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In-Sight People

Editor-in-Chief

(Updated September 28, 2016)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Athabasca University: University of California, Irvine

Scott Douglas Jacobsen founded In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal and In-Sight Publishing. He authored/co-authored some e-books, free or low-cost. If you want to contact Scott: Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.com, Scott.Jacobsen@TrustedClothes.Com, Scott@ConatusNews.Com, scott.jacobsen@probc.ca, Scott@Karmik.Ca.

He is a Moral Courage Webmaster and Outreach Specialist (Fall, 2016) at the UCI Interdisciplinary Center for the Scientific Study of Ethics and Morality (Ethics Center), Interview Columnist for Conatus News, Writer and Executive Administrator for Trusted Clothes, Interview Columnist for Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), Chair of Social Media for the Almas Jiwani Foundation, Councillor for the Athabasca University Student Union, Member of the Learning Analytics Research Group, writer for The Voice Magazine, Your Political Party of BC, ProBC, Marijuana Party of Canada, Fresh Start Recovery Centre, Harvest House Ministries, and Little Footprints Big Steps International Development Organization. Editor and Proofreader for Alfred Yi Zhang Photography, Community Journalist/Blogger for Gordon Neighbourhood House, Member-at-Large, Member of the Outreach Committee, the Finance & Fundraising Committee, and the Special Projects & Political Advocacy Committee, and Writer for Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Member of the Lifespan Cognition Psychology Lab and IMAGe Psychology Lab, Collaborator with Dr. Farhad Dastur in creation of the CriticalThinkingWiki, Board Member, and Foundation Volunteer Committee Member for the Fraser Valley Health Care Foundation, and Independent Landscaper.
He was a Francisco Ayala Scholar at the UCI Ethics Center, Member of the Psychometric Society Graduate Student Committee, Special Advisor and Writer for ECOSOC at NWMUN, Writer for TransplantFirstAcademy and ProActive Path. Member of AT-CURA Psychology Lab, Contributor for a student policy review, Vice President of Outreach for the Almas Jiwani Foundation, worked with Manahel Thabet on numerous initiatives, Student Member of the Ad–Hoc Executive Compensation Review Committee for the Athabasca University Student Union, Volunteer and Writer for British Columbia Psychological Association, Community Member of the KPU Choir (even performed with them alongside the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra), Delegate at Harvard World MUN, NWMUN, UBC MUN, and Long Beach Intercollegiate MUN, and Writer and Member of the Communications Committee for The PIPE UP Network.


Advisory Board

*Interview views do not equate to positions of Advisory Board members.*

*Advisory Board listing alphabetized by first name and relevant hyperlinks active.*

![Professor Adele Diamond, PhD, FRSC](image)

Tier 1 Canada Research Chair Professor, Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, University of British Columbia; Fellow, Royal Society of Canada; Fellow, Society of Experimental Psychologists

Adele Diamond is the Canada Research Chair Professor of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. She is a member of the Royal Society of Canada and was recently recognized as one of the 15 most influential neuroscientists in the world today.

Prof. Diamond is at the forefront of research on ‘executive functions’ and on the brain’s prefrontal cortex on which they depend. Executive functions include ‘thinking outside the box’ (cognitive flexibility), mentally relating ideas and facts (working memory), and giving considered responses rather than impulsive ones, resisting temptations and staying focused (inhibitory control, including selective attention). Prof. Diamond has made discoveries that have improved treatment for two different medical disorders and discoveries that have impacted education, improving the lives of millions of children. Her work has shown that executive functions can be improved at any age, even in the very young. Recently she has turned her attention to the possible roles of traditional activities, such as music and dance, in improving executive functions, academic outcomes, and mental health.

In looking for practical ways to help children develop healthy executive functions, and thus help more children thrive, Prof. Diamond takes a markedly different perspective from mainstream education in hypothesizing that focusing exclusively on training cognitive skills is less efficient, and ultimately less successful, than also addressing students’ social, emotional, and physical needs. She hypothesizes that besides training the skills of interest, it’s important to support those skills by lessening things that impair them (like stress or loneliness) and enhancing things that support them (such as joy and good health). Adele Diamond was educated at Swarthmore (B.A., Phi Beta Kappa), Harvard (Ph.D.), and Yale Medical School (postdoc). Her many awards include an honorary doctorate (Honoris Causa) from Ben-Gurion University, the Bronfenbrenner Award for Lifetime Contributions to Developmental Psychology in the Service of Science and Society, named a “Woman of Distinction” by the YWCA, and named one of the “2000 Outstanding Women of the 20th Century.”
Dr. Aubrey de Grey

Chief Science Officer & Co-Founder, SENS Research Foundation; Editor-In-Chief, Rejuvenation Research

Dr. Aubrey de Grey is a biomedical gerontologist based in Cambridge, UK and Mountain View, California, USA, and is the Chief Science Officer of SENS Research Foundation, a California-based 501(c) (3) charity dedicated to combating the aging process. He is also Editor-in-Chief of Rejuvenation Research, the world’s highest-impact peer-reviewed journal focused on intervention in aging.

He received his BA and Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in 1985 and 2000 respectively. His research interests encompass the characterization of all the accumulating and eventually pathogenic molecular and cellular side-effects of metabolism (“damage”) that constitute mammalian aging and the design of interventions to repair and/or obviate that damage. Dr. de Grey is a Fellow of both the Gerontological Society of America and the American Aging Association, and sits on the editorial and scientific advisory boards of numerous journals and organisations.
Professor Azra Raza, M.D.

_Columbia University, Medicine, Professor; Myelodysplastic Syndrome Center, Director_

Dr. Azra Raza is Professor of Medicine and Director of the MDS Center at Columbia University in New York, NY. She started her research in Myelodysplastic Syndromes (MDS) in 1982 and moved to Rush University, Chicago, Illinois in 1992, where she was the Charles Arthur Weaver Professor in Oncology and Director, Division of Myeloid Diseases.

The MDS program, along with a Tissue Repository containing more than 60,000 samples from MDS and acute leukemia patients was successfully relocated to Columbia University in 2010. Before moving to New York, Dr. Raza was the Chief of Hematology Oncology and the Gladys Smith Martin Professor of Oncology at the University of Massachusetts.

She has published the results of her laboratory research and clinical trials in prestigious, peer reviewed journals such as The New England Journal of Medicine, Nature, Molecular Cell, Blood, PNAS, Cancer, Cancer Research, British Journal of Hematology, Leukemia, Leukemia Research. She is also the co-author of _GHALIB: Epistemologies of Elegance_, a book on the works of the famous Urdu poet. Dr. Raza has mentored hundreds of medical students, residents, oncology fellows, doctoral and post-doctoral students in the last three decades.

She serves on numerous National and International panels as a reviewer, consultant and advisor and is the recipient of a number of awards including The First Lifetime Achievement Award from APPNA, Award in Academic Excellence twice (2007 and 2010) from Dogana, and Woman of the Year Award from Safeer e Pakistan, CA and The Hope Award in Cancer Research 2012 (shared with the Nobel Laureate Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn).

Dr. Raza has been named as one of the _100 Women Who Matter_ by Newsweek Pakistan in March 2012. In 2015, Dr. Raza was a member of the Founder Group at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, designing _Breakthrough Developments in Science and Technology_ with President Bill Clinton. On December 1, 2015, Dr. Raza was part of a core group of cancer researchers who met with Vice President Joe Biden to discuss the Cancer Moonshot initiative.
Professor Cristina Atance

Associate Professor, School of Psychology, University of Ottawa; Principal Investigator, Childhood Cognition and Learning Laboratory; Editorial Board Member, Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology

Professor Cristina Atance earned a B.Sc. (Honours) in Psychology at the University of Toronto in 1996 and Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Waterloo in 2001. She was then a Post-Doctoral Research Associate from 2001-2003 at the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle. Her research interests lie in cognitive development, and more specifically, future thinking, planning, and theory of mind (ToM) in young children.

Dr. Atance’s research has been funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and by the Government of Ontario in the form of an Early Researcher Award in 2008.
Dr. Daniel Bernstein

Tier 2 Canada Research Chair, Lifespan Cognition; Principle Investigator, Lifespan Cognition Lab; Instructor, Psychology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University; Inaugural Member, Royal Society of Canada’s College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists

Dr. Daniel M Bernstein works as the Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Lifespan Cognition for the Psychology department of Kwantlen Polytechnic University. He is the principal investigator for the Lifespan Cognition Lab. Dr. Bernstein earned his Bachelor of Arts at the University of California, Berkeley, Master’s at Brock University, PhD at Simon Fraser University, and did Post-Doctoral work at the University of Washington. His research interests lie in “belief and memory; developmental metacognition; hindsight bias; mild head injury; sleep and dreams.”
Dr. Diane Purvey

Dean, Arts, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Dr. Diane Purvey is the Dean of Arts at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. She is the co-editor of Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History (Detselig Press) and, with John Belshaw, the co-author of Private Grief, Public Mourning: The Rise of the Roadside Shrine in British Columbia (Anvil) as well as Vancouver Noir, 1930-1960 (Anvil). Her research interests include the history of deinstitutionalization as part of a Canada-wide project and educational leadership internationally. She is a contributor to Vancouver Confidential (Anvil). A homegrown Vancouverite, Diane attended the University of British Columbia (B.A., Ph.D.) and the University of Victoria (M.A.) and for several decades taught history in various BC colleges and universities.
Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D.

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D., works as a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist through online psychotherapy and counseling for PsyCall. He earned an M.D., Medical Doctor Diploma (2000), M.Sc., Medical Research Technology (2003), M.A., Philosophy (2012), and Ph.D., Psychopharmacology (2015).


Subsequently, Dr. Katsioulis remains a member in over 60 high IQ societies. In addition, he is the president and founder of Anadeixi Academy of Abilities Assessment and World Intelligence Network (WIN), and OLYMPIQ, HELLIQ, CIVIQ, GRIQ, QIQ, IQID, GREEK high IQ societies.

Dr. Katsioulis writes articles, novels, and quotes including screenplays – ELLHNAS.com (2008) and TI PEI (2009). Also, he contributed to the web advertisement-management of NAMANIC.com and the web development of Charing Cross Scheme in Psychiatry (2006), Charing Cross & St Mary’s Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2006), and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – School of Medicine – General Biology Laboratory (2012). He lives in Thessaloniki, Macedonia, Greece.
Rev. Dr. George V. Coyne, S.J.

Emeritus Director and President, Vatican Observatory Foundation; McDevitt Chair, Religious Philosophy, Le Moyne College

Fr. George V. Coyne, S.J., born January 19, 1933, in Baltimore, Maryland, completed his bachelor’s degree in mathematics and his licentiate in philosophy at Fordham University in 1958. He obtained his doctorate in astronomy from Georgetown University in 1962. After several decades on the faculty at the University of Arizona (UA), Coyne became Director of the Vatican Observatory (VO) in 1978. He became the founding director of the VO Foundation (VOF) in 1986. In 1980 he established the VO Research Group in Tucson, AZ. During his time as Director he founded the VO Summer Schools, which over the years have introduced more than 300 students from more than 60 countries to professional astrophysics.
J.J. Middleway

Member, Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBOD); Member, Mankind Project – (MKP UK)

JJ Middleway is a Druid member of OBOD, where he served for seventeen years as tutor/mentor. He is a Celebrant, delivering ceremonies to mark Birth, Marriage and Death (Naming, Handfasting and Parting), across the full spectrum of society. His ritual and ceremonial work encompasses marking the eight seasonal festivals of the ‘Wheel of the Year’ and is focused on a deep reverence for the Earth along with a laugh and a smile.

He developed and leads regular sessions of Enchanting the Void; a Western form of devotional chanting, geared toward the honoring and healing of the Land. He is an ‘Elder’ of several communities across UK and Europe, as well as leading singing groups and teaching extensively. His earlier claims to fame, were being born and brought up in a neighboring street to Ozzy Osbourne, of playing maracas with The Incredible String Band and of sleeping through two thirds of Jimi Hendrix’s last ever live concert.
Dr. Jonathan Wai

Research Scientist, Duke University Talent Identification Program; Visiting Researcher, Case Western Reserve University

Wai is a research scientist at the Duke University Talent Identification Program and a visiting researcher at Case Western Reserve University. He did his postdoctoral work at Duke University, holds a doctorate from Vanderbilt University, and graduated from Claremont McKenna College. He studies the development of talent and its impact on society. His interests focus on the many factors that contribute to the development of expertise in education, occupation, and innovation. Additionally, he is interested in policy and connecting his work with the larger global conversation.


His public writing has appeared in Psychology Today, Los Angeles Times, Forbes, National Review, Education Week, NPR, Quartz, Business Insider, TechCrunch, The World Economic Forum, and others where his ideas have reached millions. Wai has been profiled in Rotman Magazine, Forbes, Times Educational Supplement, and WSJ Marketwatch. His academic papers have won multiple international Mensa Awards for Research Excellence and he has served on the board of directors of the MATHCOUNTS Foundation. He lives with his wife, son, and cat.
Professor Kirsten Johnson, M.D., M.P.H.

*CEO, Humanitarian U; Program Director, Humanitarian Studies Initiative (HSI), McGill University; Assistant Faculty Member, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard University; Director, Canadian Consortium for Humanitarian Training (CCHT); Emergency Medicine Physician, McGill University; Assistant Professor, Family Medicine, McGill University; Board Member, International Humanitarian Studies Association*

Dr. Kirsten Johnson practices Emergency Medicine at McGill University’s Health Centres, Esthetic Medicine at Julien & Marin Dental Clinic and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. She is Program Director of the McGill Humanitarian Studies Initiative (HSI), Director of the Canadian Consortium for Humanitarian Training (CCHT) and President of the Humanitarian Training Initiative (HTI).

Dr. Johnson’s research has focused on genocide, child combatants, sexual gender-based violence and conflict-related mental health and psychosocial support. She is involved in humanitarian professionalization, working on the development of competencies for training, education and certification of humanitarian responders globally. In 2010, Dr. Johnson was awarded the Segal Centre’s Janusz Korczak award for her work on protecting the rights of children in conflict and the Award of Excellence for her work in global health by the College of Family Physicians of Canada. She was recognized as one of Canada’s Top 40 Under 40 in 2011.
Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S.N., R.N., M.S.N., ANP-BC (retired)

**Founder and Emeritus Chairperson, Humanist Alliance Philippines, International; Founder and Founding Chairperson, Philippine Atheists and Agnostics Society (PATAS); Creator, HAPI-SHADE (Secular Humanist Advocacy Development Education)**

Langseth is the Founder and Emeritus Chairperson to and is an avid philanthropist to HAPI (Humanist Alliance Philippines, International), the Founder and Founding Chairperson of Philippine Atheists and Agnostics Society, the Creator of HAPI-SHADE (Secular Humanist Advocacy Development Education), a pioneer in SEC-registered and non-religious societies in the Philippines, a trailblazer in promoting education and community outreach in selected areas to promote humanism and critical thinking in the Philippines, was responsible for the very first atheist convention in South East Asia in 2012 (PATAS convention in Bayview, Manila, Philippines) and HAPI international affiliations with IHEU and FBBN, and the Creator of HAPI humanist curriculum.

Langseth graduated *Cum Laude* with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of San Carlos in Cebu, Philippines, graduated from Lehman College (CUNY) in Bronx NY with a Masters in Adult Health Nursing where she wrote a thesis about Domestic Violence, graduated with a GPA 4.0 at College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale, NY and has a Post-Master’s Certificate for Adult Nurse Practitioner while also having prescriptive privileges and Board Certification.

In previous posts, she was an Adult Nurse Practitioner for UNH( United Health Group)/Evercare (1999-2015), an Adjunct Professor at Queensboro Community College (2005-2006), a Certified Emergency Room Nurse at Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY (1993-1999), a Nursing Care Coordinator/Supervisor (1990-1993), a Registered Nurse in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1985-1989), a Territorial Manager for Carlo Erba (1980-1985).

Her **personal blog** since 2009 has been against the tyranny of the Philippine government and fraudulent banking practices, which has evolved into a page to vent frustrations around non-religious activism. She as Admin for Atheist Against Pseudoscientific Nonsense since 2016, a Member of the American Humanist Association since 2011, and a Member of IHEU since 2015.

She is featured in the books *Godless Grace: How Nonbelievers Make the World Safer, Personal Paths to Humanism, From Superstition to Reason, An Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth, B.S./N., M.S./N., and No Outside Intelligence.*
Dr. Maryanne Garry is a Professor in Psychology at Victoria University, and the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research. For nearly 20 years, she has studied a puzzle of memory: how is that otherwise intelligent, rational people can remember things they never really saw, or experiences they never really had?

Professor Garry’s interests in applying science to the law predate her interest in memory research or even in psychological science. Her undergraduate degrees are in Forensic Science and Chemistry. Professor Garry received her PhD in 1993 from the University of Connecticut, and did postdoctoral research at the University of Washington under the direction of Professor Elizabeth Loftus, the world’s foremost researcher on human memory distortions.
Paul Cooijmans

Administrator, Giga Society; Administrator, The Glia Society

Paul Cooijmans founded GliaWebNews, Young and intelligent?, Order of Thoth, Giga Society, Order of Imhotep, The Glia Society, and The Grail Society. His main high-IQ societies remain Giga Society and The Glia Society. Both devoted to the high-IQ world. Giga Society remains the world’s most exclusive high-IQ society with a theoretical cutoff of one in a billion individuals. The Glia Society, founded in 1997, is a “forum for the intelligent” to “encourage and facilitate research related to high mental ability.”

Cooijmans earned credentials, two bachelor degrees, in composition and in guitar from Brabants Conservatorium. His interests lie in human “evolution, eugenics, exact sciences (theoretical physics, cosmology, artificial intelligence).” He continues administration of numerous societies, such as the aforementioned, to compose musical works for online consumption, to publish intelligence tests and associated statistics, and to write and publish on topics of interest to him.
Paul Krassner

Founder, Editor, and Contributor, The Realist

Paul Krassner published The Realist (1958-2001), but when People magazine labeled him “father of the underground press,” he immediately demanded a paternity test. And when Life magazine published a favorable article about him, the FBI sent a poison-pen letter to the editor calling Krassner “a raving, unconfined nut.” “The FBI was right,” George Carlin responded. “This man is dangerous — and funny, and necessary.” While abortion was illegal, Krassner ran an underground referral service, and as an antiwar activist, he became a co-founder of the Yippies (Youth International Party).

Krassner’s one-person show won an award from the L.A. Weekly. He received an ACLU (Upton Sinclair) Award for dedication to freedom expression. At the Cannabis Cup in Amsterdam, he was inducted into the Counterculture Hall of Fame — “my ambition,” he claims, “since I was three years old.” He won a Playboy Award for satire and a Feminist Party and in 2010 the Oakland branch of the writers’ organization PEN honored him with their Lifetime Achievement Award. “I’m very happy to receive this award,” he concluded in his acceptance speech, “and even happier that it wasn’t posthumous.”
Richard G. Rosner

*Member, The Giga Society; Member, The Mega Society*

Rick Rosner has written for *Remote Control, Crank Yankers, The Man Show, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards,* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* He has also worked as a stripper, a bouncer, a roller-skating waiter, and a nude model. In a TV commercial, Domino’s Pizza named him the World’s Smartest Man.

He was also named Best Bouncer in the Denver Area by *Westwood Magazine.* He has received eight Writer’s Guild Award and Emmy nominations and was named *2013 North American Genius of the Year* by The World Genius Registry. He lives in Los Angeles, California with his wife and daughter.
Dr. Sally Satel, M.D.

*Lecturer, Medicine, Yale University; W.H. Brady Fellow, American Enterprise Institute*

Dr. Sally Satel is a resident scholar at AEI and the staff psychiatrist at a local methadone clinic in D.C. Dr. Satel was an assistant professor of psychiatry at Yale University from 1988 to 1993 and remains a lecturer at Yale. From 1993 to 1994 she was a Robert Wood Johnson policy fellow with the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. She has written widely in academic journals on topics in psychiatry and medicine, and has published articles on cultural aspects of medicine and science in numerous magazines and journals. She has testified before Congress on veterans’ issues, mental health policy, drug courts, and health disparities.

Professor Sven van de Wetering

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Dr. Sven van de Wetering works as an Instructor for the Psychology Department of University of the Fraser Valley. Dr. van de Wetering earned his BSc in Biology at The University of British Columbia, and Bachelors of Arts, Master of Arts, and PhD in Psychology from Simon Fraser University. His research interest lies in “conservation psychology, lay conceptions of evil, relationships between personality variables and political attitudes.”
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*Instructor, Psychology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University; Associate Professor, Psychology, University of the Fraser Valley*

Dr. Wayne Podrouzek works as an Instructor for the Psychology Department of *University of the Fraser Valley* and instructor in the Psychology Department of *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*. Dr. Podrouzek earned his a Bachelor of Arts in Child Studies and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) from *Mount Saint Vincent University*, a Master of Arts from *Simon Fraser University*, and Ph.D. from *Simon Fraser University* under Dr. Bruce Whittlesea.
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Overview

*In-Sight Publishing* began fall, 2014. It publishes ebooks, for free and charge, and operates in independent and public interests rather than for private gains, and is committed to publishing, in innovative ways, ways of cultural, community, educational, moral, personal, and social value that are often deemed insufficiently profitable. It operates inside and outside of the bounds of non-profit/not-for-profit. *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* began fall, 2012. It publishes interviews, articles, and issues. It operates inside the bounds of non-profit/not-for-profit. It equates to the first independent interview-based journal in the world. All informal statuses.

Open, General Acknowledgement and Appreciation

*In-Sight Publishing* and *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* exist because of three identifiable sectors of support: academics, contributors, and readers. Therefore, all time and effort does have identifiable people, groups, and organizations. Each earned acknowledgement and appreciation for single or continuous, individual or group, contribution in the construction of *In-Sight Publishing* and *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal*. Many of them without mention of name contributed time and effort to the production of the journal. Some with provision of interviewee recommendations, connection to the interviewee, assistance in social media, social networks, and academic circles, photography or portraits, time for considered and comprehensive responses to questions, and assertive, constructive, and positive feedback too. Finally, and greatest, readers give the most support. For every person, group, and organization involved in this project, we express deepest gratitude to all types of direct or indirect assistance from every side for contributions to this initiative. Your effort, interest, and time support independent publishing purposed for the encouragement of academic freedom, creativity, diverse voices, free speech, and independent thought.

Design and Development

- Phase 1, August 1, 2012: foundation with "Independent Interview-Based Undergraduate Journal" status.
- Phase 2, January 1, 2013: production capacity increased with "Tri-Annual" status.
- Phase 3, January 1, 2014: stricture removal, both implied and actual, based on "Undergraduate" status through cessation of "Independent Interview-Based Undergraduate Journal" status and instantiation of "Independent Interview-Based Journal" status.
- Phase 4, January 1, 2014: increased presence through incorporation of social media.
- Phase 6, January 1, 2015: inclusion of footnotes and bibliographic references in full PDF issues, and Chicago/Turabian (16th Edition) and Harvard reference styles, and creation of the ebooks section for the first stages of construction of In-Sight Publishing.
- Phase 8, April 1, 2015: creation of "Academic" and "Casual" sections for ebook publications. "Academic" includes footnotes, bibliographic references, and reference styles. "Casual" does not include footnotes, bibliographic references, and reference styles.
- Phase 9, May 1, 2015: inclusion of footnotes and bibliographic references in website interview publications.
• Phase 10, July 1, 2015: incorporation of common reference styles such as American Medical Association (AMA), American Psychological Association (APA, 6th Edition, 2010), Brazilian National Standards (ABNT), Chicago/Turabian Author-Date (16th Edition), Chicago/Turabian (16th Edition), Harvard, Harvard (Australian), Modern Language Association (MLA, 7th Edition, 2009), and Vancouver/ICMJE reference styles in website interview publications in addition to one complete list of 27 reference styles (manual insertion without access dates)
• Phase 11, August 22, 2015: article website layout refinement: article title, biography, abstract, keywords, common reference style listing, article title, bibliography/references/reference list, footnotes, appendix I: complete reference style listing – if any, other appendices including tables, figures, and images, and license and copyright. Updates to Copyright, General Philosophy, In-Sight Publishing: Overview, Journal Overview: Section B, and License.
• Phase 12, September 1, 2015: previous Letter of Appreciation appreciations moved to Acknowledgements and Appreciation. Major appreciations remain in Letter of Appreciation. In addition, the refinement of interview layout on the website: interview title, interviewee image/photograph/portrait/sketch, abstract, keywords, common reference style listing, interview title, bibliography/references/reference listing, footnotes, appendix 1: complete reference style listing, and license and copyright; refinement to interviews in full issues: interview title, interviewee image/photograph/portrait/sketch, contents, abstract, keywords, common reference style listing, interview title, bibliography/references/reference listing, appendix 1: complete reference style listing – if any, other appendices including tables, figures, and images, and license and copyright. Footnotes for each page remain in their respective page. An update to ebook inside cover with respect to mandate and copyright. All informal statuses.
• Phase 13, September 22, 2015: revision to format of the online publications, introduction of appendices for photographs, transformation of bibliography/references/reference list into bibliography, removal of common reference style listing, and introduction of citation style listing in place of complete reference style listing.
• Phase 14, November 1, 2015: Amazon purchase transition with total proceeds to co-authors and In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal; EBSCO contract signed by Scott Douglas Jacobsen and EBSCO to proliferate In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal for formal institution distribution from the P.D.F. issues.
• Phase 15, January 1, 2016: EBSCO co-sign completion with over 150 entries at the time; officiation of the In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal with continued information status of In-Sight Publishing.
• Phase 16, February 1, 2016: In-Sight Publishing "academic" books have consistent "casual" counterparts; "academic" will be free on the website to encourage independent thought with footnotes and bibliographic references for personal research, and casual will be for charge with half of interview funds given to the interviewee (and the other half to In-Sight Publishing efforts towards cultural, community, educational, moral, personal, and social value); some e-books will not include the delineation between "academic" and "casual."
• Phase 17, May 1, 2016: Update and refine contents for Amazon Kindle products for In-Sight Publishing.
• Phase 18, September 18, 2016: attain and maintain 18 member Advisory Board with 1 Editor-in-Chief for the individual interview publications, free and low-cost e-books, and full journal issues.
• Phase 19, November 1, 2016: develop and implement early stages of novel venue for solo and collaborative article publications and interview publications in both academic and casual formats outside of the journal through In-Sight Publishing as hyperlinks compatible with P.D.F., Kindle, and iBooks.
• Phase 19, November 1, 2016: develop and implement early stages of novel venue for solo and collaborative article publications and interview publications in both academic and casual formats outside of the journal through In-Sight Publishing as hyperlinks compatible with P.D.F., Kindle, and iBooks.
• Phase 20, November 1, 2017: expand the range and variety of front cover options of ebooks for more aesthetic appeal.
• Phase 21, February 1, 2018: experiment with individual, unique book cover designs.
• Phase 22, March 1, 2018: continuation with the previous phase, as this worked.
• Phase 23, April 15, 2018: updates to the In-Sight Publishing In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal archives at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Interdisciplinary Center for the Scientific Study of Ethics and Morality (Ethics Center) Vaughen Archives (Bettye Vaughen): https://www.ethicscenter.uci.edu/vaughen.php.
- Phase 24, June 7, 2018: beginnings of more journals with Ghana’s 5% and In Context.
- Phase 25, June 8, 2018: beginnings of Apostasia.
- Phase 26, June 11, 2018: beginnings of Indigenous Middle East.
- Phase 27, June 12, 2018: construction of team for Ghana’s 5%.
- Phase 28, June 24, 2018: construction of team for Indigenous Middle East.
- Phase 29, June 18, 2018: beginnings of Canadian Islamic Theology Journal.
- Phase 30, September 8, 2018: start publications of Indigenous Middle East and In Context.
- Phase 31, September 13, 2018: construction of team for Canadian Islamic Theology Journal.
- Phase 32, October 21, 2018: beginnings of African Freethinker.
- Phase 33, November 1, 2018: start publications of African Freethinker and Ghana’s 5%.
- Phase 34, November 3, 2018: construction of national editorial teams for African Freethinker.
- Phase 35, December 1, 2018: add years sections in Ebooks tab.
- Phase 36, January 1, 2019: increase of the available chronologies on the website.

Near future phases will incorporate donations, paid ebooks, and ebook listings. Far future phases will develop from re-design and transformations of In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.
Journal Overview

In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal

*In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* exists as the first international independent interview-based journal. Submissions remain international and interdisciplinary for interviews, articles, and others. Individual publications throughout the year: January 1 to May 1; May 1 to September 1; September 1 to January 1, and so on. Each publication on the 1, 8, 15, and 22 of the month. Tri-annual full issue publications on “Spring,” “Summer,” and “Winter”: January 1, May 1, and September 1, respectively.

General Philosophy

Where imperatives, utility, and virtues interrelate, and where accuracy/authenticity implicates honesty, credibility implicates integrity, fairness/balance implicates justice, and news judgment implicates prudence, honesty, integrity, justice, and prudence converge on the ethical utility in the moral imperative of truth. Truth necessitates honesty, integrity, justice, and prudence. Academic freedom permits the possibility of truth; academic freedom necessitates destitution of dogma or obfuscation. An ability to question anything, pursue implications, and express these implications in spite of harbored biases and fear of backlash. All without alteration or omission to discover knowledge. *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* aims to attain academic freedom through its core interview format.

Format, Overview

*In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* formatted by subjects or ideas per issue. Each issue divides into interviews (A), submissions (B), and responses (C).

Sections ‘A’, ‘B’, and ‘C’


Subject Issues

- Interview sections contain only experts from one discipline with emphasis on a subject, e.g. “Psychology,” and so on. Submission sections contain only experts from one discipline with emphasis on a subject, e.g. “Psychology,” and so on. Contribution exceptions permitted with sufficient reason sent to the Editor-in-Chief.
Idea Issues

- Interview sections contain many experts from many disciplines with emphasis on an idea, e.g. Women in Academia, Outliers and Outsiders, and so on. Submission sections contain many experts from many disciplines with emphasis on an idea, e.g. Women in Academia, Outliers and Outsiders, and so on. Contribution exceptions permitted with sufficient reason sent to the Editor-in-Chief.

Frequency

- Individual publications throughout the year: January 1 to May 1; May 1 to September 1; September 1 to January 1, and so on. Each publication on the 1, 8, 15, and 22 of the month. Tri-annual full issues publications on “Spring,” “Summer,” and “Winter”: January 1, May 1, and September 1, respectively. Frequency dependent upon material quantity and completion dates. Multiple delayed completions will accelerate the publication rate until issue fulfillment.
Interview Guidelines (‘Section A’)

An overview of the interview process for this section. Interview submissions not accepted from external sources.

Research

- Preliminary research required for interview solicitation. If interview consent obtained from interviewee, a typical, but not absolute, minimum of one to four weeks for comprehensive research. This includes purchasing, acquiring, and processing articles, audio-visual material, books, interviews, social media material, and their respective synthesis to produce questions.

Consent

- Interviewees either provide written or verbal consent based on an interview request. Written or verbal consent relate to the interviewee having the power to deny/accept the interview, and for final decision of publication as a single interview on the website or in the full issue publication with all other issue-interviews in PDF and on the website. It remains casual in consent. See Copyright for information on ownership of publications.

Conducting

- Interview form depends on interviewee preference: email via Microsoft Word or Open Office file, in person, phone call, question set, or Skype. Most prefer question sets in email via Microsoft Word or Open Office. Most questions mix standardized and specialized formats. Standardized for consistency of journal format. Specialized for relevant-to-interview questions. All questions have design to elicit in-depth and full responses from interviewees.

Editing Stage One

- Editing consists of the interviewees original interview with minimal editing to keep the intended meaning and message of the interviewees intact, even where certain answers may contain controversial or 'politically incorrect' statements, opinions, or information.

Editing Stage Two

- Interviewer sends draft back to the interviewee to confirm the originally intended meaning and message seem sustained to the satisfaction of the interviewee. If the interviewee requires any further alterations, omissions, or edits, the interviewer repeats the cycle of edit to confirmation of accuracy of message and meaning to re-edit until the interviewee evaluates the final version of the interview as sufficiently accurate to their intended meaning and message. Any major editing consists of corrections to grammatical and/or spelling errors. This editing aims to optimize the correspondence between the interview and the interviewees intended message and meaning to the satisfaction of the interviewee.
Submission Guidelines (Section ‘B’)

Material

- Contributor status access restricted to undergraduate students, graduate students, instructors, professors, and experts. Each submission considered on appropriateness of grammar and style, comprehensiveness, coherence, and originality of content.

Scope

- Depending on the issue, the accepted submissions consists of articles, book reviews, commentaries, poetry, prose, and art.

Submission

- It must not have publication or pending publication elsewhere. For exceptions, sufficient reason should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief along with the material. For written scholarly material, it must be in 12-point font, Garamond, double-spaced, and with APA or MLA formatting. Length of material ranges from 2,000 to 7,500 words. Material should be sent to the following:
  - Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.com
Response Guidelines (Section ‘C’)

Responses to interviews (‘A’) or essays (‘B’) must have the following format:

Material
- Preferable for respondents to have experience or expertise in area relevant to interview or essay content.

Scope
- Response material should relate to current or prior issue on specific points in one essay or article.

Submission
- Responses must have the following format: APA format, Garamond, 12-point font, double-spaced, citation of interviewee and each ‘Question-and-Answer’ section of response (maximum of 5), and reference list of relevant articles, books, prior interviews, watching of video material, reading of social media material in APA. Length of material should range from 500-1,000 words; exceptions will have consideration with appropriate reasons provided to the Editor-in-Chief. Material should be sent to the following:
  - Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.com
Research Ethics

*In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* does not answer a research question. Interviews hold total control over final published responses for as accurate a representation as possible of an interviewee as possible. Hence, zero mandatory ethics board consent necessitated by its operation. Monetary detachment removes constraint by an institution or individual for published content, despite academic positions or alma maters for the Editor-in-Chief and Advisory Board. Please see *Internal and External Funding* for monetary information.

Internal and External Funding

Scott D. Jacobsen provides complete internal funding *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal*. All internal funding includes purchasing of articles, books, chapters, prior interviews, video material, social media material, and all marketing efforts of *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal*. In the case of external monetary funding, only monetary funding not restricting academic freedom for *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* will have consideration. At this time, *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* operates with internal funding from Scott Douglas Jacobsen with the addition of one website renewal donation from Richard G. Rosner.

Attachments

Attachments means constraints or restraints through functioning out of institutions or groups. For instance, an institution or group would consist of a university, an agency, a think-tank, and/or an interest group of some form. *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* functions autonomous from any institution or group. This provides total freedom of content for consistency with principles of operation for academic freedom.

Advertising Policy

All advertising for the journal exists as open-access for any individual. See ‘Open Access’ for more information.

Open Access

*In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* exists as open access for online contents, where any content *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* becomes accessible for reading or downloading to any interested individual/group.
Letter of Appreciation

*Outsiders and Outliers* continues into its fourteenth issue. I extend appreciation to the following: Dr. Adele Diamond, Ph.D., FRSC; Dr. Aubrey de Grey; Professor Azra Raza, M.D.; Professor Christina Atance; Dr. Daniel Bernstein; Dr. Diane Purvey; Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D.; Rev. Dr. George V. Coyne; J.J. Middleway; Professor Kirsten Johnson, M.D., M.P.H.; Marissa Torres Langseth; Dr. Maryanne Garry; Paul Cooijmans; Paul Krassner; Richard G. Rosner; Dr. Sally Satel, M.D.; Dr. Sven van de Wetering; Dr. Wayne Podrouzek; the previous Advisory Board members; and to the interviewees – Susan Murabana, Monika Orski, Ryan Bellerose, Dr. Christopher DiCarlo, Ani Zonneveld, Hasan Zuberi, Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner, Stacey Piercey, Katherine Bullock, Tim Moen, Madeline Weld, Catherine Broomfield, Gissou Nia, Aynsley Pescitelli, Blair T. Longley, Greg Vogel, Rahma Radaah, and Mahmood Amiry-Moghadam.

Also, I express gratitude and respect for the Athabasca University, Simon Fraser University, The University of British Columbia, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, University of California, Irvine, Fort Langley Library, and Surrey Public Library librarians. I appreciate all assistance in collaboration necessary for required sufficient comprehension of new disciplines, research, and interviewees involved in this project coinciding with improvisatory and comprehensive feedback in the past ad into the present.

Once more, thank you for the implied love to make the connection.

Scott D. Jacobsen
Editor-in-Chief, In-Sight Publishing
An Interview with Susan Murabana (Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Susan Murabana is an Astronomer and Rotarian, and Founder of the Travelling Telescope. She discusses: assistance to women and girls into the STEM disciplines; men, women, and childcare; single-parent households; Canadian society; and other topics.

Keywords: astronomer, Rotarian, Susan Murabana, Travelling Telescope.

Interview with Susan Murabana: Astronomer and Rotarian, and Founder, Travelling Telescope (Part Three)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We live in an unprecedented time by my estimation. I consider it a not well-appreciated fact that we have the best-educated population of women in human history, globally. It is acknowledged, but not as large as it should.

At the same time, depending upon the country, the culture and so on, there are certain restrictions that are put on women in terms of their ability to get an education, let alone science education, and these are fundamental human rights and women’s rights.

What are things that you observe that prevent women from getting involved in STEM, or STEAM if we involve arts, and what are ways we can help girls and women fulfill their dreams and their potential by becoming more involved?

Murabana: I think what blocks more women, especially in rural Kenya is 1) peer pressure 2) sometimes it is our parents who feel that it is more important to look after the boy than the girl and some of them feel that some careers are traditionally better for women, particularly teaching, and some are not.

So, I would say family, especially parents in shaping girls to get into science or not and the pressure. It could be from peers or it could be from society. Society has pressure towards that. Sometimes, it is also the fact that women belong to the house. Women are supposed to be in the home, traditionally.

There is pressure to settle and have family at a certain age. Friends and neighbours and aunts and uncles questioning why you’re not married at 25. I think one important thing is to have role models. I can see that even in Kenya we are getting more women as pilots, for example.

Or in IT coming up with the telescope projects and having them going back to their communities and working with girls and encouraging them that they could be in careers that they choose to be in. Science is one of the most evolving things. Nothing stays the same in it.
For me, personally, by having my son, I felt that I lost so much in terms of what I was doing in outreach in astronomy. That you must go through and it becomes difficult. Having role models, having parents who get it and encourage their kids helps.

Trying to give the girls or boys, giving them that confidence to not second guess themselves and that stems mostly from the house. The family and everything, it is important. I think that we should try when we can to have the parents involved.

Tomorrow, we’ll be going on a trip with school kids and they will have their parents with them and they will do everything with them and look through the telescope at the night sky and have that setting.

But the parents can connect to the science by looking up at the sky, having their kids see that and see them appreciate that science is important and vice versa.

2. Jacobson: As you noted, you had a supportive family yourself with 6 siblings. Having the family encourage them, having a family environment that supports that, outside of the family for girls and women, how can men get involved in that effort too?

In some context that you have described, there may be circumstances where in childcare and healthcare and home care, men do not get involved and are not expected to get involved and yet if they did, it would be a more balanced time budget and energy budget within the family.

Murabana: Yes, I think so too. Personally, I have 4 brothers and 2 sisters. As we grew up, our parents did not provide rules according to gender. My brothers could cook, and I could fix the dough [Laughing]. I love my dad. At some point, he would say, “Fix the dough.” I had big brothers who could do it.

I guess my point was having that, like the man being part of it, having fathers as role models to their daughters or allowing their daughters to explore. And brothers, it is important. It is sad to think because again I am talking about women being role models but also girls having a voice. Sometimes when you talk about girls, it is also we do not want to empower them so much that boys are left out. It could happen.

It sometimes does happen, and they get involved in other things that are destructive. It is a collective responsibility and obviously, I feel from working with schools, going to an all-girls school and doing an astronomy project at an all-boys school. That boys want to build and things like that.

It is also trying to encourage girls that they can do it if they want to. It is important in that sense. I do not think there is anything meant for any gender or only for boys. I have nieces and I think science is something for everyone.

I have also seen girls shy away and get intimidated by boys. Having confidence is so key for them to say what they want to do. Also, teachers, like getting teachers as involved as possible. We have programs. We always invite the teachers on board, we are always trying to get their opinion.

So, I feel that the people, kids, relate to it at their age and it is a culture that is normally, well confidence is built when they are young basically. The people they relate to most are obviously their parents and their siblings, but also their teachers. I guess it is difficult. How is it in Canada if I may ask?

3. Jacobsen: What I am probably thinking is because Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom are the top 5 developed countries in terms of single motherhood rate. Of the single parents, 80+ to 90+ plus percent are single mothers.

When I interviewed the president of the university, he was an interim president during the interview, and I brought that to his attention, he thought I was on to something. We probably tapped a need of single mothers signing up for online universities because it is convenient for time, which is tight being a single parent.

Two hands instead of four, one income usually lower rather than two. So, in terms of the education at the university level, there are more women than men. I do you recall there is a Stanford psychologist called Philip Zimbardo. He was known for the Stanford Prison Experiment.

Basically, he put a bunch of college students and made one group prisoners, another group security, like the guards and then he was the guy that runs the prison, the warden. It was before they had more rigorous experimental ethics in psychology.

It is a controversial study. People started believing they were prisoners and guards. There was abuse, severe abuse. Before 2 weeks were up, within a couple of days, people took on the role when they had it.

Anyway, he’s been researching young men, recently. He looked at how a lot of technological excessive use leads to decreases in boys’ and men’s educational outcomes.

