A Review of *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity* (2019)

by Douglas Murray[1]

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In the 1960s Mao Tse-tung promoted the mantra that "The Four Olds"—Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas—were to be rooted out of society and destroyed.

Douglas Murray identifies a more precisely focused set of four "Olds"—Gay, Women, Race, and Trans—and takes a very different view from Mao: that, imperfectly as these issues may have been dealt with in the past, their wholesale re-reworking today is the height of folly—"a great crowd derangement." Murray argues that the western world is in the process of throwing out a great deal that is considered bad without realising that what is brought in to replace it may be far from good. He uses three analytical categories in ordering his material: social justice, identity politics, and intersectionality. For instance, he highlights the absurdity that in identity politics a person's opinion may be deemed to be of greater value because they have certain minority characteristics such as skin colour or sexuality. When these characteristics intersect with each other, there is yet more opportunity for absurdity, as when an Irish senator claimed that the IRA hunger strikers in 1981 were striking for gay rights.

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Having outlined the broad contours of the minefield, Murray introduces the concept of tripwires, which may cause the unwary to take an ill-advised (politically incorrect) step with serious consequences.

He gives example after example of the herd mentality: unthinkingly following leaders whose positions are usually ill thought-out (and often Marxist). Moreover, when the declared objectives have been achieved (the battle almost won), these leaders seem to want to intensify the fighting when a more rational mind would tell them that the time had come to cease hostilities.

Gay

The first tripwire Murray identifies is "anything to do with homosexuality." The historic injustice against gays had been overcome by the end of the twentieth century, but instead of stopping the battle, activists added multiple letters to LGB, and then "something ugly happened." Everyone (including Stonewall) had been opposed to same-sex marriage, but now it became a foundational tenet. Although the train had almost reached its stated destination, it suddenly picked up speed and "went crashing down the tracks and into the distance." Examples include the American Psychological Association feeling the need "to advise its members on how to train 'traditional masculinity' out of boys" and an article about cycling deaths in London entitled "Roads Designed by Men Are Killing Women."

Murray is gay and does not support change-allowing therapy. Nevertheless, he sympathetically describes the brutal media experience of Dr. Michael Davidson of Core Issues Trust, who works with people who voluntarily seek help to reduce unwanted same-sex attractions. Davidson was treated with unprofessional rudeness by Piers Morgan on live TV, being called "bigoted," "malevolent," and "dangerous," but remained composed throughout the interview.

Murray likewise criticises the behaviour of the gay activists who forced Core Issues Trust to move the London premiere of their documentary film *Voices of the Silenced* to a different location by putting pressure on the original theatre venue to cancel the event. "None of the press which had sought to silence *Voices of the Silenced* had shown that [Davidson was] forcing unwilling participants to submit to a regime of heterosexual conversion." Rather, these critics redefined words so that "voluntary" meant "forced" and "counselling" meant "persecution."

In western society there have been many screeching U-turns on matters relating to "gay." Nicky Morgan MP voted against same-sex marriage in 2013. Two years later (on a fast track to political promotion he could have added) she held that such a view was "not merely evidence of 'extremism' but fundamentally un-British." Hillary Clinton had made a similar about-turn in the USA. Having painted this background, Murray embarks on a commendably open and persistent search for the causes of "gay" in order to better understand its growing acceptance in western society.

What Causes Gay?—The Current APA View

Although the general public have largely been persuaded that people are "born gay," he notes that the American Psychological Association says, "There is no consensus among scientists for the exact reasons [for sexuality]. . . . Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation." So, nature plus nurture plus not much choice.

What Causes Gay?—2014 Royal College of Psychiatrists Statement

Murray comments (p. 25) that "In 2014 the Royal College of Psychiatrists in London issued a fascinating 'statement on sexual orientation.'" He is impressed by their view that "sexual orientation is determined by a combination of biological and postnatal environmental factors. . . . There is no

evidence to go beyond this and impute any kind of choice into the origins of sexual orientation." (This is in fact essentially the same as the APA nature-plus-nurture-plus-not-much-choice formula set out above. In anticipation of the discussion set out below, the reader should take note of the word *postnatal* as a vital key to applying this formula.)

