are writing, for the right word to come of itself at the end of our pen, while we merely reject all inadequate words.”

Waiting for truth. But how can waiting provide an anchor to the unmoored university, state, society and individual? How can truth be awaited in a post-truth world, where the past is held to be forever wrong because it was built on that which supposedly does not exist (God) – which is nihilism? Progressivism does not need truth or freedom. What does the university become without either? This question too will have to be answered.

In another essay, Weil observed: “It is when we desire the truth with an empty soul and without trying to guess its content that we receive the light. Therein resides the entire mechanism of attention.” By “attention” Weil means education. To do otherwise, warns Weil, brings on “intellectual leprosy,” which is the best description of progressivism. The years ahead will be marked by the struggle to either spread or cure such leprosy. Thus, what is university for?

*Nirmal Dass ([ndass@wlu.ca](mailto:ndass@wlu.ca)) is a novelist, translator, and critic. Dr Dass has a PhD in translation theory.*



## BEQUEST TO SAFS

Please consider remembering the Society in your will. Even small bequests can help us greatly in carrying on SAFS's work. In most cases, a bequest does not require rewriting your entire will, but can be done simply by adding a codicil.

Thank you,  
Mark Mercer, SAFS president

## THE COLOURFUL DOORS OF PRIVILEGE

*Christina Behme*

A Google-search for news relating to “Academic Freedom” and “Freedom of Speech” generated 3.3 million and 39.2 million hits respectively on December 30, 2018. There are of course many news reports about threats to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech in countries like Turkey (e.g., [Turkey: Government Targeting Academics](#)), India, (e.g., [The Right-Wing Assault on Academic Freedom in India](#)), Hungary (e.g. [Academic freedom flouted in Hungary](#)), Brazil (e.g., [Bolsonaro poses a serious threat to higher education](#)), or China (e.g., [Beijing signals tighter control over dissenting scholars](#)).

But an alarming number of stories concern threats to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech at universities in the United States (e.g., [What Is Academic Freedom? Statement That Alarmed Professors at U. of Texas Sets Off Debate](#), or [The dangerous silence in higher education](#)) and Canada (e.g., [Suspension of TRU professor could violate academic freedom](#), [Head of UBC research institute resigns over academic freedom concern](#), [Student group cancels event at UW over \\$28,500 security cost](#), and [Controversial professor Rick Mehta fired from Acadia University](#)).

I've selected these cases randomly. My citing them does not imply that I agree with any of the reported comments. But Freedom of Speech applies regardless of whether one finds said speech agreeable.

Despite all these stories, there are also articles by academics who claim there is no threat to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom at North American universities. One of the latter is by self-proclaimed Academic Freedom expert Shannon Dea (University of Waterloo). Alleging that the widely reported threats to Freedom of Speech at Canadian universities are hugely overblown, she uses her office door as *the* counterexample: “I wear my views on my sleeve and my sleeve is my office door . . . no one at the university has ever interfered with what I post there” ([Dea 2018a](#)). Her argument seems to be “I do not have

any problems expressing *my* views, therefore no-one has problems expressing their views”.

The naivety of this argument would be surprising coming from anyone. But it is breathtaking coming from someone who has written as extensively on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech as Dea. Her office door shows that while some of her views may seem fringy to the general population, at most Canadian universities, and especially in feminist oriented philosophy departments like Dea’s, they are main-stream. So it is of course unsurprising that “no one at the university” has ever interfered with her postings. Professors who hold views diverging from the mainstream may be reluctant to post *their* views and if they do they might be asked to remove such postings. That has happened to Saint Mary University’s philosophy professor Peter March. When he posted on his office door the set of twelve cartoons originally published in September 2005 in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, Terrence Murphy, the Vice President Academic and Research of Saint Mary’s, ordered Dr March to remove them. One may suspect that only the doors of the privileged main-streamers can be decorated without interference from their universities.

There are further privileges Dea enjoys. In another article Dea herself cites “a report released . . . by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [stating that] 53.6 percent of all Canadian university faculty appointments in 2016-2017 were contract – that is, non tenure-stream – jobs” (Dea 2018b). Here she acknowledges that the majority of Canadian academics lack the protection of tenure, a protection that offers Dea the freedom to express *her* views without fear of repercussions.

In addition, having an office door to decorate is unimaginable for many part-time academics. On my last part-time appointment at Mount Saint Vincent University, in Halifax, I shared an office with ten other academics. The office door was hardly big enough for our name signs, so we never had the luxury to post our views in a way Dea takes for granted. The office situation is even worse for graduate students who fulfill teaching or teaching assistant obligations. PhD students at the philosophy department at Dalhousie University occupy tiny semi-private cubicles and MA students have no designated office space. Former WLU graduate student Lindsay Shepherd told me that she didn’t have her own office but reserved a spot every week in a shared generic office. In addition, junior faculty and faculty at smaller universities and colleges often have shared offices. Dea brags: “Very few professionals outside of academe have office doors like mine” (Dea, 2018a). Yet, even within academe only a privileged minority enjoys private offices with the potential for doors like Dea’s.

Another problem with Dea’s argumentation is that, seemingly, she believes that only widely reported incidents are a threat to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech. Her determination to trivialize the actual threat to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech is quite remarkable: “. . . with thousands of students, professors, courses, and campus speakers across the country, free speech violations occur from time to time. But these are outliers. Unfortunately, they are

the only stories we hear about. A controversial speaker whose talk doesn't get shut down doesn't make for much of a headline. A few days ago, in a heroic and carefully documented Twitter thread, Acadia University politics lecturer Jeffrey Sachs highlighted the media silence on the many controversial campus talks that proceed without incident" (Dea, 2018a).

But one wonders how Dea or Sachs would respond to a gun lobbyist in the US who argues "with millions of students and teachers, across the country, high-school shootings occur from time to time. But these are outliers. Unfortunately, they are the only stories we hear about. Yet every day millions of kids and teachers go to school without being shot. But the media are silent about that." Would Dea and Sachs conclude therefore we should not be (overly) concerned about the high school shootings that *do* occur? I hope not. And, of course, the widely reported "free speech violations" have a chilling effect on students and academics that is difficult to quantify. When a tenured professor like Rick Mehta can be dismissed because of the free expression of his views, who *is* safe? When professor Rambukkana publicly apologizes to Lindsay Shepherd for intimidating her and limiting her Freedom of Speech but then turns around and sues her ([Two Laurier professors sue former TA who recorded disciplinary meeting](#)), how can *any* student in his classes feel encouraged to express disagreement? When universities slap hefty security fees on student groups who want to invite "controversial" speakers, how many student groups will not even try to issue invitations? The widely reported incidents are in fact like tiny visible tips of massive icebergs that have been chilling the academic climate for many years.

In her dismissal of any serious threat to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Dea argues "Human beings pay more attention to anecdotes than they do to other kinds of data" (Dea, 2018a). But her office door invocation is of just this order. She pays attention to those who feel compelled to comment on the door. Undoubtedly *some* students will feel encouraged and/or welcomed by the posters. But, presumably only a small number of her students will comment. How can Dea know that the door does not silence others? Would a young female athlete who lost a competition against a physically superior transgender athlete knock at Dea's door? Would the son of Alberta oil workers who lost their jobs knock at Dea's door? Would a young woman who struggles with infertility feel welcome into an atmosphere that focusses exclusively women's "reproductive rights"? I do not pretend to know the answers to those (and countless similar) questions. But I know that, as a survivor of a totalitarian dictatorship who has been repeatedly called "colonizer" merely because of her skin colour, I would not knock at Dea's door. The display would silence me and I doubt I am the only one on whom it has this effect.

I believe that to many part-time academics, PhD and MA students, or non-conforming members of minorities, Dea's self-congratulatory musings must feel like a slap in the face: "I think that my office door nicely emblemizes just how much free expression is valued on university campuses . . . we expect professors

and students to tell us what they think . . . Indeed, it is very difficult to imagine anyone with greater freedom of speech protections than university professors” (Dea, 2018a). This argument is virtually indistinguishable from that of an East German Marxism professor in the 1970s claiming that there is no Freedom of Speech suppression at his university because he always could express *his* views. But for anyone not as privileged as Dea on so many dimensions the concerns about the free expression of their thoughts remain.

*Christina Behme (christinabehme@gmail.com) teaches philosophy at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, in Surrey, BC. She works mainly in philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. Her research focusses on language acquisition, language evolution, and language politics.*

#### SYMPATHIZING WITH MINORITIES

*Philip Carl Salzman*

When one of my friends and colleagues accused me of being unsympathetic to minorities, I was indignant. How dare he? After all, I am myself a member of a much maligned and prejudicially treated minority ethnic group, with which I identify strongly. Not only that, both of my children are “visible minorities,” as we like to say here in Canada: my son was adopted from Thailand; my daughter was adopted from China.

In our current cultural moment, to be unsympathetic to minorities implies the worst sins we can imagine: oppression of the vulnerable, racism, male supremacism, heteronormality, and Islamophobia. Who but the most egocentric, ethnocentric cynic, or the most self-serving, callous exploiter, or the most fearful, insecure weakling, could be unsympathetic to minorities?

Yet, the more I thought about it, the more I agree that I am unsympathetic to minorities. The reason is that I object to dealing with people in terms of their allocation to gross, demographic census categories. Are we to think of individuals only or primarily in terms of whether they a member of one or another racial, gender, ethnic, sexual, or religious category? This is a form of reductionism that “disappears” the individual human being into a few general features, implies if not asserts that these are the most important things about them, advises treating them according to their categories, and succeeds in dividing our society into opposing and conflicting regiments.

Many people, these days, take the view that some categories of people are more important than others, just like the animals in *Animal Farm*, where all are equal, but some are more equal than others. For example, if you say “black lives matter,” you are on the side of the angels; but if you say “all lives matter,” you are an evil emissary of white supremacy and its leader, Satan. If you say “the future is female,” you are lauded and being foresightful and simpatico; but if you say we should be concerned about men’s rights, you are a sexist chauvinist

“mansplaining,” and should be silent or be silenced. If you say, “Allahu Akbar” (Allah is the Greatest), you are just expressing the “religion of peace”; if you oppose the importation of sharia law and insist on the separation of church and state, you are an Islamophobe and racist fascist.