In that if you’re not spending time socializing, you’re not developing the little micro, non-verbal
stuff that is required for social interaction. In addition, it takes away time from study.

By the time Jane McGonigal stated, a video game researcher stated, by the time a young man is 21, the average man has spent about 10,000 hours playing video games. The average time it takes to get a bachelor’s degree is 4,800 hours.

In that time, they could have gotten 2 bachelor’s degrees. In addition, they are losing out on socialization. What we are seeing is what you pointed about before as a hypothetical about potentially leaving out boys, there are the structural blockages.

The so-called glass ceiling for women at the high end. At the low end now, the situation is even more complicated because it is not structural. There has been no historical structure to prevent men from getting into positions of power for most of history.

What it is, is motivational, the technology, in addition to pornography, apparently, is taking away traditional motivations for boys and men to become involved in education.

So, like at my university, which is two thirds women, we are seeing a higher proportion of women than men entering education. Of course, if you move the ticker percent for women up 1, then that automatically, since there are only two variables in the scale, that takes away a percent for men.

So, every percent difference is a 2 percent difference. Where if you have 55 percent women, it is not 5 percent more; it is 10 percent difference. That can translate into millions and millions of boys and young men not doing well in school or not entering and succeeding in university.

So, it is on the low end in terms of chronological age. Boys and young men are not entering school as much, doing worse in terms of awards and GPA and are graduating at lower rates on all levels, graduate and undergraduate schools.

Women when they graduate, still tend to get lower pay and they do not tend to move up as high. The only exception to that rule is women that are single at about 30 in city centers in places like the United States, New York and Los Angeles and San Francisco and Seattle. All these kinds of places. They make 8% more than young men on average in the same situation.

So, if they do not get married and have children, they are golden. But for women who do want that, and for many men who still want those things, then they are going to be docked for that professionally. So, it is a hard question.

But the general answer, that I can tell, is that lower end chronologically, boys and young men: motivational issues. Higher end chronologically, latter years of young women and moving into middle ages, it is structural as it has been, traditionally called “patriarchal structures.”

Structures that tend to lean more towards men coming to power. It is motivational versus structural by my analysis. That’s how it seems to be. Not only Canada, but at least in developed nations in general.

Murabana: We work with university students who are doing degrees. The ratio of women, we have few girls. I think of the 10 students we are working with, only 2 are women. Yes, so, I do not know what the statistics are for getting degrees in everything, but in the sciences and astronomy; there is many more men than women.

We must carry the telescope, we must carry the heavy materials. I do not think those are the things most girls want to do. It is physical as well. We need to, and I need to encourage more girls to get into it. We do not have them. We hope by going to schools and going to these young ladies hopefully we’ll encourage more girls. We want to show them the cool stuff.

One of the things we try to stress in schools is that astronomy is the science of sciences. You have biologists, you have chemists, you have geologists, engineers, computer science, you have all these different people contributing.

That opens kids minds and they think back to it because we showed them the programs we can use. The planetarium system software system we use was developed by a computer programmer and the space company that goes to space has all these different developments and are controlled by all these different people.

Then you also talk about astrophotography and all these different elements to get the kids to see the different things. We also try to encourage the students we work with from the university to not be fixed in terms of what they can contribute, but to also think of other skills they have or other interests they have by demonstrating that.

It is a bit complicated or a bit difficult in terms of trying to create a culture of people who appreciate astronomy. It is exciting the university now has a degree, which is new. Trying to get more girls into it
is difficult, some of the students at the university are telling us how their parents did not get what they are going to study and why they were going to study it and their parents were against it. It is difficult in that sense.

We realize we have a lot of work because our outreach isn’t to school kids. It is to educate everyone. There is a huge number of different people we need to educate. At the same time, when we have events for the public, there is a lot of interest. So, many people who say they want to experience looking through the telescope. It is exciting to see.

Over the 10 years I have been involved in astronomy to see where we’ve reached and where we’ve come from as a country and as a society, I think there is so much potential. Astronomy is such a nice science because it has all these other elements. It sparks curiosity and everything, but collaborations and inventions and ideas of things like that. It makes it so cool, especially for a young mind.

Then I also do not think science is for only the young. We recently went to a rural community and invited the community to come and look through the telescope, which was during the super moon.

And the whole time, the rainmaker can look at different planets, and let’s call them stars, and it is nice to hear the stories that there is still the culture of looking up at the sky with different communities. That affects how they live and it is cool. Elderly people and that traditional knowledge is also still interesting.

4. Jacobsen: What other topics would be of interest to people? We’ve covered a lot of territory.

Murabana: Topics of interest are documented dark matter. The topics for me that I find alluring are whether we are alone and the basics like looking at Saturn and trying to understand that planet and Jupiter and Europa.

Is life only found on planets or could it be found on moons? I am finding that people watch Nat Geo or the science channel and learn so much and read so much and many young kids ask you about black holes and things like that because they read about it or have seen it and sometimes they ask about aliens somewhere. The Internet isn’t always true, so you must be careful about what you read.

Jacobsen: Critical thinking skills.

Murabana: We always get these interesting questions. It is always fun to see what they are thinking of. Topics of whether we are alone is interesting.

References


Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Astronomer; Founder, Travelling Telescope; Rotarian.

An Interview with Monika Orski (Part Two)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


Place of Publication: Langley, British Columbia, Canada

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Abstract

Monika Orski is the Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden. She discusses: books by Orski and their contents; the reason for the topics in the texts; membership of Mensa Sweden; demographics; Mensa groups associated with Mensa Sweden; provisions of Mensa Sweden for its members; average standard deviation IQ score of the membership; the relationship between Mensa at 2-sigma and other high-IQ groups at 3-sigma and 4-sigma; the identification, education, and utilization of the young gifted and talented population; programs in the advanced industrial economies; some informal education and practical
life skills the gifted and talent should acquire if they wish to pursue a life in writing; and some prominent cases of when a known highly gifted person went wrong, e.g. antisocial, violent, and so on.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What have been the books written by you? What topics tend to be the focus for you?

Monika Orski: In this area, I am a typical mensan, in that my activity is diverse. This far I have published three books, each of them very different from the others.

My first book, in 2007, is an introduction to open source software. There was no such book in Swedish, and I saw a need for it, as part of my computer systems related consulting work.

The second book, in 2011, is a young adults novel. It tells a story of friendship, incipient romantic interests, and mental illness. When it was published, I often got the question whether it’s autobiographic. It is not.

The third and most recent book is a collection of short stories, published in 2017 but written over many years. The short stories are partially intertwined, with most of the main characters part of a Jewish family in Stockholm, Warsaw and Jerusalem. Again, I often get the question if it’s autobiographic. It is not, but of course I have used settings I am familiar with, and in part processed stories I have heard.

If things turn out according to plan, there will be a fourth book published next year, 2019. This time around I go back to nonfiction, for a book on leadership of the highly gifted, largely based on my Mensa experience.

2. Jacobsen: Also, why those topics for the texts?

Orski: Well, they are all topics that interest me. I always write something or other. Some texts reach publication, others do not. Writing is a hobby I find rewarding in itself, even when it does not produce tangible results.

I also look to what is currently topical in Swedish literature, as for the young adults book, and of course to what I know about, as in the nonfiction. All in all, there are many factors shaping the choice of topics, and I am aware that I am probably unaware of half of them. Like most writers, I would presume.

3. Jacobsen: Let us talk about the different functions and facets of Mensa Sweden: how many members?

Orski: Around 7,000 members, and the number increases every year. With Sweden’s circa 10 million population, we are the national Mensa with the highest number of members per million inhabitants, which we are very proud of.

I also find it noteworthy that the only other national Mensa at a similar level of members per million is Mensa Finland. Since many years, we have a friendly competition with our neighbours for this first place. There are larger national groups, of course, but no other is even near the same numbers per million.

4. Jacobsen: What demographics remain a part of Mensa Sweden?

Orski: Well, we do not really keep statistics of demographics regarding anything but age and gender. The average age of Swedish mensans is 36. We have around 25 % women, 74% men, 1% others / unknown gender.

As a side note, the success rate of candidates who take the admission test is slightly higher for women than for men. Not a large difference, but visible. Thus, if we could only persuade as many women as men to take the admission test, the gender balance would even out with time.

5. Jacobsen: What other Mensa groups frequently associated with Mensa Sweden?

Orski: All the national Mensa groups, currently around 50 of them, are associated under the realm of Mensa International. But there are also regional cooperations, and we are very happy about the close cooperation we have between the Nordics, i.e. the national Mensas of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

6. Jacobsen: What does Mensa Sweden provide for its members?

Orski: Mensa is member-driven, and almost all work within the organization is done by volunteers. This means the most important service we provide are ways to meet other members, and decide what to do together. There are local meetings spread around Sweden, organized by members who simply
announce a pub meeting, or book a lecturer and a room for the lecture, etc.

There are, of course, larger meetings organized by groups of volunteers and supervised by elected Mensa officers on the board. There is also a magazine published 8 times a year, by volunteer editors and with contributions from members.

Then there is the opportunity to help out as a volunteer in the Gifted Children Program I mentioned before, and many members see this as a key function. It is a very tangible way to contribute to one of the three stated purposes of Mensa: to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity, to encourage research in the nature, characteristics and uses of intelligence, and to promote stimulating intellectual and social opportunities for its members.

8. Jacobsen: What is the average standard deviation IQ score of the members?

Orski: The criteria to join Mensa is the same all over the world, to score among the highest 2% on a supervised intelligence test.

We prefer the use of percentile to IQ scores. To still answer the question about scores: Intelligence is normally distributed. Assuming a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15, a passing Mensa score is 131 or above.

9. Jacobsen: What is the relationship between Mensa at 2-sigma and other high-IQ groups at 3-sigma and 4-sigma?

Orski: In short, none. Mensa is by far the most well-established high-IQ group, and has no direct relationship to any other group.

Of course, there are members who also join other groups, like Intertel (1%) or Triple Nine (0.1%) or ISPE (0.1%). In my experience, those who do usually stay in Mensa too, and are more likely to continue their Mensa membership than members of any of the others.

10. Jacobsen: There seems to be a widespread loss of the gifted and talent for the benefit of society and the fulfillment and meaning, in their own lives. How would you recommend Sweden move forward in the identification, education, and utilization of the young gifted and talented population?

Orski: I’m not at all sure there is such a widespread loss. Of course, most of the gifted people I come across are members of Mensa, which means they are in the relatively small group that wants to join a high-IQ society. Among them, far from everyone has any sort of visibly intellectual career, but that doesn’t imply they cannot be happy with their life and benefit society.

That said, I still think that much can be gained if gifted children are identified and given an education proper to their needs. If schools learn to identify them early, they can be taught in slightly different ways, to cater to their intellectual conditions and needs. Most important, they should not be held back. It can make a significant difference just to allow a child to sit quietly and read about something s/he is interested in, instead of having to explicitly wait for their classmates to accomplish a task they themselves were able to do in a few minutes. Not only does it let them do something meaningful, it also gives them a feeling of being rewarded for having done the standard tasks, instead of being punished for completing them faster than others.

11. Jacobsen: What programs exist in advanced industrial economies for the gifted and talented that could easily be implemented in Sweden?

Orski: There are probably many good programs I am not aware of. Then, every educational system has its problems. However, I think the schooling systems of France and Finland would probably be interesting to look to for hints, as both tend to produce good results.

12. Jacobsen: What gifted and talented programs would take the longest to establish in Sweden but would have the greatest long-term impact on the intellectual flourishing of the country?

Orski: In my view, the greatest long-term positive impact would be produced by a shift of focus in university education. Today, it is mostly about training students for specific professions. We have university education for teachers, psychologists, engineers etc – but to gain a broad education that spans over several subjects is hard, not in terms of the actual learning process but in terms of being able to put such an education together. The system is designed to streamline student throughput, not to let them explore several possible talents.

Gifted young people should be able to combine subjects more easily. If they are allowed to find new combinations, and follow their usual multiple talents, some of them will be eminent in fields that do not even exist yet. But that takes a shift in education as a whole, and especially a shift that would allow university students to still pursue a specific field, but also let them create new combinations for learning.

Also, there remains the basic imperative never to punish gifted youth for being gifted. It is not as easy as it sounds, as every educational system has to be
mostly adapted for the average, for practical reasons. However, I think much can be accomplished by the general approach that no one should be held back.

13. Jacobsen: What are some informal education and practical life skills the gifted and talent should acquire if they wish to pursue a life in writing?

I will start with the things everyone who wants to pursue a life in writing should do: Read, read, write, read, write and then read some more. You need to be truly rooted in your language, you need to know about other literature in your field, and you also need to read classics to be able to relate to current writing, including your own. If you do not enjoy reading, writing is not the path for you. Also, writing is a craft. It takes practice.

The next thing is, remember that very few writers can actually live off their writing. This is especially true for all of us who work in small linguistic regions.

Here, the gifted usually have an advantage. Most highly gifted people have multiple talents, and thus it is easier to pursue a “daytime job”, or another parallel career, as well as being a writer.

Another important practical thing is to find peers to exchange text analysis. Find other writers at about your own level, and form a group that will share text and help each other by criticism. It is important that you should not be in the habit of praise each other’s texts, but actually criticize. That is the way to learn, and also learn to pay more attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the text before you. This group should, ideally, contain writers from different walks of life and with different intellectual skills.

14. Jacobsen: What are some prominent cases of when a known highly gifted person went wrong, e.g. antisocial, violent, and so on?

Orski: My Internet search is no better than that of anybody else... It has been widely published that the “Unabomber” Ted Kaczynski is probably highly gifted. The same things are said about another terrorist, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Of course, I have no way to corroborate these claims.

High intelligence is no guarantee against mental illness. Neither is it a guarantee for high morals. Unfortunately, there is no sign that the highly intelligent don’t go wrong about as often – or as seldom – as those of average intelligence.

References


Appendix 1: Footnotes


An Interview with Susan Murabana (Part Four)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Susan Murabana is an Astronomer and Rotarian, and Founder of the Travelling Telescope. She discusses: Galileo Galilei and Copernicus; dark matter and dark energy; the most common question from children for the Travelling Telescope; critical thinking for the young; Kenyan sociocultural barriers to the education of science; science’s epistemology; the privileged place of religion in Kenya; a unified front for science education in Africa; The Clergy Project; and United Church of Canada, and religious parents and children.

Keywords: astronomer, Rotarian, Susan Murabana, Travelling Telescope.

Interview with Susan Murabana: Astronomer and Rotarian, and Founder, Travelling Telescope (Part Four)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You mentioned Galileo Galilei as a personal hero to you. He has that famous phrase E pur si muove – “it still moves,” after his being imprisoned in his household even after they showed the people trying him the telescope and showing them… Was it Saturn’s moons? Or Jupiter’s moons?

There are other examples of that. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake partly for positing many other galaxies and stars and planets, but also because he rejected the Trinity and the Church was not too hot on that. Also, who was the geocentricism to heliocentrism?

Susan Murabana: Copernicus.

Jacobsen: Copernicus, I think it was in Copernicus’ texts; I think in his acknowledgments he had Aristophanes who had posited a long time ago, but did not necessarily have the scientific backing for the laws. So, we have this trend of considered basic facts that aren’t with further or future scientific discovery.

So, we go from as you noted early in the interview, from a geocentric or Earth-centric view to an helio-centered or sun-centered view of “the universe.” Then we go from a solar system to a galaxy that has 100, 200 million stars and then that many galaxies.

What is another idea that is widely accepted now that you think might go the way of geocentricism or things of that nature?

Murabana: Wow, I do not know what to say but to talk about, it is one of my good examples, the fact that we have the atom smasher and stuff like that. We thought the solar system was this big then we realized we belong to this galaxy. We are not even at the centre of the galaxy and there are many galaxies and billions of stars.
Now, maybe, there are more than one universe and stuff like that. I do not know how to answer your question. I would have to think about it.

2. Jacobsen: There is the big question about the nature of 96% of the universe, by which I mean dark matter and dark energy. What are they? Why are they hard to both detect and categorize in relevance to the other 4%? What we are made of, the ordinary matter that we are made of.

Murabana: The stuff we know and can account for and there is some we do not know. Let me think about it a bit longer.

3. Jacobsen: What is the most common question that children give to the Travelling Telescope team?

Murabana: At some point, the most common question is why Pluto is not a planet anymore.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] oh no.

Murabana: Obviously, with New Horizons, it is interesting to talk to them about it because there is a lot being discovered. What other question do they like asking? Yes, I think that’s one of the most common questions that comes across, about Pluto. I told you we do a song with the kids and we almost did a Pluto song. I think we came up with the lyrics for the song.

I feel like young kids identify with Pluto because Pluto is the smallest or was the smallest planet in our solar system until we reclassified it as a dwarf planet. That’s part of the reason they ask the question. Another question that comes up a lot is what a black hole is. That is another common question we get. I am sure there are others, but I cannot think of them right now.

Another question they ask is, “Have you ever been to space?” [Laughing] People confuse astronomy and astrology a lot. It feels like we’ve gone to schools and sometimes we are introduced as astrologists and we must explain to them what astrology is and that it is not astronomy. The most common I think I can remember is black holes, but one of the most common is why Pluto is no longer a planet. Why it was declassified?

4. Jacobsen: Your example of being assumed astrologers when you’re coming in as astronomers, recalls for me critical tinkling. It would be akin to inviting the “Travelling Chemistry,” let’s say, and then going to the classroom and being introduced as alchemists [Laughing].

In that sense, what is the importance of critical thinking especially at a young age?

Murabana: That’s a good question. I think it is important at a young age because the whole idea of trying to think and use the scientific approach as a way of getting solutions. Questioning and then experimenting and then deducing, coming up with a result. I think critical thinking is important at a young age.

5. Jacobsen: Within Kenya, what are some sociocultural barriers to the education of science? I am not sure if I asked that question already, but I think that’s important.

Murabana: Religion prevents it in my opinion. I feel that sometimes, a person’s economic status. Another thing is to try to encourage experiments with readily available materials. But sometimes, I get the feeling that because people belong in a certain area or kids are in a certain area feel they cannot do certain experiments because they do not have access to money or resources to get different materials. That influences it.

Another thing is knowledge. I do not know how to put it. Some are not quite used to computers. They shy off from that. They wouldn’t use computers because they do not feel confident. So, some activities we do are computer based. We could get rejection from certain groups of people because they do not feel confident.

With their teachers, we’ve gotten good reception. In some cases, we find it difficult. One of the most common questions for teachers is where we place the creation theory when we talk about it.

It is like religion, not science. Sometimes it happens.

6. Jacobsen: In a way, it seems to come down to me to a different epistemology, a different way of knowing in other words. A supernaturalistic epistemology looks for things unseen. Science comes from natural philosophy, by which I mean science as a proper branch of philosophy, based in looking for natural causes through natural means.

Therefore, naturalism, naturalistic epistemology, which is science, will come up with natural answers and if you’re dealing with different epistemologies, you’ll come up with different answers. It happens that we live in the natural world insofar as that’s what natural science teaches us.

So, we come up with evolutionary theory, the table of elements, continental drift, plate tectonics, the big bang, and so on, rather than the world is
6,000-to-10,000-years-old based on Bishop James Ussher counting all the ages in the Bible. I can see that.

Murabana: Kenya is a religious society. A good number of Kenyans are either Muslims or Christians. Religion is a big thing in school as well. Most schools either push a lot of Christianity or Islam, so we do not want to go there and make the school feel that we are disrespectful of their beliefs. It is normally an uncomfortable situation, especially if the teacher is asking about the creation stories in the presence of kids.

It is a whole different topic, I guess. Sometimes, I feel an instance of social culture or obviously the other cultural interests. I cannot think of that right now. Some teachers are good in the sense that culturally, they collected traditional sky knowledge from the older generations and sometimes you get kids that are trying to go back to their parents or grandparents to try and collect traditional sky knowledge.

I guess to feel that connection of us with the sky. Maybe one day, we’ll get some scientific knowledge or scientific proof from what was traditionally done in connection to the sky. It is exciting.

7. Jacobsen: Based on what you’re saying, my interpretation, and I want you to correct me if I am wrong please, is in Kenya religion does have a privileged place.

If I am understanding you correctly, within Kenya, and within other countries, of course, religion has a privileged place in that the religious practitioners and teachers can give that education to kids based in a specific religious belief system whereas those that have an irreligious system of operating in the world, cannot. That, therefore, means a double standard.

Murabana: I feel that it is complicated in my view because they do learn science and that’s more education. We have an astronomer talking about the big bang theory and things like that and he lied to the classroom and that’s it. When you try to question it, all the other things come in and one of the main influences is religion.

I do not know if it is still taught in the classroom, but they still learn about astronomy and things like that. Teachers try to be as correct as possible and they are open to the Travelling Telescope team or when other experts come on board.

But sometimes religion and the creation theory come into play because these are two different theories trying to explain how we came into existence.

Especially if we talk about how the Sun has existed all this time, or the Sun is a star and will grow old and die eventually. Things like that as part of questions about the creation theory and things like that.

It is interesting because as you say, science is about things that have been proven or are consistent. Religion is more personal, and it is hard to try and have arguments when it is on a personal level. Kenya is a religious country in the sense you have huge Christian and Muslim communities.

Some of the schools are built from funding from the Church or the Muslim community. We go to these schools and teach these kids and it is gone most of the time. We feel we’ve left an impact. On one or two occasions, we get those questions.

8. Jacobsen: Is there an overarching organization to unite either regions of the continent of Africa or all of them together? Are there associations among organizations? So, a collective?

Your own organization or others that come together to teach astronomy, science, all these things under one banner to make operations more effective and coherent across a larger range of activities and places?

Murabana: Africa now, we have the Office of Astronomy for Development, which is an international astronomy community office. The key thing is to do outreach everywhere in the world, but it is being helpful in Africa. We have that office based in South Africa and there are regional offices. One is in East Africa, one in West Africa, one in Southern Africa, and I do not know if there is one in North Africa but that’s the biggest body, which is such a huge resource for everyone.

I know quite several people across Africa who are doing outreach in astronomy using different organizations, but we are all able to meet or connect through the Office of Astronomy for Development. There are other organizations like Astronomer’s without Borders or Global Hands (?) and the Universe Awareness which are mostly global.

There is an African Astronomical Society which was created to connect astronomers across the continent. It is also difficult the do cross Africa. Movement from West Africa to East Africa is expensive, so coordinating our meetings for everyone is normally difficult. It hasn’t quite survived.

They also have the East African Astronomical Society, which has meetings almost every year. So, there are many different bodies. We all seem to communicate. This year, we went to Tanzania for an
annual eclipse. We traveled there to try and do outreach, but we were able to meet up with the astronomers there. The outreach people from Universe Awareness. We joined them and we were a big group. Having that connection is good globally, but especially within Africa.

Jacobsen: I think we have covered everything [Laughing]. I do not know if I have any other questions.

Murabana: Cool. It has been interesting talking to you.

Jacobsen: Thank you.

Murabana: I do not have all the answers and I probably drifted away but it is interesting, and you made me think about certain things differently or probably try to go back and think about certain things. It is being an interesting interview and I enjoyed it.

9. Jacobsen: Thank you much I appreciate that. It is mutual. There are other topics that come to mind. I want to be mindful of your time. There is a philosopher in the United States called Daniel Dennett from Tufts University.

He and this one woman got together. And they did this research project, and called it The Clergy Project. I was talking to her on the phone because she wanted to say, “Hi,” before we did the interview.

Basically, they have these ministers and pastors and priests and so on, who are still giving sermons and they do not believe anymore. They haven’t believed in a long time, but they are still giving sermons.

Murabana: There are some priests who do not believe in it anymore?

Jacobsen: They are atheists. Some of them.


Jacobsen: One person did come out and, as you might predict, social and professional suicide. They lost everything. They were fired the day after. Their family. They did not talk to them, nothing. They lost everything, by coming out.

Murabana: Why?

Jacobsen: Because they came out as atheists.

Murabana: They said they were atheists and that was it?

Jacobsen: That was it. The person who said it confided in a colleague and that colleague told the higher-ups in the Church system.

Murabana: Is that in the US or…?

10. Jacobsen: …That was in the US, but I have talked to another woman. I did not know this. So, Toronto and Vancouver are the big cities in Canada. I am in Vancouver.

I was reading the Globe and Mail or the Toronto Star, and there is an article about the United Church of Canada, which is a liberal church. Probably the most liberal church, like almost nothing is literal in the text when reading it. It is more often about metaphor and life lessons through parable, tale, metaphor, analogy, and narratives.

Basically, going back to original Gospel readings, preaching love and forgiveness and neighborliness, not so bad, a proactive Golden Rule. Basically, you’re reading a text by John Stuart Mill.

This woman whose name is Minister Gretta Vosper. She came out as, I think, it was a deist and then came out as non-supernaturalistic, non-theist, and then recently she came out as an atheist.

Her congregation was totally cool with it. They did not care. But after that, recently in September the United Church of Canada has set up a review board based on complaints, not from the congregation, but from the higher ups that they have an atheist in their ranks. Who wouldn’t thunk?

Basically, people have an issue with it. So, I talked to her in the middle of it and she is under a lot of pressure. She is part of that same Clergy Project. She is one of the few that are open. The others know that if they leave that, they lose everything.

In a lot of cases, that’s why I was bringing up the questions about religion having a privileged place because they have full access to kids. Richard Dawkins made this point where he compared it by analogy to the 60s and 70s women’s rights movement in the United States where it was consciousness raising, especially for men – changing the terminology.

Not “mankind” but “humankind,” things like that. One that he pointed out was by example. His example, and I am paraphrasing, is you look at a picture and see three children. In the newspaper, it will say, here is Mark, Taylor, and Tyler. Mark
the Muslim child, Taylor the Christian child, and Tyler the Jewish child.

No one has any problem with that. Then he says, “Okay, let’s see if we do the same thing as with religion but we do it politically.” Same children, same picture, but here are 3 children Mark, Taylor, and Tyler.

Mark the Libertarian child, Taylor the Republican child, and Tyler Keynesian child, and it immediately becomes funny because children, for the most part, are too young to have read and considered a serious economic theory to have a standardized position on what economic theory works best.

Yet, we assume a child by being born in a household, a parent, usually a male head of the household – that’s how these things work generally – or both parents, to be the religion of the parents. I would apply this to irreligion as well: that, therefore, those children have those beliefs as well.

It would be akin to parents having a political view and then the children having that view. In Canada, we have that same thing where we have free access in providing the parents’ beliefs to the children.

You do not have a Christian, Muslim, or Jewish child. You have Christian, Muslim, or Jewish parents with a child or children with Jewish, Christian, or Muslim parents. That was a big consciousness raising moment for me. I think for others in a lot of cases too.

Murabana: That’s interesting.

Jacobsen: You mentioned heroes. We’ve talked about most things under or about the Sun. The only other things I’d probably ask are: who is a favourite philosopher? Do you have any recommended books? Those would probably be the last two.


I think Neil deGrasse Tyson and the remake of Cosmos is also good. When we show kids in schools, it is well done. He’s a good communicator. It is graphic in that sense. Every time I have an interview. I am asked a favourite something. I am not that person who has a favourite colour, favourite this, favourite that. I need to work on that.

Jacobsen: Thank you much for your time, I appreciate the interview.

Murabana: Thank you so much, I know it is been several emails and checking and everything. It is good, getting interviewed by someone in Canada. Thank you for the persistence and for giving me an audience.

Jacobsen: You’re welcome.

Murabana: So, have a good day.

11. Jacobsen: Okay, thank you much for your time, I appreciate all the good work.

Murabana: Thanks, bye, bye.

Jacobsen: Bye.

References


Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Astronomer; Founder, Travelling Telescope; Rotarian.

An Interview with Monika Orski (Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Place of Publication: Langley, British Columbia, Canada
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Abstract

Monika Orski is the Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden. She discusses: collaboration with other Mensa chapters; other chapters helpful in the development of Mensa Sweden; the trend towards streamlined education; sex differences and similarities in general intelligence; signifiers of giftedness; typical means by which the gifted are punished; the unprecedented flourishing of women; pitfalls and difficulties in a life of writing; and some of the activities, memorable dialogues, and decisions made through the EMAG.

Keywords: chairman, Mensa Sverige, Mensa Sweden, Monika Orski, Ordförande.
An Interview with Monika Orski: Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden (Part Three)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How does collaboration work with the other Mensa chapters? What have been some of the collaborative projects worked on together?

Monika Orski: There is formal cooperation, to shape the rules that make Mensa chapters around the world all stay part of the federation. Then there is informal and semi-formal cooperation, mostly to create opportunities for members to meet.

Within Europe, there is a semi-formal cooperation around an annual common meeting, known as EMAG (European Mensa Annual Gathering). Formally, it is hosted by a different Mensa each year, but previous and future organizers cooperate closely for every event. I have attended every one since the start in 2008, and they have all been great fun. Also, I was the coordinator when we did one in Stockholm, in 2012.

Within the Nordics, we have a more recent common annual meeting, known as the Floating Mensans, as it is always a cruise between two of the countries. We have done two this far, had good success, and expect this meeting type to continue. We also cooperate to try and help create Mensa groups in neighbouring countries where Mensa is not yet present. In addition, I think all Nordic chairs are very happy about an annual chairs’ meeting, when we exchange experiences and best practices and offer each other support when needed.

2. Jacobsen: How have the other chapters been helpful in the development of Mensa Sweden?

Orski: The very first Mensa group in Sweden was founded in 1964 by a member of American Mensa, Jay Albrecht, who lived in Stockholm for a few years. Without that seed, who knows if we would have the thriving national group of today.

Then, there is always an exchange of ideas. For example, when Mensa Sweden had a large revision of our bylaws around 15 years ago, we got many good ideas from Mensa Norway, who had done a similar revision about a year earlier, but we also picked up some ideas from Mensa Hungary. More recently, we have been able to use experiences from Czech Mensa in discussions about paper publishing or e-publishing of our Mensa magazine, seen some interesting ideas from Australian Mensa regarding young members, etc. We are all part of an international organization, and that is among the key strengths of Mensa.

3. Jacobsen: Some individuals work to reduce the diversity of the possible programs for an individual student’s training. Some recent news items arose in the feed for me. With respect to the training and education earned in various disciplines including the typically higher-prestige and higher-paying jobs mentioned by you, what might shift the emphasis from the siloed education typified in some modern post-secondary education – for a teacher, a psychologist, or an engineer, and so on – to a broader base? An education for someone with the more plural, life-long intellectual interests rather than the singular professional ones.

Orski: There seems to be a continued development towards more streamlined, and siloed, education. My guess is that it’s mostly driven by short-term economic reasons, but it can also be perceived as making it easier to find the right education for a student with a purpose to pursue a specific profession. It would certainly not be easy to shift the other way, into a broader base.

One step towards such a broader base would be to allow students to start out with two, or even three, parallel courses from start. Let the multi-talented, and the multi-curious, try out several paths without a clear-cut switch between them. Then, let them continue – one path or several – and add more learning, some of which can be from entirely different disciplines.

While I think the general tracks for education into specific jobs also needs to remain there for those who know that one of those tracks is what they want, it should also be made easy to put together the required parts of such a track from the multi-course track, for those who start out there and then want to be qualified for a certain profession. Even within the specific job educational tracks, there should be room for, and time for, the possibility to also take some courses in other disciplines.

Not an easy change, of course. But in the long run, it would benefit all students.

4. Jacobsen: In personal and experience and knowing the data better than me, what differences exist between girls and boys, men and women, with respect to general intelligence? What similarities exist between them too? Do these considerations influence the provisions of Mensa Sweden?
Orski: In short, as far as we know there are no such differences. At least, I have not heard of any serious research that showed such differences and could be repeated.

There are many theories regarding this topic, usually spread along with claims of "natural differences" that any quick examination will disprove as things that have differed over time and differ between cultures. These assertions are usually made by people with a clear political agenda, and do not merit anything but the quick examination that disproves them.

As far as I know, there has actually been one scientific study that showed a small difference between men and women regarding the spread of intelligence. According to this study, while the average intelligence of men and women is the same, there is a small but measurable predominance of men in the extremes of intelligence – very low intelligence as well as very high. However, the study has been criticized for not having enough subjects at these extremes to be statistically significant, and no one has yet been able to recreate the results.

As I mentioned before, we do see a small but clear difference among those who take our admission test, in that women are more likely to "pass", i.e. score among the top 2%. But there is absolutely no proof that this shows a general difference in intelligence. After all, only a very small portion of the population take our test, and among those who do there are many more men than women. It seems probable the difference in "pass" percentage simply exposes a difference in how sure of their own high intelligence women and men need to be to go take the test.

5. Jacobsen: If someone is a layperson and has an inkling someone in their life is gifted, what non-professional observational clue would indicate the various levels of the giftedness of this person in their life? The signifiers, maybe not universal but probably indicative, of the person being gifted, highly gifted, even profoundly and exceptionally gifted.

Orski: The highly gifted usually display some combination of the following traits: thinks fast, asks many questions, quickly infers more information from what they are told, has many ideas, has multiple interests, has more than one profession, likes in-depth discussions, likes to learn new things, has a well-developed sense of humour, learns easily. Many are also high achievers, and set extremely high standards for themselves. Sometimes impossibly high standards, that they would not dream of setting for anyone else.

In children, you can add that they are usually early in many things. Read early, pass intellectual milestones early, develop an interest in world events and adult conversations early. They also tend to be easily bored, and can have some trouble in interactions with other children. Regardless of whether they find other children they like to spend time with, they also tend to like solitary activities.

None of those traits are universal, of course. But if you see several of them in someone, they are likely to be highly gifted.

6. Jacobsen: Regarding punitive educational philosophies and methodologies, what seems like the more typical forms of punishing the gifted for being gifted?

Orski: Holding them back, is my short answer. I know many stories of young children who, when they showed their teachers they had done all the exercises in their textbook, were told to "do them over again". As if there could be nothing more for them to learn. And of course, they often get explicitly told to hold back, and try and adjust to the average pace of their classmates.

7. Jacobsen: We watch the unique flourishing of women in most areas of education, especially in undergraduate education in the developed nations. Girls and young women continue to opt into the world of education. Boys and young men seem to opt out more now. Girls and young women had various ceilings imposed on them for a long time, especially in the world of education. Boys and young men did not have the ceilings. Now, though, they seem to have the problem of a motivational ceiling – of sorts – imposed on themselves. Why the gap in education attendance, completion, and performance between girls and boys, and young women and young men?

Orski: I doubt that anyone really has a good answer to this question. As you say, there seems to be sort of motivational ceiling, or motivational deficit. Formal education is considered less important, partially as an effect of the growing importance within our whole society of personal characteristics and certain sets of social skills, at the expense of knowledge. And areas considered less important are usually left to women.

We also need to remember that the exact same behaviour will be assessed differently, depending on whether the person doing it is male or female. We all learn this so early, it is almost impossible to fully counteract it in our own reactions, even when we are aware of it. For some reason, judgements of boys not making an effort to take in the education they are
offered seem to be much more tolerant than they are of girls with the same behaviour.

Many boys and young men seem to expect to get good jobs and incomes without having to make any sort of effort. There is such a tendency among some girls and young women too, but it is much less common. At the other end of the spectrum, I more boys seem to give up early, and expect nothing more than to gain a kind of respect from their peers by the ability to use their fists, or at worst, the ability to procure and use weapons. But as to why this is so? I have no answer.

8. Jacobsen: What are the pitfalls and main difficulties of a life in writing?

Orski: The first difficulty is to actually sit down and write the text. I have met many persons who say "I would like to write a book", but what they really mean is "I would like to have written a book". Most of them never even try, of course. I guess someone with very strong character and determination could write a book only driven by the wish to have written it, but most of us need to like the writing itself to do it.

To like writing means to like hours by yourself with your text. There are sometimes good hours of progress, but sometimes also very slow hours when things simply will not work out, until you tried tens of different ways to put your words down. The ensuing frustration and criticism of your own work go with the territory.

Then, there is the obvious difficulty of having it published and, most crucially, read. Today, self-publication is easy, but to get readers without a publishing house to help is very difficult. I would strongly recommend to try and get the help of old-fashioned publishing house publication. Even then, as I mentioned before, only a few writers can make a living out of their writing, especially if you work within a small linguistic region.

9. Jacobsen: What have been some of the activities and memorable dialogues and decisions made through the EMAG?

Orski: Over the years, there have been workshops on improv theatre, math, dancing, geocaching, Wikipedia, singing, martial arts, meditation, creative writing and many other topics. Among the lectures, the topics range from business to science and from art to language studies. To mention a few, this year in Belgrade in August, I heard very good lectures on Behavioural Economics and on Nikola Tesla. I also gave a lecture this year, on leading intelligent people, with a bias towards the challenges and joys of leading Mensa volunteers.

There is also a tourist program every year, a great opportunity to see a town you might not have visited otherwise. But the most important part are the mensans, old friends you see every year and new ones you meet for the first time. I have had very interesting conversations on climate change, EU politics, complex computer systems, health issues, data protection, dating life, education of gifted children, midnight sun, and how to mix a drink – just to mention a few from this year.

References


Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Ryan Bellerose (Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Ryan Bellerose is a Métis Activist and Writer from Northern Alberta, and a Co-Founder of Calgary United with Israel (CUWI). He discusses: family background; personal heritage; the Israel-Palestine issue; myths around Indigenous land rights; status of some treaties; Metis and non-Indigenous populations working together; and land rights issues between Israel-Palestine and Indigenous-and-non-Indigenous Canada.

Keywords: activist, Calgary, Israel, Métis, Northern Alberta, Ryan Bellerose, writer.

An Interview with Ryan Bellerose (Part One): Métis Activist; Writer; Co-Founder, Calgary United with Israel (CUWI) [1] [2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is family background regarding geography, language, culture, and religion/irreligion?

Ryan Bellerose: My family is Metis, we have our roots in the Red River area in Manitoba, just south of modern-day Winnipeg. We were forced to move west after the northwest rebellion to an area in what is now St. Albert, but were again forced to move north to what is now the Fort Vermillion area and the Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement in Northern Alberta.

We spoke mainly Cree and Michif and were mainly Roman Catholic with a mix of traditional Cree spirituality. My family was mostly pretty atheist as my Father and some of his brothers and sisters were in residential schools and had a strong dislike of organised religion because of that.

I grew up Catholic because my mother was a child of white settlers who farmed in the Rocky lane area and were French and Norwegian stock. They were very religious people. I left Catholicism after travelling to Israel a few years ago and realizing that if I am trying to advocate for a cultural resurgence, I needed to follow my own path.

My Family was very traditional on both sides, I grew up hunting and fishing, and my father moved to a very remote place when I was a small child, so I spent half the year with him in the bush and half with my mother in town and eventually the city where she attended university. This gave me a firm grasp on what life was like on both sides of the Indigenous issue.

2. Jacobsen: How does a personal Metis heritage provide a foundation for knowledge about Indigenous rights issues, especially land claim issues?

Bellerose: It does not, without a strong family knowledge, and a personal desire to know and understand the Indigenous struggle, there is no real foundation. many Indigenous people are so involved in the day to day struggle to survive that they do not have a very good knowledge base let alone a strong grasp on the macro struggle for Indigenous rights.
That is why we have so many people who say things that are counterproductive but feel good. Instead of being focused on fixing the issues in our communities many have bought into the perpetual victimhood narrative of the left and rather than working on bringing everyone up, to a baseline, want to drag others down to create another lower bar.

3. Jacobsen: The Israel-Palestine issue continues to fan flames, not only between the two countries’ citizens but also internationally for a variety of reasons. What seems to make the most sense of the land claims issues from an Indigenous rights perspective? Why does this seem the most evidenced and substantive as a case? How does this argument relate to the Canadian context with Indigenous land claims?

Bellerose: It’s actually a very simple issue at the core, either you believe that Indigenous people have the right to live in peace and worship the Creator in their own manner, speak their own language, and manifest their own cultural identity on their ancestral lands, with access to their sacred places and self-determination, or you do not.

If you support those things and you are a reader of history and understand the indicators of indigeneity, you support the Jewish people who are Indigenous to that specific land. This does not mean they have the right to forcibly remove anyone and they have not, but it does mean they have the right to be there on their ancestral lands protecting their sacred sites.

The false narrative of Arab Indigenous status is easily debunked, because Indigenous status is site-specific. For instance, I am Metis/Cree, you can call me an Indian or native Canadian, but I am not Indigenous to all of Canada I am Indigenous to the Red River area.

Just as an Englishman can be called European but his language and culture were developed mainly in what is now England, not Spain. Arabs are Indigenous to the Hejaz or the Arabian peninsula where their language and sacred places began and are located.

It relates because if we allow the argument that colonizers can become Indigenous through passage of time or through conquering of Indigenous people, and not through genesis of culture and coalescence of a people, then the same argument would apply here in a few more years and white Europeans would be Indigenous to Canada for the same reasons.

4. Jacobsen: What seems like the common myths around Indigenous land rights claims now, in this country? What truths dispel them?

Bellerose: The most common myths are that all land in Canada was surrendered under the treaty, that one was simply not true, there are many unceded lands in Canada where tribes were not even consulted and simply subsumed without even knowing.

Their leaders never signed anything. Another common myth is that we are all equal under the law, when in fact Indians who live on the reserve cannot own their own lands, do not have full ownership of their homes and in fact, are considered under the law to be wards of the crown.

I think the more damaging myths though are the “Indians don’t pay taxes” nonsense and “we pay for everything for Indians” myths. First off, the only Indians who do not pay taxes have to live and work on the reserve, which very, very few Indians do.