What Causes Gay?—Royal College of Psychiatrists Previous Position 2007–2013

Murray is apparently unaware of the controversy that preceded the RCP's 2014 position. Just a year earlier, the Royal College had given the Church of England a very different account:

> It would appear that sexual orientation is biological in nature . . . there is no substantive evidence to support the suggestion that the nature of parenting or early childhood experiences play any role in the formation of a person's fundamental heterosexual or homo-sexual orientation.[3]

It is clear that a massive shift occurred in the RCP's position on the causation of sexual orientation from 2013 ("biological . . . no substantive evidence of childhood experiences") to 2014 (the importance of "postnatal environmental factors"). It is also clear that in 2013 the College had misinformed the Church that the causation was purely biological. It has never corrected that error, which also undoubtedly influenced the British parliament's decision to change the law to permit same-sex marriage.

What Caused the 2014 Change in RCP's View?

The pre-2014 RCP statement was written as a submission to a Church of England "Listening Process" on human sexuality in 2007. A remarkable sequence of events then occurred which embarrassed the RCP. The Church of England set up a second Working Group on Human Sexuality, which produced *The Pilling Report* in November 2013. RCP simply dusted off its flawed 2007 submission and re-submitted it, virtually unchanged, to this second Church committee.

In parallel with this, Core Issues Trust (CIT) wrote a critical analysis (published as a booklet, *Beyond Critique*) of the 2007 document and submitted this analysis to the committee. Thus, the Pilling group found itself in effect looking at the RCP's 2007 document side-by-side with CIT's criticisms of that document.

Of the many flaws in the RCP position highlighted by CIT, Pilling drew attention to two, as follows (indented text, headings, and paragraph numbers below are all written by Pilling):

> **Is homosexuality harmful or is harm the result of social prejudice?**
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> **205**. The evidence indicates that there is a greater instance of mental and physical illness and substance abuse among homosexual people than among the population at large. Thus, a major study by researchers from Harvard Medical School in 2001 concluded that 'homosexual orientation . . . is associated with general elevation of risk for anxiety, mood and substance-use disorders and for suicidal thoughts and plans.' In addition, many gay men in particular have a tendency to engage in high risk sexual activity. However, there is disagreement about the reasons why this is the case.
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> **206.** One view is that it is due to the discrimination that gay and lesbian people continue to face. Thus, the submission from the Royal College of Psychiatrists declares: There is now a large body of research evidence that indicates that being gay,

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[3] https://reflectionsasia.wordpress.com/ 2008/01/03/royal-college-of-psychiatrists-

submission-to-the-church-of-england%E2%80%99s-listening-exercise-on-human-sexuality/

lesbian or bisexual is compatible with normal mental health and social adjustment. However, the experiences of discrimination in society and possible rejection by friends, families, and others, such as employers, means that some LGB people experience a greater than expected prevalence of mental health and substance misuse problems.

207. On the other hand, the Core Issues Trust point out that the three scientific papers referred to by the Royal College of Psychiatrists at this point actually refuse to attribute the causation of mental health issues among gay and lesbian people to societal factors. For example, one paper cited states, "It may be that prejudice in society against gay men and lesbians leads to greater psychological distress . . . conversely, gay men and lesbians may have lifestyles that make them vulnerable to psychological disorder."

208. This would seem to indicate that a causative link between social prejudice and health issues among gay and lesbian people is neither proven nor ruled out by the evidence. But the alternative possibility that homosexual orientation and all it entails cuts against a fundamental, gender-based given of the human condition, thus causing distress is likewise neither proved nor ruled out by the available scientific evidence.

And secondly:

Is there an issue about the durability and stability of same sex relationships?

209. There seems to be general agreement that, while there are undoubtedly examples of long-term, stable and sexually faithful relationships, gay, lesbian and bisexual relationships have tended to be less long-lasting than heterosexual ones, less sexually exclusive and more promiscuous. A key subtext of Jeffrey John's book *Permanent, Faithful, Stable*, for example, is the need for the Church to support permanent, faithful and stable relationships among bisexual and gay people, in order to counter some of the tendencies within the bisexual and gay community as a whole.

210. There is disagreement about the cause of these tendencies. As with the issue of health problems among gay and lesbian people, one explanation is the lack of social support until recently. Thus, the submission from the Royal College of Psychiatrists suggests: A considerable amount of the instability in gay and lesbian partnerships arises from lack of support within society, the church or the family for such relationships.

211. However as the Core Issues submission points out, the very paper which the Royal College cites to support its position states: We do not know whether gay male, same sex relationships are less enduring because of something intrinsic to being male or a gay male, the gay male subculture that encourages multiple partners, or a failure of social recognition of their relationships. The 'social experiment' that civil unions provide will enable us to disentangle the health and social effects of this complex question.