The key to sorting out who are the good guys and who are the bad guys is identifying victim categories: members of victim categories, or, better, multiple victim categories, are to be favoured, while anyone who is not a member of a victim category, is a member of an oppressor category who should be disfavoured. Through the magic of “intersectionality”<sup>[1]</sup> we can discover who are the worthy victims; the more victimhood categories someone can claim, the more worthy they are: non-white, female, minority race (except Asians), minority religion (except Jews), gay, bisexual, transsexual, transvestite, etc. etc., handicapped, poor, homeless, mentally ill, etc. The complementary side of the equation is the oppressors and exploiters: whites, males, Western European ethnicity, heterosexuals, Christians and Jews.

You may wonder where all of this oppressor-victim categorization comes from. It is drawn in the first instance from Marxism, which posits class conflict between the exploited proletariat and oppressing bourgeoisie as the dynamic that will destroy capitalism and establish socialism.<sup>[2]</sup> That was not popular in North America, where most people see themselves as middle class. But sociologists who came to define their field as “the study of inequality” extended class conflict to other, non-economic classes: genders, races, ethnicities, sexual subgroups, religions, etc. The sociologists added that the oppression and victimization was “structural,” with individuals’ intentions unimportant.<sup>[3]</sup>

The analysis and encouragement of gender, race, ethnic, etc. class conflicts have been labelled “cultural marxism.” Sociologists, it appears, have convinced us to think of people solely in terms of their census categories, on the one hand, and their victim credentials, on the other. Another neat twist sociologists treat us to, is that victims of structural disadvantage can never be said to be biased, to be sexist, racist, or heterophobic, because they are victims; no matter how much hate they feel about other categories, or what nasty things they say about them, they cannot be considered at fault. According to the sociologists, only the oppressors—whites, men, heterosexuals, etc.—can be racist, sexist, and sex-practice phobic.

Apparently, we are all sociologists now, for our culture now privileges this sociological analysis of our lives and society. All of our major institutions have incorporated this oppressor-victim analysis, and are enthusiastically and energetically acting to provide benefits for members of victim categories, and constraints if not outright banishment for members of oppressor categories. The Government of Canada, through the Research Councils that it funds, under the cover of “diversity,” is pushing for more members of “victim” categories to be recruited and hired, especially Indigenous and females. As females now dominate in the social sciences, humanities, education, social work, and law, they have put in place a consultant’s program to bring more females into science.<sup>[4]</sup> The Gov-

ernment had already required that Canadian Indigenous natives be admitted as students and hired as professors, or else funds would be denied.<sup>[5]</sup>

Do not imagine that Canadian university administrations had to have their arms twisted, or be dragged to progressive “diversity.” In fact, now largely dominated by females, university administrations have leapt at the opportunity to bring female dominance to the sciences, whether or not female students are keen. McGill University had a major publicity campaign, with banners and posters all over campus, celebrated females in science.<sup>[6]</sup> At the same time, a large program was initiated to recruit Indigenous students and hire Indigenous professors.<sup>[7]</sup>

In fact, university administrations across the country are scrambling to hire Indigenous professors and administrators. So the competition is fierce.<sup>[8]</sup> My Anthropology Department at McGill made offers of professorial posts to two Indigenous academics, and both refused to take (more lucrative?) positions at other universities. Similar favouritism to members of “victim” categories can be seen in the public service, federal<sup>[9]</sup> and provincial<sup>[10]</sup>, and in public and private companies.<sup>[11]</sup>

What objections could I possibly have to gender, racial, and ethnic student recruitment and gender hiring in order to benefit people in victim categories?

One objection is that the opposite of bigotry is not more bigotry, but fairness. Where once women, Jews, Asians, and Indigenes were blocked entirely or discriminated against, now whites, men, Christians, Jews, and, remarkably, Asians, are discriminated against. This highly illiberal favouritism rejects the fairness of universalistic standards, and instead, using the beard of “diversity,” celebrates “good” reverse sexism, racism, and bigotry. Despising people of certain categories in the past have been replaced in the advocacy for “social justice” by despising people of other categories.

We should be very clear that for every female that is hired because she is female, a male is not hired because he is male.<sup>[12]</sup> For every person of colour hired because he or she is a person of colour, a person of white is not hired because he or she is a person of white. For every Indigenous native hired because he or she is an Indigenous native, people with other backgrounds—Asian, Middle Eastern, African Oceanian, South American, or Euro-American—are refused the opportunity to compete for the position. What we have now, given Canadian Government and university priorities and actions, is structural or institutional reverse racism disadvantaging whites, men, Euro-Canadians, Asians, and Christians and Jews.<sup>[13]</sup>

A second objection is that considerations of academic merit and excellence are no longer primary considerations at universities, but are replaced by the “social justice” of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. The strongest academic and intellectual candidates for a position—as a student, professor, or administrator—may never even be considered, never mind admitted or hired. In other words, institutions of higher education are no longer pursuing the purpose that they

were designed to serve, for which citizens have funded them with billions of tax dollars. Universities are no longer communities of scholars, but congeries of squabbling racial, gender, and ethnic factions. This is the “progress” that “progressives” have brought to higher education.

A remarkable example of the jettisoning of academic criteria in favour of “social justice” reverse racism, sexism, and bigotry is the discrimination against people of Asian background. Although the history of Asians in North America shows centuries of prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantage, today, Asian Americans<sup>[14]</sup> and Asian Canadians<sup>[15]</sup> are discriminated against because they study too hard, work too hard, conform too well, and are successful. They are no longer victims, and so must be victimized!

“Social justice” reverse discrimination is seen not only in admissions and hiring, but also in the classroom. A newly popular teaching technique called “progressive stacking” in which “professors call on students who may be – for a variety of reasons – less likely to have their say. While every student is different, the reasons typically reflect the implicit biases observed outside the classroom, such as those related to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability status. So, according to progressive stacking, a professor would call on a black or Latina woman before a white man, for example.”<sup>[16]</sup>

A third objection is that, while protecting the rights of minorities is necessary and just, to disregard the rights of the majority to be treated fairly is both unjust and undemocratic.<sup>[17]</sup> Long struggles over centuries with feudalism, royalty, and aristocracy finally gave birth to democracy, in which the majority get to decide, within constitutional limits, questions of the day. Many countries to this day do not have democracy.<sup>[18]</sup> To dismiss the majority as evil oppressors, and to discriminate against its members in access to the benefits of society, such as jobs, is unconscionable and tyrannical. Why exactly are we electing governments that not only condone, but encourage such discrimination?

My most important objection is the inhumane reduction of human beings to gross census categories. What a sad place we have come to when we treat individual human beings, not as complex individuals with particular qualities, abilities, values, motivations, and preferences, but as uniform members of races, genders, sexualities, ethnicities.

Are all white people the same? Black people? Men? Women? Asians? Gays? To ask the question is to demonstrate how ridiculous it is treating all people according to gross categories. Not that the great university champions of “diversity” ever bother delving, in their pursuit to racial, gender, and ethnic quotas, into the diversity within all categories of people.

You will not be surprised to hear that I do not want to be treated as a member of a census category, neither in my favour nor against me. Consequently, I strive to treat people as I wish to be treated, as individuals, taking into account as much as possible their particular qualities and achievements. This is not just an abstract idea. For fifty years I taught university students, a wide range of

individuals diverse in many respects. I do not claim to be a perfect person, but it never occurred to me to weigh a student's category membership in grading. Furthermore, I took steps, such as reading essays "blind," not knowing the name of the author, to ensure that I was never biased, consciously or unconsciously, on the basis of category membership, personal qualities, or past performance. I always strove to be fair, on the basis of universalistic academic criteria. And that is the way it should be.

But how things have changed! Should we Canadians be proud that the primary policy of our governments and universities is racial, gender, ethnic, and sexual bigotry?

[Footnotes are available in the [Frontier Centre for Public Policy's version](#).]

*Philip Carl Salzman ([philip.carl.salzman@mcgill.ca](mailto:philip.carl.salzman@mcgill.ca)) is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at McGill University, in Montréal. His article originally appeared on 9 November 2018 on the website of the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, where Dr Salzman is a Senior Fellow. It is reprinted by permission.*

#### LET'S CALL THE SJWS WHAT THEY ACTUALLY ARE: POLITICALLY CORRECT TOTALITARIANS

*Frances Widdowson*

Over the last few years, the snide reference to people as "Social Justice Warriors" (SJWs) has become common. According to the authoritative source of Wikipedia, the term first came into use in the late twentieth century, and was deployed in a positive or neutral way. Soon after it was introduced, however, the label began to acquire a negative connotation. It was used to mock those who embraced identity politics and "political correctness".

The negative connotation is now pervasive because many of the people advocating for social justice are becoming more aggressive in the dogmatic pursuit of their agenda. Whether it is "decolonization", anti-racism, third-wave feminism or "trans activism", it is constantly implied that there is a predetermined "correct" way to think about politics. It is even claimed that questioning how various oppressed groups see themselves amounts to "denying their humanity" and engaging in "hate speech". As a result, SJW claims are shielded from scrutiny.

No matter how satisfying it is to castigate these activists as "SJWs", however, referring to people in this way is a mistake. This is because the problem is not ardent support for social justice, which is a laudable position, but the fact that self-proclaimed defenders of marginalized groups support censorship and refuse to accept that there could be valid criticisms of their assertions. The advocacy for equality is being pursued through the dogmatic imposition of particular views on how to overcome oppression. This cannot constitute actual social justice, as



achieving progress in this regard requires engaging with others to determine the most beneficial and efficacious course of action.

What “SJWs” are actually guilty of is Politically Correct Totalitarianism (PCT). PCTs are convinced that their view of the world is the “right” way to think about things, and anyone who disagrees is obviously “wrong” and should not be allowed to express their views. If discourse strays from the “correct” way to view things, PCTs argue, the coercive arm of the state should be used to ensure that other members of society are not adversely impacted by thoughts that are wrong or pernicious. “Hate speech” legislation is the endgame of this mindset.