The money that pays for the entire industry to run comes from the transfer trust agreement which was an agreement by the government to put all resource money into a trust to be overseen by the government. That money has slowly been misused and access has never been openly granted to us.

5. Jacobsen: What are the current statuses of some of the more prominent treaties of the land of the Indians in Canada? What media coverage obscures the truths stated before? Do certain outlets not provide accurate coverage of half-truth coverage out of political and social convenience? If so, what ones?

Bellerose: That is a complex question you must understand that out east most of the treaties are federal and with the crown, in BC the treaties are different. The biggest issue is not the treaty lands but the fact that there are so many areas that were unceded by the actual native people in the area.

Media coverage is generally poor because most media does not do much research and trends towards tabloidism rather than journalism.

6. Jacobsen: To extend a trite question, how can the Metis and non-Indigenous populations work together, toward more unified and common goals of integration in various domains? What will this take from the members of the communities and the leaders of those communities?

Bellerose: Working together can only come from a foundation of mutual respect and honesty which has not been the case. We are not just fighting stereotypes but actual paradigms those paradigms will be difficult to change.
7. Jacobsen: What seems like the areas where the Israel-Palestine issue does not overlap with, for example, the land rights and treaties issues between Canada and various Indigenous/Indian nations?

Bellerose: For beginners, in Canada, the Indigenous population is not the majority. We do not have the sheer numbers for a democracy to be anything more than a different kind of tyranny for us.

In Israel, the Jews are the majority and can assert themselves democratically to maintain their culture, language, and religion. In Canada, we cannot do that. Our goals must be modified, we need to argue for more participatory power in government, more actual power in those governments and for our traditions to be taught and respected.

Without that, our people will eventually be subsumed and assimilated. That was the original goal of the white government and has always been at the forefront of our minds when we deal with them.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Métis Activist; Writer; Co-Founder, Calgary United with Israel (CUWI).

Abstract

Monika Orski is the Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden. She discusses: wisest person ever met; smartest people ever met; asking fundamental questions about society; the advancement and empowerment of women; donation of time, skills, professional networks, and so on, to Mensa Sweden; more men joining Mensa compared to women; positives and negatives of perfectionism; the potential of gifted and talented; smartest person in history; women being held back; writing tally; downsides and upsides to the bureaucracy; boundaries and possibilities of national Mensa groups; Behavioural Economics and Nikola Tesla at EMAG; and alternative IQ tests.
Keywords: chairman, Mensa Sverige, Mensa Sweden, Monika Orski, Ordförande.

An Interview with Monika Orski: Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden (Part Four)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: If you reflect on personal interactions and literature read in life, who seems like the wisest person ever met by you?
   
   Monika Orski: A thought-provoking question, but also a difficult and rather personal one.
   
   There are friends I have learned many things from, and wise people I have met in different situations, and also books that have made me think – mostly reading the classics, ranging from Dostoevsky to Austen, from de la Fayette to Kafka, and from Cervantes to Woolf. But to name one wisest person seems an impossible task.

2. Jacobsen: Also, in terms of IQ, which is non-trivial as a life factor, who are the smartest people ever met by you?
   
   Orski: Well, I am not in the habit of asking people about their IQ scores.
   
   I have met many very smart people through Mensa, of course. I also have friends who have never taken an intelligence test, but who are clearly among the smartest people I ever met.

3. Jacobsen: Do these moves towards more streamlined and siloed educational systems inadvertently prevent the development of minds capable of asking fundamental questions about society, querying about the undergirding structures running the nation?
   
   Orski: No, I wouldn’t say they prevent it. They do, however, make the development of minds more difficult, in the meaning that these systems obstruct the systematic, guided search for broad knowledge. Anyone can read a text book on a subject they are not yet familiar with, but a curriculum set by people already proficient in the area will give a starting point that is much better.
   
   I return to the assertion that an educational system that allows for the development of the multi-curious while it still has clear paths for those in search of training for at specific profession, would be advantageous to all students, as well as to society. But it’s not an easy thing to implement. It would take partially new structures, and a different approach to university education.

4. Jacobsen: With the rise of women, in some limited domains, we see the counter to it. The rise in hyper-masculine, whether religious or non-religious manifestations, and even authoritarian groups in much of the West with the intent, in some of their efforts, to retract and regress the progress seen in women’s rights for the last few decades. Does this seem to be the case to you? If so, does this concern you? If it does concern you, what can effectively work to continue the advancement and empowerment of women?
   
   Orski: I agree, and see this as a very palpable concern. It does concern me, and people close to me.
   
   First thing, in my view, is to recognize that the authoritarian groups we are talking about try to reverse progress in several areas. They are racist, anti-gay rights, against religious freedom – and also against the human rights of women. All those aspects should be viewed together, and fiercely opposed.
   
   When we see these groups growing, it’s easy to be discouraged. I certainly am, sometimes. But all in all, most things still advance over time. The very strength of the backlash proves the power of progress. Of course, it also proves that progress has to be fought for, over and over again. This fight is done by a continuous assertion of basic democratic and human rights, for all.
   
   But there are also everyday ways to continue the empowerment of women. We are all brought up to assess identical behavior slightly differently when done by a man then when done by a woman. We can all try to counteract this in our own reactions. Learn to use the same words when we describe the actions of a woman as we use when describing identical actions of a man, and for example not call her “aggressive” where he is “confident”.
   
   Thus, let it be part of everyday life, but also a very important part of everyday politics.

5. Jacobsen: In terms of the pursuits of the multi-talented and multi-curious, I appreciate the work and effort for decades to help the gifted and talented young. It has been a significant concern for a long time for me. It warms my heart to see the work of the various national Mensa groups. Honestly, the population still seems underserved. Same with the older gifted and talented, who could be mentors and wise counsel for some of the gifted and talented young. It seems as if a waste of human capital and human flourishing to not invest in them more. How can people donate time, skills, professional networks, or join Mensa Sweden?
Orski: To join Mensa Sweden, start by going to www.mensa.se to find information about and register for an admittance test. Or, if you are not in Sweden, start at www.mensa.org to find a link to the website of your national Mensa, and look for information there.

Other than that, there are several volunteer organizations, not directly related to Mensa, that help young people add more knowledge and skills – and more fun – to the things they learn in school. Look for them to volunteer time and skills, they always need it.

6. Jacobsen: Why do so many more men join Mensa compared to women? How does this phenomenon impact relationships, dating, marriage, and potential family life for the mensans?

Orski: I wish I knew why. The figures do differ for different national Mensas, but this fact only underscores that there seem to be cultural factors of different sorts. My guess would be that men, statistically, tend to think more of their own intelligence. There might also be a factor of risk aversion, that women are more inclined not to want to take a test unless they are sure to get a high score.

Another interesting fact is that while the membership of Mensa Sweden is only about 25% women, the group of volunteers is significantly closer to 50-50. Thus, it seems that women are less likely to want to join the society, but those who do seek membership are more likely to take active part once they have joined.

I don’t think the gender statistics within Mensa has any significant impact on the dating and family life of mensans in general. I know some couples who have met through Mensa, and others who joined together, but at the end of the day it’s simply another social context for people to meet a potential partner, fortunately not the only one.

7. Jacobsen: What are the positives and negatives of the “sometimes impossibly high standards” of the gifted and talented?

Orski: Ambition is generally a good thing. So is the endeavour always to do a little better, get a little further. I also think that it will always to ask more of yourself than of anybody else, is a sign of being a sentient a sensible person.

There is a risk to it, too. The risk is that you try to overachieve in ways that push yourself beyond what is reasonable to expect of any human being with normal, human weaknesses. That is what I mean by the gifted sometimes having not only high standards for themselves, but impossibly high standards.

8. Jacobsen: How are the gifted and talented often left languishing or simply wasted as not only individuals with needs but also potential massive contributors to the flourishing of the nation?

Orski: I am still not convinced that they are. There are many ways to make a happy life for yourself and contribute to the society you are part of. While I am very much in favour of a schooling system that would recognize the needs of the gifted earlier, I would not say that the gifted and talented are often wasted. Which, of course, does not diminish the need to work to let more people explore their potential, and find paths to do so at earlier ages.

9. Jacobsen: Who seems like the smartest person in history to you, as a pervasively intelligent human being?

Orski: I could repeat the list of names from your question about geniuses in the history of Western Europe, and add some. Inventors like Cai Lun (if he did invent paper, as has been attributed to him), Leonardo da Vinci, Johannes Gutenberg. Writers like Sophocles, Murasaki Shikibu, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy. I could go on at length. But to put down only one name is an impossible task.

10. Jacobsen: Women remain more objectified than men. This ties into the evaluations of women not as complete persons with rights, responsibilities, wants, needs, and goals and dreams but as objects of beauty and admiration of physical characteristics. How does this cross-cultural phenomenon undermine women’s intellectual courage, capacity to pursue their dreams without undue and unfair criticism and setback not normally expected in – for example – the lives of most men, and lower their standards for themselves and, if heterosexual, the men in their lives too? Why would working on the reduction of this phenomena lead to more flourishing – eudaimonia – of women and a raising of standards for the men in their lives?

Orski: This is another aspect of being held back, in all sorts of ways. It is also among the things explored in the rich feminist literature, from “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” by Wollstonecraft, via “Le Deuxième Sexe” by de Beauvoir, and on to our days.

It is something that has to be worked at every day, in the everyday lives of all of us. As I already mentioned, we know that we assess identical behavior slightly differently depending on the gender of the person we interact with. I can get angry with
myself when I notice that I expect a little more work, and a slightly higher quality of work, form women I work with than from a man in the same position. We all need to counteract this in ourselves.

Then, there are all the things that women are taught to take in stride, while no man is expected to accept them. The resent “me too” movement has made people more aware of this fact. I actually think that bringing up the everyday mostly-not-quite-harassment that basically every woman is subject to at some point, has had even more of an impact than the loud and outrageous cases that, of course, should be handled by the judicial system.

And yes, I do agree that this will, step by step, lead to more flourishing of women and men alike.

11. Jacobsen: How many words do you write per day? How many days per week? When is there a break between writing?

Orski: Sometimes, when I sit down to write for an hour, the result is the draft of at short story of 5 pages. At other times, it’s a single paragraph. It all depends on the stage of that particular text. When I edit a longer text, as I do now with the upcoming book, I spend less time on new material. On the other hand, to go for a walk and then write a flash fiction story can be a great way to free the brain of blockage when things do not come out right in the text I’m mainly working at.

As writing is not my primary work, it also depends on how much time and effort I need to spend on my consulting work, as well as the volunteer work I have taken on. But in general, if I do not write at all for a week or two, it is usually a sign that I have taken on too much to be able to relax, and I try to consider that a warning sign to be heeded.

12. Jacobsen: Are there bureaucratic downsides to a national and international Mensa leadership? What are the upsides, comparatively?

Orski: There are bureaucratic downsides to every organization. Not even Mensa has been able to come up with a complete remedy for this phenomenon.

From a national Mensa point of view, we have some rules set down by national and local traditions, and other by being part of an international organization. Mensa International business is always conducted in English, which adds a language barrier for all of us who are not in English-speaking countries. For example, we always have to keep an English translation of the bylaws of our national Mensa, and before the membership can vote on changing anything in the bylaws, the proposal has to be translated into English and reviewed at the international level.

But all in all, Mensa is not very bureaucratic, for being an international organization with around 150,000 members worldwide. That is one of the upsides of an organization being run by members for members, with most of the work done by volunteers.

13. Jacobsen: What are boundaries and possibilities of national Mensa groups? What can and cannot be done? That is, what are the limits for the national groups or representative organizations?

Orski: In short, Mensa as an organization shall not express an opinion as being that of Mensa, take any political action, or have any ideological, philosophical, political or religious affiliation. Members can have all sorts of opinions and affiliations, of course, but Mensa cannot.

As a national Mensa chapter, we keep to the purpose of Mensa:

“to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity; to encourage research in the nature, characteristics, and uses of intelligence; and to provide a stimulating intellectual and social environment for members.”

14. Jacobsen: What was most fascinating about Behavioural Economics and Nikola Tesla?

Orski: Both of those EMAG lectures were well prepared and well performed. Also, I learned new things, which is always a pleasure.

Behavioural Economics, with its mixture of well-researched psychology into more classic economic theory, is a highly interesting area. We probably all know we are not always strictly rational, but here is a way to measure and explain it.

The lecture on Nicola Tesla focused on the inventor Tesla’s work on energy sources, where he was very early to see the need for new, renewable and alternative energy sources. An interesting and quite modern topic for someone active in the 1920s and 1930s.

15. Jacobsen: There are alternative IQ tests for societies with very high IQ cutoffs. Some developed by qualified psychometricians, or at least those with experimental psychology and statistics backgrounds. Others are from intelligent people without these formal qualifications. What is the general perspective of the high-IQ community of these tests? What is the range of quality of them? What is the average of the quality of them? Has Mensa ever accepted them...
for membership? Have they ever been considered for qualification of membership?

Orski: The qualification definition, being among the 2%, is the same for Mensa all over the world. The tests accepted as evidence, however, can differ between national Mensas. This is the reason I do not really know the answer to this. There might be some such “very high-IQ” test created by a qualified psychometrician and accepted as evidence somewhere, although I am not currently aware of any such instance.

Mostly, those tests remain in the realm of puzzles. Some people really like doing them, and the creators usually get a certain amount of good reputation for providing them. However, it’s very hard to measure intelligence at levels where the number of possible test subjects is scarce. Thus, most of these test will probably remain nice puzzles, rather than actual tests.

References

Appendix I: Footnotes
An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is an Author, Educator, and Philosopher of Science and Ethics. He discusses: family background; pivotal moments in early life; Dawkins and Krauss analogy; critical thinking’s influence on parenting; and Bentham, Mill, and the Harm Principle.

Keywords: author, Christopher DiCarlo, educator, philosopher.

An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Author, Educator, Philosopher of Science and Ethics (Part One) [1] [2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview. *

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of geography, culture, and language, where does your family background reside?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: My father, his parents were Italian immigrants. They came here. He was born in Canada. My mother was Alsatian.

So, it is a district in France and Germany, more Germany than France. My great-great grandfather got tired of the fighting between France and Germany. He changed his surname to Fox. I am a fifth generation Franco-Germanic on my mother’s side. That is my ancestry in Canada.

2. Jacobsen: Can you recall some pivotal moments and early influences in life? That is, the influence on the perspective of the world. The influence on directions taken in life.

DiCarlo: I remember talking to my mother once. I was born and baptized and raised a Catholic. I was an altar boy for five years. I thought, “Mom, what is heaven?” She said, “In heaven, you get everything that you want.” I said, “You do?” She said, “Yea!” I was four. I said, “I don’t want to die until I’m 80. What will an 80-year-old man want with toys?” She said, “It doesn’t matter. If you want it, you will have them there.”

Later, in early high school, I said, “What do you think will happen to my friend, Danny Epstein, when he dies?” She said, “He will go to Hell.” I said, “He’s not Catholic. He is Jewish. He’s half-right.” She said, “That’s not enough.”

[Laughing]

Early, I realized that things were not quite right in the ‘supernatural’ realm. I hear about atrocities in the world, with crime, or someone having a seizure. Anything like that. I never had an individual tell me, “That person is behaving that way because their brain is somewhat different. It is operating somewhat differently. Under certain conditions, it will behave in that particular way.”

No one would ever explain that to me. It was “when that bad man did that, he chose to do that. He was violating the law and God and will go to Hell.” When
Krauss says, “it’s child abuse,” in a way, that indoctrination is child abuse. You are not giving your child the more objective picture of human behaviour. Therefore, you are withholding information from the child. Whether that or not, when I look back in life, I wish one single mentor/person said, “Hey, this is cool. This is all right. Bad things will happen, but here’s why bad things will happen and here is what you can do to help others that suffer. Here are ways to avoid that suffering for you.”

When I look back on my life, I wish I had a mentor. It was not until late high school when a neighbor was taking philosophy courses. He would have these conversations with me. It would influence me. I considered other things people said about the world that were different than my parents.

3. Jacobsen: When I reflect on your statements, from Professor Lawrence Krauss, on that child abuse, he takes that from Dr. Richard Dawkins, in writing and conversations. There is a deep, simple argument.

Dawkins presents a context. I paraphrase the analogy. You have three children: A, B, and C. You see a slide from a projector with children A, B, and C. A is a “Muslim Child.” B is a “Christian child.” C is a “Hindu child.”

When, in fact, you have a child of Muslims parents (A), child of Christian parents (B), and a child of Hindu parents (C). The point becomes clear with political philosophies applied to A, B, and C. Same context and second slide of the hypothetical projector. A is a Conservative child. B is a Liberal child. C is a Green Party child.

DiCarlo: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: In a way, when Dawkins has presented this idea to people, he argues by analogy in the sense of consciousness-raising with respect to 60s and 70s feminism to look at the way language is used in describing people, things, and relationships. There is a valid argument.

DiCarlo: For sure, when we decided to have kids, the greatest gift to give a child is critical thinking skills. The ability to think about all things carefully and to use your sense of logic and reason. The ability to discern through different types of information. I never stopped kids from wanting to pursue any religious or supernatural belief system.

Should one of them find joy or fellowship amongst others within a faith, we could talk about it. If it was more on the spectrum of cults including the Church of Scientology, I would press much harder in contrast to Buddhism.

It is a neat thing. I dabbled in it. I would not have much of an issue with it. If my son came home and said, “I’m a Scientologist,” we would probably have a serious discussion about this.”

4. Jacobsen: Regarding your own family history and personal life including having children, a related question: how does critical thinking influence parenting?

DiCarlo: It should be one of the cornerstones of parenting. You want to be compassionate, loving, and helpful. I want to guide in all those areas. If you do not have critical thinking to inform you in those areas, you are being misguided.

I am sure Jenny McCarthy loved her children. However, the irreparable damage done from her memes to others taking the false information is big. It is epistemically irresponsible.

Epistemic responsibility is the capacity to look at information and determine its reliability, sufficiency, consistency, and so on. These hallmarks of criteria that underlie the premise that support our conclusions.

When people do not do that, it can lead to damaging actions. They may have the best intentions for their children. The fact of the matter is “best intentions” are not enough. Critical thinking is what will allow parents with the best intentions to make more reliable decisions.

Now, with my critical thinking consulting business is a large outreach program, we are developing things. Instead of proselytizing about God or something, we teach educators critical thinking, which allows students to make their minds up.

It is how and not what to think. I do not have problems with different beliefs than mine. Unless, they create harm. That is a subjective, philosophically difficult, concept. One person’s benefit is another person’s harm.

However, telling people at ages things they cannot fathom or grasp the depths thereof, Jenny McCarthy’s pseudoscientific claim are harmful. In my book, I talk about the intersecting point.

Someone’s tolerance dims as another person’s harm increase in inverse proportion. Where they intersect, that is when someone is justified to say, “Time out here. Everything was fine. I have a high tolerance for your beliefs.”
You claim a God. To me, it is imaginary. It does not affect me. You pay your taxes. Your supernatural beliefs do not affect me. However, if I find out the supernatural beliefs harm, those lines intersect.

I do not have to tolerate that anymore, especially on behalf of those suffering under the belief system. I am tolerant of other belief systems different from mine. I can get along with any person of any faith, or non-faith. Let us face it, there are atheists out there that are assholes.

They can do horrible things for whatever reasons. They might not base it on faith. However, they might use different reasons. We are talking about the beliefs generating actions harmful to yourself, others, or another species.

5. Jacobsen: Jeremy Bentham founded Utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill developed it. He had the higher/lower pleasures, and The Harm Principle. Does this emphasis on the harm reflect aspects of Utilitarianism for you?

DiCarlo: For sure, the two most important ethical precepts for me: The Harm Principle and the Golden Rule. If you take them together, it is hard to get around it. If you take them separately, they do not always work well.

Paul Bernardo, serial killer, could say, “I am abiding by the Golden Rule. I want someone to stalk, drug, and murder me. I see nothing wrong with that!” However, if you put The Harm Principle in there, then you say, “You can’t get away with that loose-fitting approach.”

I am both a Consequentialist and a Deontologist. I am a mixed bag. I developed something called Relational Systemics, which goes further than Mill’s. It is looking at individuals as their systemic selves. Now, you are communicating through a means of a system of networking. It involves various systems, which need to function. You are living on the other side of the country.

However, we need to interact with other systems. We are dependent on transportation, communication, legal, health, and so on. When I look at an individual, I see their systemic self.

There are natural and cultural systems. In terms of looking at human behaviour and trying to treat individuals fairly, if we are to value fairness as an aspect of ethical treatment, it behooves us to figure out an individual’s systemic self.

I use the natural and social sciences to the betterment of ethical systems. Many ethical philosophers sit at the desk. They think in abstruse and abstract terms. We need to marry ethics with science.

Some see that as the naturalistic fallacy. No, it is not. Hume said it is not the naturalistic fallacy if you fill in the is/ought with a lot of premises. That is what I am doing with these systems. Science must inform ethics.

If it does not, and if we exist in a vacuum, and if people get that we should not act ways and if they have their heads up an orifice, it is because they have not realized that for people to act according to specific rules, then they must be able to.

As Immanuel Kant said, “...is does not imply ought, but is implies can.” If somebody ought to do something, that means “can they do that?” If I ought not to murder, and if I have a grapefruit-sized tumor unknownost to me pressing against my amygdaloid system, limbic system, and if I murder that day, you say, “You ought not to murder.”

You have not determined the “is”. You have determined the systemic facts about me. I realize at the individual level. I do not want to murder. I do not want others to murder. The fact of the matter is life is not that simple.

We need to look at that as a complexity. We are an agglomeration of systems in this world whether we like it or not. Let us figure out the best way to think about systems interacting with themselves. So, when people cannot meet the rules within an ethical system of conduct or the law, what do we do with the rule breakers?

Dostoyevsky, right? Enter a societies’ prisons and that is how you judge them. How did they treat the rule breakers of that society? To be just and to be fair, we need to look at all the systems or at least the important nodes of those various systems to be fair to that person.

And to be fair to the next person. We need to set a precedent for that. So, the law I find, I am teaching a course in philosophy and punishment, and I am trying to get my students to think in terms of, what should we do with pedophiles? “Oh, pedophiles are horrible, they do horrible things to children.”

Yes, nobody is denying the consequences of their actions. Nobody denies that should not happen. Do you think they just sit around and say, “Jeez, I think I should have sex with kids? I’ve tried everything else, let us move on to kids.” It is not just a graduating perversion that a person has, of copulating with different persons and things and inanimate objects and then ending up with kids.
No, pedophiles are a product of their systemic selves. What are we going to do with them? If they cannot abide by the rules of society that we have put up, should we just take them out of the gene pool? Two behind the ear, right? Let us just take them out and try to eliminate their genes from the pool.

But now it is your brother, or your son, or your father. They were in all aspect’s good human beings before whatever neurochemistry in their brain caused them to favour those types of desires with those types of people where society says do not do that.

So, to be compassionate and fair to the polis at large, which we believe we have mandated ourselves to do, but we are not doing a very good job, what do we do for those people? We need to protect possible victims, no question about it. And this is what bothers some of my students. Was Burgess, right?

Was Anthony Burgess, right? Are we headed for a Clockwork Orange scenario? Where we are just going to fix the machinery. We are going to go in. First, we will ask the person, “Do you want to be a pedophile?” And if they say, “No, I hate causing pain to these children.”

Fine, “Do you wish to undergo a new therapy?” That we know will be developed; it is just a matter of decades. Where whatever “normal brains” are that do not desire to have sex with children and their brains that do desire to have sex with children, if we can fix the mechanisms within the neural transmission that causes the behaviours and the desires, then we take away the urges and we take away the crimes. Then we do not have victims.

We give the person their life back, and they no longer must hide from breaking these rules all the time. Of course, personal autonomy, if they do not wish to have this done, we still must let them know, we cannot have you running around society potentially harming children, so we are going to have to put you somewhere else.

We are going to have to keep an eye on you. We are going to have to institutionalize you. And that is the best treatment we can do. I know that is a perfect case scenario, perfect world case scenario. In some parts of the world, they are not going to have the finances to be able to do this.

Even in developed nations, we may not have the finances to do it. I am talking about a purely ideological level, what would the best-case scenario be in terms of treating people as just as possible, according to the golden rule and the no harm principles. That is one example.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Author; Educator; Philosopher; Fellow, Society of Ontario Freethinkers; Board Advisor, Freethought TV; Advisory Fellow Center for Inquiry Canada.

An Interview with Ani Zonneveld

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Ani Zonneveld is the President and Founder of Muslims for Progressive Values. She discusses: family background; the inculcation of an environment in the US; founding Muslims for Progressive Values; the bigger educational and social initiatives of the organization ongoing at the moment; building bridges; and freedom of expression, freedom of and from religion or belief, women’s rights, and LGBTQIA rights.

Keywords: Ani Zonneveld, Islam, Muslim, Muslims for Progressive Values.

An Interview with Ani Zonneveld: President and Founder, Muslims for Progressive Values[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: With regards to family background, what was the political or religious background if any?

Ani Zonneveld: I was born in Malaysia and raised a Muslim, but I lived all over the world growing up because my father was a diplomat. So, I lived in Germany, Egypt, and India for a total of 15 plus years.

However, the Islam we were raised on was inherently traditional but pragmatic and progressive in the scheme of things – definitely different from the Islam of today.

2. Jacobsen: You have a family. What is the environment in the US that you wish to inculcate there with regards to political and religious use within reason?

Zonneveld: My husband is a non-Muslim. My daughter identifies as Muslim. She is a young adult of her own mind. So, I’ve done my part. The rest is up to her and how she wants to live her life. I’m a free thinker. I don’t believe in curtailing or dictating how anyone should think.

I believe in thinking, in the free spirit, the creative soul, and the free form of expression. So, that’s how I am. That’s what I expect of people. I don’t accept intolerance of any form – whether you’re religious or an atheist; I’m not tolerant of the intolerance of the other.

As for the political climate in America, we have become a theocracy and the clever thing is, they’ve used the boogeyman Islam to fan fear to get the most radical Christian into office, who by the way, shares the same misogynistic and homophobic worldview as...
the Muslims the use! These radical Christians then legislate their beliefs at the State and Federal level. I have been calling them out for years, as I see no difference between them and the Sharia laws in the Muslim world.

3. Jacobsen: How did you found Muslims for Progressive Values?

Zonneveld: Now, that started out as a form of protest, basically. I’ve been a songwriter/producer for 25 years or more in the United States, but I was a closeted Muslim. Then 9/11 happened. I decided, at that point, that I needed to come out, but I also, knew that if I was to come out then I would be facing a lot of questions about various issues. I, therefore, needed to be educated and self-critical about Islam.

So, in the process of relearning for myself, I discovered that the teachings of the Quran were progressive and liberating, even more so than my upbringing. So, at that point, I decided, “There’s no way I’m going to go back to the traditional mosque”, because once you are unshackled, and your mind is totally free, why go back to the prison?

Since I did songwriting and production for a living, I decided to do an Islamic pop CD highlighting the new knowledge about Islam for me: the progressive values, the contribution of women in Islam, etc. That was my way of contributing to society, but I quickly discovered that none of the Muslim websites and retail stores would sell the CD because I was a female singer.

According to them, the female voice needs to be censored. It’s avarath; it’s sexual. The second reason was because I used musical instrumentation and apparently that was also forbidden since during Prophet Muhammad’s time, he only had the percussion. (That was in 2004, since then male Muslim singers have used all modern instrumentation in religious songs). I’m like, “This is the most ridiculous ‘theology’ I’ve ever heard.” I was born and raised Muslim and I have never heard of this.

Male musicians, however, were allowed to use instruments. This is a minor example of how they’re such hypocrites. So, that was another reason why I left the mosque and the traditional Muslim community.

In response, I started my own progressive Muslim community in Los Angeles. Along with other progressive Muslim communities in the United States, we got together in 2007, where I was voted by the founding members as President, to register Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV) as a non-profit and to run it. Now, in 2018, eleven years later, it has become an international human rights organization.

4. Jacobsen: What would you consider some of the bigger educational and social initiatives of the organization ongoing at the moment?

Zonneveld: For example, we have this initiative called #NoToHomophobia. We started this after The Pulse shooting, although we have always been at the forefront of this issue, advocating for LGBT rights in The United States through legislations and by developing educational tools to change the Muslim mindset on homosexuality. The Pulse shooting was evidence we needed to prove the effects of hateful religious narratives. That this man, Martin, had internalized so much of the hateful theology that was spewed in the mosque and within the community that he responded violently.

So, we have been publicly challenging religious leaders in American Muslim educational institutions to do away with homophobic teachings. It’s unacceptable because there’s no punishment for being a homosexual in the Quran nor did Prophet Muhammad ever punish anyone for being a homosexual.

The other that we are very proud of is our “Imams For She” initiative. It’s inspired by U.N. Women’s ‘He For She’ initiative. MPV partners worked with male Imams, the scholars of Islam, who are affirming and advocating for women’s and girls’ rights.

So, our program is in Tunisia and in Burundi where we go to the most remote villages. We work to educate girls, women, and young men on women’s and girls’ rights.

Us working with these enlightening Imams and scholars of Islam is key to changing people’s mindsets on the ground.

5. Jacobsen: That raises two questions for me; the first is shorter, the second is longer. So, I’ll go to the shorter one first.

In terms of building bridges with the ex-Muslim community, with the various Muslim communities, how can those bridges be built at least at a fundamental level in terms of moving the progressive conversation forward in terms of implementation of rights and values in culture?

Zonneveld: We build the bridge by using an interpretation of the Quran that undermines bigotry, and we invite people to use this bridge. But some folks, just want to blow the bridge up every chance they get, that includes ex-Muslims, conservative, radical Muslims, non-Muslims who hate all Muslims,
and by Muslim governments who see us as a threat because we promote critical, progressive, and creative thinking.

For us the principle is simple. An individual’s rights need to be upheld regardless of cultural or religious beliefs.

If at the end of the day love trumps hate, we believe – I believe – that an inclusive, loving, and compassionate way is the only way forward. I can’t engage in hate. I find it destructive and counterproductive. Our language, work comes from a positive framing. Yes, hate is louder, and garners more followers, but that is just not how we operate.

6. Jacobsen: To the second question, the four points that Muslims for Progressive Values, which is as you noted based in the United States, are freedom of expression, freedom of and from religion or belief, women’s rights, and LGBTQIA rights.

If, and as, a progressive Muslim advocating for these through Muslims for Progressive Values talking to Los Angeles, Californian, American, or ordinary Muslims about these topics that have inculcated in them more traditionalist and conservative views and values, what are common responses from them when you’re advocating for these four things? How do you respond?

Zonneveld: When we first started, the traditional Muslims use to scorn at us for identifying ourselves as “progressive”. Now, they are all tripping over each other identifying themselves as one! Mind you, many of them are just pretenders claiming to support women and LGBTQI rights. I’ve heard imams and well-known movement leaders in the U.S. make these claims in front of an interfaith audience. But it’s just lip service. They do nothing to substantiate these claims.

So, the good thing about the political climate we are in the U.S. is that conservative Muslims have to pretend to be nice to us progressives.

Lately, the short documentary about my work “al-imam” has been making the film festival rounds, is distributed by National Geographic, and the latest news is that it won a competition and will now be screened at the American Pavilion at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019.

But outside the conservative stream, here are some numbers. The latest Pew Research concluded that on the issues of homosexuality, 52% of US Muslims say homosexuality should be accepted by society — compared to Evangelical Protestants at 34%.

We’ve always known that American Muslims have always been progressive compared to the religious authorities. The problem is that the media focuses on the conservative religious authorities as representative of American Muslims when the majority of Americans Muslims don’t even subscribe to those ideologies, and according to the latest Pew Research, 72% find spiritual inspiration outside the mosque anyways!

We started with the intent of being an American organization because those talking heads, the ‘mullahs,’ don’t represent us. Now we are in 8 cities in the U.S. with many communities in many countries borrowing our values and practices. And on October 1, 2017, we launched a global umbrella organization Alliance of Inclusive Muslims, in Tunisia, made up of members spanning five continents.

7. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Ani.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A. (Part One)

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Abstract

Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A. is the Chairman for Mensa Pakistan. He discusses: personal family background; family background feeding into early life; giftedness becoming a factor in life; nurturance of giftedness; reasons for community investment in the gifted; the acceptance and nurturance of the gifted and talented through the formal mechanisms of the countries in the Middle East-North Africa region; the largest flowering of intellectual progress in the Islamic tradition; M.B.A. and early education for the gifted; benefits of multilingualism; PR company; detriment of high-IQ; membership of Mensa Pakistan; Mensa Pakistan demographics; other Mensa groups closely working with Mensa Pakistan; provisions for Mensa Pakistan members; average standard deviation IQ of Mensa Pakistan members; and the relationship between Mensa at 2-sigma and other high-IQ groups at 3-sigma and 4-sigma.

Keywords: Hasan Zuberi, Islam, Mensa Pakistan, Muslim, Pakistan.

An Interview with Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A.: Chairman, Mensa Pakistan (Part One)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of geography, culture, language, and religion/irreligion, what is personal family background?

Hasan Anwer Zuberi: My family name Zuberi (or Zubairi) hails from present-day Saudi city of Makkah, and is a sub-tribe started from Zubair bin Al-Awam, a companion and cousin of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) who is buried in a city called Az-Zubair, near Basra present-day Iraq. The spread of Islam leads our clan to move towards the East and a substantial portion settled in the subcontinent (present-day India), and after the partition of British-India, mostly migrated to Karachi, Pakistan.

Both my parents, grandparents and great-grandparents from both sides were Zuberais, due to internal marriages. Our family excels in Education and has many institutions to its name in the Indian subcontinent, including Muslim Aligarh University, Karachi School of Arts, Mardan Women Degree College, to name a few.

Our primary language is Urdu. However, I am married to an Indonesian and my kids speak: Urdu, Bahasa Indonesian, and English.

2. Jacobsen: How did these multiple facets of family background feed into early life for you?

Zuberi: Since our family is mostly in education, I started at an early age and by 15 I was through with my 10th grade, and by 22 was done with my M.B.A. in Marketing. In between, I joined Alliance Francaise to learn French, that started as a hobby and was done with DELF 1er Degre and this is where I was introduced to Mensa. I tried the test, qualified in the 99th percentile, and later became the youngest
Chairman at the age of 21.

3. Jacobsen: When did giftedness become a fact for you, explicitly? Of course, you lived and live with it. The key, was the high general intelligence formally measured, acknowledged, and integrated into personal identity and loved ones’ perception of you?

Zuberi: It was at the time of my French studies that my teachers, mostly French, showed their surprise in my capability of picking the language, especially in an English language dominant country, and of my accent. They were the ones who identified the potential and helped me participate more. These were very troubled days in Karachi, with the civil-ethnic war going on and everyday killings and business shutdown strikes were common. The language center, which served as a refuge from all that was happening around me, helped me open and I organized many events including the only and the biggest mime-show in Karachi, Volleyball, Table Tennis, and Pétanque tournaments, reading and poetry sessions, and so on.

I came across a Mensa poster there and just out of curiosity sat for the test, which resulted in this long association.

4. Jacobsen: Was your giftedness nurtured in early life into adolescence?

Zuberi: I will say, “Yes,” it did get nurtured. Learning the fact that I am among the population considered to be of the highly intelligent. It helped in my daily calculations and decision-making. Although I was not a high achiever until my college, the fact of being a Mensa qualifier, and member, helped me secure 3.5+ CGPA and scholarship in my M.B.A. degree. This also resulted in starting my own business, a PR company, at the age of 27.

5. Jacobsen: Why should governments and communities invest in the gifted, identification and education? How can families and friends help prevent gifted kids from a) acting arrogant and b) becoming social car crashes (with a) and b) being related, of course)?

Zuberi: As all five fingers are not the same, all children have their specific requirements and need to focus on it. Governments, communities, family and friends all have a pivotal role in shaping and carving a gifted personality. High IQ is not necessarily always positive; it has its negative side.

I have myself witnessed many cases in Mensa Pakistan, and this is one of our primary foci and objectives to help shape the gifted mind in a gifted person. In families, particularly in our society, high IQ often results in anti-social disorder among the gifted children, as they find it hard to cope with the average intellect, and it makes them isolate within their respective circles, be it in the family, among friends, or even at schools.

We at Mensa Pakistan focus at school, establish our school-chapters (club), and from time to time engage teachers, staff, and parents along with the gifted children to make them understand that high IQ is a gift, and should be treated like one. On the one hand, we tell the teachers and parents on how to best utilize the hidden talents of the high IQ individual, and on the other, we make sure the students should not take this natural talent as an achievement, act arrogant, and should realize that it also has its negative sides if not tamed in the right direction, with the help and guidance from the loved ones around them.

6. Jacobsen: How well-established and funded is the acceptance and nurturance of the gifted and talented through the formal mechanisms of the countries in the Middle East-North Africa region?

Zuberi: If we talk about MENA region, the concept of gifted/high IQ is still in its infancy stage, number of reasons involved, top being the poverty, low literacy rate, and the governance systems. For instance, even in the rich Gulf states, there is no visible effort to identify, polish, or to utilize the potential and skills of high IQ/gifted children. But for a change, in countries like Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and Pakistan, I came to know about certain initiatives that were to foster the human intelligence on the positive side.

7. Jacobsen: Islam maintains a long intellectual legacy unknown to much of the rest of the world, especially in relation to the geniuses in the Arab world. Who comes to mind for you? What periods of time represent the largest flowering of intellectual progress in this tradition?

Zuberi: We can start with Al-Khwarizmi, the father of “Al Jabr” (or Algebra), then we had Abu Nasar Al Farabi (or Alpharabius), Abu Ali Sena (or Avicenna), Abu Rayhan Al Biruni, and the father of modern surgery Al-Zahrawi (or Abulcasis) and all are from the Islamic golden age that was around 650-750 AD.

There was also much progress made in the modern times until the WWI, but that was divided between the rival Caliphates (Khilafah or Kingdoms) and later Nationalism even destroyed the Arabs, which still exists to date and can be seen in the present-day Arab world.
8. Jacobsen: How have the early graduation and M.B.A. helped with personal and professional life? When would education acceleration be inappropriate for a highly gifted child?

Zuberi: Early graduation didn’t help me much compared to starting work at an early age. I started my work life right after my 12th grade. This helped me a lot when I started my M.B.A. and even resulted in attaining high GPA and scholarship. The education acceleration should come when the gifted child is made aware of his potential and at the tender age. Too much pressure may also result in a negative result at an early age.

9. Jacobsen: What are the benefits of multilingualism, being a polyglot? What downsides come from it?

Zuberi: Multilingualism is always helpful. It helps kids open more to respect others, be it culture, language, or cuisine. To me, it helped in understanding others, guiding others (literally also I served as a tour guide), and interact with humans of another race, colour, and ethnicity.

10. Jacobsen: What was the PR company? How did this develop and influence professional life? Why focus on a PR company?

Zuberi: Public Relation Consultancy, the best part of PR is that it comes naturally. It is a normal interaction with people around us. The relationship with the public, where the public is everyone. Starting from the time we wake up and the first person that we see, it can be wife, kids, siblings, mother, father, to the first person we meet outside our house. To the office, on the way, until we return to our bed, how good are we with every other human being. So, for me, it became a passion more than a profession. That is one core reason, I never looked back.

In the professional base, we advise brands on how to interact with their public. Customers, partners, management, staff, employees. Each and every one with whom the brand interacts considering brand itself as an individual. To start a 2-way communication, listen to others and share your story, your good side, with them.

11. Jacobsen: How can a high-IQ be a detriment in life?

Zuberi: Like every good thing, there are good and bad sides to it. If not controlled, or tamed, high IQ can be as explosive and destructive as any bomb and can result in negativity. A high IQ person with a negative attitude can cause serious harm.

Gifted people can easily turn into an anti-social person, due to acceptability and difficulty in making others understand their thoughts. and this, at times, diverts them towards ill for the society and people in general.

12. Jacobsen: Let us talk about the distinct functions and facets of Mensa Pakistan: how many members?

Zuberi: Considering the fact that Pakistan is the 6th most populous country in the world, with an estimated population of 210 million (*approx – 2018), Mensa Pakistan is still a very small chapter.

In my tenure since 1999 as GS, and then in 2000 onward as the Chairman, we had almost 10,000 qualifiers but majority of them were high school students and a Mensa qualification was one of the point-scoring sheets for them and majority, nearly 60% went abroad for high studies and hardly 5-7% returned until date.

At this date, we stand at only 300+ members in good standing but are in contact with almost 1200, who are either too busy or too old to be worth the membership.

13. Jacobsen: What demographics remain a part of Mensa Pakistan?

Zuberi: Demographically, we are present in 3 big cities, namely Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, with active chapters, though have conducted tests in almost 18 cities across Pakistan. Gender-wise it’s a good M:F = 48:52 % mix and most are aged between (16 – 35) with few exceptions including myself.

14. Jacobsen: What other Mensa groups frequently associated with Mensa Pakistan?

Zuberi: We work very closely with British, Canadian, and US Mensa chapters, mostly for membership transfers. In addition, I have played my part in the development of Mensa chapters in Indonesia, and the UAE, and maintain good relations with them.

In Pakistan, we have hosted visiting Mensan from 6 countries to date; namely from Germany, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, and the Philippines.

15. Jacobsen: What does Mensa Pakistan provide for its members?

Zuberi: Mensa Pakistan provides its members mainly with the platform to utilize their high IQ skills in a positive manner. In addition, we provide our members with hands-on work opportunity in management, leadership, finance, and marketing. Our
senior members serve as mentors for youngsters for guidance, career advises, scholarship opps, and internships.