A remarkable aspect of this discussion is that on these two issues Pilling accepted Core Issues Trust's argument that the Royal College had misrepresented the evidence in the scientific papers that it had chosen to cite. Yet Pilling failed to comment on the most extraordinary fact of all: that all four of these texts—the above two claims by RCP that problems with LGB mental health, and brevity of relationship were largely society's fault, and the two scientific papers they cited,

which did not support their case—were written by the same person, Professor Michael King. His scientific papers are highly professional, but his application of them to the "gay" debate involved misrepresenting them—that is, misrepresenting even his own scientific work—arguably for an ideological purpose.

CIT wrote to the president of RCP offering to work constructively with the College to produce a better position statement. They declined. RCP did take action covertly, however, by working with a representative from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to craft a new statement which took significant account of the criticisms of CIT. The outcome was the 2014 statement. They did not publicise to CIT, the Church or the scientific community this major change; it is a nice irony, however, that this 2014 document so appreciated by Murray was shaped in part by Core Issues Trust.

Returning to the overall issue, we may make two important summary statements: (1) both **APA and RCP now support a model that affirms the importance of nurture as well as nature** in causing homosexuality (though RCP denied this causal relationship until 2014), and (2) **RCP have still not communicated to the Church of England the fact that they have twice misinformed the Church** (and, by extension, Parliament and the whole scientific world) by claiming that the cause of homosexuality is "biological" with no influence from environmental factors.

Murray's Hardware and Software Analogy

In his continuing search for causes of "gay," Murray helpfully introduces the analogy of "hardware" (which can't be changed), and "software" (which can). These categories map logically on to the nature/nurture/choice model that is universally recognised. Nature is hardware, nurture is software, and he has now discarded choice (except for mention of a few religious conservatives who try to "smuggle" it back in (p. 30). He notes that

the increasingly prevailing opinion in western society today favours the unscientific "hardware-only" view—born that way. "What is certain," says Murray, "is that the question as to whether it is innate or a choice—hardware or software—has a profound effect on the sympathy which people are prepared to expend on the issue."

But *bang!*—he has stepped on a major tripwire. It is true that the assumption of innate causation profoundly affects the sympathy of people's response to gay. But nurture, not choice, is the logical candidate to play the role of software. Yet nurture has now been dropped from the model and replaced by choice. Choice is not a plausible cause of "gay," he says. "What child would want to be more of a target for bullies by being gay? . . . So the zeitgeist appears to have settled on the 'Born this way' theory. . . ." *Bang!* The zeitgeist has made the same mistake: If the cause is not choice, then it must be nature. Nurture has been airbrushed out once more.

Epigenetics

Murray touches briefly on epigenetics, understanding it to be a search "to locate a gene variation that may cause homosexuality." This seems to presume that epigenetics is about finding a "hardware" outcome, whereas in reality epigenetic influences are essentially software—they are caused by environmental factors and are in principle reversible.

Restoring Nurture to the Model

Murray is aware that his hardware/software discussion has been problematic; it involves "avoiding any glances at . . . the science" (p. 31). But he does not appear to have realised that the reason his exposition is unsatisfactory may be that it has lost contact with the true software—the "postnatal environmental factors" that shape sexuality during childhood—*as affirmed above by both APA and RCP*.

This issue is of crucial importance. If we restored nurture to its proper place in the

model, what would science say to us? It would say that the nurture aspect comes logically and chronologically *after* the nature aspect—the time frames are different. We are by definition *not* "born *gay*" because at birth we have not yet encountered the *postnatal* nurture factors which will shape our sexuality *over time*. We may perhaps be born with a predisposition (hardware) that is more than usually sensitive to the slings and arrows (software) often experienced in childhood; or some individuals may have particularly distressing childhood experiences (software) (of which there are many examples in life and in the literature). But that is not being born gay. So, *our model involves a sensitive predisposition at birth followed by some traumatic experience during childhood.*

Testing the Model

Our model should be capable of withstanding testing against a range of known facts: It would be consistent with a major national cohort study in Denmark by Frisch et al., which said, "Our study provides population-based evidence that childhood family experiences are important deter- minants of heterosexual and homosexual marriage decisions in adulthood."