Postmodern *newspeak* has associated PCT with “the Left” of the political spectrum, in spite of the latter’s historical support for freedom of speech and dialectical reasoning. In fact, it is right-wing ideologues who typically have been drawn to its authoritative dictatorialism. This is indicated by the first articulate defense of PCT, which was made in Pope Pius IX’s *Syllabus Of Errors*. Since the Pope was assumed to be infallible in this document, and his interpretation of Catholicism was considered revealed knowledge, the *Syllabus Of Errors* justified intolerance of “absolute rationalism” and non-Catholic religious beliefs. This is the essence of PCT reasoning.

The same kind of “error has no rights” mentality has been seen in other forms of right-wing PCT. Take, for example, the case of anti-communism efforts in the United States, particularly in the McCarthy era. During the 1950s, it was assumed that communist ideology was obviously harmful (i.e. “wrong”), and therefore no one should have the right to express this position. Laws were even created to make it a criminal offense to argue in favour of overthrowing a State by revolution, or to be associated with any entity that engaged in discussions about this. Even more draconian legislation was passed in some regions in the United States, where life imprisonment and the death penalty were instituted for propaganda deemed to be “subversive” and speech that supported the overthrow of the government.

More recently, right-wing PCT has reared its demagogic head in the context of criticism of Israel. There have been attempts to prevent Israeli Apartheid Week under the guise that opposing the existence of a “Jewish State” amounts to “anti-Semitism” – a bizarre proposition that ignores that both Jews and Palestinians are Semites. These demands for censorship have been given credibility by the Supreme Court decision in *R. v. Keegstra* in 1990, which opened the door for any criticism of adherents of Judaism to be interpreted as “willfully promoting hatred against an identifiable group”. In this case, a person was convicted of a criminal offence for publicly stating that Jews were evil and doubting the existence of the holocaust. While these views are reprehensible and nonsensical, they do not justify the PCT proposition that they should be *illegal*.

While cases of right-wing Politically Correct Totalitarianism make up only a minority of cases today, one can see that the claims put forward are very similar to those of “SJWs”. This is because it is not the content of the ideology that

is significant, but the assertion that one's views are obviously "right" and must not be challenged. The demand for censorship is made by those who are unsure of the validity of their arguments, and so they want to silence reasoning that is potentially more persuasive. The object of totalitarianism is to control the thoughts of members of society, and it is this characteristic that should be the concern of everyone who values freedom of expression. It is only by exposing PCT censorship that we can begin the difficult process of having open and honest ideological discussions about what is the best future for humanity.

*Frances Widdowson (fwiddowson@mtroyal.ca) is Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies, at Mount Royal University, in Calgary. She is also the Coordinator, Membership Outreach, of SAFS. Dr Widdowson's manuscript, Separate but Unequal: How Parallelist Ideology Conceals the Historical and Material Roots of Indigenous Dependency, has been accepted for publication by the University of Ottawa Press.*

#### NUCLEAR FUSION AND SAFE SPACES

*Philip Backman*

For me, the first sign of trouble appeared in a journal article. I was on a sabbatical leave and finally had time to read a few articles in *The Physics Teacher*, which always had been a great educational journal published by the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT). The article that caught my eye was titled "[Perspectives on the indigenous Worldviews in informal Science Education Conference](#)."

As the title indicates, the authors had written a summary of a conference they attended in 2015, and their introduction caught my attention: "We share what we learned on the commonalities and differences in perspectives between indigenous knowledge (IK) and Western science; summarize the role that IK is already playing in the scientific fields, ranging from astrophysics to medicine to climate change, and describe how IK can help science education and research be more sustainable, inclusive, and respectful of all people."

This was one of the first times I recalled hearing the term indigenous knowledge, and almost certainly the first time where I paused to recognize that IK was being presented, it seemed to me, as an alternate method – equal in importance yet in some way different from how Western science is performed – to acquire factual knowledge about the Universe. I also wondered about the last four words: "respectful of other people." Is there a claim being made that the objectiveness at the heart of good science be conditional on whether certain discovers are offensive to certain people?

So, I was curious and read on. As it is an interest of mine, I was particularly keen to read about the IK contribution to astrophysics. After reading the article once

I paused, read it a second time, and then a third; puzzlement seemed to dominate my thoughts. Astrophysics came up just once and involved fundamentally the appropriateness of building astronomical observatories on sacred indigenous lands. Though I fully concede that a discussion on such an issue is fine, where my puzzlement arose is the contention that the non-building of an astronomical observatory, in some way, stands as a contribution to our body of knowledge in the field of astrophysics. Would it be rational to conclude that the non-building of an automobile in some way adds to our transportation infrastructure? I don't think so.

I began to pay closer attention to this idea of indigenous knowledge (also often referred to as indigenous ways of knowing) and soon began to hear about the related topic of indigenization of the University campus. Frances Widdowson speaks on this by providing critical analysis of the challenges such a course of action poses to a university. Out of a sense of curiosity, I began paying closer attention to activities on my own university as they related to indigenization. And did I discover anything odd? I did.

In the fall of 2018, I attended a meeting, known as faculty council, that included members from many departments within the faculty of science, applied science, and engineering on the Saint John campus of the University of New Brunswick. During that meeting, a professor distributed a project summary about, and commented on, a new program in the works for the Saint John campus. "Ally and Safe Space Program for Indigenous and First Nations Peoples" was the title, and it would become "an innovative project intended to develop a campus community that affirms, welcomes and supports Indigenous peoples who work, study and visit UNB Saint John." Additional print information expanded the intent further, "The goal of this program is to prepare volunteer students, staff, and faculty members of the UNB Saint John community with knowledge and skills to gain an understanding of the impact of colonialization on Indigenous peoples and in the role of being an ally." To hurry the indoctrination along, "The program will consist of two levels of training, each approximately 3 – 3.5 hours duration, and participants will receive a certificate of completion after attending both sessions."

I was seeing this for the first time; only by way of subsequent questions and answers did the program's full malevolence surface.

An early question from the audience asked about the wording contained on the project summary document. The wording of interest read, "Through raising awareness and establishing a cadre of allies, we envision that UNB Saint John will become an inclusive environment and safe space for all Indigenous peoples." The point of concern was whether the wording, "...will become..." is accurate. Is our campus currently not safe? In response to that question, and in defense of the claim that our campus is not currently safe, the presenting professor offered the example of an individual, in the not so distant past, observed walking through campus wearing a Donald Trump "Make America Great Again (MAGA)" red baseball cap. An amazing answer. The first thought to arise in

this man's mind in defense of his proposal singled out the tyranny of the politically expressive ball cap! What should we conclude? That certain personal political beliefs, if made public, will endanger the indigenous members of this campus community. If that conclusion is correct, then further questions need asking (but were not asked at that time). Will members of this new program establish, within the mandate of a campus wide "safe space," a list of permitted political inclinations allowed by students and employees at this institution? In addition, if a political position deemed "unsafe" for the indigenous population is recognized, what repercussions – in the view of members of this new program – will befall an individual who openly supports such a political position? Further, and of grave importance, will a broom closet be set aside for Trump supporters?

SAFS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 4 May 2019  
Western University  
London, Ontario

Speakers:

Rachel Fulton Brown (History, University of Chicago)  
Rick Mehta (formerly Psychology, Acadia University)  
Bruce Pardy (Law, Queen's University)

RACHEL FULTON BROWN  
PUBLIC LECTURE

Friday 3 May 2019  
London, Ontario

Later in the question period, I pressed further on the use of the word "Safe" in the program title, wondering why was it needed. I do not recall the exact trajectory of the answer, but I recall vividly that it included mention of the word "targeted" and referred back to a public presentation, made last August, by a candidate for the position of Piluwitahasuwin – also known as the position of Assistant Vice-President (AVP) for Indigenous Engagement. The claim being that a question or comment directed at the AVP candidate was of such a nature that the exchange qualified for this special labelling of "targeted". When a person is "Targeted" – the word was never clearly defined – it, apparently, renders the UNB Saint John campus unsafe.

Fortunately, I was at that AVP candidate presentation (the first of two) and recall both the question and comment (one of which was from me) that, almost

with certainty, contributed to the “targeted” exchange. (At no point during the AVP presentation do I recall being informed that a transition had occurred – no longer did I occupy a “safe space”.)

Regarding the first question asked at the AVP presentations, I would like to share with you a partial email exchange that occurred between a member of the hiring committee for AVP of Indigenous Engagement and myself. The initiation of this email exchange came from the hiring committee member (who was in the room during the AVP presentation), and it was in specific response to the question I posed to the candidate. As I mentioned earlier, my question centered on the concept of indigenous ways of knowing and the concept of “Two-Eyed Seeing.” I had come across the term “Two-Eyed Seeing” for the first time in a covering letter for one of the AVP candidates – was curious – and completed a quick search on its meaning.

“Two-Eyed Seeing” appears to be about science, and how science is best done by combining indigenous ways of knowing with western ways of knowing. My understanding was shaky, but I detected a bold claim: that some aspects of the physical reality of nature could only be discovered through indigenous ways of knowing (and never accessible by western ways of knowing) while other facts could only be found through western ways of knowing (and never accessible by indigenous ways of knowing). This is different from the claim of whether indigenous people know things that others don’t – it’s a claim that other, non-indigenous people can never know it. As my understanding was shaky, I looked for clarification from the AVP candidate. In my question I used the example of nuclear fusion in the sun: was there a discovery like that, waiting out there, that would reveal itself only if investigated by one – and not the other – of the two ways of knowing? The AVP candidate answered the question by talking about oral transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. That was not an answer to my question. Many in the audience added comment; much of which centered on Smudging, the lived experience, and basket weaving. Eventually they moved on from me and others asked questions. Two days later I received the email. It begins by challenging a claim I made within my question, the claim that I am a physicist. I then asked for clarification.

Here is the email exchange:

1<sup>st</sup>: Phil, FYI: teaching undergraduates physics no more makes anyone a physicist than teaching undergraduate students makes me a historian. Please be more accurate in prefacing your questions to the candidate for Piluwitahasuwin today as questions are supposed to generate a thoughtful exchange rather than establish hierarchy. If I am mistaken on your bona fides (that is, physicist = grant money, research program, publications) then accept my apologies. If not, please be more specific when framing your question.

The candidate you quizzed yesterday has the same level of academic credentialing as you and, equally important, she has been recognized by the Indigenous community for work both in and beyond the academy.

My comment is not to be construed in any way as a damper on questioning; rather, it is a request that you be more accurate in framing the context in which you present your question.