16. Jacobsen: What is the average standard deviation IQ score of the members?

Zuberi: The minimum accepted score on the Harcourt’s FRT Tests is 135 in the 98th %ile and the average score is in the 99th percentile among qualifiers. Whereas among general populations, we have had an average of 75%ile in the Urban areas; whereas, in the rural areas, it was 65%.

17. Jacobsen: What is the relationship between Mensa at 2-sigma and other high-IQ groups at 3-sigma and 4-sigma?

Zuberi: I am not much familiar with other IQ groups as none are present in Pakistan.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Part Two)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is an Author, Educator, and Philosopher of Science and Ethics. He discusses: social philosophy; natural philosophy and science; and time at Harvard University.

Keywords: author, Christopher DiCarlo, educator, philosopher.

An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Author, Educator, Philosopher of Science and Ethics (Part Two)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: If you go to the major categories of philosophy and by social, political philosophy and so on. We started with ethics there. What social philosophy seems the most appealing to you?

DiCarlo: Obviously, there is an element of libertarianism that attracts a person. We want to give people as much liberty as possible. But libertarianism unchecked can run amok. We’ve seen that historically. You can’t let people do whatever they want.

I am also, a social democrat at heart because I do want to help people who through no fault of their own have had a tough go at it. So, it confuses people when I am on television or what not and they try to pigeonhole me. I say, “Oh, I am a libertarian socialist.” They’ll say, “That’s not possible.” I say, “Sure, it is possible.”

I think people should have the right to make as much money as they want. But they can’t do it at the sacrifice of others. They can’t harm people or other species in the process. They have to minimize the amount of harm that they do. then I am a socialist at heart because like when I was at Harvard, I used to hang out with this guy named Edward O. Wilson. I do not know if you know him?

Jacobsen: Oh, I know him. He was a Consilience guy, the unity of knowledge. That was in the 90s.

DiCarlo: Yes, he loved hanging out.

Jacobsen: That’s where the systemic relation part comes from too?

DiCarlo: Yes, exactly. So, he said, “Socialism, Chris, is a great idea but it is for the wrong species.”

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

DiCarlo: It works well for ants. It works well for bees, but for humans, at this point in our cultural evolution; we are not there yet. even Marx, if you read him carefully, he said this. We’re going to have revolutions with trials and errors. He couldn’t have known genetically what allele frequencies were. He could not have known as much about Relational Systemics, as we do today. But let’s face it, I do not think humans generally want other humans to suffer if it can be helped. We do not. if you do enjoy the
suffering of other humans, I think that’s very telling of an individual.

There will always be suffering. We know that. I got back from Guatemala. I went down there in February to teach critical thinking. I saw poverty at levels I’ve never seen before. I am a bit of a world traveler. But Guatemala struck a nerve with me. you want to help everyone.

You want to make their pain and suffering go away. You can’t because there are so many systems in place, of which you have no control or very little control. You want to wave your hand and give them lives of integrity and enjoyment, where they are comfortable.

Where they do not have to stay afraid, there is a lot of fear in Guatemala. Everyone owns a gun. It is the Wild West. It is a tough, tough country. They have come through 4 decades of Mayan genocide where 200,000 people were killed.

Largely because of, believe it or not, the United States and what the CIA were doing in the 50s with the coup and replacing their leaders with their own republic governments. Because why? The money in fruit: United Fruit, Del Monte, and Chiquita Bananas are all out of Guatemala.

It is messy. It is ugly. It is usually somebody making a buck somewhere, which is the result of a lot of human suffering. So, I mean this is a very roundabout way; I do apologize for being so long-winded. But I am no more long-winded than Krauss, because Krauss is a long-winded guy. He doesn’t like philosophy.

I got to keep him in his place, whenever he and I are together. He does respect me as a philosopher, which is good.

2. Jacobsen: If you look at the history and if you look at the terminology of science, as a professional cosmologist and physicist where he is at the highest level, science comes from natural philosophy.

As far as I know, things haven’t changed much. That’s why things like epistemological naturalism fit very well because, historically and currently, it still is. So, natural philosophy as a sub-domain of philosophy is a different set of principles and tools. So, he’s a philosopher, a natural philosopher.

DiCarlo: Tough to get him to admit that, but you’re right and I am with you.

Jacobsen: I think it is logically and historically a proof.

DiCarlo: It is. It is. It is a shame that Krauss didn’t take it up or even one undergraduate course in philosophy.

Jacobsen: Wasn’t it William Whewell who came up with that term science?

DiCarlo: Yes, that’s right. Yes, he was born one of the first philosophers of science. Michael Ruse, he was my supervisor. He’s a big fan of Whewell. A very big fan.

3. Jacobsen: Was this your time at Harvard?

DiCarlo: My time at Harvard was interesting. When I did my Ph.D. at Waterloo, Ruse was at Guelph. I was dealing with a supervisor in Waterloo who is a wonderful man, but not a driven supervisor. My advice to all my grad students is basically the same: find somebody with whom you can get the job done.

Find the biggest name with whom you can get the job done. Because if you can’t get the job done, it doesn’t matter; they are going to leave you floundering. 50% of all Ph.D. students drop out anyhow. I was having this hard time with this wonderful but misguided gentleman at Waterloo. I was meeting with Ruse in Guelph because that’s where I live.

He said, “Would you mind if I came on board as a co-advisor?” My current advisor was very receptive. He said, “Yes, work with Michael. Whatever Michael says is good here.” So, I was done my Ph.D. in less than 6 months with him. Under Michael’s guidance, it would have taken years with this one guy, but that’s very important.

Harvard, I was talking to a guy named Robert Nozick. Bob liked what I was doing but realized – we both realized – that I wasn’t doing philosophy anymore. As Ruse told me, “Find a niche in which nobody has ever worked and be the best at it in the world.”

Because he and David Hull kind helped me with philosophy and biology. So, I contacted Bob and he said, “You do not want to work in philosophy, what you’re talking about is cognitive evolution.” I said, “Yes, I know. I want to know if I can make determinations as to how people reason based on putting the pieces of the puzzle together from archaeology and anthropology, of hominid evolution.”

He said, “You want to work in the Stone Age lab.” So, I contacted the head of the lab, who said, “Come on down. We would love a philosopher in our faculty at the Stone Age lab.” So, that was my ticket to a postdoc for a couple of years down at Harvard.
It was wonderful to be able to ask any question that I wanted. No questions were too silly. Because we were talking about epistemic responsibility. By the way, Ed Wilson loved that term so much; he gave me this.

[Shows gift from Edward O. Wilson.]

He loved the fact that I gave him this term. Let’s face it, it is the hallmark of or should be of epistemology and philosophy in general. But it was wonderful to hang out at Harvard and everybody there knows, all the anthropologists, that we have to tell a story.

We do not have time machines. We can’t go back to see australopithecines morph. We do not know that for sure. But when you put all the pieces together from around the world, migration patterns, all of that, it appears obvious that certain lines went extinct but others led to others.

When you look at cranial development and brain size and tool use developments, we can tell more epistemically responsible stories than if we make things up willy-nilly. To me, one of the things I was most impressed with was the scientists I dealt with.

These are some of the best minds in the world. So, when I came in to talk about evolution, they loved it. Because probing around with primatologists, an archaeologist, people in genetics, behavioural genetics, and others.

I could meet everyone. So, I could meet with everybody and handle my questions there. I developed a fairly robust hypothesis as to why people have reasons, have developed reasoning skills the way we have. Like Aristotle developed the three modes of thought.

But even more so, I think I’ve got a pretty decent handle on why, throughout hominid evolution, mythologies and religions developed. Of course, there is no litmus test. There is no way anybody will ever say, “Look! DiCarlo’s right!” There is nothing clear to be able to say that, like the atomic weight of Caesium. We’re never going to get that.

But I think I put the pieces of the puzzle together in an epistemically responsible manner as I can, to be able to say, “We know what gave rise to what based on tool use and movement and nomadic practices, and the fauna and flora of a human area. We know that brain size was already completed. It was at its current size from 200,000 years ago.”

So, I talk about this perfect storm element of all different developments being necessary for language, which co-evolved with consciousness developments. So, I think I have a fairly robust hypothesis. I think I have enough information from other scientists that I’ve been able to glean.

I no longer consider myself a philosopher. So, I call myself an inter-disciplinarian at this point. But what does that mean? You hear about interdisciplinary studies at universities. They are a joke. They are largely hand picking people from English and other areas. There is no such thing as interdisciplinary studies in any robust way that I have seen.

But I think that I am doing it. Obviously, I am biased, but I do go to those other fields. I look at the information they provide me. When I ask them what I think are the hard questions, the challenging questions, when they answer them to the best of their ability, I am able to culminate this information.

I am able to look at all of these different historical systems that have worked together in various ways in order to produce the evolutionary species that we now find ourselves. I think I have a pretty decent handle on that aspect of human cultural and cognitive evolution.

So, yes, those two years at Harvard were probably the greatest intellectual time of my life. I was immersed among so many well-educated and proven scientists who could answer my questions very, very well. I was so impressed with the faculty of people and, of course, the other visiting scholars who were there from all around the world.

It was a good time. It was a very productive time for me and developing my ideas.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Author; Educator; Philosopher; Fellow, Society of Ontario Freethinkers; Board Advisor, Freethought TV; Advisory Fellow, Center for Inquiry Canada.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Rick Rosner and I conduct a conversational series entitled Ask A Genius on a variety of subjects through In-Sight Publishing on the personal and professional website for Rick. Rick exists on the World Genius Directory listing as the world’s second highest IQ at 192 based on several ultra-high IQ tests scores developed by independent psychometricians. Erik Haereid earned a score at 185, on the N-VRA80. Both scores on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of ~6.13 for Rick – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 2,314,980,850 – and ~5.67 for Erik – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 136,975,305. Of course, if a higher general intelligence score, then the greater the variability in, and margin of error in, the general intelligence scores because of the greater rarity in the population. This amounts to a joint interview or conversation with Erik Haereid, Rick Rosner, and myself.

Keywords: actuarial science, America, Erik Haereid, Norway, Rick Rosner, statistics, Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part One)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Erik meet Rick. Rick meet Erik. The topic is ‘The Future of Statistics and Actuarial Science’ for this discussion. Erik, you are a statistician and actuary. That is, you have the relevant expertise. Therefore, it seems most appropriate to have the groundwork, e.g. common terms, premises (or assumptions), and theories within statistics and actuarial science, provided by you. To begin, what are the common terms, premises (or assumptions), and theories within statistics and actuarial science at the frontier of the disciplines? From there, we can discuss the future of statistics and actuarial science within a firm context.

Erik Haereid: I thought the topic should be more common. I am not comfortable talking about the latest theories within Statistics and Actuarial Science; I have never practiced as a statistician even though I have an M.Sc. in Statistics. I have worked the last 20 years primarily with insurance administration; as manager, entrepreneur and as a consultant (pension schemes for companies; DB- and DC-plans, pension accounting and so on), and only in the life insurance and pension fields. I have not worked with insurance mathematics in 20 years. If you insist on using insurance as a topic, we must concentrate on life insurance and pension in Norway from 1960 to today. This is my premise. I think that I know the Norwegian life insurance area from the 1960’s until today well, but I hoped that we could concentrate on
a more interesting and common topic; there are so many things going on in the world today. I thought we should talk about a common topic like refugee problems, economy, politics, war, peace, social psychology, aggression, love, existential questions, as intelligent laypeople, and not about topics related to my profession. I have several profound thoughts about many topics. Rick Rosner and I are both 50+ years and have experienced the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s. Why not use this fact as a basis for a discussion?

2. Jacobsen: Let us start with the first recommendation of the refugee problems:

Both of you are over 50+ years. You have experienced the changes of the 1970s to the present. There is a problem with refugees now. Have there been comparable problems within your lifetimes? What seems like the source of this current refugee crisis? What might alleviate the problems associated with it? What might be a general solution for it?

Haereid: One week ago, a Kenyan judge ruled that the Kenyan government’s plan to close Dadaab, the world’s largest refugee camp, was wrong (“illegal” and “discriminatory”), I think this is a beginning of many refugee camps closures in the future; in Kenya, Liberia, Uganda, Lebanon, Jordan etc.

A lot of migrants moved from Central America to the USA in the 1970’s and 80’s. The Refugee Act brought USA closer to the UN Convention from 1951. Maybe Rick can say something about this event. The Reagan administration was not too happy about the situation. And I would like to hear Rick’s opinion about Donald Trump’s apparent xenophobia.

I am born 18 years after the end of WW2, and the first catastrophe I remember is the Biafran War, the Nigerian Civil War, from 1967 to 1970. I remember the pictures of the malnourished children with huge bellies. This was hard. The picture of the famine left some psychological scars in a five-year-old boy from a developed country. The Biafran War led to a huge number of refugees inside the country. Then the Biafran Airlift was established and dropped food and medicines over the camps. Nigerian aircrafts tried to stop them from doing this, using hunger as a weapon against the people. I remember the commitment from the rest of the world, how everybody wanted to help. The media did a good job there, by transmitting pure pain into ordinary peoples living rooms. It made people feel empathy, and act.

There have been several wars and refugees for the last five decades, but not like today. The many conflicts, and the Syrian conflict as the main, make the situation today the most severe since WW2. There are approximately 65 million refugees in the world today, and about 21 million are refugees in other countries than their own.

The UNHCR and the international community have to take this situation more serious; this is only a beginning of a possible mass migration that has no end. In my opinion, we have to build separate cities or communities spread all over the world, where migrants and refugees can live temporarily in a sustainable environment. The tent camps have to be replaced by ordinary houses and infrastructure. This will be cheap compared to the alternative; more war, more suffering, more violence, an increasing pressure on the stabilized countries... The international community can for instance rent land from different countries that has land to spare.

When integrating or resettling too many refugees we will experience more far-right politics. We can expect a blooming extremism and fundamentalism when we try to integrate too many refugees and migrants in developed countries like the USA and Europe. Xenophobia expands when we don’t control the stream of refugees. This is as I see it the most important cause to define a limit of the number of migrants coming into USA and Europa. I have to add that I am myself in favour of diversity in any culture; diversity implies less xenophobia when the integration is done right. We learn to like and love; we can’t rush it. The diversity has to rise in right pace. If we move too fast, people get scared and their votes are based on that fear.

We have to learn from the many failures we have done concerning the treatment of refugees all over the world. The Syria crisis is a wake-up call. Today it’s about 5 million Syrian refugees outside Syria; most of them in neighbouring countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. I think we have to use more money on more sustainable solutions, and that one solution is to build more sustainable reception centers for refugees in areas where they can live temporarily with support from the international community; cities or communities with a certain level of infrastructure, independent of local fluctuations in politics and business. It would be like enclaves protected by the international community; UN, the different governments, non-profit organizations etc.

The final answer is, of course, to make the world more peaceful and balanced, but this answer does not help the 65 million refugees in the world today. This is another question, like how to cure cancer.
The sources of the crisis are war, starvation, environment, despotism, population growth, dreams about a better place…

Well, I think building sustainable communities in migration zones may alleviate the problem. The main task is to help the people who suffer beyond our imaginations. Wars are a consequence of instability. People have to feel safe, feel that they can live normal lives. And to achieve this we have to restore the meaning of the word respect.

Rosner: I recently had the immigration argument with a very conservative guy. So, I am generally not overly informed about political stuff, but on immigration, I am slightly less ill-informed than usual. My buddy argues that the US has let in something like 60 million immigrants in the past 40 years, which is somewhat higher than historical percentages. So, if it weren’t such a politically charged issue, I could see slightly reducing the rate of immigration from the average of 1.5 million per year over the past 40 years, even though that’s well under 1% of the U.S. population per year.

I find that for most political issues, there’s a large set of facts which most people don’t know, and the people who are informing us using these facts cherry-pick the facts to fit their biases. In the case of my conservative buddy, he listens to people who cherry-pick facts about Islam to make Islam sound like the worst thing possible. And because I am ignorant, I can’t argue against them very well.

All I can say is, “Well, that sounds way too awful to actually be the case.” But I don’t have the countervailing facts to fight his facts. One set of facts pertains to the rates and sources of terrorism in America and the rest of the western world. In America, current arguments about immigration are, for the most part, about whether we’re leaving ourselves open to terrorist acts and terrorist infiltrators—terrorist sleepers.

My conservative buddy has the additional argument that if you let in too many Muslim people, who, according to him, have a strategy and a religious obligation to have kids at a higher rate than the native population to eventually turn the country into a Muslim majority country. If you let too many Muslims into America, according to my buddy, they will become a significantly large minority, and they will enforce Sharia Law.

He says to look at Germany and other European countries, where the population is at 10% of the country and seems to be causing some problems. And yeah, I can see where there are some problems there. My friend says that in the 70s, we only had like 60,000 Muslims in the whole country. Now, we have 3 million Muslims because we’ve been letting in immigrants and because immigrants have kids.

My argument is that 3 million is still less than 1% of the total United States population. And even if those 3 million reproduce at a crazy rate, they will not reach the troublesome 10% level in 50 years or 60 years, and in that next 60 years, there will be so many other things happening in America. Muslims are having kids at a faster rate shouldn’t be in the top 3 or top 5 things that we should be worrying about.

I would worry about the social and political upheaval because of the crazy waves of technology that we’re going to continually be hit with over the next 60 years. I would counter the too many Muslims argument with what another friend who works in software and artificial intelligence (AI) says: “By the year 2100, the world may have 1 trillion AI at various levels of sophistication.”

So, I think we need to worry more about how we are going to build a society that can incorporate hundreds of billions of AI rather than whether or not 3 million Muslims will be having too many kids. As I’m speaking, we’re 6 or 7 weeks into the Trump presidency. He will soon be presenting the revised travel ban for 7 countries that give Trump the creeps because he thinks they’re the source of potential bad guys coming in.

My feeling is that we’re already fairly prudent in terms of letting people into the country to live. It takes—I’ve heard in my ignorant way—like 2 years of screening before people get to move here. In my ignorant way, I know that immigrants—both legal and otherwise—have lower crime rates than native-born Americans. So, it seems to me any adjusting we do does not need to be abrupt and draconian, but if we feel we need to protect ourselves more we can adjust existing practices to lower the level of risk presented by the people we let in as official immigrants.

We’ll never get every single dangerous person. This freaks out my conservative friend. He also argues that even if you do get everybody and do let in everybody that it doesn’t prevent the radicalization of their kids who grow up in America because, he claims, the first generation born here is more easily recruited to do terrorist stuff than perhaps their parents who came here as grateful immigrants.

Trump’s first big issue, which he ran on, was kicking out illegal immigrants. In his early campaign, he characterized them as our #1 threat, which, to me, seems like bullshit right off the top because, if you believe the statistics (and some conservative people
don’t), prior to ’08, we had about 12.7 million undocumented aliens, and after the economy tanked, the net flow of undocumented immigrants was out of the US.

So, 9 years later, we have 11.7 million undocumented immigrants. Some conservatives say, “How do you know? Maybe there are 30 million undocumented immigrants.” But that’s a hysterical exaggeration. It’s around, say, 12 million. At 12 million, that’s less than 4% of the people in America, and 4% of the people can’t be the source of everything wrong in America in terms of crime, in terms of lost jobs.

It’s 4%. So, you’re not going to make everything better by kicking out the 4%, especially with regard to crime because that 4% has been shown to have a lower crime rate than people who were born here. They don’t have a zero crime rate, there are plenty of bad people among the 4%, but they’re not solidly bad people who are destroying the fabric of America.

Obama was deporting the hell out of people. I don’t know the statistics, but billions over the course of his presidency. A lot of people got deported. Conservatives will argue those numbers are kinda fake because a lot of the deported people come back in, but Obama deported more undocumented aliens than, I guess any other president, ever. [NOTE: Here’s a Snopes explainer of 21st century US deportation stats. http://www.snopes.com/obama-deported-more-people/]

So, I tend to be on the side of doing what we were doing under Obama and if we need to tighten things somewhat, fine, but we don’t need the full-on Trump treatment of immigration. There are a lot of things in the world that should be based on statistics and the best outcomes. Like when you look at instances of possible police incompetence that lead to fatalities, unjustified fatalities, it seems that there should be some statistics-based training of cops the way that sports teams do statistics-based tracking and training.

Basketball, you learn where the sweet spots are. You learn the statistical outcomes. Good coaches know, in basketball, whether you should foul an opposing player or not based on how good he is at shooting free throws. Like Hack-a-Shaq, if somebody’s terrible at free throws, then you deny them the likely 2 points of making a basket and make them shoot free throws. You can apply that to a general model where you don’t foul somebody shooting from behind the 3-point line because that gives them three free throws to shoot.

All of that stuff is based on keeping a lot of statistics and building strategic models based on those stats. You can do the same thing with certain aspects of policing. When, as a cop, you’re approaching a suspect and you’re apprehensive about certain things you’ve noticed about the situation you’re in, you should know what potential actions on your part have statistically minimized the worst possible outcomes.

It seems like that kind of statistical training might be helpful. I don’t know. I’m not a cop. I don’t know what statistics cops keep or what models they use, but, in any case, you can use statistics-based models for immigration. You look at immigration and related statistics, set your risk parameters, for tolerance of risk based on the US being a beacon for immigrants and for various other social and economic statistics, and you build your models and your strategies based on that stuff instead of on demagoguery and freaking out.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Erik Haereid: “About my writing: Most of my journalistic work I did in the pre-Internet-period (80s, 90s), and the articles I have saved are, at best, aged in a box somewhere in the cellar. Maybe I can find some of it, but I don’t think that’s that interesting.

Most of my written work, including crime short stories in A-Magasinet (Aftenposten (one of the main newspapers in Norway, as Nettavisen is)), a second place (runner up) in a nationwide writing contest in 1985 arranged by Aftenposten, and several articles in different newspapers, magazines and so on in the 1980s and early 1990s, is not published online, as far as I can see. This was a decade and less before the Internet, so a lot of this is only on paper.

From the last decade, where I used more time doing other stuff than writing, for instance work, to mention is my book from 2011, the IQ-blog and some other stuff I don’t think is interesting here.

I keep my personal interests quite private. To you, I can mention that I play golf, read a lot, like debating, and 30-40 years and even more kilos ago I was quite sporty, and competed in cross country skiing among other things (I did my military duty in His Majesty The King’s Guard (Drilltruppen)). I have been asked from a couple in the high IQ societies, if I know Magnus Carlson. The answer is no, I don’t :)

Haereid has interviewed In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal Advisory Board Member Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, some select articles include topics on AI in What will happen when the ASI (Artificial superintelligence) evolves; Utopia or Dystopia? (Norwegian), on IQ-measures
in **180 i IQ kan være det samme som 150**, and on the **Norwegian pension system** (Norwegian). His book on the **winner/loser-society model** based on social psychology published in 2011 (Nasjonalbiblioteket), which does have a summary review [here](#).

Erik lives in Larkollen, Norway. He was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1963. He speaks Danish, English, and Norwegian. He is Actuary, Author, Consultant, Entrepreneur, and Statistician. He is the owner of, chairman of, and consultant at **Nordic Insurance Administration**.


He earned an M.Sc. in Statistics and Actuarial Sciences from 1990-1991 and a Bachelor’s degree from 1984 to 1986/87 from the University of Oslo. He did some environmental volunteerism with Norges Naturvernforbund (Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature), where he was an activist, freelance journalist and arranged ‘Sykkeldagen i Oslo’ twice (1989 and 1990) as well as environmental issues lectures.

He has industry experience in accounting, insurance, and insurance as a broker. He writes in his IQ-blog the online newspaper *Nettavisen*. He has personal interests in history, philosophy, reading, social psychology, and writing.

He is a member of many high-IQ societies including 4G, Catholiq, Civiq, ELITE, GenerIQ, Glia, Grand, HELLIQ, HRIQ, Intrulect, ISI-S, ISPE, KSTHIQ, MENSAS, MilenijaNOUS, OLYMPIQ, Real, sPlqr, STHIQ, Tetra, This, Ultima, VeNuS, and WGD.

**Rick G. Rosner:** “According to **semi-reputable sources**, Rick Rosner has the world’s second-highest IQ. He earned 12 years of college credit in less than a year and graduated with the equivalent of 8 majors. He has received 8 Writer’s Guild Award and Emmy nominations, and was named 2013 North American Genius of the Year by The World Genius Registry.

He has written for Remote Control, Crank Yankers, The Man Show, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards, and Jimmy Kimmel Live!. He has also worked as a stripper, a bouncer, a roller-skating waiter, and a nude model. In a TV commercial, Domino’s Pizza named him the World’s Smartest Man. He was also named Best Bouncer in the Denver area by Westwood Magazine.

He spent the disco era as an undercover high school student. 25 years as a bar bouncer, American fake ID-catcher, 25+ years as a stripper, and nude art model, and nearly 30 years as a writer for more than 2,500 hours of network television.

He lost on Jeopardy!, sued Who Wants to Be a Millionaire over a bad question, and lost the lawsuit. He spent 35+ years on a modified version of Big Bang Theory. Now, he mostly sits around tweeting in a towel. He lives in Los Angeles, California with his wife and daughter.

You can send an email or a direct message via [Twitter](#), or find him on [LinkedIn](#), or see him on [YouTube](#).

An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is an Author, Educator, and Philosopher of Science and Ethics. He discusses: evolution of human reasoning; SR value; supernaturalism; and enforced ignorance for social control.

Keywords: author, Christopher DiCarlo, educator, philosopher.

An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Author, Educator, Philosopher of Science and Ethics (Part Three)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of the evolution of human reasoning, that formed the basis of one book. The other book was on the evolution of religion. Daniel Dennett has done the same. I believe it was Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon.

I might have that wrong. What sources did you consider for writing that text and what is your overall theory or hypothesis?

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: For the evolution of religion?

Jacobsen: Yes.

DiCarlo: Here’s what happened. If you look at the history of human evolution and we have said the degree of complexity on the Y-axis and we have time on the X-axis, what happens is, it is low. The degree of complexity of tools and all that stuff is low for most of our evolutionary past.

Even at the 200,000-year level where we have speciated and Homo Sapiens comes out of South East Africa and what not, it is still static. Once we get to 40,000 years ago, it goes off the scale. The degree of complexity of art, of tools, clothing, so many different forms of movable statues and fertility rates. We see this reflected in the statues and artworks and cave paintings and hunting and all that stuff. 40,000 years ago, they call it the cultural explosion.

What happened was humans are the only primates where our larynx drops in our throat at about the age of 2, we have a gene that kicks on and our larynx drops.

Jacobsen: A single gene?

DiCarlo: A specific gene yes, a mutation. This is what allows humans to speak unlike any other primate is to articulate and enunciate better. That is why kids can no longer breastfeed because they cannot circular breath right.

They can breathe and swallow at the same time. I would not suggest you try that now. You will get a bit of a shock. So, when that larynx does drop, and it drops about the age of 2, you cannot normally shut kids up. They have been babbling and doing this proto-language.
Suddenly now, they have the hardware that will facilitate language development better, so we know roughly when the genes mutated. We can hypothesize as to when this occurred. We know no other primates or apes have this.

To me, that along with the development of the brain and not the brain itself because Neanderthal brains were larger, but they did not develop technologically as well as Homo Sapiens did, led to a perfect storm. Feudalism, diet change, meat feeds the brain, the brain is a very expansive organ. 20% of your bodies’ energy goes into feeding your brain.

We do not have claws or camouflage or fangs but 3 pounds of electric meat here. All these things were coming together. Bipedalism, nomadic movement through Africa and Asia, genetic differentiation, pharyngeal developments.

Philip Lieberman at Chicago has done some of the best work in understanding that aspect of human evolution. So, absolutely, his son was at Harvard. he is still there. He is the one in the Danube and maintains that when you look at humans when you look at Homo Sapiens when you look at us, we are one of the few that can rotate.

Our rib cage rotates as we run. If you look at other apes, they do not have that ability. Other apes are bow-legged. The way our hips extend, the femoral is different. The way women give birth and so on and so forth. So, Dan at Harvard believes that Homo Sapiens were runners.

You look at the arch of our foot, when you look at our glutes and how they attach to our hamstrings and you look at the fact we can rotate as we run, they have shown the bushman of the Kalahari running wildebeest to their death.

They hyperventilate because they must stop and breathe to cool down and these bushmen keep running and running until they collapse from heat exhaustion. So, I looked at all these factors as humans were evolving and then my hypothesis is that consciousness and language were fed on each other like a cyclical feedback loop.

The more consciously aware you are of an environment, the more you are going to be able to use a language to describe that which you are conscious. the more aware our ancestors would have become of various things that would have led to what I call, “SR value,” or “survival reproductive value.”

Certain things you ought to do, certain things you ought not to do! Gravity is a great lesson. So, I tie this into what I call natural logic or how I believe Aristotle might have figured out the 3 laws of logic. The Law of Identity, the Law of Contradiction, and the Excluded Middle; that is, they are extremely dichotomous.

As my dog knows, there is either something in his bowl or there is nothing in his bowl. He may have some grey area that there’s something in there. Animals know distinctions more clearly than they know vagueness or that shady area between those states. Our ancestors would have been like that.

Predator-prey, male-female, friend-foe, night-day, hot-cold, all these varying diverse types of degrees, would have led them to think of the way the world works. When it came to the perfect storm of all these elements, the brain size is complete, bipedalism is complete, pharyngeal development is complete; now, we start moving along through Africa and Asia and running into diverse groups. Boys can communication and ideas start to take off.

How to start fires, how to hunt differently, and they would have ripped each other left, right and centre because whatever is going to increase your survival reproductive value, we tend to think are going to be operationally taken.

So, in trying to understand causality, that is one element in the picture of the development of the mythology of religious views. Then there’s morality. There is a system of “do’s and don’ts” within any group. You should or should not hunt this way. We need to act in that way.

If it were an alpha male type of tribe before pair bonding began, then as we see with pan troglodytes, if you mess with the big guy, you are going to pay. If you try to get in on the harem of females, you are going to pay. Where bonobos are not dimorphic, they are equal in size, so they have an entirely different strategy of accommodating actives and that thing.

Again, we must be careful when we look at activities of another species. We cannot say, therefore, one group of species act this way so, therefore, our ancestors did. Because De Waal would say they do not act anything.

Needless to say, once all of this started to develop and we saw 40,000s years ago, 30,000 years ago, 20,000 years ago, we saw more and more specific ways they were hunting and foraging and trapping and putting objects in art. We can conclude that they had to consciously know what they were doing at that time that.

It took foresight and forethought to imagine the world in a way. All right, so then how does religion come into being? Well we have causality, we have morality, “the do’s and don’ts” within a group and
then there is mortality. We start to see the first ritualistic burials about 70,000 years ago.

**Jacobsen: Did Neanderthals have this as well?**

**DiCarlo:** Neanderthals did but not as complex as Cromagnon or the rest of the *Homo Sapiens.* Much more complex involved about 30,000, 45,000 years ago. Finding skeletons buried with beadwork and things of value, e.g., straightened mammoth tusks, which take forever to heat and then retract and all that.

So, stuff that would be valuable. We know by that; we can infer by that that something was going on. It is not by accident they kicked all this stuff in. They are laid there very precisely. This stuff was of excellent value to them. So, mortality, we had causality trying to explain what is going on in the world so it can increase your survival reproductive value.

Morality or sense of morals within a group or the “do’s and don’ts,” which are hopefully going to keep the cohesion of the group working well. Now mortality, which is by analogy, you are going to end up like the person you buried.

So, to me, those 3 things more than likely gave way to the development and invention of things beyond their capacity to reason. They did not have a seismic plate tectonic model to explain the volcanic activity. They did not. It made more sense that the mountain is angry.

I have camped deep off the beaten path in my life and in one week we had 5 days of rain straight, 5 days and 5 nights. Nothing worsens your trip more than having waterproof matches not work because they are so bloody damp.

And on the night of the 5th day when we started to see some blue sky and then the skies finally cleared, and we saw a very spectacular sunset, the guy I was with was pretty much giggling like an idiot. It hit me why people could worship the Sun. It hit me. I was grateful but there was nothing really; there is no God.

It was the events and my circumstances that led me as a highly educated 21st-century person to say, “Boy am I glad the rain has stopped.” I wanted to thank something or someone. I wanted to show my gratitude.

When you step back from yourself, even as emotional as that is, you’ve been through a nasty time for 5 straight days and nights. Now, you’re being thrown a bone as it were, it seemed perfectly natural for me to understand why people with unsophisticated levels of scientific understanding to say, “Of course, the mountain is angry,” or, “Look at what the gods have done for us.”

That is why all 3 of those factors, understanding causal forces, developing a moral system within your group: if you cannot enforce, then you develop something that will enforce it. Because it sees you no matter where you are.

Then the mortality thing, “No he’s not dead, he’s still alive but he’s alive in some other sense that we don’t understand.” These were then naturally developing proto-scientific ways to try and deal with natural factors in the environment.

2. **Jacobsen:** In terms of SR value, if you have causality, morality, and mortality with respect to youth and the fertility of men and women, how would these 3 factors play into a hypothetical scenario? To make it concrete for people reading this.

**DiCarlo:** So if you’re talking about several thousand years ago on a South Pacific island that happens to be volcanic and it can threaten the entire life of the particular group that is inhabiting nearby and you want to appease the mountain god, the most prized thing you have is your virgins who haven’t yet laid down with men.

So, the old cliché of chucking the virgin into the volcano to appease the mountain god. If a group did such an act and the mountain, the seismic activity coincidentally subsided, it is very easy to have confirmation bias and maintain that that must have been the cause.

So, my old saying is, show me a Polynesian group living on an island with an active volcano and I will show you a lot of nervous virgins. Interestingly enough, it might be motivation enough for those virgins to not be virgins anymore. They could try to get out of that classification group.

So that is one very crude, simplistic example, but you can see it in ways of not having a robust understanding of the true forces that are in work. The natural, not the supernatural but the natural, forces at work. Maybe, it might be a clever idea to put your efforts into shipbuilding and get off that island and get to a nearby one that has the same types of natural resources, but is not going to kill you!

3. **Jacobsen:** Those 3 same factors, as is it applied to not only religion but another broader term, supernaturalism, how would that play into the evolution of a supernaturalist? The general principle for looking at the world from which you can derive various angels and demons and ghosts and these things.
DiCarlo: I do not wish to oversimplify this in any way. Remember, we do not have the time machine, so we must put the pieces together hoping that we are doing an accurate enough job.

What you and I both know is that supernatural belief systems become entrenched and embedded in a group, those become the most valued beliefs that that group is going to have. Therefore, those that are the “experts” in those beliefs. Are they going to be the least powerful?

Jacobsen: Not even close, they are going to be the shamans.

DiCarlo: They’re going to know right away, “I got a good thing here.” They are going to get more sex, more food. They are going to get treated better. They are going to get levels of privilege that will increase their SR value right off the scale. Once that came to be realized by members of a group; do not forget, we know that the genes for mental health issues like schizophrenia are recent. They are recent mutations.

Jacobsen: Like tens of thousands of years recent?

DiCarlo: I am not saying every shaman was schizophrenic, but hearing voices and seeing the world differently from others might have been valued in an organization that was living in a proto-scientific world and thought, “Wow, you hear voices?”

“Yes, from the great beyond!”

Meanwhile, they have a gene mutation right.

So, we cannot say that is the case in every example but what we can say is, “Okay, power is affiliated with belief systems that are amongst the most valued with any particular group,” and we have seen this for a long time throughout history, through recorded history.

We have seen it through the dark ages, you have seen it. What were the value places during the dark ages? Monasteries. These guys, all they had to do was pray for the villagers and the villagers would bring them food, they would be protected, it would be a decent life to be a monk as far as you are probably never going to starve.

You might get sacked every now and again from marauders. Whether they are Islamic or Christian or whatever but for the most part, they are doing all right because they are the keepers of the greatest knowledge. Once Gutenberg comes along and we have a movable type and people are becoming vastly literate, my favourite book of all time gets translated from the Greek to the Latin.

It is Outlines of Empiricism, the basis for skepticism. The other two names were Zappa because I am a huge Frank Zappa fan. Bonzo because John Bonham, to me, was the greatest rock and roll drummer, from Led Zeppelin, of all time. Anyhow, this little book wreaked a lot of havoc in Europe. The Vatican feared this book.

Here is a book saying there is no definitive proof of any god whatsoever, so you must suspend judgement. You cannot say you know, so suspend judgement! The ancient skeptics were the precursors for the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Pragmatism. In many estimations, the scientific method that we have now.

When people start yipping at each other, I pull this book out and say, “You have some philosophers to be thankful to because they saw the world in a naturalistic way.” They said, “There may be supernatural elements out there, we are not denying them. that nobody can demonstrate that.”

We do not have a reality-measuring stick. So, until you do, let us figure out how to function within the natural world and try to know it as best as we can and if there is something supernatural out there, maybe, someday, we figure it out. Maybe, someday, we don’t figure it out, but we’re not waiting around for it to happen.

The old saying is somebody must take out the trash. At the end of the day, we still must live. So that book, thanks to Gutenberg and so many others, the unwashed masses now become literate and what a huge threat that came to these established monasteries, to the Vatican, to other very well-established places within Western Europe, where this stuff was away and was very privileged information.

It served the monasteries well to keep the people ignorant and fearful, which, when you think about other political regimes throughout the world, that is a theme. That is a major theme. If you can keep your people uneducated, you can keep them a little fearful; you can control them extremely well.

4. Jacobsen: Didn’t the British empire do that to the Irish?

DiCarlo: Yes, look at the shaman, the shaman who claimed to know certain things. If anybody can, and I have often thought, how would you challenge a shaman? Even if a shaman is telling you something that is going to reduce the groups SR value significantly, would there have been a schism? Where one person says, “You’re nuts man, you’re crazy. We are not going to sacrifice my daughter. I
have had enough of this. We are gone. We are going to go our way and you go your way. ”

What would it have taken to have gone against those types of sacred views? The views that were amongst the most important to a group.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Author; Educator; Philosopher; Fellow, Society of Ontario Freethinkers; Board Advisor, Freethought TV; Advisory Fellow, Center for Inquiry Canada.

An Interview with Monika Orski (Part Five)

Abstract

Monika Orski is the Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden. She discusses: the work of Mensa Sweden; announcement and organization of an event; electronic media; ground rules in online fora; tips for women and girls online; online moderators; in-person versus online interactions of Mensa Sweden members; similar interactions online and in-person; expansions of Mensa Sweden’s in-person provisions; technology and online environments to improve Mensa Sweden experiences; and in-person experiences to improve online environments.

Keywords: chairman, Mensa Sverige, Mensa Sweden, Monika Orski, Ordförande.
An Interview with Monika Orski: Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden (Part Five)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I want to explore the world of possibilities more for Mensa Sweden. On the one side, the world of electronic media. On the other side, the interactions in-person of Mensa Sweden members. Then, of course, the ways in which electronic community can facilitate and enhance in-person interaction and vice versa. Let’s work in the order presented: for the electronic media, the ability to organize meetups, have fora for discussions and debates, and even vote on important matters of Mensa Sweden governance and policy – at least, potentially – become easier. Does this reflect the work of Mensa Sweden – with examples in relevant domains, please?

Monika Orski: It does, in some ways. We have electronic communications as well as in-person communications. I like to refer to the electronic communications as virtual meetings, to mark that there are both similarities and differences compared to in-person, physical meetings.

We do not use any electronic voting systems, as least not yet. Some other national Mensas do, but decisions by our membership are made at a yearly general meeting, with the possibility of postal ballot for those who do not attend in person. But practically all social interactions and communications within the organization have both electronic and physical sides to them.

2. Jacobsen: How long is the standard time frame given in the announcement and organization of an event or meeting prior to its coming to fruition?

Orski: Depends on the meeting. Our Annual Gathering (AG) is usually decided on and announced two years in advance. The organizers need time to prepare for a four-day event with 500-600 participants. On the other hand, some small, local meetings are announced only days before the actual meeting.

Some local meetings are recurring. For example, in Stockholm, mensans meet at a restaurant on the first Tuesday of every month. We have done so for more than 25 years, and will probably continue to do so as long as the place stays open. This meeting can be considered announced for a long time to come, but the occurrences are usually put into our events calendar at the beginning of each year, for the next 12 months.

3. Jacobsen: How can vigorous, respectful debates on various political, philosophical, mathematical, ethical, scientific, and so on, happen more easily through electronic media? I ask because, I know, most people, or everybody, experiences – or has experienced – intense and unpleasant debates, or even simply sour dialogues and discussions, on a number of topics.

Orski: I wish I knew. Unfortunately, electronic communication channels seem to bring out the worst in people. They also tend to be dominated by the few who are very loud and have too much time on their hands. Facebook and Twitter are extreme examples, where obtrusive aggressive behaviour is clearly rewarded, but the basic problems tend to surface sooner or later even on well-handled fora and mailing lists.

There are, however, some counter actions. Groups of people who want a debate that is actual debate, not a hate fest, come together to step in and politely try to turn discussions into real exchange of ideas, with positive feedback to those who show normal, respectful human behaviour. It is hard, but the people who do this help all of us keep some faith in humanity.

I do think it is possible to have an electronic forum where respectful debates are possible. It does take some work, and I think the key is to establish clear boundaries early on. Such a forum needs to be moderated, and the ground rules need to be clear, but it is also important to set the level of what is considered normal within that context. When someone steps out of line, it should be clear to everyone that this is not accepted, regardless of whether the moderator is there to immediately deal with the problem.

4. Jacobsen: What seems like reasonable ground rules to set in an online forum to prevent vitriol and maintain respectful communication between the parties involved in them, especially in the cognitively highly capable?