So, nurture/software is an important determinant of sexuality. It would be consistent too with the highly regarded findings of E. H. Laumann et al., based on the U.S. National Health and Social Life Study (1994) that "a pattern of homosexuality similar to those of biologically-based traits such as left-handedness or intelligence is exactly what we do not find" (p. 307). So, *not* hardware/born that way. And (with reference to male homosexuality) the theory that "the environment in which people grow up affects their sexuality in very basic ways" is "exactly one way to read many of the patterns that we have found" (p. 309). Software again. The model also supports the findings of a thirty-year study by Wilson and Widom (2010) that men with histories of childhood sexual abuse were 6.75 times as

likely as controls to report same-sex sexual partners.

Not least, the model is compatible with the findings from studies of identical twins. Murray states that the sexuality of male twins "interestingly appears to be identical when they are." This would suggest "born gay"— though he doesn't make this connection. But, uncharacteristically, he has made a category error here. The very opposite is the case: almost nine times out of ten, if one of a pair of identical male twins is gay, the other is not. Their sexuality is influenced mostly not by their shared nature but by their partly shared nurture. Finally, the software/nurture paradigm is compatible with the discipline of epigenetics as noted above.

In Murray's discussion of nature, nurture, and choice, the neglected middle child has been nurture. It is evident that, having introduced the concepts of hardware and software, Murray's discussion has been inconclusive, probably as a result of his initially defining software as nurture but then identifying it with choice. A most exciting project would be for him to revise his narrative in the light of the above observations, exploring in depth the "complex role" rightly identified by the APA for nurture, and its "postnatal" character as stated by the RCP, but neglected in the field of research and largely omitted from his own discussion.

Philosophical Considerations

Murray comments that Aristotle's apparent view that homosexuality arises in some people from birth and others from "habituation" is close to the positions of APA and RCP, but he says, "The only point of difference is that a reputable twenty-first century source would be unlikely to define "habituation" as "such as in those who have been abused from childhood." But Aristotle may have been nearer the mark than Murray realises. Laumann (p. 345) found that both men and women who had been "touched sexually" in childhood were almost four times as likely as the general population to identify as homosexual or bisexual. This is

further evidence of the influence of nurture factors in shaping the development of sexuality.

Murray reflects on "gays" (who want to be treated equally with others) and "queers" who want to be allowed to write their own rules (e.g., rejecting monogamy). He notes the incongruity of Tom Daley and Dustin Lance Black "having a baby" as if it were the most natural thing in the world, and touches on conflicting views within the gay "community" on a number of issues. Shortly after the Pulse nightclub massacre, a banner leading a gay pride parade in New York proclaimed that "Republican Hate Kills," forgetting that the Pulse perpetrator was a supporter of ISIS, not the Republican party. Intersections may sometimes be totally irrational.

Murray gives a brief and entertaining outline of the Marxist foundations that have led to the "gobbledegook make-believe masquerading as science." "After critical race theory and gender studies had done their work, was it not hard to explain why some things that seemed fixed (especially sex and race) were in fact social constructs whereas other things that may have seemed more fluid (not least sexuality) had become viewed as completely fixed? (p. 58). Fluidity of sexuality is a theme that he does not pursue further, unfortunately.

Women

The second of Murray's four main themes is women. It consists largely of illustrating the absurdities that arise when the traditional categories of masculine and feminine are abandoned. Societal "self-delusion over biological reality" is leading us "to reorder our societies not in line with facts we know from science but based on political falsehoods pushed by activists in the social sciences." Sex has been exploited in the media, especially Hollywood. The very phrase "the casting couch" says much.

So, what happens when women's rights meet Hollywood realities? Among several examples Murray describes is Jane Fonda being interviewed in 2007 on a show hosted by Stephen Colbert. At 69 Fonda was clearly keen to demonstrate to audiences that she still "had it." And so, during the interview she made a show of sexually stalking her host, enthusiastically whooped up by the audience. Murray devotes several pages to similar examples to illustrate the sexual degradation to which Hollywood had sunk by the early twenty-first century.

But "all this changed in 2017 with the first *Me Too* claims against Harvey Weinstein. At that stage there seemed to be a rapid consensus that any and all sexual advances against other people were intolerable. The new lines seemed to have been dug very deep as well as very fast." Suddenly a double standard had been revealed. A new morality had been established, but it had no agreed rules. So, Jordan Peterson suggested, "Here's a rule. How about no makeup in the workplace?" What was the purpose of makeup if not to make a person more sexually attractive? This was like red rags to a bull, and the media went into overdrive, accusing Peterson of saying that women were responsible for their own sexual assaults by virtue of wearing lipstick. Murray has no difficulty in showing how much hypocrisy underlies Hollywood's sexual reality compared with its self-proclaimed high values.