2<sup>nd</sup>: from the author: Hi, Beyond your challenge that I am not a real physicist, could you please be specific and explain how my questions were not thoughtful?

3<sup>rd</sup>: Phil, They reflected an absence of context. For example, the notion of objective truth or facts is a philosophical position well debated in the literature. This is not to say that science is subjective or constructed. Rather, that science changes over time and there is much in physics that is speculative and unproven (i.e. not factual) and this needs to be recognized. Also, there is much in physics derived from ancient philosophy. Nothing wrong with that; however, the Indigenous philosophy mirrors that of the Greeks and so to assume there is only one way of seeing physics is ahistorical. I have no quibbles with questions about how Indigenous views inform what we do-or how we are to integrate. Maybe there are cases where doing so is actually counterproductive—to everyone involved.

My comment had to do with the intrinsic nature of hierarchy at the U and how that crept into the question. Compare your approach to Rebecca's question on math.

\*\*\*

My question was not liked, or approved of, and contacting me was this person's attempt to force me into silence by casting doubt on my own skill as a physicist, and doubt about the entire field of physics. And it worked, momentarily: at the presentation given by the second candidate for AVP Indigenous Engagement – which occurred a few hours after receiving the first of the above emails – I found myself feeling extremely self-conscious as I prepared to ask a question of the candidate. I felt, specifically, verbally paralyzed as I scrutinized my questions in search of the context needed for their legitimacy; it was a mental torture I should not have had to endure. In this instance it was clear to me that pressure was applied in an attempt to sway the direction of sincere and good faith questioning.

What does all of this say? Is there a problem here and is it metastasizing? It does seem obvious, to me, that there is an extreme reaction to what is fair and sincere questioning and commenting. I certainly have reached my own personal conclusion about the new “Ally and Safe Space Program”: it is not a program at all, really, but the formation of a malevolent police force. I see it no other way. In addition, I do not see how it will play any role in improving the relationship between indigenous peoples and the descendants of European settlers; it can only serve to divide those two groups yet further. I wonder also about the label given to any person who declines becoming an “Ally,” though I certainly will not become one. I will not support my own self-immolation, nor the immolation of the University of New Brunswick.

*Philip Backman ([pbackman@unb.ca](mailto:pbackman@unb.ca)) teaches physics at the University of New Brunswick Saint John.*

### SHOULD I TELL WRITERS WHAT TO SAY?

*Robert Grant Price*

For those of us who believe that life is better when expression is open and inquisitive, 2018 proved a depressing year.

On the far side of the world (but not so far away) journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered in what seems like retaliation for his writing. Rodrigo Duterte, president of The Philippines, continues his attacks on journalists by leveraging the tax code against them. Writers who speak against regimes in China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey are more likely to find themselves imprisoned than feted.

Canada is a freer country by far, but as we saw in 2018, even here at home free expression is confounded, questioned and (if you're a true cynic) imperiled.

The clearest danger to the long-standing understanding shared by democrats—that free expression is the clearest path to truth, knowledge, and the good life—emanates from a vocal group of academics and writers. These people tend to view free speech as a tool of right-wing fascists and a social construct that reinforces traditional power structures.

I am unconvinced that free speech is so dangerous it must be curtailed. Certainly, extremists on the left and right benefit from the freedom to speak. But so does everybody else. So *should* everybody else. As writers in publications like this one have concluded many times over, we cannot easily censor people we dislike without silencing others who pose little or no threat. An over-class of censors is not the answer. The better answer is still to meet speech with speech and to tune out what you don't want to hear.

I teach writing. Naturally, freedom of expression is a primary concern. As I see it, if I want new writers to investigate and understand the world, I must let them express what they discover about the world in their own language. Once they can do that, then we can talk about how to sharpen their knowledge and their sentences.

The writing generated in my classes usually reinforces my views that censoring expression is a bad idea. When given freedom, most writers use it well. Last term, I taught several writing courses in the University of Toronto Mississauga's Professional Writing and Communication Program. I spent much of December reading and grading hundreds of stories and reports. Most of the reading was pleasurable. I had one student write about how his grandfather's death—the first death this writer had experienced—forced him to consider what his life means. Another student questioned her religion and found it wanting. And another wrote a history of the impoverished neighbourhood where he grew up

and concluded that where a person comes from influences a person more than who they are.

These classes succeed because inquiry is open and free. Students can take risks and take up important questions. But the one consequence of giving writers their freedom is that they might say things I don't like.

In one class, an Asian writer wrote about her "hatred" of white people. She makes this confession in an essay about working as a host at an American-style bistro in Vancouver. After a long, hot day, she becomes frustrated with obtuse white customers who constantly ask if the restaurant serves Chinese food (the hostess is Asian, so they must serve Chinese food here, right?). In a moment of frustration, the writer admits to herself that she hates white people. The story turns on the prejudice: the white customers stereotype her; she responds with her own prejudice.

I read the story with a mild sense of alarm. I'm white. I wondered if the student hated me too. I considered calling her out for her views, but in the end, I did not. In the story she admits to feeling bad for feeling this way. Now that she had articulated her hatred, she'd have to deal with it. Writing the story was one way of dealing with the feelings.

And then there was the report about a sex club. The writer visited the club on Thanksgiving evening and produced a story that is as unsexy as anything I've ever read. I read the story and wondered if I should have told the writer he couldn't explore that topic. But what would have happened if I had censored him and the other writers in my classes?

First, I'd probably handicap their investigations. For example, the writer who wrote about the sex club discovered that sex clubs—hangouts for lonely, mostly unattractive people who have anonymous sex—are nowhere near as titillating as a teenage boy's fantasies. The narrative ably critiqued the club's assertion that its patrons represent "a community." A real community, the writer suggests, finds itself on something other than promiscuous sex. If I had told this writer, who I knew from other classes, to keep his mind out of the gutter, he might have gone to the club just to spite me. As uncomfortable as I felt with his topic and some of what he wrote, it turns out that the best way out of the gutter was through its bottom.

And second, if I had told writers which beliefs, topics, and language was off-limits, I'd inevitably shut out certain students who might need to be heard by me, their teacher. I'd also reinforce the ludicrous idea that we need a class of people—like privileged white men, perhaps—to tell us what we can and can't say.

And that doesn't make for good learning or good writing.

*Robert Grant Price (robertgrantprice@gmail.com) is a Lecturer at the University of Toronto Mississauga.*



REVIEW OF JORDAN PETERSON, *12 Rules For Life**Kris Larsen*

*Jordan Peterson, 12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos, Random House, Toronto, 2018 (Hardcover, 409 pages)*

University of Toronto psychologist Jordan Peterson has been an accomplished academic for almost three decades and published *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief* in 1999. Yet his profile has recently spiked with his courageous stand against political correctness, not only on university campuses, but also within the broader society, including within our leftist dominated media. Indeed, he emerged victorious in recent skirmishes with “cool kids” Wendy Mesley (CBC) and Cathy Newman (UK’s Channel 4).

Peterson ranks with Gad Saad, Frances Widdowson, Lindsay Shepherd, William McNally, David Haskell, and Janice Fiamengo, plus The Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, in defending free speech and the diversity of ideas. His excellent book *12 Rules For Life: An Antidote to Chaos* (2018) is a smash best seller and it is gratifying to hear that this articulate, intelligent, and hard-working intellectual is also doing fabulously well with his videos and speaking engagements and, as such, is well positioned to thumb his nose at those who employ him at the University of Toronto, should he ever wish to do so.

*12 Rules For Life* is a refreshing change from the postmodernist pablum we have been inundated with. It contains many truths about the natural human condition, enhanced by several references to the Old and New Testaments, as well as to mythology.

Peterson correctly asserts that individuals vary with respect to ambitions, aptitudes, abilities, tastes, and willingness to work hard and each of us possesses differing levels of creativity, intellectual skill, and physical prowess. Hierarchies and inequality are inevitable consequences of individual differences and any government attempting to impose equality of outcome (inevitably by evil totalitarian means) undermines the work ethic and, by extension, the economy.

But inequalities also create domination and submission, which encourages aggression by bullies who are drawn to those who are weaker and easier to intimidate. A better quality of life beyond the peace through appeasement fallacy, ephemeral at best, means not only refusing to play the victim, but also taking control and standing up to bullies who are more apt to be deterred (or not “keep coming”) when they realize that picking a fight means adverse consequences for themselves.

More is the pity that Peterson does not devote a chapter to the postmodern university campus. How much of a stretch is it to attribute the success of our campus “social justice warriors” (SJWs) to bullying? Identity politics, cultural Marxism, postmodernism, safe spaces, trigger warnings, paranoid microaggres-

sion obsessions, and rights *not* to be offended are *de rigueur* and there are even assaults, shout downs and shutdowns, vandalism, and mischief (setting off fire alarms) to stop events featuring politically incorrect speakers. Indeed, being cowed into submission is understandable when the consequences of challenging politically correct sacred cows gets one labelled a “racist”, “bigot”, “Nazi”, “fascist”, “homophobe”, “transphobe”, “Islamophobe”, “sexist”, or “misogynist” (have I forgotten any epithets?) and perhaps beaten up for good measure.

Thankfully, Peterson follows his own advice by standing up to bullies. Left unchecked, political correctness will only get worse with SJWs becoming even more emboldened each time their antics are met by apologetic appeasement displays.

Peterson emphasizes the importance of the individual and personal responsibility in addition to the need to coexist with others. He pays tribute to what the individual can be and correctly stresses that life is hard for all, albeit harder for some than others. Displacement and genocide, poverty, abuse and starvation are merely a few of the tragedies experienced by many, while others are thankfully spared such horrors. But few will avoid struggles with work, marriage and child rearing, care for elderly parents or other relatives, family tragedies and loss of loved ones, disputes, bills and debts, household and vehicular maintenance plus numerous additional complications that can ruin a day.

Yet Peterson correctly asserts that individuals are not always helpless victims at the mercy of forces beyond their control. Indeed, we are also imperfect souls who “screw up” just fine without help. Those of sound mind and body can nevertheless strive to improve themselves even when lacking opportunities available to others. While some obsess about how they are less successful than others and lament the unfairness of it all, their time is better spent ignoring the plight of peers and, using only themselves as bases for comparison, striving to make themselves better than they were the day before.