Orski: In my experience, it is important to set ground rules that are generic rather than detailed. A code of conduct, rather than very specific rules. Detailed rules will always trigger some troll to find the equivalent of waving his hand two centimeter from your face while triumphantly shouting “but I’m not touching you”.

The rules should always include that participants need to stay polite, that no ad hominem is allowed, and a general rule that trolling is not allowed. Depending on the context, they might also include
rules on what topics are allowed in the specific forum, and that all posts and comments should stay on topic.

Last but not least, a very important ground rule to communicate is ”do not give the moderators a headache”. You are free to think a moderator is wrong, but not to question that the moderator’s ruling is the law of the forum. The referee is the sole judge of the game, and the moderator is the referee of the forum.

5. Jacobsen: In online environments, women and girls get more harassment. Indeed, they receive more harsh criticism and ad hominem attacks, even if their statements remain, functionally in content and tone, the same as a man or a boy – not in all cases but, from qualitative reportage and complaints of women, probably most cases. Any tips for women and girls, especially the highly gifted and talented to stay on topic, in self-protection of cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment?

Orski: Do report harassment. Do report threats. Do report the hate stalkers, or of course all stalkers.

Unfortunately, the legal system tends to ignore those reports. I know very well that reporting threats to the police usually results in a formal answer that they have no way of finding the culprit, even when you provide details that in fact make it very easy to find them. But still, do file the reports. Don’t let the quantity of these threats and harassments go unnoticed by not being in the statistics of reported crime.

My second tip is to talk about it. It’s often hard to do so, but do talk about it. You will be reminded that you are not alone. And it might sound simplistic, but to see the harassing messages outnumbered by even very simple tokens of sympathy usually helps keep your spirit up.

And then, of course, for the cases that are not threats and harassment but simply stupid and often sexist digs, there is the more general tip to remember you are under no obligation to educate any random pundit. If there is no mutual respect, there is no real discussion. Don’t waste your time, you have better things to do. Just leave the trolls to keep throwing mud at each other.

6. Jacobsen: What is the importance of an online moderator in the prevention of these behaviors by many men and boys – or some women and girls? What seems like the appropriate punishments, reactions, or mechanisms to acquire justice in the cases of legitimate cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment? That is, how can the bullied, stalked, and harassed deal with these individuals?

Orski: First and foremost: It is not the job of those bullied, stalked and harassed to deal with the people who abuse them. It is not the obligation of the victim of a crime to administer justice. Everyone, and especially anyone in any kind of leadership position, needs to be clear that it is not up to the victim to change the behaviour of the perpetrator, or to talk to them, or whatever.

Thus, I would say that the importance of online moderators must be clearly stated. If you run a forum, it is your duty to handle those who cannot behave as civilized human beings within the rules stated for that forum, and to remove them from the forum if they will not change their ways. This goes for any forum, be it a mailing list or a Facebook group.

Of course, in theory, the owners of platforms such as Twitter or Facebook should also be held accountable. But the way things work today, we know that does not happen.

7. Jacobsen: Now, to the second aspect, the in-person environment has been the main form of interaction of the highly intelligent in a relatively tight locale. What are some interactions Mensa Sweden members can get in-person but not online?

Orski: In-person interactions are always different to online interactions. That goes for groups as well as individuals. In today’s world, most of us have people we care for but live to far from to see very often, and while online chats and emails certainly help keep those bonds alive, we are always happy to see them and be able to just sit down together to talk. In a slightly diluted form, this goes for group interactions too.

On a less general note, some things need to be done in person. To listen to a lecture online is not the same as to be in the room and able to interact with the lecturer. Online gaming is different from sitting down to a board game. Board games are popular with many mensans, which makes it a good example.

8. Jacobsen: What about similar interactions online as in person but the interactions are simply better, richer experiences for the participants than online?

As mentioned, to sit down together to talk is different from exchanging messages online. In the context of Mensa meetings, or of any larger group, there is also the fact that some people have lots of time on their hands and therefore tend to spend a lot of time in online fora. I don’t mean the trolls now, but people
with perfectly normal online behaviour who simply take up a lot of the discussion bandwidth because they are interested and have the time to do so. At an in-person meeting, they will not dominate the discourse in the same way, as discussions tend to take place in smaller groups. This also gives more room for those who tend to talk less.


Orski: I think I’m more of a pragmatic, practical Mensa leader than a dreaming visionary. Both kinds are needed, but I’m probably not a very good person to ask for the pie-in-the-sky ideas.

However, I can try. The educational needs of the highly gifted are not very well served today, as we have discussed at length. It would be wonderful to provide a Mensa university, with courses ranging from the level that would help school age children stay interested in education to very advanced post-graduate level courses for those who want to widen the horizons of their everyday work. All free and adapted to the learning pace of the highly intelligent.

Also, there are mensans who discuss plans of common holiday homes. Others dream of some kind of permanent version of the annual gatherings, with lectures and games and common dinners, and most importantly always lots of mensans around to talk to. Some even talk of retirement homes, especially for mensans. It would be a dream idea to provide some sort of complex with all these things, a kind of real life community that members could visit anytime, or even make their permanent home.

10. Jacobsen: To the third facet, the nature of the interaction between the two. How do technology and online environments improve in-person experiences of the Mensa Sweden group?

Orski: Some people come to the in-person meetings only after a time in online groups. They often have a feeling of not being totally new to the environment, and being already acquainted with some other members. Thus, it can help more members actually join the in-person interactions.

Online interactions also help keep up contacts between members in different local groups, and for that matter in different countries. If you meet once a year at a large gathering, it’s good to have some interaction in online groups in-between those events.

Jacobsen: How do in-person experiences provide the basis for enhanced experiences in the virtual environments of the Mensa Sweden group?

Orski: It’s always easier to have good online interactions once you have met the people you interact with. The other side of online interactions reinforcing the contacts made at gatherings, is that meeting up at a gathering will enhance the mutual understanding and discussion climate of online communications.

References


Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Stacey Piercey
(Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Stacey Piercey is the Co-Chair of the Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights for CFUW FCFDU and Vice Chair of the National Women’s Liberal Commission for the Liberal Party of Canada. She discusses: personal and family background; early life and impact on experiences; professional experiences and professional certifications; being a former candidate member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia for the BC Liberal Party; running for politics in Victoria-Swan Lake, and politics as a trans or transgender person; being a mentor at the Canadian Association for Business Economics; being the Vice Chair of the National Women’s Liberal Commission for the Liberal Party of Canada/Parti Libéral du Canada; being the Co-Chair for the Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights at CFUW FCFDU (Canadian Federation of University Women); and hopes and fears, regarding Canadian culture and public discourse, in 2018/19.

Keywords: Co-Chair, Liberal Party of Canada, Ministry of Status of Women, Stacey Piercey, Vice Chair.

An Interview with Stacey Piercey: Co-Chair – Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights, CFUW FCFDU; Vice Chair National Women’s Liberal Commission at Liberal Party of Canada | Parti libéral du Canada (Part One)[1][2]
1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is family background regarding geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof

Stacey Piercey: My family and I are from the island of Newfoundland, for generations we have resided in Placentia Bay. It is somewhat rural, steeped in traditions, accompanied by a robust evangelical background from being Salvation Army. We have developed a strong sense of independence and resourcefulness from this isolation, believing in self-reliance, community and compassion for others. We lived off the land, close to the sea and benefitted from what we were given to us by nature.

2. Jacobsen: What is personal early life for you? Did this familial background impact perspective and experiences of the world?

Piercey: I grew up in a small town, working class, with the primary industries being that of shipbuilding and fishing. I had a great childhood, I was in every activity imaginable, from the arts, sports and community groups. I prefer intellectual pursuits and technology. I had lots of friends and a rather large family. Later I was married, and my life was somewhat normal with the advantages and privileges of our time. I got to travel, and I think that helped me come into my own. I believe growing up where I did put me on the right path, with a passion for volunteering, community building and social skills, and confidence in myself and my abilities.

3. Jacobsen: What were the professional experiences and educational certifications before the current human rights work?

Piercey: I have a degree in economics and business administration from Memorial University and a college diploma in information technology with a focus on accounting, business, and computer applications. Also, certificates in investing from the Canadian Securities Institute. I moved away after school from my home in Newfoundland, due to the lack of professional opportunities. I worked in advertising in Toronto. I managed other businesses until I eventually started my own. My first venture was in educational resources, my second was in digital marketing, and now I am working at being a writer. I always have been very active socially and in volunteering my time with groups such as Toastmasters, political parties, women’s groups, public education, the church and executive boards. Even more so I have always better myself through painting, writing and music lessons. This list goes on and on. I am the type of person who is involved in something, I am a passionate reader and consider myself a life-long learner.

4. Jacobsen: You were a former candidate member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia for the BC Liberal Party. What inspired this move in professional life?

Piercey: I was not inspired to be a political candidate. I turned down the request several times. I consider myself to be an introvert; I was not where I wanted to be in life for this opportunity. I was coming into my own, after my transition and regaining my confidence. I didn’t think I was the personality type or someone who is out-going nor did I want the attention or was comfortable being in the media. I did attend political meetings and socialized within organizations my whole life. It is a safety thing for me, hanging out with politicians, lawyers, investors, and community leaders as they are well behaved, and it is a safe place for a respectable transgender woman. I know now; my friends get me in and out of trouble at times. I was very concerned as a transgender woman about the problems I would face. It took me a while to realize how much I have overcome with my transition. I learned to speak up for myself, ask my friends for help and to go right to the top to solve the issues that I had. I was always there doing this work behind the scenes. Eventually, I was in a situation where I became known to people beyond my social circle. I was overwhelmed. I didn’t realize how vital a transgender woman with the Liberal Party of Canada was around the world. I had a lot of amazing people that encouraged me to run, I realized it was my time, and I occasionally said yes for the experience and to see if this was me. It is a great honour to put yourself forward and to run for public office. I did run into problems. I faced my fears, and I have become better because of the experience.

5. Jacobsen: Also, you have a first attached to running for politics in Victoria-Swan Lake. One of the firsts for the trans or transgender community as a result. It is not central to the quality of character or political party platforms-and-polices, but it is an important facet of the narrative of professional, and personal, life. What was the reaction or feedback from the public as a trans or transgender political candidate in Victoria-Swan Lake? Obviously, as we both know, the general public can be mixed on the trans or transgender community, for a variety of reasons.

Piercey: I honestly don’t know where to begin. Campaigns take on a life of there own. I started mine out on a tv spots saying “jobs, jobs, jobs, this election
is about the economy.” But my campaign started years before that in retrospect. I was advocating for transgender human rights; I was someone on many executive boards, I was a business owner, I knew people from my neighbourhood, I had friends that wanted to help me, family support and I was in tune with the issues in Victoria-Swan Lake from all of my involvement in the community. What was strange, this experience was more like a public roast for all of the hard work that I did behind the scenes. The image created of me in the media was not me, I spent my time knocking on doors and talking to people. It was weird to read the paper and see what I said when I don’t even know how to think like the comments I saw, and at the same time having to explain it. Politics is local, but my campaign gained international attention once the word transgender came out. Despite all of the policies that I worked on, the studying I did to prepare, and the training that I did receive, it was difficult to focus my campaign on the issues because for many I was the first transgender person they met. I had moments where it was more about me justifying my existence and my right to be a candidate. I felt like a teacher and, was distracted at times, I was pigeon-holed or considered a gimmick and dismissed because I was a transgender woman. I think I received extra criticism because I was transgender, and I was harassed beyond belief online. And I saw some things that made me sick. I was the image and the face of transgender people. I understood, what I was doing was ground-breaking. That was the campaign that I saw from my seat watching the public.

What I was doing the whole time, I was meeting my riding. My riding was great to me in person and as an individual. I got to meet my neighbourhood, make friends, and speak to groups. I wish I had more time to get to know them all; I felt safe; I was welcomed into homes, I sat at kitchen tables, shared in a coffee, rode the bus, walked trails, and I even walked someone dog. I became my riding, I learn to speak with one voice for their concerns, and I have tremendous respect for the BC Liberal Party that took a chance on me. I don’t think they nor I knew what I was going to go through. I have been told, that I was fearless to do what I did, but I always did this. I impressed myself, I did the work necessary, I ran a good campaign, people enjoyed meeting with me and talking to me too, and I grew as a person beyond my wildest dreams. I recommend this experience to everybody. It is too bad some dismissed my accomplishments because I was transgender and that hurt, I think it made everything harder for me, and I am so proud of what I accomplished. I was studying to be a Citizen Judge at the time, so I held myself to a high standard, and that did help. Now I help others get elected, and I have watched since then other transgender friends run for office. I would have received more votes and probably could have gotten elected with any other party, but I wanted the training, the friendships and to do this with a government that was in power for 16 years. My background confirmed to me of the choices available. I am a BC Liberal. I still didn’t know what they think; I do feel like I crashed the party. I didn’t realize I would be kicked out of the LGBTQ community because I ran with a party that was a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives. I was considered entitled and evil by my friends at the time. In their minds, I cross the floor and join the enemy. I think others were scared for me and tried to protect me too or worse educate me. It was all so strange, and I never had so much fun before either. Afterwards, with all the parties having transgender candidates in BC, transgender human rights was established nationally in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was all worth it. Because I know what my life was like before I transitioned, I lost so much that the average person takes for granted and I will never get all of that back again. Now I have equality under the law, and I can rebuild my life.

6. Jacobsen: How did you mentor at the Canadian Association for Business Economics? How do you mentor? What are the basic, and then advanced, dos and don’ts of mentorship?

Piercey: I have been with the Canadian Association of Business Economist for a while. It is an excellent organization for an economist in Canada. We get to practice our presentations within the group. I am privileged to know, meet and be a part of this collection of economists from the public and private sector. I also get to share in the information, through webinars and in-person meetings and presentations. I was a coach in sports, I am an executive advisor and have been in the mentor role on many occasions with other groups. I was encouraged to be a mentor, to help other individuals in banking or government that were economists starting their career, as I could be of great assistance. I was a mentee first, for a year to get to know the program. Now I am a mentor to others. It is about being an economist. It is where despite our background we share a perspective, exchange knowledge and ideas with others.

The mentoring program involves activities such as information sharing, informal teaching, general career advice and coaching. It is part of an overall strategy to encourage members to reach their career potential, enhance career development, offer supports, increase networks, and open lines of
communication with other members. I act as a guide, adviser and sounding board. This program enriches the work-life experience, discusses options without judgment and provides feedback. We establish an atmosphere of trust, explore choices and possibilities, providing information and instruction, and I, act as a role model to assist the mentee. My styles have been to go for coffee and chat, create a safe environment, with an understanding of helping. I learn as much in this setting too because we share experiences and support each other. I may be older, or the mentor, but we are equal, as economists.

7. Jacobsen: As the Vice Chair of the National Women’s Liberal Commission for the Liberal Party of Canada/Parti Libéral du Canada, how did you earn this station? What tasks and responsibilities come with it? How do you maintain moral excellence in professional conduct while in a high-level national position?

Piercey: I am a member of the Liberal Party of Canada, I have taken on many roles over the years and have received lots of training. I was a director and was on a few committees; then I was asked to join the BC Women’s Commission as the riding association representative. It seemed simple enough to speak up for the woman on the riding association as an executive member. Then very quickly I became Direct for Vancouver Island to Director with the province of BC. Then when I moved back to Newfoundland, I was voted Chair for Newfoundland Labrador Women’s Commission, and I speak for this province on our national board and lead our commission here too. I am also on the provincial executive for the party with our seven federal Members of Parliament. I am on the policy committee provincially, and the policy committee with the Women’s Commission too. I became and was voted Vice Chair for the National Commission after our President left to run for the leadership of a provincial party. I connect the ridings in Atlantic Canada as Vice-President. Also, I am part of the Women caucus with all of our women Member of Parliament; we work with government ministries, especially the Ministry for the Status of Women. The commission promotes gender equality, encourage participation in politics and gender policies in this country. What I like most is the friendship from having a representative from each province and territory in Canada, and that support network, I can not say enough how great it is when we have our meetings and to check in with the country through these ladies. I don’t think about maintaining moral excellence; I am more concerned about staying on top of things, to be honest. I do trust all of my experience, and knowledge gained has created the person I am today. I have learned when to speak up, I might not be the smartest or most knowledgeable on any subject, but I do lead and give other the confidence to try to voice their opinions or stand up against injustice. I am still learning. It is a prestigious title, and I often forget. I am just me, and I enjoy this role, and it doesn’t feel like it is work either. Then someone will ask me about it, and I share some stories, and I get a hug or asked for my autograph, then it hits home, this is important. I have learned much from the women with the Liberal Party of Canada on this commission, we are an incredible team, and we have our way of doing things. They are my strength, and my motivation to make this a better world. I realized I am in this role because of all of the work I have done, all the boards and campaigns that I have been a part of and I am so proud of this title and the policies we have created.

8. Jacobsen: As the Co-Chair for the Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights at CFUW FCFDU (Canadian Federation of University Women), what tasks and responsibilities come with this position? What are the main difficulties and subject matter covered through the federation

Piercey: I have been a member of the Canadian Federation of University Women for a while, I have been on the executive with my local chapter, with the education trust fund and I enjoy our social groups. These ladies are great, and we do so much in the community. What the CFUW is, it is a national organization working to ensure that all girls and women have equal opportunities and equal access to quality education within a peaceful and secure environment where their human rights are respected. We work to reduce poverty and eliminate discrimination. We create equal opportunities for leadership, employment, income, education, careers and the ability to maximize potential. We strive to promote equality, social justice, fellowship and life-long learning for women. This role as the Co-Chair for the Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights is somewhat new for me. Besides chairing this committee, I am on the CFUW Standing Committee on Advocacy. Both groups have two major reports that we are presenting. The advocacy committee reflects on all of the work that the CFUW does in communities with other organizations. We are connected to and support many groups through our affiliated clubs across the country. With the Status of Women Human Rights Subcommittee, we are now working on a major report, a National Initiative of Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls. There is a focus is on Sexual Assault Policies in Post-Secondary
Institutions in Canada. It is a big deal because the CFUW holds special consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC) and belongs to the Education Committee of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. We send delegations to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It is a real privilege to be on this committee, and we do fantastic work.

9. Jacobsen: What are hopes and fears, regarding Canadian culture and public discourse, in 2018/19 for you?

Piercey: I will be honest with you; I am a little concerned about Canadian culture and public discourse right now. There is a new attitude in politics around the world that I believe currently to be unhealthy. There is the empowerment of intolerance, excuses to hate others and methods to discriminate that doesn’t look the same as it once did. I noticed the world is a little more hostile in tone and the line that I consider to be decent has been pushed a little further than what I am comfortable in seeing. I am not worried, this is temporary, it will pass, and it will get better over time. I think we are watching a social backlash as there is a changing of the guard from generation to generation around the world. In Canada, we are privileged to lead the way for the next generation. I see that with the election of Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister. He is the first world leader that was my age, with the technology of my generation and the values I am familiar with growing up. We will probably see more change as the world comes together in the next 30 years than we have in the last 300. So I have some fears, they are short-term, and I have great hope, in the long run. I do believe the future will only be better.

10. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Stacey.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Co-Chair – Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights, CFUW FCFDU; Vice Chair National Women’s Liberal Commission at Liberal Party of Canada | Parti libéral du Canada; Mentor, Canadian Association for Business Economics.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part Two)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Abstract

Rick Rosner and I conduct a conversational series entitled Ask A Genius on a variety of subjects through In-Sight Publishing on the personal and professional website for Rick. Rick exists on the World Genius Directory listing as the world’s second highest IQ at 192 based on several ultra-high IQ tests scores developed by independent psychometricians. Erik Haereid earned a score at 185, on the N-VRA80. Both scores are on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of –6.13 for Rick – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 2,314,980,850 – and –5.67 for Erik – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 136,975,305. Of course, if a higher general intelligence score, then the greater the variability in, and margin of error in, the general intelligence scores because of the greater rarity in the population. This amounts to a joint interview or conversation with Erik Haereid, Rick Rosner, and myself.

Keywords: actuarial science, America, Erik Haereid, Norway, Rick Rosner, statistics, Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part Two)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Erik Haereid: I do not know if you (Rick) think that I am on Trumps and his person’s side concerning immigration policy. I am not! I want mixed cultures, including Muslims. I think multicultural societies enrich us as humans. What I am afraid of is immigration on a large scale, which will challenge the welfare states’ infrastructure. This will probably lead to far-right movements, and unwanted political situations around the world. The best way to prevent far-right environments, racism and xenophobia, is to understand and respect how people think and react in different situations, as when people feel threatened (if the fear is based on facts or illusions doesn’t matter). Mass migration can be the case; consequences of global warming, sea level rise, more wars and conflicts, poverty, hunger... The number of refugees can increase rapidly in the next few decades. This will cause substantial issues, especially moral ones, and on a larger scale than today. I think we have to prepare for worst case scenarios. The best way to do that, as I see it, is to build temporary homes and environments on available areas, directed by UN and the international community; not camps with simple tents and lack of hygiene.

You mention fear of a potential Muslim majority in western countries in the future, pushing Islam and Sharia Laws on the native Christian people. I guess this is a part of the bottomless well of fear that is established, on wrong conditions, among a lot of people in our cultures. Creating fear to gather votes (politicians) and money (Media) is as old as these
institutions. Trump is part of a wave of populism hitting the mainland, not only in the USA but also the rest of the western world, like Europe, where we are not that familiar with populism. Trump and his buddies play with people’s emotions, with a mixture of illusions and reality, as more or less decent rhetoricians have done since Cicero. Sometimes this is right and necessary. Other times, like that Trump has banned immigration from some predominantly Muslim countries, this is wrong.

You mention statistics as a basis for more true facts, and I agree. In Scandinavia, Sweden, we had a professor Hans Rosling that used statistics effectual to illustrate certain topics. You mention your buddy who believes that Muslim immigrants do get more children than the native population, as a strategy, and eventually turn the country into a Muslim majority country. Well, I looked it up, and for immigrants that came from Asia, Africa and Latin America to Scandinavia as adults the birthrate was 3.5 children per woman (from 1990 to 2004) (compared to Scandinavian women; birthrate = 1.9 children, today). For immigrants that came to Scandinavia as children, the birthrate was 2.2, and for women born in Scandinavia with parents from Asia, the birthrate was the same as in Scandinavia. The tendency is that immigrants adapt to the same birthrate as the country they move to. I did not find statistics for Muslims separate though. But the point, as you indicated, is to collect data, and use statistical tools to remove fear rather than create it.

You say that the immigrants are not the big danger in the future, but AI. I agree that there are several threats, like you say uncontrolled technological evolution, but also pandemics, asteroids hitting the Earth, and environmental issues like global warming are major problems we have to deal with. These issues do not make migrant issues less important, I think. My view is based on worst-case scenarios. A vast immigration, or fear of it, implies that more people vote for far-right movements and parties. Statistics will certainly help, but fear seems to follow its own path. Statistics cannot say much about an unstable future unless it is almost a copy of the past; predictable. You can give Trump and his equals facts, true facts, but he can hit back with predictions that no one can prove; the future is to a certain extent steered by rhetoricians.

Statistics will have an importance to some degree, and then the irrational nature of humans takes over. In crises, like war zones, people stop acting rational. Another fact is that humans become irrational and immoral when we feel that our connection to the group is threatened.

A known psychological experiment is the Milgram experiment from the beginning of the 1960’s, which revealed that people obey authorities and authority figures even if apparently causing serious injury and distress. Other experiments show that people tend to be irrational or in lack of basic knowledge, for instance answering “Madrid” as the capital of France if the others answered “Madrid” on that question, when they have the choice between using their cognitive abilities and doing the same as the others.

You mention police violence. Yes, there is a problem if one takes for granted that potential violence is correlated with a person’s skin color, the clothes people are wearing and if they have body piercing or not. If the police get into a situation where they feel threatened, why can’t they use methods and weapons that are harmless and remove the potential danger until they have clarified the situation?

I think that humans become more human if we understand how to live together in different cultures and take the best out of each culture; remove the violent parts (I know this is more difficult than I made it sound like). The problem is the fundamentalism, the lack of will to learn from others and adapt, and not the differences.

Rosner: Having read Erik’s reply, I think that the Venn Diagram of how we feel about things is a couple of circles overlapping by 90% if not more. Sorry if he thought that I thought he was on Trump’s side. I do not think that at all. I think that comes from me arguing against the opinions of a conservative friend whom I have been arguing with extensively about this stuff. No, I do not think Erik holds those Trumpian views at all.

And Erik’s done an excellent job at laying out good arguments for not demagoguing immigration. He has some excellent statistics showing that immigrants are generally not trying to take over countries by making a zillion babies. He does not have those statistics for Muslims, but the hope of any country welcoming immigrants is that the immigrants become part of the fabric of that country.

Newcomers embracing a country’s values while adding cultural input of their own makes for that whole rich melting pot kind of deal, and the US has generally been successful as a melting pot. You let people in and you find that for the most part they embrace American values. We are a successful country of immigrants (successful for immigrants and their descendants at least; less so for people who were already here when Europeans arrived).

About the H-1B visas – the smart and talented people visa – it is scary that we might begin turning away
people from other countries with skills and some education who want to expand their training or use their talents in this country. They get special visas because, hey, they can contribute. If we scuttle that and if we make the US look inhospitable and unfun for talented people from elsewhere in the world, we are screwing ourselves.

There are other countries – I said this elsewhere – who are very happy to admit smart, skilled people who would otherwise come here. China seems as if it could be super fun if you are a high-level entrepreneur or engineer. In its industrial cities, you can be a giant of industry.

If you do not mind this silly, semi-backwater, like Portugal or Spain – countries that used to dominate and are still modern but not at the very forefront of stuff. Not to mention, matters of international dominance aside, that it is straight out sickish to, in an automatic way, deny American values for purposes of fear and demagoguery, and political advantage.

Haereid: Thank you for endorsing my arguments. I agree that the USA is a successful country of immigrants. It’s not easy, and you have done an excellent job the last 200 years. The complications you have had is minor compared to what it could have been. There are victims. But overall you have shown the rest of the world that one can handle a cultural crucible; in less than a couple of dozens of decades.

“About the H-1B visas…”

I agree. That doesn’t seem like a good idea. In competition with the newcomer China you will need all the capacity you can get. It’s not politically smart to prevent know-how, thirsty young people and bright brains helping the business to evolve; including persons from abroad. We are dealing with the butterfly effect. A few brains in a garage or at the boy/girl room can start companies that survive and grow beyond imagination, like GM, Microsoft and Apple. Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and their mates did something spectacular in the 70’s and 80’s. They used their eagerness and intelligence to investigate new sides of life; they were at the cutting edge of information technology. Maybe they were smart and lucky; they were first. One should not prevent that kind of people, wherever they come from in the world, to live and nurture inside the USA if they want to.

9/11 was not only a catastrophic act of terror and violence, but also a lack of US intelligence. I don’t think we can remove this kind of action from the future by closing our borders. There are several western native boys (and girls) that, because of their lack of affiliation, and despair, go into ISIS/Daesh or other fundamentalist groups to fight against whatever, or just do the violence on their own (like Anders B. Breivik in Oslo in 2011). It is not Islamic beliefs per se that makes violence, even though the text in some ways inspires to kill and get paid after death, but the fundamentalism that is attached to it and to all beliefs, all cultures, and all humans. Humans seem to exaggerate everything; we are so damn dramatic! It’s not what we believe in that’s the problem, but why we become narrow-minded and hateful. Our brains seem to take a bunch of shortcuts and easy tracks and forget some basic moral rules that our brains also try to establish. It’s Dionysus against Apollo, Id contra Superego.

We forget that there were a lot more terror in the 1970’s and 80’s than today, which we forget because there was less terror in the 1990’s. Then 9/11 in 2001 came as a chock to us all. You can say that 9/11 erased the terror in the 70’s and 80’s from our memories. A new era began; the Islamic fundamentalist-period. The difference between then and now is that the terror is more global; it can hit you anywhere. I remember the IRA (North Ireland) and ETA (Basque Country, Spain). I also remember the Baader-Meinhof Group (RAF) from Germany. These organizations dominated the news 30-40 years ago. Now it’s Islamic extremists that spread fear around the world. I don’t think it’s clever to use fear as an excuse for closing borders and giving birth and nurture to demagogues. Terrorists want to push some buttons more than kill innocent people.

[Ed. Haereid Addendum]

May 7 I read in a newspaper (CBS News) that the 97-year-old prosecutor from the Nurnberg process in 1946, Benjamin Ferencz, said that “war makes murderers out of otherwise decent people”. Several people, including philosophers like Hannah Arendt, have written about the Nazism, and asked necessary questions. Arendt meant, as I have read her, that evilness is (primarily) not based on sadism but rather obedience. Are human monsters, or are we obedient? The psychological Milgram experiment from 1961
implies that we are obedient and not sadists. But does it matter for the victims?

Why do humans act evil, not only on macro-level as national or religious leaders, but also on micro-level in the school yard (bullying), as mass murderers, psychopaths, sociopaths…? Is it because of one person’s lack of love from his/her parents? Is it because of brain damage? Is it because of a potential destructive pattern we all have inside us? Is it because we get an ecstasy, a rapture that prevents us from acting rational and makes us un-empathic? Is it because of revenge? Or is it because this is the natural and best way to evolve as a species? Is it because we think this is what the authority expects from us?

Is there any way that we can control our monstrous side?

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Erik Haereid: “About my writing: Most of my journalistic work I did in the pre-Internet-period (80s, 90s), and the articles I have saved are, at best, aged in a box somewhere in the cellar. Maybe I can find some of it, but I don’t think that’s that interesting.

Most of my written work, including crime short stories in A-Magasinet (Aftenposten (one of the main newspapers in Norway, as Nettavisen is)), a second place (runner up) in a nationwide writing contest in 1985 arranged by Aftenposten, and several articles in different newspapers, magazines and so on in the 1980s and early 1990s, is not published online, as far as I can see. This was a decade and less before the Internet, so a lot of this is only on paper.

From the last decade, where I used more time doing other stuff than writing, for instance work, to mention is my book from 2011, the IQ-blog and some other stuff I don’t think is interesting here.

I keep my personal interests quite private. To you, I can mention that I play golf, read a lot, like debating, and 30-40 years and even more kilos ago I was quite sporty, and competed in cross country skiing among other things (I did my military duty in His Majesty The King’s Guard (Drilltroppen)). I have been asked from a couple in the high IQ societies, if I know Magnus Carlsten. The answer is no, I don’t :)

Haereid has interviewed In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal Advisory Board Member Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, some select articles include topics on AI in What will happen when the ASI (Artificial superintelligence) evolves; Utopia or Dystopia? (Norwegian), on IQ-measures in 180 i IQ kan være det samme som 150, and on the Norwegian pension system (Norwegian). His book on the winner/loser-society model based on social psychology published in 2011 (Nasjonalbiblioteket), which does have a summary review here.

Erik lives in Larkollen, Norway. He was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1963. He speaks Danish, English, and Norwegian. He is Actuary, Author, Consultant, Entrepreneur, and Statistician. He is the owner of, chairman of, and consultant at Nordic Insurance Administration.


He earned an M.Sc. in Statistics and Actuarial Sciences from 1990-1991 and a Bachelor’s degree from 1984 to 1986/87 from the University of Oslo. He did some environmental volunteerism with Norges Naturvernforbund (Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature), where he was an activist, freelance journalist and arranged ‘Sykkelagen i Oslo’ twice (1989 and 1990) as well as environmental issues lectures.

He has industry experience in accounting, insurance, and insurance as a broker. He writes in his IQ-blog the online newspaper Nettavisen. He has personal interests in history, philosophy, reading, social psychology, and writing.

He is a member of many high-IQ societies including 4G, Catholig, Civiq, ELITE, GenerIQ, Glia, Grand, HELLIQ, HRIQ, Intruellect, ISI-S, ISPE, KSTHIQ, MENSQ, MilenijaNOUS, OLYMPIQ, Real, sPlq, STHIQ, Tetra, This, Ultima, VeNuS, and WGD.

Rick G. Rosner: “According to semi-reputable sources, Rick Rosner has the world’s second-highest IQ. He earned 12 years of college credit in less than a year and graduated with the equivalent of 8 majors. He has received 8 Writer’s Guild Award and Emmy nominations, and was named 2013 North American Genius of the Year by The World Genius Registry.

He has written for Remote Control, Crank Yankers, The Man Show, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards, and Jimmy Kimmel Live!. He has also
worked as a stripper, a bouncer, a roller-skating waiter, and a nude model. In a TV commercial, Domino’s Pizza named him the World’s Smartest Man. He was also named Best Bouncer in the Denver Area by Westwood Magazine.

He spent the disco era as an undercover high school student. 25 years as a bar bouncer, American fake ID-catcher, 25+ years as a stripper, and nude art model, and nearly 30 years as a writer for more than 2,500 hours of network television.

He lost on Jeopardy!, sued Who Wants to Be a Millionaire over a bad question, and lost the lawsuit. He spent 35+ years on a modified version of Big Bang Theory. Now, he mostly sits around tweeting in a towel. He lives in Los Angeles, California with his wife and daughter.

You can send an email or a direct message via Twitter, or find him on LinkedIn, or see him on YouTube.”

An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Part Four)

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Abstract

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is an Author, Educator, and Philosopher of Science and Ethics. He discusses: helping others in hardship; his difficult story; religious beliefs and evolution.

Keywords: author, Christopher DiCarlo, educator, philosopher.

An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Author, Educator, Philosopher of Science and Ethics (Part Four)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Also, not only what it would take but, what is the recourse to do it? What organizations, associations, and support exists? For instance, we see this with people leaving Islam in many cases.

The Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain, I know Maryam Namazie does work through there. I can imagine. It is a difficult job not only in terms of likely ridiculous and threatening emails and letters but the amount of time and resources out of one's life to do this.

I can imagine if you are dealing with a shaman if you are dealing with a major figure in a society or group, it would be a difficult thing. In fact, Steven Weinberg, senior physicist, noble prize winner, as you know, he was talking about a man.

He worked with Abdus Salam, who was a noble prize co-winner in physics. Abdus Salam was saying when he was trying to bring science to the Islamic world, MENA region; he had a hell of a time because they were open to technology but not to science because the clerics and imams found that science was a corrosive force for religion.

2. Jacobsen: I am not familiar enough with it. What is the story there?

DiCarlo: I am not a tenured professor right, so I am a regular schmo. When I was teaching at a university in 2005, towards the end of a critical thinking course, I wrote on the board. I said, “Okay, so, we have all learned these skills. We have all learned various types of information.”

Steven Weinberg stated in the Atheism Tapes, “Damn it, I think they were right.” It is a consistent theme. You see this in Saudi Arabia. Atheism was made illegal or a terrorist offence, recently. It was claimed as terrorism against the state.

Something to that effect. Although there was a good move where women got the right to vote. However, what, 16 or 14 women showed up? Because you need a male companion to drive to the voting booth.

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Being an avid atheist has significantly hurt my career, I do not know if you are familiar with that?
“If we take evolutionary theory seriously, and we should, what does that say about human origins?” Some students put up their hands. We talked about it. I said, “Okay, let’s look at the entailments. What logically would follow if evolutionary theory is right?”

We look at the evidence for it, about our own origins.” Then I wrote the words. It would have to follow; we are all African. So, a student challenged this. She joined up with others. She was Aboriginal. I said, “I know your people might think you have always been here.” She said well, “Who is right, us or science?”

I said, “Not your people.” I was teaching in an area, which is 6 nations. However, then I said, “Look, can you bring in some leaders? I will bring in some scientists and we will show the class how to conduct a dialogue between cultures when there is a clash of science and mythologies?

So, we can have intelligent conversations. Maybe, we can continue to disagree and get along. The class erupted with applause. I thought this is great. This is what university should be about here. No, she hooked up with two fundamentalist Christians, went to the dean. I lost a tenure-track position.

Jacobsen: I do recall an article stating that science was “Eurocentric.” I believe this was one of the quotes.

DiCarlo: That is right.

Jacobsen: That is like saying there is Christian science or Muslim science. It is science. It does not matter who is doing it. The Aboriginal chiefs could be doing it. It works. It is the nature of it.

DiCarlo: I got headhunted to another brand new university in Southern Ontario. The deans were on board with me. The chairs were on board with me. The staff was on board with me. Everything was going well. However, I was such an outed atheist. I am on the radio. I am on television. I could not get tenure.

I was wondering why the provost was not rubber stamping the approval to make it happen and certain things would occur; and they would go, “We did not like that particular aspect. So, we are not going to give you tenure. Maybe, next year at this time.”

After 2 three-year contracts in which I was supposed to be tenured, I was out the door. So, I sued in the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario for discrimination of creed. This was the first recorded lawsuit where somebody is suing for discrimination of creed where creed is atheism.

Jacobsen: In Canada?

DiCarlo: In Canada. Maybe the world but certainly in Canada. You are not going to know about this. Because I have a bit of a gag order on this. So, my human rights lawyer and I took them to the task; they took us to task and tried to counter sue. For 2 years my wife and I nearly lost this house, we separated; it was unbelievably hard on our family.

We went to trial and they showed up with their five attorneys compared to my one guy, an ex-Muslim. The judge said, “It does not seem that either side was willing to negotiate a settlement, so we are going to proceed.” Their head lawyer stood up and said, “Who said we are not willing to negotiate a settlement? We will do that right now.”

They pushed me. For two years, they would not talk about any settlement until the first minute of the trial because this is what they do. They push you and push you and push you for 2 years of your life and chew you up. Then we settled and they put a gag order on me so I cannot tell you any of the details.

My lawyer said, “I can tell you about as much as I can tell you. It is what I have said publicly. However, that is it. I am out of a second job. Now, you sue two universities because you are an atheist, word gets around.” So since 2010, every gig I have applied for and I have won major awards.

Jacobsen: I saw the listing.

DiCarlo: Yes, I am well published, I am well connected, but I have been told they are never going to hire you because they are never going to take the risk.

Jacobsen: I know it.

DiCarlo: So, my life and my families life where I should have been a normal tenured professor making a pretty decent income, publishing, not having to worry about so many different things all the time, has been taken from me and I have no recourse because the lawsuits are done.

I won both lawsuits but they were only for damages and legal fees and things like it. So, they by no means made our family better off. So, I am stuck in this netherworld where I am pretty sure I am never going to get a tenured position unless I know somebody so deep like a chair or a dean who looks at my work and says, “Yes, get this guy on staff. This is the type of person we need here.”

Unless you become that big, but even then the unions can keep you out, there are all other ways you can be kept out. So, I am teaching at U of T and Ryerson.
where I can and trying to be as good an academic writer as I possibly can.

Now going worldwide with this critical thinking stuff, trying to bring it to developed nations where to me that is the greatest tool to combat inequities and injustices is to give the people the skills to the reason for themselves. So, I am a bit of a renegade secular missionary [Laughing].

3. Jacobsen: I have seen the statistics on Canada. So, when I interviewed Eric Adriaans and I interviewed Pat O’Brien, do you know both of them?

DiCarlo: Yes, I know both.

Jacobsen: In the midst of the research, if you look at the global statistics on no religious affiliation, it is not necessarily atheistic; it can be agnostic or others. Then it is about 16% in North America, 17% in Canada, BC is like 35%.

I am not sure the statistics on Ontario, in particular. But if it is the general national statistics, then, in any class you are going to be teaching in with 30 students, most are going to harbour some belief, where, probably, some religious principles won’t necessarily take unguided evolutionary by natural selection, which is the actual one – not theistic evolution and so on.

The idea itself is an affront to a lifetime for students of religious teachings, which teach them wrong things about origins and the development of humans. I could easily see why it would seem offensive to them because it is going against things; not only that belief, but associated with many other things. They are in the wrong.

DiCarlo: The thing is, with all of this, I am a really nice atheist. I do not come in banging the drum, banging the gong saying, “If you do not believe what I do, you are an idiot.” I am attentive to their belief systems because that is what I have studied at Harvard and throughout my life as to why religious beliefs are so important.

I have talked to Richard Dawkins about this. I said, “Richard, you are showing people a prefrontal cortex thing.” The majority of religious thinkers are limbic. It is an emotional attachment they are having. It is far older and far stronger than what our prefrontal cortex is capable of.

I may think all that I want that my wife is not cheating on me but my limbic system, my gut, is saying, “That bitch is screwing around.” It does not matter how many PhDs I have; our emotions are in most cases going to get the better of us.

When I go into my classes and we have talk about God, especially as it relates to morality and ethics and that thing, the first thing I do is I say, “I am not here to judge you, I am not here to tell you what to believe or not to believe. You all know or have done your research on who I am, it I am an atheist. So, I am telling you right up front that does not mean I want you to be one.”

Jacobsen: That is ideal. It would be like a journalist saying look, “I am part of the NDP, let’s go for the lesson now.” That is ideal because you know up front.

DiCarlo: Yes. I try to say, “You know what? I am here to teach you guys how to think. What you think is left up to you. I am going to give you a skill set. I do not care if you are an atheist I do not care if you are a Muslim. None of this bothers me. All I care about is: are you doing harm through your beliefs?“

“That is what you need to think about. Are your beliefs in any way generating harm?” Then I give my little soapbox talk. I say, “Look, you are in university. It means your beliefs are going to be challenged. Because where else should they be if not here? If you do not like your beliefs to be challenged in any way, do not take this personally from me, because I am on the spectrum, I am Asperger’s.”

“Do not think I am addressing this to you as a person. I might look at your belief set. But it has nothing to do with you as an individual. However, here’s how things are going to go down. Some of you – you know who you are, I am going to call you what you are. You are Muslim. You have a belief system. If you happen to be a lesbian or a homosexual, you know how tough your life is.”