In business circles too, he gives examples where on the one hand, "equality" of women is preached, but, on the other, opportunities to claim the *superiority* of women are grasped when they present themselves. Christine Lagarde wrote, reflecting on the 2008 financial crash, "if it had been Lehman Sisters rather than Lehman Brothers, the world might look a lot different today."

One example of following an unscientific fad is what is known as "unconscious bias training," which is intended to ensure that minority groups get a fair chance of being recruited and promoted in employment. The most widely used instrument for this is the Harvard Implicit Association Test, which purports to enable people to identify who they may subconsciously regard as being in

an "in group" or an "out group." Murray asks with some irony whether if they find no such bias this is a failure or a success. He also gives an example of a friend of his who was asked if they would mind being given a pay rise in order to assist their employer in balancing the books as regards payment of minority groups.

A useful section deals with feminism, focusing particularly on some of the most popular feminist writers in recent times and making it clear that their thinking leaves much to be desired. Marilyn French claims that there is evidence that for about 3.5 million years the human species treated men and women equally. Then, about 6,000 years ago men began constructing "the Patriarchy," and for women it has "been downhill ever since." During the last 400 years things have got completely out of control, with men "mainly in the west" attempting to "tighten their control of nature and those associated with nature—people of color and women." Men are mounting "a global war against women." Women are rejecting this "toxic masculinity" and are demanding to be treated as "human beings with rights," including "that men not feel free to beat, rape, mutilate and kill them." This is the historical narrative taught by one leading feminist. Let the reader decide how closely it relates to their own experience.

In January 2019 this strong feminist thinking found its way into the official teaching of the American Psychological Association which claimed that 40 years of research showed that "traditional mascu-linity—marked by stoicism, competi-tiveness, domination and aggression, is undermining men's well-being. Not only is there no equivalent toxic feminism"; there is no way that these characteristics of manhood could be sensibly harmonised in a way that would be useful for daily life.

Murray asks (if indeed competitiveness is a male trait), "When is that competitiveness toxic or harmful, and when is it useful? Might a male athlete be allowed to use his competitive instincts on the racetrack? If so, how can he be helped to ensure that off the track he is as docile as possible?" (p. 103). (And, this reviewer would ask, is that docility always desirable in daily life—for example, if he and his girlfriend were attacked while walking down a dark street at night?) With these and other examples (soldier, firefighter, etc.) Murray exposes the farcical consequences of the direction in which the APA is going.

Finally, Murray prepares the ground for the chapter on trans, which will come at the end of the book. He returns to his analogy of hardware and software, saying that historically the differences between male and female were seen as a matter of hardware. Now it is being said that they are a matter of software—a person can change from one to the other. We are being not just asked, but expected, to radically alter our lives and societies on the basis of claims that our instincts tell us can't possibly be true.

Silicon Valley Is Not Morally Neutral

Before moving on to his next main theme, Murray gives a brief overview of the practical out workings of some of these intersecting principles in Silicon Valley. It is frightening.

For instance, for all its preaching, Google has only 2% of African Americans in its workforce. And Asians make up 35%, compared with only 5% in the U.S. population. There is an issue here which has not been addressed by the politically correct establishment (nor by Murray): Is it the case that people from all racial groups in the world are equally equipped in terms of the qualities that should enable an employee in modern society to advance their career through promotion on grounds of merit?

But while the Googles of this world make attempts to ensure that their employee practices are fair, something deeply troubling is going on. Based on the assumption that inequality of outcome is caused by discriminatory attitudes, attempts are being made to develop an approach called Machine Learning Fairness. Machines, surely, will not engage in

discrimination? Murray explores this by means of computer searches—for example, asking the machine for pictures of "straight white couples" results in outcomes where couples are neither straight nor white. The machine has been programmed against "straight" and "white" because these are categories that are out of favour. The potential consequences of this kind of reverse apartheid are very sinister indeed.

Race

On the question of race, Murray finds many similarities to the women and gay issues he has discussed. And many of the approaches to it equally incoherent. Universities have courses on "Black Studies," which celebrate "blackness." When it comes to "Whiteness Studies," however, the emphasis in one authoritative definition is on "problematizing whiteness." By a strange irony, the noble speech of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963—that people should be judged by their character and not their skin colour—is reversed, and skin colour is everything.