Peterson adds that time is well spent reflecting upon past mistakes, eliminating behaviours responsible for them, and doing things differently, even to the point of changing a life’s course or ceasing to be a slave to an ideology. Ask what makes someone a good person and strive to attain requisite qualities. Be polite and try to help others whenever possible and listen to others who just might know something you don’t. Do not strive to “change the world” until you expend the hard work necessary to become someone who can set an example.

Emphasis on personal responsibility also applies to those we are trying to help, argues Peterson. Support and constructive advice can always be provided, but, ultimately, the recipient must want help and employ the hard work required to improve his lot. Otherwise, a helper’s efforts are for naught.

Likewise, Peterson stresses we say “no” to our children when appropriate and set boundaries prior to age four, when other influences begin competing with parents. An inadequately socialized out of control child with no boundaries

will be shunned by peers and adults, which increases his potential for isolation, depression, criminal activity and/or nihilism.

Peterson also effectively invokes skateboarding (primarily a preserve of boys) to debunk a pernicious and seemingly popular notion that boys should be socialized to be more like girls. Skateboarding tests the limits, involves risk taking, and helps boys toughen up in ways that feminine pursuits do not. It is preparation for overcoming obstacles and mastering the challenges to come.

Men who accept responsibilities and confront life's problems make better (and more stable) husbands and fathers, who pull their weight with child rearing, family finances, household chores, and other domestic, as well as civic, responsibilities.

By contrast, attempts to feminize may seem oppressive to some boys or men who may rebel by resorting to crime, political extremism, or other activities perceived to be at odds with feminism. Others opt out (live in parents' basements?) and are of little use.

In essence, Peterson nails it! One addition to his attempt to help us navigate our way through this mess, although not universally supported, extends beyond his valid recommendation to set aside time to problem solve. Nanosecond technology accelerates the pace of life, which, along with urban overcrowding, fosters incivility, including the loss of proper manners (which increases aggression), and elevates stress levels (also a contributor to bad manners and aggression) which increases potential for cancer, heart ailments, emotional/mental breakdowns and, doubtless, numerous other maladies. We seem poised to maintain this trajectory with no end in sight, in no small measure because this is what too many of us seem to want. Escape to a saner pace of life with less stress in a more rural environment with no phones, televisions, computers, and other techno-gadgets whenever and as often as possible really is another viable solution for those with means, opportunity, and desire who disdain fast paced "progressive" urban lifestyles, which all too often seem horribly out of control. Escaping the rat race, even temporarily from time to time, is preferable to no respite at all. Perhaps this thirteenth rule can nicely supplement Peterson's twelve. You won't die, I promise!

All in all, *12 Rules For Life* offers common sense advice to help us sift through chaos and label whatever ails us. Only by labelling, confronting, and taking ownership of our problems can we hope to take the steps necessary to overcome them. Furthermore, Peterson's unwillingness to glorify victims' hierarchies, grievance mongering, and identity group hustling is a welcome change from the politically correct pap that passes for wisdom these days. After all, nothing is addressed, much less resolved, when we persist in blaming everyone but ourselves for our misfortunes or erroneously attribute personal failures to "systemic" injustices.

Antifa thugs and cultural Marxists can benefit most from reading this great and prophetic book, which stresses individualism and personal responsibility. But

as slaves to an ideology that despises Western values and institutions, they are apt to disdain *12 Rules* without so much as opening its cover.

*Kris Larsen (larsenke57@gmail.com) is a retired Nova Scotia civil servant with a background in adult education and social services. He and his wife live in Halifax, Nova Scotia.*

#### INDIGENIZE THIS

*John E. MacKinnon*

On a steamy afternoon in early August, a ceremony was held on the campus of Saint Mary's University to raise the Mi'kmaq Grand Council flag, where it continues to waft alongside the provincial and national flags, making us, apparently, not just a Nova Scotian and Canadian, but also a Mi'kmaq, institution. This was, and remains, curious, since the Mi'kmaq had precisely nothing to do with the founding and flourishing of Saint Mary's University. Those who did, in fact, are treated these days as quaintly irrelevant. According to the flag-raisers, however, the non-role of the Mi'kmaq in establishing the University, or any other institution of higher learning in the Province, misses the point. In keeping with the ritual benediction they eagerly mouth before every official event on campus, they tell us that Saint Mary's sits, just as the rest of us live and breathe, on "unceded territory." At best, the grounds for such claims are, you might say, quaintly irrelevant, and for any number of reasons [see Alex M. Cameron, *Power without Law* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009)]. And yet, as long as University officials are given to such revisionist antics, the rest of us have to wonder when and how far their pandering will affect academic policy. The University's commitment to "directed," that is to say, race-based, hiring suggests ample grounds for such concerns. But there is more. Indeed, with another grading season having just run its course, it is worth recalling a particularly egregious failure of administrative nerve last academic year.

In the Winter Term of 2018, I taught Philosophy of Law. After the first meeting of the class, in which I had distributed the course syllabus, and made general remarks about assigned readings and course requirements, a student dropped by my office. I will call her Q. She told me, first, that English was her second language, adding somewhat insistently that this was not a disability, and, second, that she would therefore require a note-taker. Since she spoke English fluently, I wondered what she could mean, until it dawned on me that she was Mi'kmaq and that the unmistakable element of display in her announcement suggested that, as far as she was concerned, her limited ability in English was no shortcoming, but a bracing testament to her own cultural pride. I proceeded to contact three students whom I knew and trusted to ask if any could serve as her note-taker, and eventually urged Q to contact one of them.

The material in Philosophy of Law is demanding, but, precisely because of this,

invigorating and rewarding for those who are capable and committed. After three weeks of working our way in detail through Norman Kretzmann's article on Aquinas and H.L.A. Hart's "Positivism and the Separation of Law and Morals," I prepared a review sheet for the students, devoted an entire class to review, and, the following class, administered the test. Marks ended up ranging from 0 to 98. Q earned a 9, that is, a 9 out of 100. Immediately after I handed back the tests, she came to see me and, smiling, asked if I could simply not count her mark. I told her that, while I looked forward to her marks improving, I could not, of course, simply discount this one. She appeared taken aback by this, as if she were used to a different kind of response elsewhere. I suggested that she should perhaps consider dropping the course, but she insisted that this wasn't an option.

The class proceeded through the next set of articles, by Lon Fuller, Friedrich von Hayek, and the American feminist legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon. In the midst of this series of classes, Q asked if I minded if she tape-recorded the lectures. Although I don't like being taped, I agreed, even suggesting that she sit nearer the front of the class, so her recordings would be clearer. She didn't take me up on this, but proceeded, as far as I could tell, to tape the classes. After another few weeks, I once more prepared a review sheet and devoted an entire class to reviewing the articles we had completed since the first test. Following the review, Q stopped by my office to tell me, now two days before the second test, that she needed another note-taker, since she couldn't understand those provided by the one I had arranged for her many weeks before. They were too detailed, she said. I told her I would make inquiries, checking with those others who had responded to my initial request, but that, at this late stage of the semester, I wasn't hopeful. Students were under a great deal of pressure, with looming deadlines in all of their classes, so I wouldn't be surprised if none even felt him or herself able. This was indeed the response I eventually received, so I contacted Q to tell her, adding that, if she had recordings of the classes, in particular of the review session, she should be in good shape. On the day, Q submitted a test on which she had written a preamble to an answer to the first question, but nothing else, thereby earning 0. At that stage of the semester, with 50% of her grade determined, she had an average of 4.5. Not 45, but 4.5. She could have hung on for the final two weeks of classes, submitted a term paper (although, written by whom, it would have been hard to imagine) and taken the final exam, but there was obviously no way that she could have passed the course. So, unsurprisingly, for those final two weeks, she didn't appear. Nor did she attend the final exam or submit a term paper. We who remained concluded the semester by reading and discussing a selection from MacKinnon's *Only Words*, as well as Ronald Dworkin's "Two Concepts of Liberty," after which students completed their term papers and prepared for the final exam.

To earn a university degree, students are subject to a number of academic regulations. At the beginning of each semester, for instance, they have eight or nine days to add and drop courses. This gives them a chance to get at least some measure of a course and its instructor, and to decide whether the course material

is sufficiently interesting and the course requirements sufficiently manageable to remain enrolled. After that deadline, withdrawal from a course is indicated on a student's transcript by a "W," which has no bearing at all on the student's GPA. Much later in the semester, however, there is a further deadline, what our *Calendar*, relying on academic regulation 16 a.), refers to as "the last day for withdrawing without academic penalty" from a semester-long course. Those who withdraw after this date are automatically assigned an "F." Although this is not a common occurrence, it is hardly unheard of. Thus, in the Winter Term of 2018, a student in my Propaganda and Truth class withdrew one day late and was immediately given an "F." Likewise, in the Autumn Term of 2018, again in Propaganda and Truth, a student withdrew one day late and was duly assigned her "F". Even though Q remained enrolled in Philosophy of Law ten full days past the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty, when I went on-line to submit final grades, her name had been removed from the class-list.

On occasion, of course, retroactive withdrawal can be granted a student who has failed to withdraw in time, thereby sparing her a failing grade. Over the years, I have supported several such requests, but always in consultation with the Associate Dean of Arts and always on grounds that the Associate Dean and I regard as reasonable. Such grounds almost always involve illness, whether physical or mental, afflicting the student herself or a close family member to such an extent that the student misses an inordinately high number of classes. "Being Mi'kmaq" is no such reasonable ground.

Out of an initial enrolment of twenty-six students in Philosophy of Law, twenty-four completed the course, although, of these, four (not counting Q) failed, while two earned D's, and another five received marks in the C-range. Since most who enrol in Philosophy of Law are seriously entertaining the possibility of applying to law school, and since it is unlikely that anything lower than a B+ in the course would do them any favours, I can only assume that many, if not all, of those who earned disappointing grades would have wished their transcripts scoured with the efficiency and stealth that Q's had been.

When I discovered that Q's name had been expunged from official records, I immediately contacted V to find out on whose authority this had been done and on what grounds. The paper trail, V eventually reported, indicated that Q had met with a mid-level administrator, that she had vaguely, and I can only imagine haltingly, complained that certain course requirements, expectations, and deadlines had not been made clear to her, even though an examination of the course syllabus, complete with a reminder, in bold print, of the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty, would have confirmed how groundless this charge was. And yet, at no point, I reminded V, had the administrator bothered to contact me. "There are," V nodded in an attempt to explain, "...sensitivities."