“I am here to tell you right now there is nothing wrong with you. You are as normal as every heterosexual person in this world. There is nothing wrong with you. If your religion thinks that homosexuality is wrong. Maybe, there is something wrong with it.”

So, I created with Eric Adriaans an underground for students of Muslim faith, Christian faith, whatever, who are way deep in the closet, who can never have this come out for fear of rejection, ostracism, and apostasy. You get tossed out.

I tell them, “If you or anyone you know is facing a difficult time in your life because you know you are homosexual and you know this isn’t going to work well with your particular belief system, contact me once, and we have a secure encrypted site, I can tell you about it. We have meetings with others like you.
Those who are wondering what the hell to do because through no fault of your own; you happen to be gay.”

“You try to figure out. Can you be a gay Muslim? I hope you can. If you want to maintain your beliefs in that particular God, you being gay or not should have no effect. So, I am here to tell you, ‘You are a normal human being. If you want help, I am here. It is all I am going to say.’”

Invariably, at the end of almost every class, I take longer to pack up. I take a long time packing up. I talk to whichever students are waiting around and let them all leave because there will be one or two guys. They will be online pretending to do something. They are waiting for everybody to leave.

A guy will come down and he will say, “How sure are you that homosexuals are normal? I said, “As close as science will allow,” which is a high rate of probability. I say, “Let me guess, you are gay?” Half of the time they say, “Yes,” and the other half of the time they say, “No,” but I have a friend [Laughing].

I say, “Fine, have your friend contact me.”

“I will do that sir.”

Sometimes, I never hear from them. They cannot take the risk. Their community, their family, is so important to them, not to disappoint them. If they marry, they have kids. I am sure they must have secret societies.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Author; Educator; Philosopher; Fellow, Society of Ontario Freethinkers; Board Advisor, Freethought TV; Advisory Fellow, Center for Inquiry Canada.

An Interview with Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A. (Part Two)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A. is the Chairman for Mensa Pakistan. He discusses: recommendation of the MENA region moving forward in the identification, education, and utilization of the young gifted and talented population; advanced industrial economies for the gifted and talented; gifted and talented programs in the MENA region that would have the greatest long-term impact on the intellectual flourishing of the region; some informal education and practical life skills the gifted and talent should acquire if they wish to pursue a life in entrepreneurship and business; some prominent cases when a known highly gifted person went wrong, e.g. antisocial, violent, and so on; collaboration work with the other Mensa chapters in Indonesia and the UAE; the British, Canadian, and US chapters; hosting visiting Mensans from Germany, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, and the Philippines; very rare cases of a 1 in 30,000 kid; the removal of important discoveries, sciences, and philosophies by colonial powers; the most important ethical theories and narratives; revive the influence and culture of Mensa in the MENA region once more; terrorist or extremist activity lure some gifted youth into an unhealthy life trajectory, individually and societally; favourite writers, philosophers, and artists; the wisest person ever met; the smartest people ever met; people donating time, skills, professional networks, or join Mensa Pakistan; more men join Mensa compared to women; the positives and negatives of the perfectionist tendencies of the gifted and talented; the gifted and talented often left languishing or simply wasted as not only individuals with needs but also potential massive contributors to the flourishing of the nation; bureaucratic downsides to a national and international Mensa leadership; the boundaries and possibilities of national Mensa groups; and alternative IQ tests for societies with very high IQ cut-offs.

Keywords: Hasan Zuberi, Islam, Mensa Pakistan, Muslim, Pakistan.

An Interview with Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A.: Chairman, Mensa Pakistan (Part Two)[1] [2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: There seems to be a widespread loss of the gifted and talent for the benefit of society and the fulfillment and meaning, in their own lives. How would you recommend the MENA region move forward in the identification, education, and utilization of the young gifted and talented population?

Hasan Zuberi: IMHO, the Academia, Government, and society, in general, has to realize the potential of individual giftedness and work on the various available gifted programs right from the school age. It will help them identify the true potential and direction for kids and on how to carve their intellect into a positive skills-set.
2. Jacobsen: What programs exist in advanced industrial economies for the gifted and talented that could easily be implemented in the MENA region?

Zuberi: There is a number of programs, Gifted Education is widely used in a number of Western countries as a specialized area. STEM, robotics, and coding are also on the go.

Then we have the Japanese gifted programs introduces in 2005, and above all the Quran based education, that is a mix of subjects from languages, to numerology, to basic astrology and medicine (tib) that has been practised since the Islamic golden age, but removed by colonial powers can also be revived.

3. Jacobsen: What gifted and talented programs would take the longest to establish in the MENA region but would have the greatest long-term impact on the intellectual flourishing of the region?

Zuberi: I think the last one I mentioned above, the Islamic golden era methodology, that mixes the education, religion, with the daily affairs and prepares a child for everyday task. it teaches a student right from personal hygiene to grooming, and from multiple languages to sociology, astrology, numerology, and basic medicine (tib) all derived from the holy scriptures of the Quran.

Interestingly Quran is 40% based on the Old Testament (Book of David, Torah & Zabur) and the new testament (Bible/Injeel), and the remaining 60% is of the present, and future and covers the base of the other subjects. So for a region predominantly Muslim and with Arabic as a primary language, it is something that can improve the society in general.

4. Jacobsen: What are some informal education and practical life skills the gifted and talent should acquire if they wish to pursue a life in entrepreneurship and business?

Zuberi: Languages skills, interpersonal skills, digital knowledge, and above all the personality traits, like honesty, dedication, and hard work. These should be part of the skills taught to every inspiring individual.

5. Jacobsen: What are some prominent cases when a known highly gifted person went wrong, e.g. antisocial, violent, and so on?

Zuberi: In Pakistan, we had a very talented boy. He qualified and joined Mensa Pakistan. He was from a very deprived background and was resident of a slum area, in fact, it is Asia’s biggest slum called Orangi Town in Karachi, and was very bitter towards life.

After he joined Mensa, we the management committee tried our best to make him feel welcome and gave him responsibilities, which he did with pride and brilliantly. He got admission in the most prestigious University.

We helped him secure a scholarship to cover his education cost and, I personally, visited him to show our support at his university and met his teachers and fellow students, in one of my visit to Islamabad as Chairman Pakistan Mensa.

He was on honour roll and won a gold medal in the initial terms, but halfway there, he left the University, after putting up accusations on his faculty dean.

He returned to Karachi, and we hired him, as first paid post holder, but it turned out to be a disaster as soon after he took out his frustration directly on me and wrote to our Vice Chairman and other ManCom members to remove me from office, wrote to Mensa International accusing me of what not.

I had to answer Mensa International on all his false accusations, provided them with valid proofs on each point. After a long, due investigation process, the management committee of Mensa Pakistan found his accusations false and revoked his membership.

He hasn’t stopped there and till now, and often try to influence me through other international Mensa members, the last was Chair of Mensa Cyprus.

6. Jacobsen: How does collaboration work with the other Mensa chapters in Indonesia and the UAE? What have been some of the collaborative projects worked on together?

Zuberi: Well, Mensa Indonesia was long dead, when I visited Jakarta back in 2008, met some of the members and the Chairman, offered my help in reviving it. I wrote to Mensa International there and then and asked for assistance in terms of test booklets.

Mensa Germany came forward and provided support and send us the booklets there which were used for first revival test, on the same trip. Now Mensa Indonesia (MIind) is one of the very active chapters in the Asian region. I feel so proud of my small contribution to its revival.

Likewise, during my work year in UAE, I started contacting Mensa Pakistan and other members residing in the UAE, our first meeting. I still remember, had 12 people from 10 different countries.

After that Mensa UAE was active for a good number of years before slowing down again. Many of the members, like me, left the Emirates and others got busy with their lives.
7. Jacobsen: How have the British, Canadian, and US chapters been helpful in the development of Mensa Pakistan?

Zuberi: Well, the established chapters, British, Canada, and the US have always helped in terms of guidance, knowledge transfer, and above all accommodating visiting Pakistani Mensa members.

Mensa Germany has been always at the forefront in supporting, as in the case of Indonesia mentioned above, as well as in the time of our need, like when our office was flooded and everything destroyed, we got books from Germany.

Then there was a massive earthquake in Pakistan back in 2005 and many International chapters supported us in providing assistance.

Mensa Australia members send us their pocket money as monetary assistance at the time of floods in Pakistan. Likewise, Mensa China and Malaysia were accommodating to our visiting Mensa members and helped in every way possible.

8. Jacobsen: With hosting visiting Mensans from Germany, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, and the Philippines, what was involved in that?

Zuberi: Due to a decade of terrorism and violence in and around Pakistan, there were few incidents of foreigners visiting Pakistan; and among them, the Mensans were very small in numbers.

But we had members from many countries visiting Pakistan, primarily for business, and we, as the host Mensa chapter, tried our best to facilitate them wherever applicable. The Philippines mensan was the master chef, who joined a leading 5-star hotel in Karachi, whereas Mensan from Finland was part of a big packaging company.

Our Indian neighbour was there to witness a friendly Cricket match between our countries. We hosted special meetups for them for the exchange of ideas and knowledge and it worked very well every time.

9. Jacobsen: What should be done with the very rare cases of a 1 in 30,000 kid, or even more rare. How should we educate them, the unusually bright?

Zuberi: It is called Gifted or Special. so should be treated like one. The problem is the identification of such gifted talent as in most countries the talents are not identified putting them in more isolation and depressing state. Once identified, certainly should be put up with experts and should be educated in their field of interest.

10. Jacobsen: Regarding the removal of important discoveries, sciences, and philosophies by colonial powers, can you explain in more depth? Those discoveries, sciences, and philosophies with the need for revival and renewal of professional-academic activity.

Zuberi: The colonial powers had to subdue the occupied land and demoralize the occupied people, and the tactics they used was to make them realize that their knowledge, education, discoveries were all worthless.

Hence creating a feeling that whatever the occupiers are doing is good, just, and accepted. From cultural to dressing and from language to inventions, everything was ridiculed and put up as backward.

11. Jacobsen: Within the Islamic context, what remain the most important ethical theories and narratives? How do these apply to the current context?

Zuberi: In Islamic context, the most important ethical theory, as prescribed in the holy scriptures is of Saving and Serving the humanity. even it is written there that Prophet Muhammad was sent for all humanity and not alone for any one religion, tribe, nation, or creed. The killing of one person is termed as the killing of humanity.

But it seems that the message is lost in present-day circumstances and with terrorists glorifying their acts as acts of religion and justifying it from selected verses.

Another interesting fact is that 40% of the Quran is comprised of the Old & New Testaments: Zabur (The book of Prophet Dawood or David) Torah/Taw rat – of Musa/Moses) and Injeel/Bible (of Prophet Isa/Jesus). Whereas 60% remaining covers the time of Prophet Muhammad, and future till the judgement day.

The 60% also covers Shariah (which literally means the Daily routine/life) that covers hygiene (brushing teeth, combing hair, cleanliness) to mannerism (treatment with family, neighbours, merchants, business etc), and from dressing up to dressing down.

12. Jacobsen: What could revive the influence and culture of Mensa in the MENA region once more?

Zuberi: IMHO, localization can help. Be it in language, culture, and national interests. For instance, in GCC countries, in particular, they have some strange rules to secure the interests of the ruling class, and gathering of intellectual brains in one place is termed as something against it.
So if it can be done under some other contexts, like (related to some trade of area of interest) it can work in a much effective and positive way.

13. Jacobsen: How does terrorist or extremist activity lure some gifted youth into an unhealthy life trajectory, individually and societally? What are some protections older generations can create for them?

Zuberi: If I can talk with a brief history and from the perspective of Pakistan, the terrorism was started as a sacred duty and disguised as Jihad (literal meaning: Struggle), against the oppressing Soviet occupying of Afghanistan.

And was sponsored by USA / CIA and other West European countries to stop Soviet expansion to the hot waters / Oil of the Middle East. It helped the mushroom growth of the unregistered holy school, which only used their own version of the Holy text to justify “fighting Atheist Soviets for protection of Monotheism”

The reward for these young kids, willing to fight and sacrifice their lives was: money (approx 200 USD in the early 80s), power (weapons/authority), and religious backing (Islamic context of helping the occupied poor Afghans). Then they were left unattended and uncontrolled with all the weapons, after the fall of Kabul, the departure of Soviets, and the collapse of USSR.

Fast forward, 2001, after 9/11 and the attack on US forces on Afghanistan to counter Al-Qaeda, the narrative changed. Now, the enemy has a new face but the game is still the same, and with many players. From Russia, China, India, and Gulf nations, to neighbouring Iran, Pakistan and Central Asian republics, all are part of it.

So, education is the key. It has started in Pakistan, but still controlled by powers with their interests. The need is to teach humanity from the perspective of the respective religions and sects.

14. Jacobsen: Who are your favourite writers, philosophers, and artists?

Zuberi: Starting from Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (national poet of Pakistan), and the great Persian philosophers Jalal Uddin Rumi, Sheikh Saadi Shirazi, and Khawaja Shams Tabraiz. and in the present day Noam Chomsky.

15. Jacobsen: If you reflect on personal interactions, who seems like the wisest person ever met by you?

Zuberi: Have met many interesting people in my 22 years of journey with Mensa and my professional life. One of the best people was Late Mr. Ardeshir Cowasjee, a leading newspaper columnist and social activist of Pakistan.

Meeting him as Chairman Mensa was a great honour for me. I remember replying to his email was such a huge task, so articulate and well written it was, that it took me a good hour to reply to his email.

16. Jacobsen: Also, in terms of IQ, which is non-trivial as a life factor, who are the smartest people ever met by you?

Zuberi: I have met many, many amazing people. From all walks of life, not enough space for names here.

17. Jacobsen: How can people donate time, skills, professional networks, or join Mensa Pakistan?

Zuberi: People can join Mensa Pakistan after appearing and attaining IQ score in the top 2 percentile in a Mensa supervised test session, or by presenting an IQ equivalence score of 98% or above by a certified, recognized and registered Psychologist.

As it is a volunteer society, members willing to take up responsibilities donate time accordingly.

18. Jacobsen: Why do so many more men join Mensa compared to women? How does this phenomenon impact relationships, dating, marriage, and potential family life for the mensans?

Zuberi: Well, in my opinion, it depends on the choices and interests. Women have their own set of interest and do not really feel to showcase their intellect in front of a group.

Women are more compassionate and dedicated compared to us, the men, and prefer to use their intellect when it is required. In Pakistan, we have a mixed crowd, and almost equal number of qualifiers so the opportunities are also the same for all genders.

19. Jacobsen: What are the positives and negatives of the perfectionistic tendencies of the gifted and talented?

Zuberi: Positive tendencies are certainly that they keep control over their performances at their pace and as per their satisfaction. Whereas the negativity is that they want to keep everything under control, it affects their performance as team players and/or leader.

20. Jacobsen: How are the gifted and talented often left languishing or simply wasted as not only individuals with needs but also potential massive contributors to the flourishing of the nation?
Zuberi: I think; the biggest problem is of identifying the gifted talent; as if not identified, they have to follow the norms which result in getting bored from the routine lives and effects their own growth, as well as slow the pace of the tasks they are assigned to. But results can be 100% improved if utilized according to their intellect level and interests.

21. Jacobsen: Are there bureaucratic downsides to a national and international Mensa leadership? What are the upsides, comparatively?

Zuberi: Like many organizations, there certainly are, but Mensa is a high IQ society, we tend to find alt-routes, thanks to our amazing Mensans in mancom.

22. Jacobsen: What are the boundaries and possibilities of national Mensa groups? What can and cannot be done? That is, what are the limits for the national groups or representative organizations?

Zuberi: Well, like any organization, we too have cultural, national and territorial boundaries, and apply the law accordingly. Otherwise, all local chapters have their respective constitutions, in line with the core recommendations and duly approved by Mensa International.

For sure, we cannot interfere with any matter that is beyond our limitations and for that, we refer to Mensa International, which has an amazing system and protocols in line.

23. Jacobsen: There are alternative IQ tests for societies with very high IQ cut-offs. Some developed by qualified psychometricians, or at least those with experimental psychology and statistics backgrounds. Others are from intelligent people without these formal qualifications. What is the general perspective of the high-IQ community of these tests? What is the range of quality of them? What is the average of the quality of them? Has Mensa ever accepted them for membership? Have they ever been considered for qualification of membership?

Zuberi: Well, the societies are there, but since their acceptance rate is very limited, so is their membership base. So generally, it is very odd to see someone with qualification from these ultra high IQ societies. So far have not met anyone, in this part of the world, even from our Mensa crowd, interested or inclined towards these societies.

Appendix 1: Footnotes


An Interview with Dr. Katherine Bullock

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Abstract

Dr. Katherine Bullock is the Chair of the Islamic Society of North America-Canada and Lecturer at the University of Toronto. She discusses: family background regarding culture, geography, language, and religion; personal life and upbringing in the early years; first woman Chair of the Islamic Society of North America – Canada; the next generation of Muslim women leaders in Canada; Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes (2007); prejudice and bigotry; freedom of religion; the perceptions of the capabilities and roles of women; advancement and empowerment of women within the Canadian Islamic communities; prevention of those; some women Muslim scholars representative of the future and current leadership of Muslim women in Canada; and recommended books or organizations.

Keywords: Chair, Islam, Islamic Society of North America-Canada, Katherine Bullock, Lecturer, University of Toronto.
An Interview with Dr. Katherine Bullock: Chair, Islamic Society of North America-Canada; Lecturer, the University of Toronto[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is family background regarding culture, geography, language, and religion?

Dr. Katherine Bullock: I was born in Australia to an Anglo heritage. I was raised in the Anglican Church and attended the Presbyterian Ladies College for high school. In Australia, the PLC is part of the United Church. I think it’s different in the US/Canada.

2. Jacobsen: How did this build into personal life and upbringing in the early years for you? When did Islam become the proper way of life for you?

Bullock: The Church, and especially the all-girls high school, instilled some very important values in me, which I recognize today as also being Islamic – respect for others, commitment to excellence in work; the importance of family and community, being resilient and persistent through difficulties and hardship, and living an ordered and disciplined life. I converted to Islam in the 2nd year of my Ph.D. studies at the University of Toronto.

3. Jacobsen: You are the first woman Chair of the Islamic Society of North America – Canada and were its Executive Director of Education, Media, and Community Outreach. What tasks and responsibilities come with these stations?

Bullock: I was the Executive Director of Education, Media and Community Outreach for a couple of years in 2004. That position no longer exists. As the Chair, the main task and responsibility are to see to the proper running of the board and to be the main point of contact with the Executive Director. The board deals with ensuring legal compliance, setting the organization’s policies, strategic visioning and planning, and financial policies and budgeting.

4. Jacobsen: How might this inspire the next generation of Muslim women leaders in Canada?

Bullock: Hopefully just seeing a woman in this position will inspire another woman to imagine that possibility for herself. Although we’ve been a bit busy with all the duties I previously mentioned, I hope to establish a women’s group that can contribute to leadership development before my term expires.

5. Jacobsen: You authored a number of books with some emphasis on Muslim women in particular. In Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes (2007), what were the main questions, the central thesis, and the answer to the questions within the framework of the thesis of the text?

Bullock: Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil was born directly of my experience of converting to Islam and starting to wear hijab. I received so many unexpected negative comments from people around me, from strangers on the subway, to colleagues in my department where I was pursuing graduate studies.

I couldn’t understand why my friends and I had such a positive view on wearing the hijab and yet it is viewed so negatively by the wider society. I decided to investigate the origins of the Western notion of hijab as oppression and to compare that with Muslim women’s own perspectives and opinions.

6. Jacobsen: Muslims and other Canadian citizens undergo undue prejudice and bigotry. At times, this can include scapegoating and becoming targets of cynical political rhetoric or disproportionately negative media coverage, as far as I can observe.

Ordinary religious and non-religious people of conscience, typically, are appalled by this behaviour by politicians and others to demonize minority sectors of the Canadian population. First question, what is the source of this xenophobia and ethnic-nationalist hatred of the other and, in particular, Muslim women (and men) in Canada?

Bullock: First of all, I want to thank you and others like you who can see through the smear campaigns and for reaching out to gain more understanding. Muslims really need allies like that. I believe that the source of this xenophobia is actually quite complex.

It involves a sense of fear of loss of status and place; some white/Anglo/Franco nationalists feel that immigration is pushing them out of ‘their’ society, and will change its values for the worse.

Second, I believe anti-Muslim prejudice is deeply rooted in Western cultural discourses. We can trace negative portrayals as far back as the eighth century when Christendom feared Islam as a Christian heresy.

Some thought Muhammad had wanted to be Pope and failed, then breaking off to found a rival and schismatic group. While we now live in a secular world, many of the early themes mentioned in these
folktales are still around, such as barbaric men and oppressed women.

They passed on from Christian writers to missionaries, to colonizers, to secular publics.

7. Jacobsen: Second question, what can reduce and eventually – ideally – eliminate the rhetoric of division and hate? I realize some non-religious people want to eliminate religion altogether or stop the freedom of religion of others by implication.

I disagree with those non-religious people. I consider the freedom to religion and freedom from religion as equal rights for the religious and non-religious to mutually enjoy.

In particular, I note the emphasis among this subsection of the non-religious population on hypervigilance on Islam as a set of beliefs and suggested practices, and Muslim communities and Muslims as individual citizens in their respective countries.

Bullock: This obviously is a very big and important question. It seems, most, unfortunately, that some forms of hatred will always exist as part of the human condition.

I have recently learnt how anti-Semitism in Canada has lasted for over 100 years. I think the best we can do is try and make as many friends as possible amongst the different religious and non-religious groups, and take a “live and let live” attitude, as you suggest.

We should learn about each other through dialogue and shared activities. We ought to be able to understand our differences with respect, remind ourselves constantly what we have in common, and work in solidarity on issues we share concern over, like the environment, good employment, affordable housing, and good education for our children.

8. Jacobsen: Now, within the Islamic communities in North America, what tend to be the problems in terms of the perceptions of the capabilities and roles of women? This links to larger issues within societies in the refusal to implement the rights of women, and the advancement and empowerment of women, in global culture.

Bullock: There is so much diversity in Muslim communities this question is hard to answer. There are those that see total equality between men and women as being normal, those who favour a patriarchal attitude, and many shades in between.

There are those who think Muslim women should not lead, nor work outside the home and those who think the opposite. Social workers, lawyers, women’s groups and community activists, both male and female, have raised the plight of women in situations of domestic violence, issues of mental health and parenting.

There are Muslim women teaching things such as self-defence, literacy, and know-your-rights to try and advance and empower Muslim women.

9. Jacobsen: What is being done to advance and empower women within the Canadian Islamic communities?

Bullock: In addition to what I just said, there are many activities, projects, and education plans to advance and empower women, both spiritually and secularly.

To name a few, there are groups that teach Arabic, Qur’an and Islamic studies; storytelling and art to boost self-esteem; sports and good nutrition; and leadership development and volunteer recruitment to increase civic engagement.

10. Jacobsen: What is being done to prevent the advancement and empowerment of women within the Canadian Islamic communities?

Bullock: What prevents the advancement and empowerment of women in Canadian Islamic communities are cultural practices, customs, habits and religious interpretations that say a woman should only be a wife and mother, and not have any other role outside the home.

I do not mean to downplay these roles. I have children and I understand completely the special honour and role of these traditionally female roles. I also know the exhaustion that can come with multi-tasking “inside” and “outside” roles.

But it is quite clear that Scripture intended for women more than the “home-based” role only. Women have many skills and talents that can and should benefit society.

11. Jacobsen: Who are some women Muslim scholars representative of the future and current leadership of Muslim women in Canada?

Bullock: Dr. Ingrid Mattson is a much-admired Canadian Muslim scholar. In Critical Muslim and anti-racism studies, Dr. Jasmin Zine stands out, and in Muslim chaplaincy development, Dr. Nevin Reda is providing leadership.

As for the next generation, I know several very smart Ph.D. students who will take their place as leaders in the next decade.
12. Jacobsen: Any recommended books or organizations?

Bullock: One of my favourite books that I think most people would enjoy is the autobiography of Zarqa Nawaz, called *Laughing all the Way to the Mosque*. Zarqa Nawaz helped produce the first Muslim sitcom on Canadian television *called Little Mosque on the Prairie*.

She used comedy and television to try and give a better image of Muslims to the wider society. Her book is inspiring as it talks about her life journey and how she made it to that high point.

Anyone who wants an inspiring book about Muslim women scholars should read *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam*, by Muhammad Akram Nadwi.

It is a bit academic in places, but it is inspiring for how it reminds us of Muslim women’s scholarship in our history so that we can reclaim that role with confidence, and know that we are not innovating something, but restoring something that has been lost.

13. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Dr. Bullock.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Chair, Islamic Society of North America-Canada; Lecturer, the University of Toronto.

An Interview with Tim Moen
(Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Tim Moen is the President of the Libertarian Party of Canada. He discusses: family background, culture, family, geography, language, and religion/irreligion; religion and God; and arguments for God.

Keywords: Libertarianism, Libertarian Party of Canada, Tim Moen.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of culture, family, geography, language, and religion/irreligion, what is your background?

I grew up on a farm in Northern Alberta about 80 km NE of Grande Prairie with my mom and dad and younger brother. My grandparents were Mennonite Brethren who were branded Kulaks and fled Stalinist Russia and settled in Southern Alberta around Lethbridge. They worked hard to build a life in Canada and I’m grateful for their legacy of hard work, responsibility and sense of connection to something greater than one’s self.

Our family went to a non-denominational Church and I was a very involved and earnest evangelical Christian and truth seeker. I spent a year in Bible College immediately after high school studying theology with an eye towards serving as a pastor. That year left me with the impression that there were no real answers to be found and I realized I’d have a difficult time being a pastor selling any kind of certainty so I moved on to a career in Emergency Services.

I’ve spent over 22 years working in Emergency Services in various roles and still work today as a Firefighter/Paramedic. I love helping people and I consider my primary purpose in life to protect people from destructive forces whether its acute illness, fire, trauma, authoritarian force, or unclear thinking.

2. Jacobsen: At the time, what images of religion and God were in mind for you?

My image of God at the time was one of an omnipotent, omniscient, mostly compassionate celestial dictator. A God that knew my every thought and desire and had a plan for me. Religion to me was the institution where one became educated in order to obtain salvation and more closely align one’s beliefs with a very real spiritual realm.

3. What argument and evidence seemed the strongest in favour of the God of evangelical Christianity to you? This can include traditional arguments such as the Cosmological Argument (from contingency), Kalam Cosmological Argument (based on the beginning of the universe), Moral Argument (based upon moral values and duties), Teleological Argument (from fine-tuning), and the Ontological Argument...
(from the possibility of God’s existence to His actuality).

The most compelling argument I’ve heard for a God is probably the Unmoved Mover argument. The way Tom Woods explained it here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ2oY7nVM-M is very compelling to me. I’d always thought of the Unmoved Mover as a way of saying that there must be a beginning to the universe ergo God most have started it, which seems fairly easy to dismiss, but Woods explains that it that this view of the Unmoved Mover is a straw man and further explains that bringing potentiality into actuality is an ongoing process and demands a God. In other words; for reality to continue to exist requires a supreme being. If one then takes a layman’s interpretation of the quantum realm and how strange and difficult to explain the substrate of reality becomes it becomes compelling to imagine a supreme being there. It satisfies a deep psychological longing to explain reality in a way that is easier to understand and also a longing to never cease existing. In fairness I haven’t thought very deeply on these issues for years so I haven’t delved into the arguments for or against the Unmoved Mover in any depth.

Once you have a compelling argument for the existence of a supreme being you still have all your work ahead of you to argue for the “God of evangelical Christianity”. There are as many interpretations and conceptions of God as there are believers so its difficult to know how one would go about proving the existence of a particular conception. For example, what is the null hypothesis for a Young Earth Creationists argument that the Earth is only 10,000 years old? What about Evangelicals that believe in an old Earth and evolution? Are we expected to believe that God ignored humanity for its first 100,000 years, essentially sentencing them to eternal torment, and then suddenly showed up with a bunch of rules and then sent his son to die and offered everyone in the past 2000 years another path to salvation that didn’t exist before? These types of questions are ones that vexed me in the past and essentially turned me into an anti-theist for a period of time, but I now think this is probably not helpful to try and demand a literal description of material reality from scripture in the same way it is not helpful to propagate the idea that the scripture is a literal description of material reality.

I have considerably softened my view of Christianity over the years. My mind started to change towards Christianity after reading the writing of Michael Dowd who is a Christian pastor and author of the book “Thank God for Evolution” has a completely different conception of evangelical Christianity that doesn’t require belief in the sort of supernatural person in the sky I believed in as a child. It was further softened as I went through grad-school and read research on optimal mind states and started practicing some forms of meditation, based on peer reviewed research, that looked very similar to how I was taught to pray. Expressing gratitude is peer reviewed and is also happens to be how many religious practices teach to begin prayer. So when I’ve attended religious ceremonies and church over the last few years I’ve come to view them through a different lens. There are likely good evolutionary reasons these institutions emerge and there are very good things going on here and they fill a deep human need.

In summary, I think there are some compelling reasons to believe in a supreme being although I remain unconvinced. I think that Evangelical Christianity can comport with these compelling reasons to believe in a supreme being if it isn’t taken as a literal description of material reality.

Appendix 1: Footnotes


An Interview with Monika Orski
(Part Six)

Abstract

Monika Orski is the Ordförande/Chairman, Mensa Sverige/Mensa Sweden. She discusses: the fun of the super smart; researchers of the gifted and talented; theories of creativity and genius; other demographics of Mensa Sweden; and the old “nature” argument.

Keywords: chairman, Mensa Sverige, Mensa Sweden, Monika Orski, Ordförande.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*
1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Now, if the super smart are anything like ordinary people, where their higher general intelligence simply implies a bigger hammer or a stronger ox, they must have a friendly competition with some of the other chapters of the super smart groups. You mentioned some within the definition of Western Europe. How do some of the Mensa chapters have some competitive fun? How do smart people compete with one another, simply in a more amplified and varied set of ways?

Monika Orski: Probably in lots of ways I am not aware of, but of course I know of some kinds of competitive fun.

I am not a particular fan of board games myself, although I occasionally enjoy one at some Mensa meeting. There is a quite large group within Mensa who are very much into board games of different kinds, mostly with a preference for the strategic games where you need to think fast. No large Mensa gathering feels entirely complete without a games room, and some participants will spend almost all of their time in it, while others might step in for an hour or two in between other activities.

At EMAGs, the European meetings, there is usually also a football (soccer) tournament, where mensans from different national groups form teams – sometimes mixed nations teams, to get enough players.

Some national gatherings, including the AG of Mensa Sweden, often include a poker tournament. Only small money stakes, of course, as it’s purely intended for friendly competition for the fun of it.

There has also been a logic puzzles competition with national teams from the four Nordic Mensas. It’s been a while since anyone organized one of those, though. If I remember correctly, Sweden lost the finals to Denmark the latest time we had it. It might be time for us to try and organize a re-match.

2. Jacobsen: In the European context, who are some researchers with a great deal of experience and research into the gifted and talented community there?

Orski: This is a question where I need to resort to an excuse: I’m an engineer, not a psychologist. I don’t have the deeper knowledge of psychological research needed to provide a good answer.

From my own reading, I would pick the names Ian Deary and Robert Plomin. In the more local, Swedish context, I know that Roland Persson has done a lot of interesting research regarding gifted children, and there is also some interesting work by Berit Carlstedt on intelligence and intelligence testing. But those happen to be some names I know of, I’m sure there are many others.

3. Jacobsen: In the European context, who are individual, establishment or independent, researchers with interesting or unique take on creativity and, indeed, genius? Any personal theory or theories, from reading and observation, as to what comprises the roots necessary for genius to flourish – with, of course, a definition of genius as a bulwark for the theory or theories?

Orski: As above, I have no particular knowledge of the foremost research into creativity or genius. I think my reading is too amateur too really allow me in good conscience to point to anyone.

I know that there is a continuing debate on whether genius is a useful term at all. If we are still going to use it, I think the definition used on the English language Wikipedia page for the subject “genius” is a good one: “A genius is a person who displays exceptional intellectual ability, creative productivity, universality in genres or originality, typically to a degree that is associated with the achievement of new advances in a domain of knowledge.”

Thus, I think it important to remember that gifted rarely means genius. There are few geniuses, while gifted is a label used for a fast-thinking part of the population – be it the 2% allowed Mensa membership, or 5% as is often set as an estimate of the number of gifted children, or something in between. This is not a large minority, but it is not truly rare, as genius is.

How can we help genius to flourish? My theory, or maybe rather my guess, would be to follow the same principles as to help anyone gifted to flourish, only the genius would probably need more of it and at a much faster pace. Let people learn things, and keep learning. Leave room for creativity. Don’t be afraid to give a young person space to explore things in solitary occupations. Keep teaching them new things. Let them find their multiple talents, even if they chose to pursue one of them more than others. Allow them to create positions for themselves to keep exploring, and to keep learning also when they are no longer young.

4. Jacobsen: Also, I am curious. What are the religious demographics, if known or even simply surmised, of Mensa Sweden? What are the political demographics? How does this, potentially, reflect the international data on intelligence and political orientation & religious beliefs?
Orski: The simple answer is, I don’t know. We do not keep records of religious, ethnical, or political characteristics of our members. I might add that I would find it quite repugnant if a society like ours did.

Religion is not particularly present in Swedish everyday discourse. Many people would rather define themselves as of no particular religion at all. This makes it a bit hard to define. Also, it’s not a particularly common topic in everyday talk.

Regarding politics, some people tend to talk much more about it than others, especially on social media. Those are usually not the level headed, middle of the road types. But from what I know of the politics of the mensans I meet, I have no reason to believe there is any significant difference to the general political demographic. There might be reason to take into account that the educated part of the population is probably overrepresented in Mensa, but other than that – we have all sorts, just like everywhere else.

Which leads me to another demographic, where I have no statistics but a qualified guess based on who I meet in Mensa. While we have people from all walks of life, there is an overrepresentation of those with university education. Seems quite natural, especially if you take into account that in our part of the world, access to education is not limited by the financial means of your family.

5. Jacobsen: Occasionally, in the early 21st century less than the 20th century but still, we find individuals, internationally speaking, who crop up. They, at times, hold great stations of power and influence, and prestige.

They proclaim science as a male thing, not as a female thing; science only built, statistically speaking, for the male brain, in their some time terminology; even, that women simply are intellectually inferior to men and, therefore, should have a pre-ascribed role within society based on, what they see and argue, innate differences in not only abilities but also preferences based on temperaments.

Ironically, temperaments seen as innate in which they feel the need to encourage through all systems and channels reaching mass audiences in society, especially reflected in the reactions to non-traditional roles for women in representations within films and television, for example.

Even so, or while saying these things, often, these individuals will lose their jobs and be lambasted in public. Others, at the same time, will see them as pariahs of the genetic truth of the human species in sex differences – full stop, end of story, exclamation point.

What seems like the proper interpretation of the situation here? How can one respond to the arguments about innate differences and prescribed roles for women in society? Why do these individual make these arguments?

How do – in your lifetime of as one and in conversations with them – women tend to react to these individuals when speaking with one another, which may not be the same manner in which women speak in public or to men for that matter?

When they bring data forward, or historic examples of more men than women as the listed discoverers or inventors, what seems like a proper retort?

Orski: The old “nature” argument. Of course, if this was in fact a matter of nature, there would be no need to try to force that conviction on anyone, and even less to put it into laws, as those authoritarian sexists often will. No one seems to see it necessary to make laws to prevent that humans photosynthesize, or that we fly by way of flapping our arms. Why? Because there are truly innate traits of human nature that make those acts impossible.

My recipe for a proper retort is usually to simple say that is not true, and go on do something productive, nice, or both. There is usually no way you can reason with people like this. They obviously have a need to cling to some sense of being superior, no matter how unrealistic. Unless you are a psychologist they came to in order to get help with the inferiority complex that is likely to be somewhere at the bottom of this attitude, it is not your job to make them understand how the world works.

For those who are simply unaware of the different expectations men and women still live under, even in relatively equal societies, I recommend a little mind game. Next time you think a man is well qualified for a position, ask yourself if you would also think a woman of exactly the same merits and exactly the same level of professional behaviour qualified. Also ask yourself the corresponding question next time you think a woman might not be quite qualified for a position.

Lastly, for all the decent men with true merits of their own who encourage women to make sure they do not get positions based on gender: Ask yourself whether you would be in your current position if you were a woman with exactly the same qualifications. If your honest answer is yes, assuming you have a realistic assessment of your qualifications, then you can
congratulate yourself on being hired on merit, and not on the all to common male quota.

References

Appendix I: Footnotes
An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Part Five)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is an Author, Educator, and Philosopher of Science and Ethics. He discusses: Religulous; and foundational questions for naturalists and supernaturalists.

Keywords: author, Christopher DiCarlo, educator, philosopher.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Do you remember that line from Bill Maher in Religulous when he’s interviewing ex-Mormons? Familial, basically it is social suicide, that reminds me of this narrative you are telling me.

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: When I was in grade 6, we knew our teacher was gay. We knew he was gay. He was the poster boy for homosexuality but we were Catholic. So, we said, “No, he cannot be a fag, right? He married whatever her name is. Her Grade 1 teacher. He had kids. No, he’s not a fag.”

Turns out, he was gay. However, he was Catholic. It was the 1970s. He comes out. He gets excommunicated. To a Catholic, you cannot be buried in consecrated ground. You are forever in limbo. You are never getting into heaven with your family.

So, he stayed in the closet. He did what so many gay men of the time did: they lived a lie. He finally came out. His wife accepted it. His sons accepted it. Now, his community accepted it, but it took decades for people to realize this. His whole life was a lie because of a belief system.

To me, that is harm; therefore, it is wrong. Therefore, guys like me have a right to say, “No, I am going to speak out against it. I am going to try to be more compassionate to others who might be going through that same situation.” Ideally, in the perfect world, we do not want people to suffer needlessly.

We are all going to suffer. We have to suffer, but that seems so needless. Today, Muslim communities are even worse than what the Catholic community was like in the 70s. In Saudi Arabia, places like that, people get thrown off buildings, get stoned, get executed all the time.

Simply, through no fault of their own, for being homosexual, it is medieval. I have a right to speak up against it. It would be interesting for you to know that some of the work I am doing in critical thinking. I am meeting with people from Iran. He has to be smuggled into Iran.

I might be on a hit list [Laughing]. That I do not know about, but I do not think I can visit Iran like I did with Guatemala and what I will do with other countries. So, we are going to do it by Skype and by
smuggling the information and allowing teachers to take over at an underground level.

Jacobsen: It is going to be hard because the kids can report back to parents or authorities.

DiCarlo: I know and then the teachers will be in trouble.

Jacobsen: But these are also individual choices to make.

DiCarlo: That is it. That level moves very slowly, creeps. However, we have to try it. You have a mission in life. Philosophers have missions in life. If they are not trying to make the world better in some ways, I mean that is audacious as hell, but if we do nothing than we are doing a disservice to our calling.

Which is the love of wisdom, is the capacity to educate and to offer people more than what their particular code system is telling them is right and just. So, it is like an “emancipation,” for lack of a better word, to free up their minds to think in a more liberated way.

I understand this is extremely audacious of me to believe. That I am a liberator in that context, but whether I am pie in the sky misguided or not. That has become my calling and that is the type of thing I am finding myself to be most passionate about. That is what I am going to continue to do.

2. Jacobsen: How might hypothetical naturalist and supernaturalist respond to each of the 5 foundational questions of life?

DiCarlo: We get of them sent to us. Publishers want us to use them in our courses. None of them would talk about the elephants in the room.

They all talk about, “We can think about this, here is a Venn diagram, here is a truth tablet, here is propositional logic, there is formal and informal logic and fallacies and what not.” Of them have great stuff in them, but none of them dealt with the nuts and bolts of thinking. Which is: let’s look at the 5 most important questions that people try to answer that sum up the meaning of life.

Then we can look at the two major ways people try to answer them: naturally and supernaturally. I try to be fair in the book and treat both sides as fairly as possible and not tell you what side you should believe and put it out there for both of these sides.

In terms of the question, what can I know? The ancient skeptics, like Socrates, were so adept at identifying. To me, this is one of the most important distinctions that humankind has ever made. It is to be aware of the fact that you do not know absolute truth.

To me, this is probably the greatest understanding of our epistemic state that any human has been able to do at any time in the history of thought. By absolute truth, I mean knowing from a God’s eye view thing. So, the supernaturalists maintain that they are in possession of absolute truth.

So, it is not as though an Orthodox Jew, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, or whatever, get up in the morning and say, ” I could be very misguided in my views. I should question why I believe this stuff.”

No, I mean when you are a true believer, it follows that the information in your head is about how the universe is and that God answers very those other 4 questions and that gives you a certain feeling.

To me, the brain evolved in order to get you to do certain things in certain ways: largely to reproduce. However, along the way, your brain in eating and having sex releases certain chemicals that feel really good. Evolution has modified your brain over time to make you feel good by doing certain things.

What does that mean? That means that our brains get us high. Lots of things that we do get us high.

Watching a good movie, voting for the right candidate that we think will take this country to the next stage, watching the Raptors do as they did, or Milos Raonic doing so at Wimbledon, or swinging on a swing, or watching the birth of your child, these things get us high.

They are incredible experiences. Religious belief is the grandaddy of all highs. If you have got those big 5 answers supernaturally, things are going along and can get you through some rough times.