For example, a decades-long tradition in a college in Olympia, Washington, was a one-day absence of non-white students from class to celebrate their identity. In 2017, however, the organisers flipped the arrangement, asking that all white people should stay away for the day. One lecturer objected, pointing out the difference between voluntary absence by oneself and absence enforced on others. He was verbally attacked, with students shouting obscenities and "Hey ho, hey ho, these racist teachers have got to go." The lecturer was humiliated, being made to move his hands in certain ways as though he were a puppet. A riot ensued, with the police being called. A few months later the lecturer and his wife (who taught in the same college) resigned.

On another occasion, at Rutgers University, a Black lecturer asked a Black student heckler, "Do facts matter?" His response was, "I don't need no facts." Murray suggests that this is an indicator of a

deeper malaise in "Black politics," which argues that since Western society embodies some bad things, every element of it must be bad and must be replaced.

In another college, some Black students wrote a letter arguing for the banning of a speaker who had conservative views. They argued that the idea that there is a single Truth is a construct of the Euro-West, which regards Black and brown people as subhuman. Murray observes that the worrying thing is not that young people hold such views, but that they have been taught them. He is concerned that the belief that racism exists where in fact it does not, can easily spread from the universities to society, and "the ability to say racist things in pursuit of an alleged anti-racism has become utterly normalized."

An example of such absurdity is the casting of actors for the science fiction film *Altered Carbon*. An Asian man, Takeshi, dies and almost 400 years in the future is reborn into a different body, played by a different, Swedish-born actor. In the real world of our day this sparks a controversy—why did they not choose an Asian actor? According to *Time* magazine it was wrong to cast a "white guy" in the role. *Time* had forgotten that this was Sci-Fi, with the character being given a different body, or "sleeve." In any case it seems absurd (to this reviewer) that the demand should be for an Asian actor. If Takeshi was a Japanese character, it would be inappropriate to make his new persona Indian, for example, even though both ethnicities were equally Asian. Those intersections again.

Murray's major point here is that yesterday it wasn't like this. Actors and singers of all ethnicities were accepted in theatres, cinemas, and concert halls in the twenty-first century. Yet in 2018 when the BBC announced that Broadway star Sierra Boggess would take the role of Maria in the music of *West Side Story*, there was "denunciation on social media." She would be a Caucasian displacing a Latina in one of the few roles "open to" the latter. Boggess stepped down with a grovelling apology,

saying that to do otherwise would be "a huge mistake." Murray comments, "A talented star had been bullied into submission. And in the name of "progress" and "diversity" the most regressive and undiverse thing imaginable clocked up another victory" (p. 143). He points out ironically that the same logic could be used to reserve some roles for white people. "Casting can either be colour-blind or colour-obsessed, but it probably cannot be both" (p. 144).

Sharing of the good things between cultures could be very beneficial, but "sadly" a theory got there first—"cultural appropriation"—making it "not OK." Portland, Oregon, is described as having turned from being a "foodie paradise" because of the variety of its restaurants, to "a foodie warzone." People with the wrong DNA are considered to have no right to cook ethnic food.

Publishing houses now use sexual and racial quota systems rather than merit in deciding what books to publish. And politics can trump ethnicity. Black commentator Michael Eric Dyson said, "I bet a lot more Black people would support Rachel Dolezal than would support, say, Clarence Thomas."

Peter Thiel, a gay man, and Black actor Kanya West both declared their support for Donald Trump and then found themselves disowned by those communities. This "suggests that 'Black'—like gay—is in fact a political ideology." So, Whoopi Goldberg could say of Rachel Dolazel, "If she wants to be Black, she can be Black." Murray remarks that the implication of this is that "a Caucasian wearing bronzer but holding the 'right' opinions was more Black than a Black Supreme Court Justice [who] happens to be a conservative" (p. 156).

He gives multiple examples of people being punished for using language that is considered inappropriate—but only if used by white people. But he adds that "Asian privilege is currently being weighed up in the social justice scales" (p. 162).

In 2014 a group of Asian students gave evidence that their university's admission process routinely downgraded Asians under such vague factors as "likeability," even though the students had never even been interviewed.

Murray gives an interesting account of the controversy caused by publication of The Bell Curve, which posits different IQ averages for people of different ethnicities, with Asian-Americans and Ashkenazi Jews at the top. Neuroscientist Sam Harris admits having avoided contact with the authors, such was the vitriol of the debate. This does not bode well for the future, and Murray closes the chapter by saying that "people who jump up and down on this quietly ticking ground can have no idea what lies beneath them."