I have no way of knowing whether this particular administrative diktat was mandated, encouraged, or merely permitted, whether it confirmed the malign influence of what Marilynne Robinson calls "the tyranny of petty coercion," or

whether, to adapt Nabokov, the administrator’s “fine ear caught the soft whisper of official suggestion long before it had become a blare” [Robinson, *The Death of Adam* (New York: Picador, 2005), pp. 255 ff.; Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 282]. Regardless, it managed to spare Q a particularly withering encounter with reality, if only at the expense of usurping my role and responsibility as the sole informed evaluator of her work and, of course, falsifying her academic record.

The case of Q prompts a number of questions for indigenizers. Q was admitted to Saint Mary’s as a transfer student on the strength of her having completed twenty-seven credit-hours (the equivalent of nine half-year courses) in arts and humanities courses at another university. For a student who cannot function in written English, how is this even possible? Are Mi’kmaq students not being taught English in school? Or is English, even if taught, given short and derisive shrift? If so, on whose direction? The Government of Nova Scotia? The Minister of Education? The Mi’kmaq Grand Council? Since failure to learn English well can only jeopardize the prospects of the students themselves, why, petty cultural politics aside, is this tolerated? Does “indigenizing” the academy entail non-indigenous students, in addition to shouldering their own considerable responsibilities, doing work that Mi’kmaq students should be doing for themselves? Is this what educational bureaucrats mean by “service learning”? How many academic regulations have been relaxed or ignored, how many transcripts tampered with, how many grades inflated and pseudo-subjects concocted in deference to the imperatives of “indigenization”?

The first institution of presumptive higher learning that Q attended has clearly debased itself, dispensing university credit on the cheap. And yet, I have little doubt that, in time, she will manage to navigate her way through the thicket of academic regulations and requirements at, and earn a degree from, Saint Mary’s. Once again, though, how?

I know the answer to that one.

*John E. MacKinnon (john.mackinnon@smu.ca) teaches philosophy at Saint Mary’s University, in Halifax. His article “Narrative Rhyme and the Good Life” appears in Philosophy and Literature, Volume 42, Number 1, April 2018.*

### CATASTROPHIC ANTHROPOGENIC CENSORSHIP: PART III

*Jack Edwards*

“What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist.” —Salman Rushdie

The potential catastrophic consequences of censorship, both on and off campus, were outlined in Part I (SAFS *Newsletter*, April 2018). Academics, organizations and government efforts to suppress free speech on the topic of global

warming/climate change were discussed, including aggressive calls for prosecution and imprisonment of global warming sceptics. In both Part I and Part II (SAFS *Newsletter*, September, 2018), [survey results](#) were cited that indicate students are now willing to accept greater limits on free speech than in earlier surveys, have a greater reluctance to express their opinions and are more accepting of attempts to block invited speakers through dis-invitations, shouting speakers down and even violence.<sup>1</sup> Students now *value diversity and inclusion as more important than free speech* and, although almost half of respondents recognize hate speech is protected by the First Amendment in the US, 31% of those think it should *not be protected*.

The belief that humans are the primary cause of global warming is so ensconced in prominent universities that debate about its accuracy seems moot. In both Canada and the US, the creation of “climate friendly” organizations and programs have shifted the argument from *what* is causing the observed warming to how to reduce *it*, that being the arguable culprit, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Examples include: [Harvard’s University Center for the Environment](#) with its goal that the U. S. be fossil-free by 2050; [McMaster’s Centre for Climate Change](#) with its outreach to the public on “carbon accounting”; the [Yale Climate Connection](#) giving advice on how to break the bad news to students and the public about Catastrophic Anthropogenic Global Warming (CAGW); and, [Waterloo’s School of Environment, Enterprise And Development](#) preaching social justice sustainability. Many faculties, administrations and students have become so invested in the assumptions, predictions and advocacy of CAGW that it has all but killed debate on the issue. Vocal exceptions are certain invited speakers, but they are often prevented from speaking.

Following the money often leads to motivating causes of behaviour. In the case of the “scientific consensus” on global warming, amounts in the hundreds of billions for research and activism explain much of how belief in CAGW has been built up and the censorship that now serves this new orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup>

The lack of debate on the causes of a changing climate was noted some eight years ago in an article published by Russell Nieli entitled, “[Global Warming: The Campus Non-Debate](#).” After raising questions that should be part of any honest exchange, he notes: “Alas, they are rarely asked today on college campuses due to what can only be described as the stifling dominance of a smug orthodoxy that is so cocksure of itself—and of the general ignorance and malevolence of its critics—that genuine debate and interchange between divergent viewpoints rarely takes place.”

In addition to the persuasive aspect of billions in grant money and its effect on beliefs in CAGW, Nieli points to a second cause: a belief that one is doing something noble, something that gives life meaning. Although not a novel ex-

---

<sup>1</sup>A study by the Brookings Institute suggest support for violence may be as much as twice (20%) that reported in the [Gallup–Knights Foundation study](#)

<sup>2</sup>see Lindzen, R.S. (*Winter*, 2012). *Climate Science: Is it currently designed to answer questions? euresis journal*, Vol. 2, 161-193.



planation, Nieli frames it effectively: “radical environmentalism in various forms has taken [the place of Marxism and Freudianism] in the lives of many secular intellectuals as a source of existential meaning and purpose. The insular, defensive, cult-like behaviour displayed by so many global warming advocates when confronted with the concerns of informed sceptics reinforces that interpretation and explains their refusal to debate dissenters.”

Adding the weight of intimidating lawsuits in the broader culture to the absence of debate in universities means that it will be some time before the affect of global warming “informational hysteria” is mitigated.<sup>3</sup> In the Soviet Union, sceptics of Trofim Lysenko’s misguided genetics were punished into silence by the State; in Western democracies, it has taken the combined actions of scientists, governments and media to foster an hysteria that brooks no legitimate sceptical voice. The latter’s half-life seems to be considerably longer.

Outside the academy, actions moving the culture in the direction of a *catastrophic censorship* have gone beyond verbal attempts to stifle sceptical speech to aggressive legal manoeuvres. The fossil fuel industry and governments have become the principal targets, allegedly responsible for disastrous climate change and inaction in preventing it, respectively. Relief is now sought in the courts to force industry to pay for climate events that have not yet occurred and to force governments to seek reparations from that industry and individuals through carbon taxes. As of November 2018, there were approximately 1500 global suits of which nearly 1,000 had been filed in the US.<sup>4</sup>

Several lawsuits were mentioned in Part II of this series, e.g., in September 2017, [San Francisco and Oakland](#) along with [NYC](#) filed separate lawsuits against the top five oil and gas companies over what they allege are the costs they will incur from climate change, specifically, in that case, sea-level rise. In similar actions, [six other California cities and counties](#) sued big oil for damage they claim will arise from human contributions to the changing climate.

Increasingly, children and youth are being used to front these suits in an attempt to create sympathy in the courts. In Canada, in November, an [application to authorize a class action suit](#) “on behalf of all young Quebeckers 35 and under” was filed against the government for its failure to take action to protect the rights of young people. In the U.S., a pro bono suit (*Juliana et al. v. United States et al.*) on behalf of young people is making its way through the courts. Twenty-one youths, ranging in age from 8 to 19 at the time of filing, accuse the government of failure to take adequate action to protect them against future effects of climate change. James Hansen, a prominent proponent of CAGW, is acting as a “[guardian for future generations](#)” in the case filings.

Despite the forces arrayed in support of CAGW, they do not occupy the whole ground. Suits against climate sceptics like Tim Ball in Canada and Mark Steyn

<sup>3</sup>Although not formally defined, examples of this phrase have appeared in various contexts for over a decade.

<sup>4</sup>[The Sabin Center For Climate Change Law Columbia Law School](#), 2018.

in the US are providing hope that long-term outcomes may not be so bleak. Michael Mann, a vocal proponent of CAGW, brought those suits but has lost the one in Canada against Tim Ball because Mann refused to provide his “supporting data” to the courts. Suits against the fossil-fuel industry and governments also appear to be in trouble. At the end of December, 2018, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals [granted the government an interlocutory appeal](#), creating uncertainty in the fate of *Juliana v United States*. Also in 2018, a federal judge [granted motions to dismiss a case](#) against Chevron, Exxon, ConocoPhillips, Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum.

Before Scott Pruitt’s departure as head of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), he considered establishing a “Red Team” to debate assumptions and policies of (C)AGW. Andrew Wheeler, the nominee to replace Pruitt, has remained non-committal on the Red Team/Blue Team proposal but is known to have views similar to those of Pruitt’s.

In contrast to the non-debate on university campuses and a plethora of climate-related lawsuits, there has been global push-back: Trump continues the U.S. commitment to a permanent pull-out of the Paris Agreement on climate-change; Trudeau seems to have bet his 2019 re-election chances on a carbon tax in Canada, but is finding critics on all sides of the issue; Macron has been forced to watch Paris burn over his attempt to impose a carbon tax on gasoline. Trump now appears to be more popular in France than Macron. France’s [“yellow-vest” protests are now spreading to other countries](#); and, organizations like *Turning Point USA*, *CFACT* and *FIRE* are helping bring more diversity of ideas, including climate change, to universities.

Will CAGW proponents consolidate their wins and force governments and industry into carbon tax programs and silence sceptics or will efforts to counter the rush toward a catastrophic censorship result in more reasoned, open debate on the causes of global warming in academia and the broader culture? Despite how issues have roiled opponents, anything approaching resolution is likely a decade or more away.

*Jack Edwards ([jle@aimdc.ca](mailto:jle@aimdc.ca)) is a retired entrepreneur whose career included research and development in artificial intelligence and advanced technologies. He is a Ph.D. graduate in Psychology from York University in Toronto and currently lives in Florida.*

#### DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

Apart from notices issued by the SAFS Board of Directors, views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society.

All or portions of original articles in the Newsletter may be copied for further circulation. We request acknowledgement of the source and would

appreciate receiving a copy of the publication in which the Newsletter material appears. The copyright for reprinted articles remains with the original publication.