Not only is it going to feed you dopamine and serotonin and other types of neurotransmitters that make you feel wonderful; they are also going to produce endorphins for when you are stressed and will reduce your stress. So, the work that I did in Harvard looked at the neuropsychological factors of religious beliefs along this evolutionary model that I developed.

So, when you say, “What can I know?” To be consistent, a supernaturalist would say, “I know absolute truth. I am in possession of the information, which is absolutely true. That which cannot possibly be misguided or mistaken.”

When you are making a claim like that, man, it is not an easy thing to deal with that level of dogmatism. The number one question I get from students and people who interview me is: what do you do with a pig-headed person who is so dogmatic that they
simply will not listen to reason? Do you give up on them?

I say, “Obviously, it depends not on the circumstances. Who is it? Do you want them to give up on it?” My mother was a Catholic until the day she died.

We would have conversations. She knew I was an atheist. She would hold a rose up and said, “What a beautiful thing God has made!” I would say, “Glorious accident mother, absolutely amazing.”

However, nothing more than that. A wonderful, genetic freak accident of nature. As she approached death, I called the dogs off, essentially. Because you have to exercise a level of diplomacy and critical thinking when answering those big 5.

I thought the greatest thing for my mother as she is approaching death is to think she is going to meet St. Peter at the pearly gates. She is going to see Jesus. All of her dogmatic beliefs will be proven right.

She will be up in Heaven looking down on me praying for me to come back to the fold. Even though, we had our disagreements; I would never raise the issue of God. I let her go to her grave believing that what she knew was absolutely true.

However, for others who are dogmatic, who wish to engage in conversation, how I do it is less, less in your face, “What an idiot you are for believing this stuff. Here is all the evidence. Why cannot you see it?”

I tend to be far more Socratic. So, initially, I will not necessarily agree with them, but feign ignorance as Socrates did and say, “This God that you believe in, sounds like a quite an amazing character.”

They respond, “He is, let me tell you more about him.” So know, you have put them at ease. Now, you have made them more comfortable and let them know you are open to listening to their side. So, then say, “Tell me more. What else can this God do?”

Give them enough time, I will ask questions, which will much force them to think about things like “How do you reconcile omniscience with free will? How can they reconcile, if they are Christian, an all intelligent God with the capacity to see original sin?”

That is a no-brainer. That he didn’t see that. He had to make a part of himself flesh to die to himself to alleviate original sins from what he created, of what he should have known would be sin in the first place.

So, I get people to walk through the inconsistencies and contradictions, so that they see it. Instead of me hammering them like a Bill Maher or Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, type of approach, I say to them, “I want to believe in this God, so convince me.”

It puts them at ease. It makes them talk; the more they talk, the more you throw in some questions that allow them to realize, “Oh, huh… I never thought of that.” Then you leave them for a while and let them mull all that over.

Dan Barker told me, “Chris if I had someone like you who showed me the inconsistencies and contradictions, I would have changed my views in a day.” I said “No, you would not have. You were hardcore Christian. It would have taken you weeks, months, and, maybe, years.”

You and I know: we talk to former theists who are now atheists. They tell us their story and sometimes – although, it is rare – there is that flash of epiphany. That secular epiphany, “How could I have been so stupid?”

To me, those are people who were along that path, already questioning things, to begin with. They were the ones who were already thinking, “What am I believing here?” So, they read The God Delusion or looked up Sam Harris online or read Dennett’s books or whatever.

But it is the ones who are hardcore dogmatic who are firmly entrenched, digging the heels; if you come at them in an adversarial way, they are only going to become more entrenched and dislike you all the more for it.

I am trying to teach people how to have intelligent, adult conversations and disagree and still get along. Because that is your neighbour, that is your kids’ teacher, that is a cop who pulled you over. We want to make sure people are treated fairly. So, when people say, “What can I know?”

The naturalist says, “I know that I do not know what absolute truth is.” So, that, immediately, puts me into a pragmatic level of lessening my epistemic requirements and saying, “What do I know about cause and effect relationships?” It comes under the rubric of the scientific method and the sciences. That is what I will say I know.

But that knowledge is perhaps limited to being pragmatic, useful, and beneficial. It may turn out to be absolutely true, what physicists are telling us about matter or energy and biologists about function and mechanisms, may, ultimately, turn out to be absolutely true.

But all my colleagues and I are not in that businesses. We are not here to worry about it. That is what the
worry is about. We are all humans. Does it work? Does it cure cancer or put people on the moon?

Vaccines cause the recognition of certain types of pathogens and kill them before it gets a chance to kill our children. Pragmatic truth is really good. It has helped our species and many other species.

That is the difference between the natural and the supernatural claims to knowledge. Why am I here? The naturalist – I am here – one answer: luck. Luck that is why we are here.

If the world happened in any other ways and functioned differently, that comets, meteors, didn’t crash into the Earth at the right, specific time to wipe out the dinosaurs to give the mammals the shot that caused the line of descent from ground squirrels to simians to primates to the split divergence of orangutans from the rest of the great apes to us, then we are not having this conversation.

We are not here. Why are we all here? Luck: that is my explanation. Luck by way of natural forces. Supernatural? Depends on the particular flavour of the day. “By the divine grace of God. We are here because God wanted us to be here.”

What am I? A natural explanation, “I am a descendant of the African ape. Prior to, that more than likely, a reptilian, prior to that fish, prior to that much pond scum, blue-green algae.”

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I love that phrase.

DiCarlo: Prior to that, every atom inside of us was once inside of stars. Joni Mitchell was right; we are stardust, billion-year-old carbon. That is it! Nothing more special to us than that and why we are here is of lucky episodes.

Supernaturalists, whatever. “I am a physical being but I am also a spiritual being. I am often a dualist. That means there is some corporeal aspect to me that will survive bodily death and will maybe be recycled and maybe not recycled depending on the flavour.” That is the thing within us that does the choosing.

That is not somehow affected by the natural law and that is a tricky one to reconcile. However, none the less, this cosmic goo or this spiritual fog or whatever it is you want to call our essence and continues on after we die somehow in some other realm.

I have no evidence for that so I stay over on the natural side. Supernaturalists, they believe it for their various reasons and like I said, as long as that is not generating verb harm, you go ahead and you believe that to the cows come home.

I am not, but you go ahead. How should I behave? this is the field of ethics; most supernaturalists will have some divine command theories.

God has created us for a particular reason, wants us to behave a particular way and out of that emerges somehow a free choice. Out of your choices, you get the black checks or the red hearts from God who is watching your behaviour.

If you get enough red hearts over black checks, you get rewarded in some particular way. If you do not, it is not going to favour your protoplasmic goo after you have shuffled off the mortal coil. For a naturalist, we are on our own. We are in a big old cold universe. I am an ultimate nihilist. That means I have found no ultimate universal rules for behaviour, but I am a proximal ethicist. That means we have to come up with the rules. It seems like we have indicators that help us.

We try to avoid pain and suffering. We tend towards comfort and approval in certain areas. So, maybe, those connect as guides. Maybe what good and bad is coming from biology, and what is good and bad for an organism than can come from the bottom up rather than top-down, it will give us some capacity.

It will then make rules, which will favour our comfort and disadvantage our discomfort. It will extend to another species as well. Because other mammals clearly can experience pain and pleasure; therefore, we owe them rights or must extend rights to them as well.

Nothing in the universe tells me in any way that I am more privileged than a squirrel. If you can show me that, please do. I am more conscious, maybe than a squirrel, but a squirrel is way better at other things, e.g., walking on a wire, than I am.

So, why do I get to value my life more than that of a squirrel? Or we can talk about hierarchies if you want but that would get into a criteria problem. What criteria now? Is that entirely arbitrary and favours ethnocentrism and anthropocentrism?

So, I, basically, want humans to get along as much as we possibly can so we can get as much as what we want, but that cannot be at the expense of other species and other humans. I am not saying this is easy to figure out.

This is what social and political theory is about, trying to make sure people have the lives that they want, but not at the cost of so many others. That means another species as well.

That goes right to the level: I am an omnivore; I enjoy eating meat as much as I enjoy eating plant
products. However, I do not eat as much pork anymore because I drive into Toronto and see those huge trucks carrying pigs.

I know how intelligent they are. I see they are going to the slaughter. I would rather not see them die, so I am going to try to cut that out as much as I can. I am a little bothered that there has not been more attention paid to.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Author; Educator; Philosopher; Fellow, Society of Ontario Freethinkers; Board Advisor, Freethought TV; Advisory Fellow, Center for Inquiry Canada.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Rick Rosner and I conduct a conversational series entitled Ask A Genius on a variety of subjects through In-Sight Publishing on the personal and professional website for Rick. Rick exists on the World Genius Directory listing as the world’s second highest IQ at 192 based on several ultra-high IQ tests scores developed by independent psychometricians. Erik Haereid earned a score at 185, on the N-VRA80. Both scores on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of ~6.13 for Rick – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 2,314,980,850 – and ~5.67 for Erik – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 136,975,305. Of course, if a higher general intelligence score, then the greater the variability in, and margin of error in, the general intelligence scores because of the greater rarity in the population. This amounts to a joint interview or conversation with Erik Haereid, Rick Rosner, and myself.

Keywords: actuarial science, America, Erik Haereid, Norway, Rick Rosner, statistics, Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part Three)[1] [2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let us talk about good and evil, what defines good? What defines evil? Do these terms suffice in the representation of the reality?

Or do these terms carry metaphysics and ethical baggage, which detracts from the reality of proper notions of morality? In a discussion on good and evil, we can analyze the topic from multiple levels.

Let us talk about the small acts and thoughts, the little world of good and evil, then the next session can engage on a micro-level foundation into dialogue on the medium- and macro-level forms of good and evil.

What seems like quintessential small acts of good and evil – everyday acts of kindness? Also, as an aside, does religious belief or faith influence personal conceptions of good and evil?

Erik Haereid: I have experienced a strong connection to others based on mutual feelings and empathy.

One time I met a stranger, a man, on the street downtown, crowded with a lot of people walking in their own thoughts, and he looked me in my eyes and I did the same and both smiled warmly.

It was nothing sexual (I am heterosexual, and I guess he was too), only a friendly empathic mutual silent
confirmation (“Hey, I see you”). I felt good the rest of the day.

Small actions like that are good because they enhance something in us. We did both, I am quite sure he did too, became better persons after that moment. I smiled warmly to some others, become more tolerant, friendly and inviting.

Most people, at least in my country, do not understand warmly smiles; they misinterpret it in mistrust. Many, not all, of course, think you want something from them that they don’t have or don’t want to give to you.

The mistrust is basic in our culture. We want the kind smiles and friendly behaviour, but we mix things up. Either we make it sexual, or we think it’s irony and contempt. Trust is essential here; you have to believe in yourself to receive good deeds and implement it into your personality and self-image.

When curiosity is replaced by judging people for their genes or personality, we have a problem as a group, if you ask me. Individual freedom has to be supported by respect for every individual in the crowd.

If not, some maybe gain a lot, but society is polarized, and this implies more conflicts. But, as we can see from for instance my country, the lack of winners strangles each individual; you are forced into an average (the average is the winner).

If you are outside the standard, the average tends to attack you. This system creates polarization too; you have to fit into the average to be accepted by the society.

A good deed or thought is when it makes the other person feel better, also in the long-term. It’s trusting in it. We have to believe in the behaviour. And the same with evil actions; it has to be pointed at us, and we have to believe that the person wants to harm us.

A good thought and deed are one that strengthens the other person’s self-esteem and self-image in a way that does not make him, her or them more extreme egocentric (narcissistic). Evilness is the same with the opposite sign.

In this context, I believe that good and evil deeds (and thoughts) have to make perpetual influences on the object’s mentality. If you save a person from drowning, you make changes to that person’s mentality for the rest of his life.

If you make a person feel bad about herself as part of her perpetual self-esteem, you make eternal changes to her mind. A rape is such a deed. Being bystander to for instance a school-killing, too.

The deeds and thoughts have to be meant; deeds, where the outcome is good/bad for the object, is not good/bad deeds if it is not intended to be. If it’s by chance, by impulse, it’s something else. A condition for good deeds is that the sender has empathy with the other person(s).

To hate or scorn someone for their genes and natural behaviour is evil, even though it’s impulsive and one can’t control the impulse at the moment. This is so, I believe because hate and contempt also are products of some nurturing processes.

You can choose to reflect on your impulsive thoughts, feelings and actions. If you nurture your impulses, you act evil/good. The fact that you have impulses doesn’t make them acceptable or true; they can be worked on and changed.

You can blame the forces of evolution, that something is cemented and not possible to change, and then fasten your immediate emotional experiences.

Or you can believe, as I do, in the elasticity of our brains, and that almost everything is possible beyond the present stringent scientific discrimination and reduction; that we in the future with help from AI, nano- and biotechnology will find a way.

It’s easier to act bad and evil, than good. Then you control your feelings. But the price is high; you also teach others to act the same way to you.

I think the best good act and deed one can do is to open up, and not close others out from your feelings or thoughts and invite others to express their feelings and thoughts whatever they are. This is, of course, more difficult than it sounds.

It assumes that we can handle our own feelings among other reactions and that we really are open-minded towards all other people. As soon we start discriminating, in thoughts or actions (normative, not descriptive), the tense and stress among all in that social realm increases.

Rick Rosner: I wanted one more comment on statistics. Now, it is frustrating because I have many, many years of college courses and extensive training in statistics. But statistics is beyond me now, in terms of being able to do it, because statistics is so coding based that I cannot do anything productive in the field anymore. Because I do not code.

I understand statistics and probability super well, but, at this point, I am nothing but a rank amateur because I cannot build databases, statistical apps, or work with statistical apps.
Now, in terms of good and evil, I look at good and evil as the preservation of order versus the destruction of order, order versus chaos.

Generally, everything is dressed in story and detail, but, basically, when people are fighting for good; they are fighting for the preservation of structure and order and, usually, higher order.

Star Wars is probably our most prominent good versus evil story now. You can see good as being a higher order that includes individuality and liberty, and the ability to do high-level things. That to be fully developed people who are free to pursue their lives.

The Empire is a suppressive force, which will blow up your planet if you defy them. It is a lower level of order. It is draconian and rule-based and is based on a few simple rules.

The people who are in favour of liberty, the Jedi and the Rebels, stand for a higher level of, say, information processing. The ability to look at the world and address it in sophisticated and creative ways rather than having to reduce the world into a few simple rules as The Empire does.

Good versus evil is about higher-level information processing versus chaos and lower level information processing. The increase in information and order in the world is basically good.

To further clarify based on the questions from you, Scott, evil is associated with the destruction of higher order, whether it is killing a living being, where the living being is higher order, or destroying works of art that are reflections of higher order and so on.

These terms carry ethical baggage, sure, because the ideas are usually brought to us within a philosophical framework that is often obsolete to some extent and has developed its own repressive and not innovative characteristics.

For instance, America is based on, or a lot of American politics is rooted in, the Constitution is the highest level of rule-giving order.

What we have been running into in today’s stupid American politics, the dumber forces in politics trying to justify whatever they do that is reactionary or repressive by saying that it is based on the originalist conception of the Constitution.

That this is immutable. You must let people have as many guns as they want given the Second Amendment to the Constitution. Then people on the Liberal side arguing less persuasively because they do not have the infrastructure and ruthlessness of the Conservative side.

That our understanding of the Constitution must be tempered by 225 years of history. That the Constitution is centuries old and it is not going to adequately address every possible thing.

So, the Constitution of this embodiment or this symbol of good, but it is obsolete in a lot of ways. So, yes, conceptions of good and evil can have ethical and historical baggage that fuck things up.

[Addendum from Rick.]

As an addendum, I have said this at greater length, and so have a lot of other people elsewhere. To quickly point out the political situation in the US, due to some demographic game playing that began with the Republicans 30/35/40 years ago – before Reagan, well-funded Republican thinktanks began to research how to wrangle voters.

They found that dumb voters are easier to wrangle. The current situation in American politics is the result of one party spending two generations getting better and better at manipulating dumb voters.

The Republicans, who started out as a respectable major political party, are, now, at their nadir. Because they have become a party of dumb assholes. Once you start herding dumb people, you have to keep going dumber.

You end with a base and elected officials being more and more amoral/immoral. The values that get lost in the demographic push further and further right. To quickly sum up, it is like smokers.

When I was a kid, a huge percentage of adults smoked, probably well over half. It was in planes and restaurants. Planes would be a bit blue with smoke because so many people smoked cigarettes. Nobody thought anything of it.

I worked in a bar in 1980. 2/3rds of the people smoked. The air was blue-ish with smoke. Over the past 30 years, more and more people have gotten the message about how terrible smoking is – for people and animals around them.

What was widely spread around the general population in 1984, the person who smokes in 2018 is more likely to be either a dick or an idiot. They are like, “Fuck you! I will keep smoking.” They either didn’t get the message.

Or if they did, they don’t care. It is a smaller segment of the population. But in a Bayesian way, as that population shrinks, it keeps proportionately more of the idiots and the assholes. That is basically what has happened with the shrinkage of the Republican base.
If people want a more in-depth conversation on gerrymandering and electoral politics, then they can go elsewhere on other things you and I, Scott, have talked about.

Haereid: I have corrected my view on the evolution process; I see it as brutal, not evil. That’s an important distinction. The evolution process seems evil because it (for humans) contains a lot of evil actions, like manipulations that harm others to gain possession. But in a pure form it’s basically honest and egocentric. I clarify this below.

First a short comment on statistics and data. I also think that statistical methods and math will benefit more in the future, not least because of the huge access to data, such as Google and other big companies has. Greater storage capacity, stronger processors, and “infinite” data access (AI) in the computers will make statisticians’ biggest nightmares, not getting enough data, history.

But, I am not aware of how much and where statistics is used today, but know it’s used in many areas (like medicine and psychology).

Back to the topic: I agree that the development and freedom of the individual must be at the center and that we can and should mature to a higher order; as through a Hegelian dialectic.

It is the outcome of a creative, individual free will. This is what I mean when I say that egotism is altruism (see below); that the good exists in individual freedom and not in the appearance of a straightjacket of conformity and normality.

Egoism is altruism in practice (cf. Aristotle’s Eudaimonia); I use altruism in the sense that all actions we make lead to a win-win situation or any other outcome where one or all loses, and where altruistic actions create win-win situations. I do not believe in complete self-sacrifice. Therefore, I do not use the term altruism in the strictest, most rigid sense.

The best example of altruism is when we feel better after doing others well. Since I feel better, I did it for me, even if you also felt better afterwards. Win-win. You could criticize it and say that it is lack of empathy. But I don’t think so, because the feelings and emotions are contagious.

I do not use egoism and altruism as opposites. When we nurture ourselves, according to our own abilities, opportunities, in freedom, we influence others to do the same, and thus society becomes good (theoretically).

Altruism in the usual meaning of the word, i.e. complete self-sacrifice, often leads to the opposite of intentional intent; violence, war, assault, exploitation, pecking order… It may be a good purpose, but by suppressing your own needs and abilities, your own opportunity to get the best out of your life, and be brainwashed to believe that an overall system, a culture, trumps your own preferences and opportunities, you develop evil.

We become evil of being hindered in our individual growth and development (this is also theoretical: of course not all become evil to others, but perhaps to themselves; self-destructive). The sense of belonging is conditional on being allowed to be oneself in that culture.

In Scandinavia we have a well-developed welfare model, something that I’m a fan of to some extent. And we also have a culture that cultivates equality; by nurturing an egalitarian society everyone gets the same possibilities, worth and we get a good community. This is the doctrine. In practice, it’s almost the opposite.

By cultivating differences, people find each other in mutual respect, and then people act good against each other. It’s about accepting the strengths of others, and using them as inspiration. When we focus on the weaknesses of others, we spend our time on others and not our own abilities and opportunities.

In short, it is not about being equal but about equal worth, and that equal worth is created through acceptance and respect of inequalities. This is good.

At a macro level, such as nations and global societies, one should (to act good) prepare for individual freedom, safety net for those who, for various reasons, should be abandoned, general healthcare, police, etc. (welfare model), and the right to be different; being ourselves (since everyone is different).

When the focus is on equality, the culture undermines the individual’s needs; to develop their abilities, talent, opportunities. Thus, people get frustrated and attack each other.

Egoism (in my sense of the term) is about respecting each other, narcissism about not doing so. An egoist knows how to develop his abilities, but also to see what he is capable of and not. A narcissist believes he is God, Lord above others, and that others obey him.

Competition is important to acknowledge and see how far it is possible to develop. You are not competing to make the others worse, but to make the others even better so you have more to aspire after.

Appendix I: Footnotes
[1] Erik Haereid: “About my writing: Most of my journalistic work I did in the pre-Internet-period (80s, 90s), and the articles I have saved are, at best, aged in a box somewhere in the cellar. Maybe I can find some of it, but I don’t think that’s that interesting.

Most of my written work, including crime short stories in A-Magasinet (Aftenposten (one of the main newspapers in Norway, as Nettavisen is)), a second place (runner up) in a nationwide writing contest in 1985 arranged by Aftenposten, and several articles in different newspapers, magazines and so on in the 1980s and early 1990s, is not published online, as far as I can see. This was a decade and less before the Internet, so a lot of this is only on paper.

From the last decade, where I used more time doing other stuff than writing, for instance work, to mention is my book from 2011, the IQ-blog and some other stuff I don’t think is interesting here.

I keep my personal interests quite private. To you, I can mention that I play golf, read a lot, like debating, and 30-40 years and even more kilos ago I was quite sporty, and competed in cross country skiing among other things (I did my military duty in His Majesty The King’s Guard (Drilltroppen)). I have been asked from a couple in the high IQ societies, if I know Magnus Carlsen. The answer is no, I don’t :)

Haereid has interviewed In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal Advisory Board Member Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, some select articles include topics on AI in What will happen when the ASI (Artificial superintelligence) evolves; Utopia or Dystopia? (Norwegian), on IQ-measures in 180 i IQ kan være det samme som 150, and on the Norwegian pension system (Norwegian). His book on the winner/loser-society model based on social psychology published in 2011 (Nasjonalbiblioteket), which does have a summary review here.

Erik lives in Larkollen, Norway. He was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1963. He speaks Danish, English, and Norwegian. He is Actuary, Author, Consultant, Entrepreneur, and Statistician. He is the owner of, chairman of, and consultant at Nordic Insurance Administration.


He earned an M.Sc. in Statistics and Actuarial Sciences from 1990-1991 and a Bachelor’s degree from 1984 to 1986/87 from the University of Oslo. He did some environmental volunteerism with Norges Naturvernforbund (Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature), where he was an activist, freelance journalist and arranged ‘Sykkeldagen i Oslo’ twice (1989 and 1990) as well as environmental issues lectures.

He has industry experience in accounting, insurance, and insurance as a broker. He writes in his IQ-blog the online newspaper Nettavisen. He has personal interests in history, philosophy, reading, social psychology, and writing.

He is a member of many high-IQ societies including 4G, Catholiq, Civiq, ELITE, GenerIQ, Glia, Grand, HELLIQ, HRIQ, Intruelfeel, ISI-S, ISPE, KSTHIQ, MENSAL, MilenijaNOUS, OLYMPIQ, Real, sPlqr, STHIQ, Tetra, This, Ultima, VeNuS, and WGD.

Rick G. Rosner: “According to semi-reputable sources, Rick Rosner has the world’s second-highest IQ. He earned 12 years of college credit in less than a year and graduated with the equivalent of 8 majors. He has received 8 Writer’s Guild Award and Emmy nominations, and was named 2013 North American Genius of the Year by The World Genius Registry.

He has written for Remote Control, Crank Yankers, The Man Show, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards, and Jimmy Kimmel Live!. He has also worked as a stripper, a bouncer, a roller-skating waiter, and a nude model. In a TV commercial, Domino’s Pizza named him the World’s Smartest Man. He was also named Best Bouncer in the Denver Area by Westwood Magazine.

He spent the disco era as an undercover high school student. 25 years as a bar bouncer, American fake ID-catcher, 25+ years as a stripper, and nude art model, and nearly 30 years as a writer for more than 2,500 hours of network television.

He lost on Jeopardy!, sued Who Wants To Be a Millionaire over a bad question, and lost the lawsuit. He spent 35+ years on a modified version of Big Bang Theory. Now, he mostly sits around tweeting in a towel. He lives in Los Angeles, California with his wife and daughter.

You can send an email or a direct message via Twitter, or find him on LinkedIn, or see him on YouTube.”
An Interview with Tim Moen (Part Two)

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Abstract

Tim Moen is the President of the Libertarian Party of Canada. He discusses: activism and the Libertarian Party of Canada; election and feelings; media exposure and responsibility to the public; and great wisdom from the Lord of the Rings.

Keywords: Libertarianism, Libertarian Party of Canada, Tim Moen.

An Interview with Tim Moen: Leader, Libertarian Party of Canada (Part Two)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What were your early involvements in activism and politics prior to the Libertarian Party of Canada?

Tim Moen: I started writing and expressing a political opinion about a decade ago. I didn’t have much of a political opinion before and generally went along with TV pundits like Bill Maher and his 90’s show “Politically Incorrect”. About 10 years ago I went through a period of self-exploration where I examined my faith and realized I had not reasoned my way into this belief system.

I realized that if I had been born in another country my view about the nature of reality would be completely different and I’d be worshipping a completely different deity. My beliefs had been a product of my environment, my culture, my family more than anything else. This was very disconcerting and left me feeling like I couldn’t trust that many beliefs and I started examining my worldview through the lens of skeptic trying to parse out truth from falsehood.

Examining political beliefs through this lens caused me to realize that politics was essentially a set of implicit and explicit claims about the morality of using force. I started blogging, making videos and appearing on podcasts to promote clearer thinking and skepticism towards extraordinary claims about government and the use of force.

In 2009 the Province embarked on centralizing control of Emergency Medical Services taking control away from communities and local practitioners. My first foray into the political sphere was appearing as a panellist at a local town hall meeting trying to alert the public to what we could clearly see was going to hurt them.

In the fall of 2013, I wrote an article about my experience working with Neil Young on a film project about the Oil Sands and what I saw as some hypocrisy and unclear thinking. The article went viral and was noticed by some libertarian activists who started trying to convince me to run as a candidate for the Libertarian Party of Canada (LPoC) in the 2015 general election. I was very resistant to that idea at first, I saw involvement in politics as implicitly supporting an idea I found immoral, but ultimately they convinced me that I’d be missing out on an
opportunity to connect a lot of people to important ideas.

A few days after committing to run for office in 2015 my MP resigned and I was thrown into a by-election in early 2014 with zero clues about how to even file candidacy paperwork or run a campaign. I had a number of volunteers sign up to help me including a guy who moved across the country to volunteer for my campaign. We threw a lot of things at the wall including a meme that said, “I want gay married couples to be able to protect their marijuana plants with guns.”

That meme went viral and got me a lot of attention. I was interviewed on Fox, CNN and “This Hour Has 22 Minutes” made fun of me. This wave of attention led to me being nominated for the leader of the LPoC in May 2014.

One of my goals as a leader was to expand the party and get more people involved. We worked hard for a year and a half and had our best result in 43 years in the past election.

2. Jacobsen: Following election to the leadership, what were the feelings for you?

Moen: I felt very honoured to be given the trust of my fellow party members. This was followed by an immediate weight on my shoulders as I came to realize the fact that I carried a responsibility to be a competent caretaker and communicator of a message we all felt tremendous passion for.

3. Jacobsen: You have moderate exposure in the media. What responsibilities come with this public recognition?

Moen: Whenever you start getting a bigger audience there is a temptation to tell people what they want to hear. This is particularly true when you are a politician who is in the business of trying to win popularity contests. This is why so many politicians seem like vacuous and soulless caricatures of what voters want rather than their authentic selves. It is understandable, it’s really cool to be held in high esteem and have adoring fans who see you as the answer to all their problems and it really sucks being the villain that everybody hates and be seen as the antithesis to everything good.

I understood this when I agreed to get involved in politics and it was a real concern. I was really concerned about this toxic pull to bury my authentic self in exchange for popularity. In fact, I wear a replica of the Lord of the Rings ring of power to remind myself of this corrupting influence.

So with all that said the responsibility that comes with public recognition is to hold on to my humanity, my authentic self, to not portray myself as something I’m not. This is first and foremost a responsibility to my self, then my family and friends, and finally as a responsibility to the public. Then there is also an incredible responsibility to my party and people who I speak on behalf of to present the message that is so important to all of us in the most genuine, authentic, and grounded way possible. The by-product of speaking from an authentic, grounded place is that the message has much more integrity and is far more difficult to dismiss. Our message can seem shocking to some people and I think it’s important to be sympathetic and connected with listeners as I am delivering the message.

4. Jacobsen: What great wisdom comes from Lord of the Rings, besides insights into the potential corrupting nature of power, for you?

Moen: Power should only be entrusted to those who view it as a burden not as a tool to achieve some noble end. I think it also provides a path forward for fellowship and cooperation among dramatically different cultures. In todays divisive political and cultural milieu, it offers a demonstration that different cultures can be against globalism or imperialism, the idea that a particular culture ought to be the dominant one, and that they can work together for the common goal of guarding against the desire to dominate while maintaining their own cultural identity. It reveals that real leadership and fellowship emerges when courage is combined with a servant’s heart.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[2] Individual Publication Date: October 22, 2018: http://www.in-sightjournal.com/moen-
two; Full Issue Publication Date: January 1, 2019: https://in-sightjournal.com/insight-issues/.
An Interview with Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Part Six)

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Abstract

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is an Author, Educator, and Philosopher of Science and Ethics. He discusses: in vitro meats; ignorance and getting along; and final thoughts.

Keywords: author, Christopher DiCarlo, educator, philosopher.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Dr. Christopher DiCarlo: Do you know what in vitro meats are?

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Are those the ones that are grown in a lab or on sheets? They are thinking of doing it like with 3D farming with plants but with meat cells or muscle cells.

DiCarlo: Yes, exactly, but it is all private, no government in Canada or the states are putting any money into this. We know why. You are going to piss off the dairy, pork, and chicken producers. Agriculture is huge money. A lot of money went into that hamburger. It costs 250 grand to make one burger.

Obviously, they have to raise their capital by any means. In a perfect world, if we can create in vitro meats, animals do not have to suffer. It makes sense to me. If we have the technology to do this, then do we have to continue the mass slaughter of other sentient beings in order to continue to feed us?

I do not see why especially if we can control for the disease. We do not need hormones, steroids, or antibiotics. It all comes down to taste. In vitro meats are at a stage right now, where they are not particularly favourable. I cannot hold people’s feet to the fire. They make their own choices. We have to evolve culturally.

I hope that at some point in the future humans get a level of technology, where it is pretty much Star Trek. I would like an 8-ounce steak and want to talk to the replicator. It makes you the 8-ounce steak and no animal ever has to suffer.

We can transform matter and energy in a way so that we are a lot more compassionate to living, breathing, and sentient beings. We are not there yet; we are still in post-caveman days. So, how should we behave?

The supernaturals have top-down Divine Command Theory and the naturalists have a ground-up ethics. Let’s figure out the best possible mechanisms we can.

That is why we developed Relational Systemics. If we wish to treat people fairly, we have to take in as many considerations within systemic relationships as we possibly can: “What is to come of me?”
This works in 2 different ways: “What is to come of me as I am alive? What is to become of me in my lifetime? What choices do I make that result in certain consequences? And what is to become of me after I die?”

So, the supernaturalist, obviously, what is to become of me in this life, it depends what type of person you’ve been in the eyes of God. That will determine what type of fate you are going to have while living and after your death. A naturalist says, “I have no idea what is to become of me after I die. I do not have any compelling evidence to think that I may continue.”

However, if you are a good skeptic and a good naturalist, you would say, “I remain agnostic.” Now some people, some hardcore positive atheists might say, “You are belying your worldview, your ideology, as an atheist thinking that something could possibly happen after you die,” to which my son and I had this conversation for years.

We know so little about multiple universes. We know so little about time and probability. Let’s say you and I die simultaneously, we both get struck by lightning. Somehow, where you are and where I am, you and I both die.

We get buried and cremated, and whatnot. Our lives end. It seems like our lives have ended forever. My students keep saying, “But I cannot even imagine what that would be like!” I said, “Really? Do you remember what it was like 10 years before you were born? It would be like that.”

“So, you could imagine what that is like and after you die you won’t be able to imagine it,” Socrates said this. He said, “Life is either going to continue or it is not.” If it does not, you are not around to piss and moan about it.

That makes this life all the more important: get as much out of this life as you can without harming others, get as much as you can out of this life as possible.

Then my son and I thought, “There does not have to be a God in order for us to somehow have our existence continue after we die. All there has to be is enough time, an infinite amount of time and an infinite amount of possibility.”

If those two things exist, then it is theoretically possible that you and I are going to have this conversation again at some point in time.

Given an infinite amount of time and the multiple worlds/multiple universe theory, and based on how little we know about aspects of causality, it is theoretically possible that all of the components, all of the stardust that has made you and me, Scott Jacobsen and Chris DiCarlo, have somehow come together in particular ways; I am saying, “You cannot imagine the amount of time.”

Trillions of years are unfathomable to us. However, to a dead person, the passage will be instantaneous. Because if consciousness ceases, and if they are somehow regenerated, their matter reproduces that consciousness to recognize themselves in some other way again or even in not in different ways, then death will be an illusion.

Either we will never experience consciousness again, ever, or we will, but it will take a shit load of time to materialize.

When people come to me and say, “Atheism is so bleak.” I say, “No, you are selling it short. Reflect on your own ignorance. Our ignorance is so incredibly vast as to the true nature of what is actually going on there should there be an actual multiverse.”

I try to take my students from the level of subatomic physics to String Theory all the way through to the levels of cosmology and the expanse of our known universe. The 13.7 billion years that our Big Bang period. To the fact, that now M-theory maintains this may not be our only universe.

There may be an infinite number of universes. This bubble structure or bubble theory/model that they have outside of our own.

If that is the case, this is what Sagan talked about in terms of awe. I am in awe of the natural universe and what could actually be going on with my puny little brain. My insignificant little being in this magnificent huge backyard of a universe that we have.

So, I try to tell people, “What is to come of me?” Ultimately, I have no idea. However, if the answer is nothing, and if I cannot figure out a way to upload my brain as a digital copy like the great Kurzweil thinks we can do in 40 years, then that is it.

However, if I can gain immortality that way, by uploading my brain, digitally copying it then downloading it into an autonomous titanium robotic exoskeletal being, I would do that tomorrow if I could.

The last debate I had with this Christian guy. So, people told me there were Christians in the lobby crying because of what I had said and that it woke them up. That, maybe, that is all there is to the universe that it is all ultimately meaningless.

But like I said, we have what I call Proximal Meaning. Our lives are short and meaningful here.
However, in the expanse of space and over an infinite period of time, we are nothing. *We are nothing.* That affects a lot of Christians. It made some of them cry, which I did not want to do. I do not want people to feel hurt.

But suffering is inevitable and even epistemic emancipation can put people through times in which they are going to suffer because you are trying to think in ways your brain has never allowed you to think before.

So, I try to tell people if the universe is ultimately meaningless, and if that is all there is and when we die that is it, then you are not going to change it.

You are not going to change through thought or through your actions the way the universe actually is. So, why do not we all live as if this may be the only life we have, okay? And whatever happens afterward, as long as you live a life, as a life as your systemic self will allow you to live, then you have nothing to worry about.

You have nothing to worry about. Try to make the world where you are a little bit better for others, especially if you can pay it forward. If you can do that, then I think that is about as much as we can expect of you given what the state of your brain is.

You are not a serial killer; you are not someone who is incapable of acting that way. Enjoy this life as much as you possibly can because we have absolutely no idea how long we have to live at any given time. What’s around the next corner? What’s hurtling through space that might be headed towards this planet?

What idiot might be elected president who has their finger on the button of how many nuclear warheads? None of it is certain so appreciate what we have and try to live the best life you can.

This is what Socrates said, “There is nothing more important than thinking about how we ought to live.”

I think you and I have come back full circle to where this conversation began.

2. Jacobsen: Any thoughts or feelings in conclusion?

DiCarlo: I am hopeful for education that it will take a turn out of this bizarre, post-modernist, wacky notion that no ideas are any better than any other ideas.

That we can actually see for ourselves that, at least in terms of pragmatic benefit, that there are better and worse ways of thinking based on how it is we wish to behave towards others.

If we are to be compassionate beings, not to ourselves but to other species as well, then hopefully the turn is coming now, where people can have meaningful dialogue and can be diametrically opposed to one another but see the importance of still getting along.

That is the final message we take from critical thinking and education. We are always going to disagree, but it is extremely important to know why we have these disagreements and still figure out reconciliation techniques to be able to get along. So, that is what I am very hopeful for in the future.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Dr. DiCarlo.

DiCarlo: No problem, thank you.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Author; Educator; Philosopher; Fellow, Society of Ontario Freethinkers; Board Advisor, Freethought TV; Advisory Fellow, Center for Inquiry Canada.

An Interview with Dr. Madeline Weld
(Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Abstract

Dr. Madeline Weld is President of Population Institute Canada. She discusses: family background; factors in birth rate; ethical rightness of human rights; rape as a weapon of war; climate change and overpopulation; authoritarianism and xenophobia; and a rational approach to immigration policy.

Keywords: Madeline Weld, Population Institute Canada, president.

An Interview with Dr. Madeline Weld: President, Population Institute Canada (Part One)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of family background, what was it?  
   Dr. Madeline Weld: My dad was an English Canadian. My mom was originally from Germany.
He was working at the military mission in Berlin [and she was one of the local staff], choosing to marry her was unpopular with the Canadian government and his parents [Laughing].

He was a diplomat. We travelled a lot. Up until I was 15, I only spent 4 years in Canada. I lived in Brazil between 4 and 8. I lived in Pakistan from 10 to 12. Then we went to Switzerland and then came back here when I was 15.

As it happens, I was born in the United States. My father was posted in New York when I was born. So, I was born in White Plains, New York. Anyway, my childhood was constantly travelling every few years and returning to Canada after a posting abroad.

From an early age, I was aware of the population issue. I remember in Brazil seeing the Favelas and thinking, “Oh my goodness.” I was also aware, even though I was short of 5 when we went, of the contrast between how I was living, and they were living.

I got interested in population growth and the human population was growing rapidly. I remember thinking in Pakistan at pretty places, “Is this still going to be here? Or will it be deforested?”

That is how I got interested. I always have been aware of it for as long as I can remember [Laughing]. That is my family background [Laughing].

I have a bachelor’s degree from Guelph in Zoology. Then I have a master’s and Ph.D. in Physiology from Louisiana University in Baton Rouge. My most recent work was at Health Canada. I am retired. Yay!

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Weld: [Laughing] I worked for Health Canada for 14 ½ years up until October 2015.

2. Jacobsen: When it comes to demographics and population statistics or analysis, what are some of the top factors that are strongly negatively or positively correlated with the birth rate of a nation or a region of the world?

Weld: Certainly, the education level is strongly correlated. The higher the education level in the country. The more likely women are to have smaller families. That is strongly correlated, so is culture. Because in strongly pro-natalist places, where tribalism is also strong, it is harder to get acceptance of birth control.

I would say correct information too. Part of the problem in Africa is there are incorrect myths of birth control: the harms, causes of infertility, and so on, or that it is a Western plot. It is the case in some Muslim countries and some imams have been saying it. Then we have, in Tanzania, the president, Magufuli, who is pro-natalist. [He said people should have as many children as possible and those who don’t want a lot of children are lazy.]

The other very important thing is availability. Bangladesh got its total fertility rate close to 2.0. It made a concerted government effort to provide family planning for women in the villages in a culturally appropriate way.

Family planning and government-political will to do something are helpful. Thailand, for instance, in 1970 – and the Philippines – had the same poverty level and population. Then Thailand promoted family planning quite vigorously, but not coercively as in China.

The Philippines had the Roman Catholic Church that was against family planning. Thailand’s total fertility rate fell. Now, it is a net exporter of rice; whereas, the Philippines must import rice. Thailand is doing better economically. The work of Jane O’Sullivan in Australia showed something interesting.

Usually, we say, “Birth rates fall when a nation accumulates a certain amount of wealth.” But what happens is the reverse, when the birth rates fall, especially when they have 2-3 children, the wealth of the nations increases. So, individuals become richer.

I think we are putting the cart before the horse when we say, “If we bring wealth to a certain level, we will get a particular birth rate drop.” I think the most pernicious myth is the demographic transition theory. It assumes all nations will go through the same stages Europe went through.

That when wealth increases then the total fertility rate will fall. It has not happened on the continent of Africa, and a few other countries. People need to speak to the benefits of small families. Both to societies and to the environment.

Some have done this in an appropriate and effective way.

3. Jacobsen: On the last point, if someone argues for the ethical rightness of human rights – in other words, the implementation of reproductive rights for women, and if one looks at the economic development of a society as a result of family planning and other things like this, could an easy argument be made that it is both morally and economically the right choice to have family planning and reproductive health rights for women respected and implemented?

Weld: Yes, I agree. Even if the world were not overpopulated, I am in favour of women’s rights,
education, and the right to choose to have kids or not. I believe that is a choice best made by a woman and, preferably, her partner [Laughing]. That they raise a family together.

So, I think the choice is important, and the informed choice depends on being independent. Because a lot of women in these surveys say that they are not the ones to decide. It is their husbands or their mother-in-law. They think it is a duty.

It would be educating them that they have their own rights and rights to self-determination, and so on. That is not the case for a lot of them. Right now, we have the resurgent Islamism. That is one of the things there. They become very pro-natalist.