Trans

Murray comments that every generation does some things that to us looking back are "morally stupefying," such as the slave trade and using children to clean factory chimneys. What may be in that category for our time? He gives the example of Nathan Verhelst, born a girl and named Nancy. She had a grotesque upbringing. When she died, her mother said, "When I saw Nancy for the first time, my dream was shattered. She was so ugly . . . we never had a bond." In her thirties she had three sex-change operations, seeking peace of mind. But they did not work: "When I looked in the mirror I was disgusted with myself." So Nathan was euthanized by the state. Murray imagines a future person looking back saying, "So the Belgian health service tried to turn a woman into a man, failed and then killed her?"

Murray ponders the fundamental questions. What is trans? What makes someone trans? He notes that trans has become a "dogma" much quicker than gay, along with a demand to "make up the science around it." Campaigns to permit alteration of birth certificate to change people's sex at birth. Children taught that boys can have periods. "Crowd madness." Stonewall have a new t-shirt saying, 'Some people are trans. Get over it.' But are they? And should they? asks Murray.

He seeks to start from the known before venturing into the unknown. The phenomenon of intersex is a scientific fact—in his terminology, hardware. He appears to side with those who prefer caution rather than early major surgery. Transsexualism is in another category. He sympathetically describes the experiences of James Morris. An army veteran from WWII, he became a successful journalist, happily married with five children. Murray describes Morris's experience of surgery in some of Morris's own words, including the retrospective comment, "I would take a knife and do it myself [if no surgeon were available]." Murray ponders the ethics of all this, observing that there is a big problem in "how to navigate the leap from biology to testimony." He sets out the diagnostic dilemma: If someone thought they were Lord Nelson and wanted an arm removed, could they be sane? And if not, what about a man wanting his penis cut off?

And though science has found no hardware reason why people want to change sex, "there is still a push—as with homosexuality—to move the issue from software to hardware" (p. 199). Activists had for years been trying to de-pathologize trans, when J. Michael Bailey stood "on top of the landmine" and faced deep opprobrium for advancing new opinions regarding causation.

Continuing his quest for causation, Murray comments that a man wanting to have his penis cut off could hardly be said to be making a "choice." "Yet even this does not 'prove' that trans is a hardware issue," he says. (Once more, he omits the possibility that nurture plays a software role in causation.) He muses that some people believe that trans is the new gay and fear being caught on the wrong side of history, "and in some sense the similarity is there. If there is nothing genetically different about gay people, then the only thing that signifies a difference is their behaviour. Gay people "are gay when they say they are and when they do the things that show people to be gay." But once again Murray omits the possible influence of nurture. What if the gay

(or the trans) person is a young man who was sexually molested as a child, and his gayness, though not genetic, is not just "being gay when you say you are" but a daily experience of sexual desires whose origin lies in that early painful nurture?

Murray briefly discusses one fundamental difference between gay and trans—the irreversibility of the latter post-operatively. He is disturbed about the "cluster effect" of trans sweeping through schools and urges that questions about the age at which drugs and surgery are permitted are "worth contesting deeply." Many who identify as gender dysphoric in childhood will grow out of it, "many of them to become gay." This last observation suggests that trans may be the next stop after gay on the nurture/software train journey—a question surely meriting further research.

A case study supports this argument. James is a "very gay" man who thinks he may be trans. He progresses far down the road towards surgery but pulls back at the last minute. He says he is very glad he did. He wonders why suicide rates don't change between pre- and post-operative trans people. He feels he was put on an NHS conveyor belt towards surgical transition. "He was never offered any counselling" (of the type offered by Mike Davidson). It was very easy to get the drugs he wanted.

Murray comments that gay groups have generally supported trans rights as being part of their continuum but observes that many trans rights claims "profoundly undermine" the claims of the gay movement. "Some people are gay. Or possibly trans. Or the other way round. Get over it." He gives an anecdote of a young woman student at Hillary Clinton's alma mater, who decided to identify as a "masculine of centre gender queer person," with amusing contradictory consequences not narrated here.

The Feminist Tripwire
There is inevitably a tripwire between trans and feminism. This makes sense, says Murray, because feminists who have stoutly defended their identity as a matter of

hardware (fixed) can hardly accept the proposition that it is actually software and they could change. He recounts the experiences of feminists such as Julie Bindel, Julie Birchill, and Germaine Greer.