#### THE ACADEMIC IRRELEVANCE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

*Mark Mercer*

A scholar neither gains an advantage in research or teaching nor suffers a disadvantage from being a member of a group that she takes as an object of study. Equally incisive research on a group of people can come from both insiders to the group and outsiders. Equally effective teaching about the group can come from both insiders and outsiders.

Scholars who are members of the people they study might be thought to be in a better position to gain and communicate insights into the object of their investigations than scholars who are not on the grounds that insider scholars have shared the common experiences of the people under study—experiences, perhaps, of oppression, subordination, exclusion, or marginalization. They know what it is like to be one of the people they study, for they are one of them. While I accept the premise of this argument, I do not think the conclusion follows.

Alternatively, scholars who are members of the people they study might be thought to be in a worse position than scholars who are not on the grounds that insiders will have sympathies and concerns for the group and its members that will distort their reading of the evidence. Outsiders to the group will be receptive to evidence from all directions and be inclined to weigh evidence accurately. Again, while I accept the premise of this argument, I do not think the conclusion follows.

If it's true that by virtue of their lived experience, scholars who are members of the groups they study will produce better scholarship or be better teachers than scholars not members of the groups they study, then group membership is an academic criterion, and so may be used in making academic decisions. Now the contention is not so crude as to imply that any work by a scholar belonging to the group will be superior to any work by a scholar not belonging to the group. But it must at least imply that scholars who belong to the group can be expected to produce work more original or insightful (or more original while being no less insightful) than scholars who don't.

The argument that insiders will generally be better scholars or teachers is that a scholar possessed of lived experience of the group knows what it is like to be a member of that group. This knowledge, in turn, provides the scholar with an understanding of the beliefs and values common to members of the group. From this understanding the scholar can articulate insights into the life and ways of the group that are not available to the outside observer, no matter how

sympathetic that observer is or how rich her observations.

The argument fails not because lived experience or knowing what it is like to be a member of the group does not generate ideas that might be true or useful in a scholar's understanding of the people under study. It does. The argument fails, rather, because lived experience or what's it like to be a member of the group is simply raw material for the scholar. The claims the scholar makes on the basis of her lived experience must be evaluated and incorporated in a theory of the people she is trying to understand. If they are not evaluated, they are not believed on the basis of evidence or argument, and if they are not brought together with other ideas, they remain inchoate, inarticulate.

The deliverances of lived experience are, for the scholar herself as well as for scholars not members of the group, part of the subject matter of scholarship, not an instance or product of scholarship. To gain a scholar's understanding, a person must reflect critically on lived experiences, their own and others. The better scholar, the more insightful or comprehensive or incisive scholar, is the one who makes the best scholarly use of the deliverances of lived experience.

One might object to my position on the grounds that it rests on the view that understanding is theoretical or linguistic. A person's lived experience is not a theory and not even, primarily, a set of cognitive states. But it may well nonetheless contain an understanding of how things are. The scholar who has this lived experience possesses that understanding, and only a scholar who has that lived experience can possess it. Possessing this visceral though inarticulate understanding provides a strong basis for constructing a scholar's articulate understanding.

Yet even if we grant what I believe to be false, that lived experience contains a pre- or non-verbal understanding of how something is, my argument stands. A pre- or non-verbal understanding is not a scholarly understanding; it is, instead, material to be critically evaluated and used in constructing a scholar's articulate understanding. Indeed, it is not lived experience against which theories can be falsified or verified. Theories can be criticized only against judgements regarding lived experience, not lived experience itself.

What about teaching? Perhaps a teacher who belongs to the group about which she teaches will be better able to communicate the experiences of those people to her students. That might be true, although with imagination and empathy an outsider could also do an excellent job. A better response to this concern about teaching, though, would note that a scholar's task is not to communicate experiences, but instead to communicate understandings of those experiences, understandings with which the students might then engage critically.

Now, being an outsider rather than an insider might be thought to give a scholar an advantage for the outsider will not be tempted, consciously or subconsciously, to downplay evidence that goes against her preferred view or exaggerate evidence that favours it. The insider, on the other hand, cares that her people flourish and this care could easily distort her thinking and her research.

The observation is true, but, importantly, it is hedged with “might”s and “could”s. The insider scholar *could* lose her dispassionate attitude and *might* be partial to the plight and aspirations of her people in such a way as to produce propaganda or succor rather than scholarship. But for a scholar passionately dispassionate, that passion might well compete effectively with whatever other passions move her. There’s no general reason to think that a person’s desire to engage the world as a scholar will lose in competition to any other of her desires.

I’ve argued that group membership and lived experience are irrelevant to scholarship and teaching. A scholar’s group membership or lived experience should be a matter of indifference in all academic decisions, including hiring, promotion, grading, course assignments, and distribution of research funds.

But what’s so great about scholarship? Contemporary universities are organized around job training, preparing a professional and managerial elite, instilling proper attitudes toward such things as equity, diversity, anti-racism, inclusion, the economy, and the environment, and producing socially useful research. A university organized around one or another of these ends would not be concerned to protect or promote scholarship. Non-academic grounds might be the appropriate grounds on which to make decisions at such universities. The ethnicity or lived experience of the professor or applicant could, then, be entirely relevant.

Indeed, dispassionate scholarship, according to those who favour the post-academic university, is more trouble than it is worth. A history professor at my university opined in conversation that independent thought is greatly overrated. Better, he suggested, that our students believe truly and value soundly as a result of social pressures than that they believe falsely or value unsoundly for their own articulate and examined reasons. The thoughtful racist with empirical studies is much more dangerous than the fearful, know-nothing social justice warrior. Call-out culture can be brutal, but it gets an important job done.

Group membership and lived experience are irrelevant to scholarship and teaching, for scholarship seeks to construct deep, comprehensive, and articulate understandings of things as they are. But that result is not itself a defence of universities as places of scholarship against the alternatives.

*Mark Mercer (mark.mercer@smu.ca) teaches philosophy at Saint Mary’s University and is president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship. This article is based on his presentation at Proximity and distance: a conference on the virtues and limitations of group membership for scholarship, Saturday 10 November, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax.*

## PHRYNÉ – THE BETRAYAL OF THE JUDGES

*Heinz Klatt*

*The Betrayal of the Clercs*

In 1927, the French philosopher Julien Benda published *La Trahison des clercs* (*The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*), a book that at the time unleashed violent polemics in France. The term *clerc* referred to “all those whose activity essentially is *not* the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of nonmaterial advantages. . . .” (p. 30), Socrates being the archetype or paragon of the *clerc*.

Benda saw “for more than two thousand years. . . an uninterrupted series of philosophers, men of religion, men of literature, artists. . . whose life were in direct opposition to the realism of the multitudes,” i. e. opposed to political passions. They were either indifferent to political passions as were Leonardo da Vinci, Malebranche, Kepler, Newton or Goethe, or as moralists they reflected on the conflicts caused by human egotists, such as Erasmus, Kant and Renan. These scholars argued in the name of humanity or justice, i. e. the adoption of abstract principles that are superior to political passions. Admittedly, “. . . thanks to the ‘clerks’, humanity did evil for two thousand years, but honoured good.”

Benda asserted that “at the end of the nineteenth century a fundamental change occurred: the ‘clerks’ began to play the game of political passions” (p. 31; emphasis in the original). At Benda’s time, thinkers such as Péguy, Maurras, d’Annunzio or Kipling exercised political passions with a “thirst for immediate results . . . the scorn for argument, the excess, the hatred, the fixed ideas.”

*The Condemnation of Elisabeth Sabaditsch*

I was drawn to rereading *La Trahison des clercs* when I learned about the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in the case of *E. S. v. Austria*. Last October, just three months ago, the court under the German president Angelika Nußberger ruled, among seven judges, unanimously that there has been “no violation of Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights.” Here we have the Betrayal of the Judges.

The case is about the unemployed housewife Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff, an Austrian national, born in 1971 and living in Vienna. In 2009, she gave two seminars for young voters about The Foundation of Islam (“Grundlagen des Islam”) to the Freedom Education Institute, an academy of the Free Party of Austria – the Social Party of our Homeland (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs – die Soziale Heimatpartei, FPÖ).

In the context of her political activism, she discussed the fact, undisputed by Muslim authorities, that Muhammad married Aisha when she was 6 years old

and consummated their marriage when she was a child of 9. How thoughtful and considerate of him to wait for three long years!

The comment, made between meetings in informal conversation with participants of the seminars, that became the focus of the accusations was that Muhammad “had a thing about children... a 56-year old and a 6-year old?” („... hatte gerne mit Kindern ein bißchen “was gehabt... ein 56-Jähriger mit einer Sechsjährigen?”). However, apart from this elliptical sentence, other comments were perceived, or at least claimed to be perceived, as incendiary as well, such as: Muhammad had a “relatively significant ‘attrition’ of women” („relativ großen Frauenverschleiß“). This comment was based on the fact, as affirmed and accepted by both Sunnites and Shiites alike, that for years Muhammad had about a dozen wives simultaneously, not counting his female slaves who were always available. In fact, he was so craven for women that he offered marriage to a young and pretty Jewish woman, Rihana, on the same day he had her husband, and probably her father and brother as well, murdered after the Battle of the Ditch in 627. After every battle won, Muhammad as the spiritual leader exercised his right of the first “pick” from among the female captives.

The reputedly socialist, German language weekly NEWS (English title!) had deceptively planted a reporter in the conference hall, who recorded the first two of three seminars. The reporter submitted the tape and transcript of only 30 minutes to the Vienna public prosecutor’s office with the claim that the tape was evidence of hate speech. This was the beginning of a four-stage legal nightmare.

Stage 1. In February of 2011, the Vienna Regional Criminal Court (Straflandesgericht) ruled that Sabaditsch was guilty of disparaging a religious doctrine. The judge made a distinction between pedophilia and child marriage. It was, according to him, legitimate to talk about child marriage, however illegitimate to even insinuate, let alone affirm, that Muhammad was a pedophile. One might ask whether the difference is one between a disorder of society vs. a disorder of an individual, and if so what the significance of it is, or whether “pedophilia” as a Greek word with a (pseudo)scientific aura sounds more ominous than “child marriage.”

Thankfully, Sabaditsch was exonerated from the charge of incitement to hate (“Verhetzung”), because her statements were not made in a “provocative manner.” She was condemned however to a fine of €480 plus court costs, alternatively to 60 days in prison. Indeed, she was found guilty of disparaging Muhammad in contravention of the Austrian blasphemy law §188, but she appealed her sentence.

Stage 2. In December of 2011, the Vienna Court of Appeal (Oberlandesgericht von Wien) came to the same conclusion and consequently upheld the decision of the lower court. Sabaditsch, it was ruled, denigrated religious doctrines. Which religious doctrine? She was advised that if the fine is not paid within six months she would go to prison, and to go to a jailhouse to join other undesirables, indeed, was no laughing matter for her. This defeat made her appeal to the Supreme

Court.

Stage 3. In 2013, the Supreme Court of Austria, not surprisingly, dismissed the application. Thus, the “guilty” appealed to the European Court of Human Rights.

Stage 4. Last October the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg delivered another blow to her legal wrangling, mercifully however not to her integrity. Sabaditsch, again unanimously was judged guilty on the same grounds as at the domestic courts.

Most interestingly, and here the sophistry of the judges hurts like acid in the eye, it is legitimate to declare “in isolation” that “Muhammad had sex with a child,” since that appears to be a universally accepted fact, but what makes the message a crime is the “veiling of the statement” (die “Verbrämung der Aussage”). The “Verbrämung” makes it a mockery (“Verspottung”) and that is to be condemned, it “clearly implied an excess of valuation” (“deutlich ein Wertungsexzess”). The statements “were not phrased in a *neutral* manner aimed at being an *objective* contribution to a public debate concerning child marriages.”

SAFS members will recall the deplorable events at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo last year. The teaching assistant Lindsay Shepherd was reprimanded for having “neutrally” introduced the hotly debated question of how to address “transgendered” individuals. It was expected of her to disapprove of the traditional, grammatically correct pronouns, such as everyone would present Hitler, his words and deeds, disapprovingly. Would anyone talk about pronouns for the transgendered or Hitler objectively, without judgment and emotions? The delicious absurdity of the abuse that Shepherd suffered is almost comical.

Political correctness and multiculturalism appeared in two avatars. According to the code of conduct for instructors at the university in Waterloo, we are expected to be *judgmental in an academic lecture* or seminar, whereas in Strasbourg, according to the human rights court, we are expected to be *objective in a political academy*, i. e. without veiling and without being excessively judgmental!

I have to admit that I have never been at, nor heard of, a political event that indulged in “objective, unassailable truth.”

(Dear reader, please forgive me when I say that I have not yet attended a meeting presided by President Trump. Perhaps I would change my mind if I find out that Trump in political gatherings is objective and non-judgmental as is required by the European Court of Human Rights.)

The Court further ruled that the “abusive attack on the Prophet of Islam . . . was capable of stirring up prejudice and putting at risk religious peace.” May it be argued that to call a comment, made in between lectures, an “attack”, that the choice of the word “attack” by the judges is an “excess of valuation” and thus is to be condemned? Where are the attack and excess? And let us not forget the picayune nature of the “offense”!



Further, why is the information that Muhammad married a child “capable of stirring up prejudice”? Instead, is the information not conducive to a more realistic appreciation of his personality and thus valuable?

There is an “obligation to refrain from saying something that, unfounded, is offensive to others” (“grundlos beleidigend”). I wish the judges would elaborate what in the comment in question is “unfounded” since the content is not in dispute.

The “comment is apt to create a justified vexation” (“berechtigtes Ärgernis”). Here the judges again betray us with their condescending paternalism. During the last decades, again and again, we have been confronted by “progressives” with the exhortation that women, blacks and homosexuals have to be treated with satin gloves since members of these groups are fragile, sensitive human beings and deserve special care by robust white, heterosexual men. What intellectual drive! Now we are expected to add immature and malevolent Muslims as well as leftist journalists to the list of fragile contemporaries.

We live today in societies in which sentimentality trumps rationality. The statement that Muhammad married a child of 9 years, whether the statement is made with or without a smile, smirk or perhaps even mockingly, makes a claim, it gives information and thus is rational. The claim of feeling offended comprises two rational decisions. First, the “offended” must compare the content of the statement with his own view on the matter and judge that there is a discrepancy between the two. Second, he must make a claim in order to instrumentalize the discrepancy in order to harm the “offender,” i. e. to bring legal action. What is bizarre is the fact that the judges’ ruling is not based on these two decisions of the “offended,” but on the claimed sentimentality. Rational decisions are debatable, but if a Muslim “feels offended” by the comment, it is these unpleasant feelings for which the speaker is held responsible. Here again, the weak and infantilized Muslim is to be protected from the powerful argument, or mere insinuation, of Muhammad being a pedophile.

According to the Court, the impugned comment “threatens religious peace.” Here again, the judgment reveals what Benda meant with Betrayal of the Intellectuals: Judges rule in support of the “right to have (one’s) religious feelings protected,” and by granting such “right” to a complainant, to trample on the right to freedom of speech, in order to preserve the “religious peace in Austria.” I fear, by sacrificing the rights of the woman and by protecting the journalist’s or Muslim complainant’s, the judges anticipated an easier and more secure life for themselves. I perceive those judges as comparable to the group of professors who give good marks to bad students to avoid appeal procedures and bad teacher evaluations.

It is painful to observe how ubiquitous the fear of Muslim violence has become in our societies that chafe under the pressures of mass immigration of people who share neither our values nor our legal traditions. When Hilaire Belloc in 1938 published *The Great Heresies* he included a chapter on *The great and*

*enduring heresy of Mohammed* which spoke much more disapprovingly of the founder of Islam than anything being said in *The Satanic Verses*. However, there was no uproar and Belloc did not have to go into hiding like Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Hamed Abdel-Samad, Geert Wilders, Maajid Nawaz, Ibn Warraq, Christophe Luxenberg and others, and he was not protected by the police, because the number of Muslims in Great Britain at the time was negligible.

It is utterly shameful for our democratic states to allow that judges can sentence and send to prison people who, thoughtfully or thoughtlessly, rationally or emotionally, express their views on religions and their founders. Religion is a particular ideology, based on claims about a transcendent world, that is based on affirmations that are subject to any critique, eulogy and condemnation as every other ideology. In the case of Islam it is even debatable whether it is a political doctrine in the clothes of religion, or whether it is a religion with an explicit political mandate about government, education and civic duties. The fact that Islam does not allow a separation of mosque and state therefore should make every observer careful about asserting that such or such a behavior is religious and therefore deserves special protection. Why are religious doctrines and sentiments singled out for special consideration, and why are political or cultural sentiments allowed to be impugned?

Why is the insinuation or declaration that Muhammad was a pedophile considered a religious doctrine (“eine Herabwürdigung religiöser Lehren”)? Is it not rather a fact, or fiction, to be decided by historians rather than imams? And historical facts or imaginations are open to any kind of expression, from rational and restrained to any kind of mockery and abuse.

Finally, what and where is the beauty of Islam that we make such extraordinary accommodations? Islam is a religion (and political ideology of the 7<sup>th</sup> century!) founded by a man who in one night, in 615, on the back of a winged horse with the head of a woman (al-Burâq), travelled from Mekka to Jerusalem (al-Isra). From there he ascended into heaven (mi'râj), where he met and talked to biblical prophets and entered into the presence of Allah, and during the same night returned to Jerusalem and from there back to Mekka (Coran 17, 1). This nocturnal trip to heaven is by the way the only ground for claiming Jerusalem to be a holy city for Islam! The claim of the nocturnal voyage, after all, is to be taken literally. How else could the claim to Jerusalem be made, since it cannot be asserted on the basis of a dream or fantasy? The Islamic heaven is believed to be filled with houris, dark-eyed perfectly shaped, loving eternal virgins for the everlasting pleasures of men (not women; Coran 56, 35ff). All of these delights for men are the reward for killing infidels and being killed in the pursuit of jihad, holy war.

Where is the compelling beauty of the faith and its founder that we exonerate him, and in doing so, after centuries of struggle, allow the faith-ideology to subvert our hard won cultural and civilizational accomplishments? Blasphemy laws indeed are particularly harmful and dangerous anachronisms.

*Phryné*

In conclusion, I would like to tell the tale of Phryné. This incredibly beautiful courtesan of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B. C. lived in ancient Athens a successful life as an hetaera. Part of her legend is that she was the concubine of Praxiteles and served as his model for his sculptures of Aphrodite. Eventually, she was accused of impiety and dragged before the judges of the dicastery. Just before her sentence was to be pronounced, Hypereides, her defense lawyer, lifted the veil that covered the body of his client and exposed her in the buff to the venerable, dignified and meritorious judges, who all immediately lost their venerableness, their dignity and merits. She was just too beautiful to be condemned for anything. I personally sympathize more with the hesiasts of the agora in Athens than with the judges in the Human Rights Court in Strasbourg. The curious reader may want to google Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) or visit the Kunsthalle in Hamburg to behold his *Phryné devant le jury*.



*Dr. phil. Heinz Klatt ([hjklatt@gmail.com](mailto:hjklatt@gmail.com)) is Professor Emeritus of psychology, King's University College, Western University, London, Ontario.*

SAFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mark Mercer, PhD, Saint Mary's University  
president@safs.ca

Janice Fiamengo, PhD, University of Ottawa  
fiamengo@uottawa.ca

Tom Flanagan, PhD, FRSC, University of Calgary  
tflanaga@ucalgary.ca

Andrew Irvine, PhD, University of British Columbia  
andrew.irvine@ubc.ca

Steve Lupker, PhD, Western University  
lupker@uwo.ca

John Mueller, PhD, University of Calgary  
mueller@ucalgary.ca

Clive Seligman, PhD, Western University  
seligman@uwo.ca

Peter Suedfeld, PhD, FRSC, University of British Columbia  
psuedfeld@psych.ubc.ca

*Past Presidents*

Clive Seligman, PhD, Western University

John Furedy, PhD, University of Toronto

Doreen Kimura, PhD, FRSC, Simon Fraser University

SAFS MEMBERSHIP FORM

To join SAFS or to renew your SAFS membership, please go to: <http://safs.ca/membership.html>

SAFS OFFICE

PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre, Halifax, Canada NS B3L 4T6. Email:  
president@safs.ca.