There is a particular poignancy in the well-known experience of Greer. Murray says that "insulting Greer, and indeed excommunicating her from the latest version of feminism became a rite of passage for a generation of women which had—whether they knew it or not—benefited from her trailblazing" (p. 215). In *Varsity* magazine, at Cambridge University (Greer's own alma mater in the 1960s) Eve Hodgson wrote an article headlined "Germaine Greer can no longer be called a feminist." According to its author, "Greer is now just an old, white woman who has forced herself into exile. Her comments are irreparably damaging, reflecting a total lack of regard for trans lives. Thinking what she thinks, she cannot be a prominent feminist any longer. She no longer stands for the same things we do" (p. 215).

Trans and Children

Murray is concerned that children are so easily caught up in the idea of trans that it can spread without any justification, particularly in schools. In one example from the north of England, a 16-year-old girl told her parents first that she was gay . . . and then trans. When they attended a Parents' Day they discovered that the school was already using a boy's name and pronouns in dealing with their daughter.

A Scottish government document suggests that children should be able to compete in sports in the gender that they feel most comfortable in, and that parents should not be informed if their child wants to share a room with members of the opposite sex on school trips. All this, Murray remarks, in schools which have to get parental permission before issuing an aspirin to a pupil.

The internet abounds with people trying to push drugs and trans practices. Some of these people have become celebrities, with

TV updates as to how their transitioning is going. Murray refers to "a slide of acceptance which led the NHS in England to sign an agreement that NHS professionals 'will never suppress an individual's expression of gender identity.'" "The assumptions all continue to go in just one direction," says Murray. And many parents, especially in the U.S., are told by doctors that if they prevent their child from transitioning, the result will be suicide. He gives an example of supposed research into puberty blockers for children (not repeated here), which he says requires "a strong stomach" to read.

Murray considers that the current "stampede" into trans may lead to "an avalanche of lawsuits." Perhaps, indeed, it will require the forensic spotlight of the courtroom to bring people to their senses.

Conclusion

Murray summarises his argument by saying that the activists who want to radically change society believe that the various "oppressions" he has discussed are interlocking, and if we can unweave them we shall be able to achieve social justice. "After which something will happen. Precisely what that thing is remains unclear. But in reality "the interlocking oppressions do not all lock neatly together" like a Rubik's cube. He is concerned that the "dogmatic, vengeful liberalism" of our day risks "undermining and even bringing down the whole liberal era."

Gay is not "the new Black." There is a complete disconnect between "gay marriage" and anti-miscegenation laws. One writer in a feminist journal suggested that Rachel Dolezal should be allowed to change race just as Bruce Jenner was allowed to change gender. But the argument that had worked for gender didn't work for race, and the directors of the journal were forced to resign.

An 18-year-old Texan girl taking testosterone in order to transition to male won a wrestling competition. Normally such

drug-taking would lead to disqualification, but in this case that rule has to be set aside. "As always, it gets worse," says Murray.

What is really going on?

There are contradictions everywhere in what Murray refers to as "this new religion of social justice." But it would be wrong to imagine that they can be harmoniously resolved by constructive discussion, because the activists are working with a Marxist objective: "If you cannot rule a society . . . then you can do something else . . . you sow doubt, division, animosity and fear . . . And then present yourself as having the answers . . . the details of which will follow in the post" (p. 254).

One suggested response to such a person is to ask, "Compared to what?" Where in the world today, or in the past, should we look to see an example where the other party's complaints have been addressed? Murray urges that we incline towards generosity. He also encourages face-to-face interaction, noting how in the 1830s Alexis de Tocqueville was impressed by the significance of assembly in the United States. Face-to-face meetings of the citizenry allowed them to resolve problems often before any other authority was needed. He then immediately puts this theory into practice with respect to his differences with Michael Davidson, flagged up in his opening chapter:

> I do not especially like [Dr.] Michael Davidson's ideas about being gay, but if I decided that he and his 'Voices of the Silenced' should be viewed only in the most negative possible light then I would not merely have no need to listen to him. I would not want to

live in the same society as him. Yet we do live in the same society, and we have to find some way to get along together. It is the only option we have because otherwise, if we have come to the conclusion that talking and listening respectfully are futile, the only tool left for us is violence. (p. 254)

Reviewer's Postscript

As a supporter of Mike Davidson's work, this reviewer is surprised and delighted at Douglas Murray's openness to talk to him. I believe that they have much in common, not least the spirit of generosity shown here by Murray. Mike has much to say that I believe will be of great interest to Douglas as a conversation partner. In particular, the identity of nurture as the elusive middle child may enable Douglas to reappraise his discussion of gay in a way that could be of real benefit to gay people, to science and to society.

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