The more fundamentalist the place – regardless of religion, but some more than others – then the more kids they will have; the less choice and economic independence that they will have. So, I would say. It is, as of right now, people have as a right to have as many kids as they want, even if they cannot afford them.

But they will have the consequences. In a lot of these overpopulated places, where there is conflict and women are raped, even unhealthy family planning, no family planning has imposed the horrors that they experience in conflict zones, overpopulated conflict zones like Darfur.

It is partly ethnic. It is partly Jihadi. Even if you have ethnic groups that do not get along, the more there are economic and resource pressures, then the worse they will be.

4. Jacobsen: Also, the trend right into the present with rape as a weapon of war.

Weld: I hate to say it, “Humans are not perfect. They are a mixed bag based on evolution. Maybe, that behaviour is evolutionary, which is not something that I would support from an ideological point of view. But, maybe it is.

It takes a moral code to behave decently if you are the conqueror or the winner of a war – not to abuse the women. I wouldn’t want to be the women in a conquered nation or a conquered tribe [Laughing]. Some call them primitive societies and not technological societies.

In some cases, there is a lot of raiding and kidnapping of a woman, as has been described by Napoleon Chagnon in some South American tribes. But from that perspective, when the population is low and not technologically advanced, the damage is limited, especially environmental damage.

With our population, we can cause a huge amount of damage. The progressive movement ignores the impact of population growth, “It’s Capitalism or overconsumption.” [Laughing] But all these people, the question is, “Do they want to live on a subsistence level or consume some more?”

The Chinese started to develop and eat more meat. Can anyone blame them? They could not before. Once they got the chance, they did. As a human, we should not expect people to behave like ascetics once they have the chance to consume more.

They will continue to consume, not at a minimum level. The more people there are then the less likely they are to be able to attain a higher economic level. Right now, we are depleting the oceans. We are overfishing.

In Africa, most of the cause of deforestation is subsistence farming. They cut down trees, need more fields as the population grows but the fields might not last very long (erosion, depletion of soil).

5. Jacobsen: I agree with you. On that strain of the progressive movement or their arguments, I disagree with them. I agree with the arguments and evidence that population and overpopulation is problem number one.

It relates to another problem of our time, which is climate change.

Weld: China in absolute terms produces more greenhouses gases than the US. It has the population. Some pollution in places in China is unbelievable. They do not have the same environmental protections [Laughing] as we do.

I guess protestors can be more easily dealt with by the Chinese government.

6. Jacobsen: [Laughing] If we look at some of the leaders, some would be the Tanzanian leader. It would be the religious leaders of theocratic states.

It would also be some rising in Western Europe and North America with a certain zeal, tendency toward to authoritarian thinking, and xenophobia with attempts to try and return women to the home.

Weld: What is happening in Europe now, and starting to happen in Canada, there is too much immigration before integration; the population is not happy with it, with some of the cultural things happening. They are starting to react.

With the massive immigration in Australia, in Britain, in the US, it does not benefit the people economically. We do not need this amount of
immigration from an economic perspective. It benefits developers. It benefits bankers who get more mortgages. It benefits some businesses who get cheap labour. They have strong political influence.

Also, politicians want the ethnic vote. One way to do it through more immigration. It is what Mulroney’s Immigration Minister, Barbara Jean McDougall, did when she vastly increased the amount of immigration coming to Canada to a minimum of 250,000 per year.

Every government has done this. (Justin) Trudeau upped it. Finance Minister Bill Morneau pointed out young people face a job insecurity problem. If young people are having trouble and immigrants are too, why bring in vastly more? There is no justification for doing this.

Immigration has not lowered the average age. Because we bring in such a large number of immigrants (including parents in the family reunification category). This has been shown by several studies and known for a long time. But the issue of “our aging population” is continually brought up as an argument for more immigration.

If immigrants cannot get a decent job, and get more in public services than they pay back in government taxes, and two mainstream economists estimated this at $30 billion per year, how are they going to pay our pensions?

We have Canada’s policy of mass migration benefitting a few and the costs are borne by all. They include more congestion, more smog in cities, lost time in traffic, and so on.

7. Jacobsen: What would be a rational approach to immigration policy for societies that already have a lot of infrastructures?

Weld: Our infrastructure is under stress. You can see that in big cities including Vancouver, Montreal, and Ottawa. I can see the quality of the roads going down. We keep increasing the population. But we need to put more into infrastructure because they are being used more.

There is a lot of pressure on infrastructure. We should have balanced migration. There is no reason that we should be constantly increasing the population. When is it going to be enough, when we have 1.3 billion like China? The argument about big space is bogus. Because much of Canada is chilly and mostly rock like the Canadian Shield.

We should be realistic and incorporate ecological considerations. We should help people where we are. Whenever we bring an immigrant to Canada, we spend a lot of money on that person; we could spend more on people in place, including refugees – help them where they are and help them return to cultures more familiar to them.

Basically, we are finding all excuses to increase the population. The Prime Minister says, “We are strong because of diversity.” No sociological studies support that. In fact, they show there is less cohesion in mixed neighbourhoods.

Robert Putnam’s study (E Pluribus Unum, 2007) found that. Putnam is liberal. He was dismayed by his findings. He could not find confounding factors that changed his results. Whatever he did, his conclusions were the same.

There is no need to increase our population. We should support countries – not Tanzania – that are trying to implement rational family planning policies.

Population control has become a dirty phrase. Norman Borlaug, who launched the Green Revolution, which saved India from starvation that Paul Ehrlich predicted, said the problem of hunger will not be won until the people working for food production and those working for population control work together.

He recognized that a continually growing population will run out of food. We are turning Earth into a feedlot for humanity, in Paul Ehrlich’s words. I think it is what we are doing. We are cutting down trees and making forests into fields.

Everything for human consumption. Even green energy, like these miles of solar panels. That is not a place where birds can nest, or Cariboo can run.

Appendix I: Footnotes


Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part Four)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Rick Rosner and I conduct a conversational series entitled Ask A Genius on a variety of subjects through In-Sight Publishing on the personal and professional website for Rick. Rick exists on the World Genius Directory listing as the world’s second highest IQ at 192 based on several ultra-high IQ tests scores developed by independent psychometricians. Erik Haereid earned a score at 185, on the N-VRA80. Both scores are on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of -6.13 for Rick – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 2,314,980,850 – and ~5.67 for Erik – a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 136,975,305. Of course, if a higher general intelligence score, then the greater the variability in, and margin of error in, the general intelligence scores because of the greater rarity in the population. This amounts to a joint interview or conversation with Erik Haereid, Rick Rosner, and myself.

Keywords: actuarial science, America, Erik Haereid, Norway, Rick Rosner, statistics, Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

Ask A Genius (or Two): Conversation with Erik Haereid and Rick Rosner (Part Four)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: With a moderate pivot from good and evil, and morality, into religion and theology, what defines religion to each of you? What defines theology to each of you?

Within the definitions given, and in general, what seems reasonable and unreasonable in theology and religion? What seems true and false in theology and religion? What seems functional and dysfunctional in theology and religion?

Rick Rosner: The problem with theology and religion in general: it was designed to answer questions via making up stuff that were not yet answerable throughout history by actual understanding of how the world worked.

Religion has been and is a comfort. It has been a means of exercising social control and concentrating power. It contains a lot of guesses about the nature of things that have turned out, as we have learned more, not to be true.

It does not mean that you have to throw out the entire exercise. Because, to some extent, theologizing and building religions. That is practicing philosophy. It is just that philosophy, especially with it is theological, eventually turns out to be disproven.

On the other hand, as we have recently talked about, there is no guarantee that what we believe as supposedly scientific objective people will not be undermined by discoveries in the future.
I have been saying a lot, lately, that cold random universe is a misunderstanding and will be undermined by an order-based universe. A universe that everywhere that exists and emerges from increasing order rather than the universe playing out as a kind of random bunch of collisions among particles bouncing off each other.

Who knows what philosophical implications will be of an order-based universe? But the older religions, the book, Homo Deus, talked about some of the reasons for the way that the religions of the time meshed with the economic and social structures of the time to reinforce them, to help things function smoothly.

That the monotheistic religions, where Man in God’s image, functions great for a farming society, where we have to believe that we have souls, but we cannot believe that animals have souls because that is too brutal.

Because look at what we do to animals, Man being created in the image of God and everything else being created for use by Man helps agricultural societies function. Then the earlier gods with dozens of gods and spirits and stuff.

Those were helpful in pre-literate periods, where those gods were probably more improvised. It did not matter because no one wrote anything down yet, because there was not language yet – 60,000-70,000 years ago.

So, I like the argument the author makes in the book. Religion is a tool of its era. Each type of religion is a tool of its era to support or provide mental buttressing and societal buttressing for the necessary structures of that society.

But most of religions guesses about the nature of things have been wrong except in the most generous, general terms. It would be weird to think that everything was wrong until now we have science and then we are right about everything.

That seems deluded, arrogant, and counter historical. At the same time, we have all this feedback that we are getting things right because science is so effective at manipulating the world.

So, it is a mix. Where lots of evidence that science is correct, lots of historical evidence that our beliefs at any point in time will be disproven later, my best guess is that the specifics of science, most of them, will survive.

There are definitely 100 or so elements made of protons, electrons, and neutrons. All that is not getting thrown out. It is not some made up a belief system that will be overthrown 200 years from now.

What might get overthrown are the philosophical underpinnings why science works and math works, there’s always the chance that what we perceive as protons, neutrons, and electrons will get tweaked to the point that we barely recognize the later versions that people in the 1930s had a hard time adjusting to the quantum mechanical versions of the elements that make up the world.

Einstein famously hated the probabilistic nature of Quantum Mechanics. He worked hard to overthrow it. 90 years later, we are kind of okay with it. In the ‘70s, there was an ad for a Palm Olive Liquid, which was a dish soap that was emerald green.

It was supposed to be kind to your hands. So, there is a whole series of ads about Mash the Manicurist.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: She would talk about how Palm Olive is gentle on your hands. The housewife she is talking to in the nail salon says, “Oh, psha!” Mash would always say, “Well, you’re soaking in it!”

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: The woman would look down and her fingers were in this green liquid making them all nice.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: It is kind of what Quantum Mechanics is like. We have kind of been soaking in it culturally for almost a century now. What made people crazy in the 1920s and 30s, people say, “Oh, alright.” Nobody is freaking out about a single photon being able to travel through more than a single slit at a time. We have plenty of freak-outs to come, philosophically, as we move into the future.

One thing that is coming is the era of big data and the discovery of previously unrecognized relationships among aspects of the world that we could not find out because our brains are too small, and our data processing apparatuses are too primitive.

We will get hit with a bunch of new relationships to try to understand. Also, we will get hit with a bunch of black box relationships that will be tough to understand because the correlations will be made within systems that we cannot get at.

With the handiest example being, all the sudden: AI schema that has made computers the unbeatable champions of Chess and Go. We do not know what
principles they have developed within their architecture.

We do not know what algorithms that are working off. I think there is a similar thing happening with Google Translate. It has developed a metalanguage within itself. That is not any human language but facilitates the translation among human languages.

That is a big scary black box deal. We will have our big data apparatuses. They will be coming up with all sorts of relationships and discovering new aspects of the world, and correlations.

Why those correlations are, they may be beyond us. I read some science fiction story. Maybe, it as by Chang. The guy who wrote the short story that became the Amy Adams movie.

Anyway, it concerns scientists 150 years from now. I do not know. They write for the Journal of Human Science, which is a completely bullshit journal because humans can no longer do science because it has moved beyond regular humans.

It is all being done by massive information processing AI entities. So, what used to be the chief or the noblest pursuit of humanity, it is now this little hobbyist magazine, which would be the equivalent of a model railroad magazine today.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

We will continue to be surprised. Those surprises will continue to be in philosophical, existential, and theological terms will be good and bad surprises. Theology got hit by bad surprises during the past 2,000 years.

Earth got knocked out of the center of the universe. The Star System got knocked out of the center of the universe. Humans got knocked out of the center of God’s Creation. God got knocked out as the creator of the universe. Theology’s ass got kicked.

In some ways, we have gone as far as we can go to kick ourselves to the corner of the universe.
Although, I would argue that IC further kicks us, by establishing a super long timeline. So, we are not even favoured by having our own special place in time.

We got kicked out of our special place in space. Then IC kicks us out of our special place in time. A Big Bang universe, every moment of a Big Bang universe is its own unique moment.

But a universe that kind of keeps going as a rolling boil across trillions and octillions of years. There is no favoured place in time really either. But once we have taken it as far as we can go to kick humans and human consciousness into insignificance, there are surprises that will pull consciousness back to a pretty important role in the business of the universe.

Erik Haereid: To me, religion is about people, imaginations and metaphysics. It’s about what people in general need to believe in beyond their narrowed perceptions, and their struggle between conviction and if their perceptions are true or false.

Religion is also the history about all these imaginations, the doctrines, through history and in every culture that exists and ever has existed.

It’s a broad conglomerate of fictions, in the space where we have needs, doubts, we are uncertain and scared, where we are children even though we are grown up. Religion contains our absent or dead father and mother.

Religion fills, for a majority of people, the mental gap people tend to get when they don’t feel whole. But it departs from fictional movies and novels because its task is more existential; while ordinary fictions that we know are false are entertaining, religion is nurture and mental food.

Theology is the study of such religious belief. It’s the investigation of those histories, trying to prove if it’s true or false. To me, it’s also associated with the priest, who spoke at school and in the church, and represented an alternative truth and path.

And therefore it’s more like telling us the truth, like a teacher in history or geography, more than asking critical questions about if it’s true or false. I can’t remember much self-criticism from my childhood’s priests.

They told us a truth, with conviction and aura. I can’t remember that they said something like “…but, maybe what I tell you now is not true”. So, theology is, to me, the beginning of and cause to religion wars (Here I link theology to every religion, not only Christianity).

It’s the foundation of centuries with quarrels and unnecessary fights. Because it does not contain any doubt. And since religion contains several gods and texts which do not fit into a single truth, theology’s lack of respect and humility creates violence and wars.

God does not exist, other than a need, a wish, as comfort, to reduce personal responsibility and emotional baggage. A type like Jesus may have existed. That’s possible, and likely.

But most of the figures from the texts are mythical, and some of them may have existed in some way; the
texts exaggerate them to fit the reader’s needs, the aim of the text.

To me the Bible, Koran and the history of any God is a manmade project, well written, superb actually, fictions that fulfills many people’s needs. In addition, it’s an edifice of doctrines that force people into certain beliefs and ways of thinking.

It’s a “dictator’s” voice speaking to his audience, his uncertain and unsafe people, promising them safety and prosperity. And the people, in lack of independence and belief in themselves, listen, grasp and take it for granted.

To me, this castle of fantasies reminds me about how fragile we humans are, emotionally, and how dominating emotions like anxiety, guilt and shame, are. Religions are a tool for humans to abide by in their lives.

Therefore, theology in the sense that it tries to prove Gods existence, or at least to make arguments for Gods existence, is close to nonsense. The main problem is that some really think the text is true, whether it’s the Bible, Koran or Vedas. But as fictions, the texts can be rewarding.

What is meaningful is discussing human’s fantasy abilities. And our immense needs to build these kinds of illusions and imaginary worlds. And of course our inclination to let us convince; believe in such castles of words, symbols, actions, meaning, even though most people at some deep level understand that this can’t be true.

The history of religions is more like a testimony of a wonderful creative human brain. It’s absolutely amazing what abilities we have, to let us lead into such fantasy worlds, let us be seduced and directed.

And especially let the imaginations, or rather the people who manipulate, convince us that the imaginations are real. What I think is most interesting, which psychologists certainly can answer better, is where the boundary goes, that’s where we let go of the imagination and think it’s real.

I don’t believe in any God, but in the creative power, human abilities and will that faith triggers in people. The downside is the hate that also often appears.

Faith makes us creative; think of all the monumental temples, churches, mosques, and other buildings and monuments that people have built to worship their God. And all the beautiful texts. And all the complex and wonderful rites and ceremonies. The problem is not all these manmade constructions, but the dogmatic and sometimes hateful content.

What are functional and not? I think there are some moral compasses in some biblical texts that are functional, for instance, the story of Jesus Christ. The Ten Commandments is another example. People use it, and also to the good.

To people who have faith, religious texts, rituals, spiritual leaders and monuments have functioned as a safety net, social acceptance, and as a beam through their lives.

To us who don’t have faith, the monuments and rites can be affecting and beautiful. And the music. I have visited churches to calm down, to find inner peace. I like to walk on cemeteries. I feel quiet and peaceful when doing so. When I travel I often visit a church or two, because of its monumental and at the same time tranquil environment. It’s relaxing.

Religions are dysfunctional as extreme dogmas, brainwashers, messing up people’s perception of reality (in the sense that there is a reality), as inspiration to violence, and as motivation to perpetual religious wars.

A main problem in some religions is the double standard, like the situation in the Catholic Church with the Catholic priests abusing children. And when the theology doesn’t open up for new and other interpretations of the texts.

Religions are a lot about extremities. When parents and other authorities teach their children to kill in the name of God, with great promises both in life and after, it’s quite obvious that this becomes dangerous when it’s systemized. As we can see.

Belief in prosperity or at least a nice continuation after death could be functional to a lot of people, because it reduces the anxiety connected to the thought of the scary and unknown phenomenon death.

On the other hand, most religions demand some strict behaviour to achieve the nice continuation, e.g. Karma. This could also motivate people to act good in life.

There is for sure some functionality in religions like Buddhism, where one uses contemplation and meditation techniques and rituals to achieve inner peace. In the secular world, we have adapted it as yoga and learned meditation techniques trying to get the same effects.

One way to conviction is when the belief in God helps you substantially in a traumatic situation in life. If a dogma, a faith, a strong belief in whatever it is, can bring you through the most severe trauma, alive, I guess you lean toward believing that this God or
whatever exists in one or another way, even though it’s maybe possible to explain the phenomenon via biochemistry, psychology or something.

I agree with Rick in that religion is an explanation of what people need to know, don’t know, and based on an inner pressure of having to know. It’s about human needs.

And why can’t we live without knowing, without gaining complete control? Curiosity? Anxiety? Probably both based on a need to understand and see the whole picture that makes meaning and sense, and make us survive.

Humans try to explain their lives and the world they perceive, the Universe, based on various reasons. On this road, we get stuck, locked, because we tend to be convinced (because it pleases us).

When something feels odd or dangerous or dislikeable, people tend to reject it even if it’s based on data, science, logic, and everything humans see as truth. These obstacles postpone a smooth understanding of how things work.

We need to feel safe in our environment, before we move on. Rick mentions Einstein’s resistance to the probabilistic nature of Quantum Mechanics.

I am sure it took people some time, then back in 1543 (I had to look up the year) when Copernicus drew the new picture of where the earth stood in the Universe, and changed people’s consciousness from a geo- to heliocentric view, before they accepted that the Earth orbits around the Sun and not the opposite.

We often choose what pleases us; fulfill our needs, even if it’s false; even if it’s plausible that it’s false, and sometimes even if we know that it’s false. Then our subjective truth becomes something else than an objective truth.

The irrational nature of us is a part of the truth. We can choose to call this nature whatever we like, for instance, a part of a deterministic Universe that we don’t know yet, or that exists beyond what we are capable of ever knowing.

When people find peace, some other, alternative truth can be disturbing. Also, truths based on enormous amounts of data, information, and smart black boxes inside AI-agents. Maybe this is temporary, because we don’t know or understand yet.

Maybe there exists an objective truth that is good and not bad, where every human brain and body on the planet fits into a higher level of consciousness. We’ll see. Until then we are all more or less separated, with our own, individual truth, and in groups where each individual seemingly fit into some dogmatic truth.

If the absolute truth is a higher level of human consciousness, a summary of all individual truths, then the objective truth is the present truth, including science and religions, knowing, doubting and believing. Knowing can, after all, be reduced to a mental process. Maybe our own technology one day will help us to gain a common truth.

Religion is not wrong in the sense that it’s not functional, on the contrary. It’s, as Rick says, a tool, like eyeglasses, cars and computers. We always look for the best tool, the most correct map, and adjust it all the time.

It’s interesting and rewarding to read Ricks thoughts, like when he says that we, humans, are captured in theology, philosophy and existential questions and definitions, because we can never collect or reach science.

In the future, it’s contained in the CI’s black boxes with unknown algorithms finding new relationships and correlations to events and phenomenon. We will never be the Masters we dream about, gaining the total control we try to, understanding everything, being superior as we are to other animals.

Because on this road we invent things that prevent us from achieving this. Like AI and black boxes. And because this will happen perpetually, we will always turn us to theology and religion and spirituality, because we can’t accept that we do not know everything! If I understand you right, Rick.

2. Jacobsen: Also, to close the Part Three add-ons, we talked about the little world of good and evil. In relation to religion or the lack thereof, what comprises the middle world and big world of good and evil?

Rosner: You have been asking questions about various levels of evil over the last few weeks and days. Good and evil on a small scale. This reminds me of a diatribe I went on with you. It was under a different topical umbrella about companies that suck and people who are assholes.

I assume this falls under little evil. Things that do not directly threaten people’s welfare but make life a little bit more unpleasant for everyone. That can include microaggressions and even the refusal to grant cognitive credit to animals.

It allows us to, in America, to kill 10-20 billion chickens per year. We raise meat animals under terrible conditions. Also, milk cows don’t have the greatest time. I assume that will be looked at as a
greater evil when we have a better understanding of consciousness.

Although maybe not, because the kinds of consciousness that will be more commonplace, more complicated, and more powerful than ours in the future, the life of a chicken may not be any more important than we often view it.

Medium evils are acts that directly harm other people. That threatens their lives. That takes away their money or freedom. That discount their opinions. Right now, we are 18 days away from the mid-term elections.

There is massive voter suppression in the country. That seems like it is, at least, medium evil. The Republicans, or even each party, doing it. But the Republicans have been much more successful and ruthless about it, since 2010.

That is, at least, medium evil. Big evil would be situations like war. In discussing all these, you have to discuss whether the actions that lead to the goodnother and evils are intentional or just a matter of generalized incompetence and not being able to resist our own tendencies.

Also, under big evil, I guess, you would have situations of which we are not yet aware that impinge larger structures than just our planet. It is reasonable to assume that there are other conscious species out there.

That many of them are going to be much, much older than us. That their actions might encompass much larger things. There is the possibility of Star Wars level of evil. Then there is the possibility that the universe has some intentionality.

It implies the possibility for universe level good and evil. I realized that talked about evil with all my examples...

Jacobsen: ...[Laughing]...

Rosner: ...and no examples of good at various levels. But having decent manners counts as a little good, some Jewish people joke, including us, about Mitzvah.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: When I talk about them, it is about something really trivial I did. Nothing comes to mind like holding a door open for somebody. A medium good might be working to be less of a dick in a long-term relationship.

My wife and I, as a precautionary measure and not because we have a lot of conflicts, have been going to couples counselling for decades, about once per month. It is like doing maintenance on the relationship and then helping to build an emotional framework.

Where if there is something that annoys me, I can look at it, then decide, “Is this something I can let go because it has no real importance? Or is it something I need to call her on because it has the potential to impact our relationship? Also, are there things I need to work on myself that be annoying and whether I can lose them in the context of the relationship?”

Then there are medium goods, overt acts that have actual impacts on other people and also on you, like giving to charity. Since I have been unemployed, I have been crappy at it. Giving up money or time has a real impact on your life and someone else’s life, it seems like a medium thing.

It seems like something that you have to do. But it is not simply opening doors as an activity that you’re used to, e.g., I was a doorman for years. I am very cognizant of doors. That’s all I have time for.

Haereid: I believe that one main reason to evilness on all levels, from person to person, with groups like organizations involved, religious, political and others, and with states, big, medium or little evil, is overregulation (suppression, brainwashing, dogmatizing…).

When people are diminished or overruled by someone else beyond their own needs and opportunities, we seem to produce violence and evil actions, physically and psychologically, against ourselves and others.

We are kind of forced into a tyranny of egalitarianism, and of course, we hate it because it’s not natural for us. But everyone (my exaggeration) tells us that we need to fit in by being egalitarian. No one (another exaggeration) sees that to fit in and be good we need to be different.

When I talk about equality and egalitarianism I mean equal in almost everything else than worth and quality; to achieve a perception and feelings of that humans have the same quality and worth, we have to incarnate that we are substantially different. That’s my point.

A little evil could be to be rude by not answer a colleague or neighbour when it’s natural to be polite, and you are not distracted by something else. And in general being rude to someone you just don’t like, without any constructive criticism.

A little good could be to be more than polite to that neighbour or stranger you meet at the store, and say hello and smile or something like that.
I would say that if you torture one person to death, knowing that this person died under severe pain, it’s big evil because of the severity of the pain, even though no state or government or religious organization is involved, and even though no other persons are seemingly influenced.

If the evil is medium or big depends on the amount of the pain, for how long this affects that person(s) and of how many persons this affect. If one person damages a world (by for instance creating and spreading a harmful internet virus, starting a war or intentionally spread an AI-agent that is programmed to kill or hurt as many people as possible), that is big evil.

And if a group of people, like a religious fanatic group as Daesh, creates violence by torturing and killing people, that is big evil.

If you kill a bird because you are hungry, it’s not evil but brutal and necessary; it’s life, it’s natural. But if you catch a bird and make it suffers in some kind of pain some time before you kill it, it’s evil. It’s, as Rick says, the conditions before killing the animal whether it’s by hunting or raising that matters.

Regimes, both secular and religious, and groups like political or religious movements, are good when they teach people to think for themselves, let them act as they want to (to some extent) and evolve as themselves and not necessarily to be approved by others (persons, regimes, groups, organizations…).

When we get what we basically need we tend to accept that other people think and act otherwise than us, and we also approve it and learn from it.

Goodness is about getting opportunities, evilness about not. Religious texts, rituals, cultures can both reveal opportunities and not. The same about secular societies; the regimes, the culture, the organizations need to facilitate, so that each person get these optimal opportunities. This is big good; the freedom to choose, the number of possibilities.

A Norwegian priest said recently that God gives her a bigger perspective of life, and a room to express all her difficult emotions and feelings. Then God is good, for her and her surroundings.

I also believe that faith can raise one’s consciousness over and beyond the levels people with no faith usually possess; faith can under certain circumstances make us more intelligent and embrace our emotions in a better way.

Its evil intentionally to focus on others flaws to gain position oneself. This is so on personal level, between groups and states.

Goodness is when for instance a political leader acknowledges and shows respect to an opponent. Such as John McCain did in the 2008 presidential campaign against Barack Obama, when a woman said Obama was “Arab”. McCain stopped her, and said that “Obama is a decent family man…” . McCain defended his political opponent.

Goodness is to embrace others by confirming them, and make the others see their own opportunities and abilities, talent, like a trainer.

I will also mention the decadence of the western world, illustrated in, for instance, the movie “The Wolf of Wall Street”. This becomes evil when it escalates and harms people severely, because we are intelligent enough to know the consequences. I think it’s qualified when religions criticize this kind of behaviour.

This decadence can be illustrated by let’s say drinking two bottles of liquor containing 40% alcohol each day instead of two-three glasses of wine to your Saturday dinner. It’s about moderation.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Erik Haereid: “About my writing: Most of my journalistic work I did in the pre-Internet-period (80s, 90s), and the articles I have saved are, at best, aged in a box somewhere in the cellar. Maybe I can find some of it, but I don’t think that’s that interesting.

Most of my written work, including crime short stories in A-Magasinet (Aftenposten (one of the main newspapers in Norway, as Nettavisen is)), a second place (runner up) in a nationwide writing contest in 1985 arranged by Aftenposten, and several articles in different newspapers, magazines and so on in the 1980s and early 1990s, is not published online, as far as I can see. This was a decade and less before the Internet, so a lot of this is only on paper.

From the last decade, where I used more time doing other stuff than writing, for instance work, to mention is my book from 2011, the IQ-blog and some other stuff I don’t think is interesting here.

I keep my personal interests quite private. To you, I can mention that I play golf, read a lot, like debating, and 30-40 years and even more kilos ago I was quite sporty, and competed in cross country skiing among other things (I did my military duty in His Majesty The King’s Guard (Drilltroppen)). I have been asked from a couple in the high IQ societies, if I know Magnus Carlsen. The answer is no, I don’t :)

Haereid has interviewed In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal Advisory Board Member Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, some select
articles include topics on AI in *What will happen when the ASI (Artificial superintelligence) evolves: Utopia or Dystopia?* (Norwegian), on IQ-measures in *180 i IQ kan være det samme som 150*, and on the *Norwegian pension system* (Norwegian). His book on the *winner/loser-society model* based on social psychology published in 2011 (Nasjonalbiblioteket), which does have a summary review [here](#).

Erik lives in Larkollen, Norway. He was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1963. He speaks Danish, English, and Norwegian. He is an Actuary, Author, Consultant, Entrepreneur, and Statistician. He is the owner of, chairman of, and consultant at [Nordic Insurance Administration](#).


He earned an M.Sc. in Statistics and Actuarial Sciences from 1990-1991 and a Bachelor’s degree from 1984 to 1986/87 from the University of Oslo. He did some environmental volunteerism with Norges Naturvernforbund (Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature), where he was an activist, freelance journalist and arranged ‘Sykkeldagen i Oslo’ twice (1989 and 1990) as well as environmental issues lectures.

He has industry experience in accounting, insurance, and insurance as a broker. He writes in his IQ-blog the online newspaper *Nettavisen*. He has personal interests in history, philosophy, reading, social psychology, and writing.

He is a member of many high-IQ societies including 4G, Catholiq, Civiq, ELITE, GenerIQ, Glia, Grand, HELLIQ, HRIQ, Intrulect, ISI-S, ISPE, KSTHIQ, MENSA, MilenijaNOUS, OLYMPIQ, Real, sPlqr, STHIQ, Tetra, This, Ultima, VeNuS, and WGD.

**Rick G. Rosner:** “According to semi-reputable sources, Rick Rosner has the world’s second-highest IQ. He earned 12 years of college credit in less than a year and graduated with the equivalent of 8 majors. He has received 8 Writer’s Guild Award and Emmy nominations, and was named 2013 North American Genius of the Year by The World Genius Registry.

He has written for Remote Control, Crank Yankers, The Man Show, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards, and Jimmy Kimmel Live!. He has also worked as a stripper, a bouncer, a roller-skating waiter, and a nude model. In a TV commercial, Domino’s Pizza named him the World’s Smartest Man. He was also named Best Bouncer in the Denver Area by Westwood Magazine.

He spent the disco era as an undercover high school student. 25 years as a bar bouncer, American fake ID-catcher, 25+ years as a stripper, and nude art model, and nearly 30 years as a writer for more than 2,500 hours of network television.

He lost on Jeopardy!, sued Who Wants to Be a Millionaire over a bad question, and lost the lawsuit. He spent 35+ years on a modified version of Big Bang Theory. Now, he mostly sits around tweeting in a towel. He lives in Los Angeles, California with his wife and daughter.

You can send an email or a direct message via Twitter, or find him on LinkedIn, or see him on YouTube.”

An Interview with Dr. Madeline Weld
(Part Two)

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Abstract

Dr. Madeline Weld is President of Population Institute Canada. She discusses: impact on policy from religion; consequences of blocking family planning; efforts to reduce women’s ability to make informed choices; the most stunning fact about demographics and birth rates; and if we ruin the planet, will we Disnify it (?).

Keywords: Madeline Weld, Population Institute Canada, president.

An Interview with Dr. Madeline Weld: President, Population Institute Canada (Part Two)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*
1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When I think about something mentioned at the start of the conversation, it was the impact of some religious organizations, sometimes quite big, who stand against family planning. One of them tends to be the Roman Catholic Church.

The largest religious segment of Canadian society is Roman Catholicism. How does this impact policy?

Dr. Madeline Weld: Roman Catholics in countries with birth control access do not listen to the Vatican. Because Catholics in Canada use birth control and abortion at the same rate as everyone else. But, historically, I do not think there is any other organization that has caused more damage…

Jacobsen: …wow…

Weld: …to the population movement than the Vatican, which is a political organization. I look at it as a political organization intent on its own preservation rather than a spiritual organization. When the UN was being formed after WWII, the head of the World Health Organization was a Canadian named Brock Chisholm, a Canadian humanist.

He was in favour of family planning. He thought overpopulation would be a problem. He wanted to make family planning part of the WHO’s umbrella services, like child immunization, and so on. The Vatican got together a group of Catholic countries and they said that they would withdraw from the UN if this happened.

They bullied the WHO into dropping family planning from their agenda. This is described by Milton Siegel, who was the second to the chair or the vice-chair of the WHO [he was Deputy Director]—and who attended every meeting, as something they simply dropped as a topic.

The Catholic Church for all environmental things; it has been consistent in opposing family planning. The president of Ceylon now Sri Lanka was concerned about overpopulation; on his small island.

The Vatican was at the conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 [UN Conference on Environment and Development] also got family planning off the agenda. Then the Cairo conference in 1994: The International Conference on Population and Development had both the Vatican and the progressive feminists being against population control.

They talked about racism, colonialism, and so on. They talked about people freely and responsibly choosing the size of their family. But they did not speak about a woman living in a pro-natalist country, where her religion, mother-in-law, and husband say that she must have a lot of kids.

By not initiating any programs or ideas for programs for governments to take for this sort of thing, it fell by the wayside. The amount of money for family planning as a percentage of total population assistance fell dramatically. It went to AIDS.

The point is the Vatican interfered a lot [Laughing]. I do not think there is any organization in the UN that did more damage. We have the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, which is 56 Islamic countries plus the Palestinian Authority.

I am not sure how supportive they will be of family planning. They are a powerful block. I agree that religion [Laughing] does not help with family planning. In Canada and all over Europe, even Spain and Italy, they do not listen to the Vatican. Spain and Italy have some of the lowest birth rates in Europe.

Jacobsen: However, this came from the secularization of the organization of the outside rather than from the inside.

Weld: Yes, I think women benefited from the secularization of society with more freedom and so on. There is a reform movement in the Catholic Church too. There is a strong contingent of pro-choice people in the Catholic Church too.

Jacobsen: I did an interview with the president of Catholics for Choice.

Weld: A lot of Catholic women disagree with the Catholic anti-abortion stance. There was a commission in the Catholic church to look at their stance on family planning. They had 56 lay people and 16 clergy representatives looking at it. [FYI: This was Pope Paul VI’s Pontifical Commission on Birth Control, which produced its report in 1966: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontifical_Commission_on_Birth_Control. And there were 56, not 54 laypeople on it.]

They were supposed to see whether changing the Vatican’s stance on abortion would harm the organization and whether the Vatican should do it. The commission looked at it, decided it would (harm the authority of the Vatican), but said it is the right thing to do anyway.

Basically, all the lay people agreed to it. 9 out of the 16 clergy representatives agreed that the Catholic Church should change its stance. A dissenting decision was made that if the Catholic Church changed its stance then it would look like the Holy...
Spirit would not have been guiding the Catholic Church all along.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Weld: But it has been instead with the Protestant groups, where birth control was okay.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Weld: What was a mortal sin would now be okay, it could not do that. Guess, who wrote much of the dissenting opinion? Karol Wojtyla who later became Pope John Paul II. It prevailed, the dissenting opinion. That is an unfortunate thing.


There were two times when birth control could come into the fore. One was when the UN was formed with the WHO led by Brock Chisholm and another was when the Catholic Church looked to reform on birth control positions. Neither happened.

2. Jacobsen: Now, I look at this as one of those ethical splits. One from a transcendentalist traditionalist religious perspective on the source of ethics. Another on international secular human rights. When I look at those things, I recall Human Rights Watch stating equitable and safe access to abortion is primarily a human right.

Of course, it lists the consequences of not providing the safe and equitable access to abortion. So, if some of these religious organizations and some progressive feminist groups are blocking family planning and potentially abortion too, what are the consequences of doing this for women?

Weld: They are higher abortion rates. If women cannot use birth control, a bunch will seek abortions, and if illegal then illegal abortions, which means an increased rate of abortions and an increased rate of deaths from illegal abortions.

I can understand but do not agree with being anti-abortion. But if you are anti-abortion, then you should be pro-birth control, right [Laughing]?

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Weld: Some people think women should not have those rights. I do not see why a sensible person would be against birth control.

Jacobsen: We have come to the same conclusion. If someone is pro-life in a strict and realistic sense, they should be pro-choice because the consequences would be pro-infant life, pro-maternal life, and pro-human right.

Weld: Right. I think the most awful case that made the news was this woman from India, who was in Ireland. Her fetus was dying. It was not viable. But the Irish doctors refused to abort because they were terrified at the time that the Irish draconian laws of the time may make them go to prison if they perform it.

The woman died because by the time the fetal heart rate died; she died of septicemia. It was a sad story. That was about five years ago. I forget when. Because Irish abortion laws were voted to be changed very recently.

3. Jacobsen: Now, in open societies in Karl Popper’s terms, such as Canada, the notion of the restriction of women’s bodily autonomy through various legal or fundamentalist religious measures cannot be done or, at least, as easily.

So, the people who try to do that or want to do that – and, to be frank, some people probably want that in this country – must work through coercion and culture.

Do you note any attempts within the culture or arguments made socially/culturally to either guilt women or shame women, or talk women, into being against contraception – trying to reduce their ability to make proper and informed choices about family planning?

Weld: I know in Ottawa the Morgentaler Clinic prevented people from demonstrating in front of the clinic. It is not advertised. You cannot tell looking at it from the outside. They cannot protest with 50 metres now.

That is some protection. There are organizations. I see their ads on the bus, advertising to pregnant women. Something like Melinda House or Maryam House, where you can go and have your baby. They have outreach.

They try to discourage abortions by women. I do not know of any attempts. The Catholic Church is always preaching against it. But I do not know of any coercive attempts. I do not know if they can without breaking the law. But they try.

They try to influence their legislatures and stuff like that. It is entrenched in Canada, though. Maybe, they can limit it to a certain number of weeks. I do not think even Henry Morgentaler did abortions after 22 weeks; unless there was a medical cause to do it.

I do not think they are going to give up. I think they have a pretty good turnout at their pro-life rallies in Ottawa. But they bus all the high school kids there. They beef it up [Laughing].
Jacobsen: [Laughing] something heard by me. The idea, “What will you do after you’re 35? What will you do in the latter part of your life? Oh, don’t worry, you’ll change.” These said to women.

These to negatively associate singlehood or non-motherhood, and to get them to have children or get married and have children. Tiny guilt and shaming tactics over time. They may not be conscious of it.

Weld: People, in general, or humans are pro-child. I think it is natural to want children for a lot of people. But people must make their own decisions. If life is too complicated, I know that more women now who are trying to freeze their eggs – or have their kids later in life.

Sure, they have a right to do so. But from my perspective, imagine looking after a toddler when you are 45 or something, I have two sons. They are 31 and 29. I was 31/32 and 34 when I had my kids. I am glad I had my youngish energy to chase around after them.

Because your energy levels decrease as you get older. You might have a rebellious teenager when you are 60 [Laughing]. Right now, I am 63 and independent. My kids have moved out and have their own life. The freedom is great.

It is something that people want to consider when they put off having their kids. They will be looking after kids into their old age. Do they want to be doing that? Of course, you will not see your grandchildren if you have huge distances between the generations.

Anyway, I think society must figure it out. Given that we have so many people already, I think small families is a good thing. The longer you wait then the less the population is, because parents do not die instantly when they have kids.

I am thinking in terms of biological realities. There might be an optimum-maximum age. There was a case of an Italian woman. She had a kid when she was 65. It was a few years ago. It made the news. I thought, “Why would you do that?”

Jacobsen: Did she have any kids prior?

Weld: I do not recall. You can read cases of old women or an old woman who want to have kids. It is weird.

4. Jacobsen: What is the single most stunning fact about demographics and birth rates, and so on, encountered in your entire career, even post-retirement included?

Weld: I guess that there are 1 billion more people every 12 years. It is 9 zeroes. It is stunning. Since 9:58, my time, this morning, 13,319 more people have been added to the world. That is the net increase since I have been sitting at this computer.

So, in an hour and a half, we have thirteen and a half thousand new people, which is a lot.

Jacobsen: Is it considering the deaths?

Weld: Yes, it is births minuses deaths. We have this population clock on the website. I guess that is the most stunning fact. Also, humans have taken over 2/3rds of the land surface of the Earth for their uses and only the parts that are difficult to get to are a little safe from us.

It raises the question, “Do we want to turn the planet into a feed lot for humanity? If so, why?”

5. Jacobsen: Will we Disnify the planet if we ruin it?

Weld: I think we are to a degree. I think we delude ourselves if we think we are in control. If the soils are impoverished and cannot support high-yielding plants, and if the rivers are depleted if the aquifers are depleted and it is happening, what will we do now?

They are trying to breed plants that do not require much water. But we are always scrambling to solve some other problem. It is always something. The increase in food production has slowed down. There is always a maximum that can be produced.

It cannot be done forever. A lot of our food production depends on cheap fertilizer, which depends on oil; as the price of oil increases, the price of fertilizer will increase. We should limit our numbers before things naturally self-limit and make things unpleasant for us and other animals.

We could be a blip. It happened when the meteor wiped the dinosaurs out. Why would we do this to ourselves? Why would we cause this transformation and this depletion when we can avoid doing it?

Jacobsen: Because intelligence may be a lethal mutation as per the words of Noam Chomsky.

Weld: [Laughing] Yes, I think that is true.

Jacobsen: Alan Watts used to joke – the Eastern scholar from the 60s-70s – about what if the eventual state of a species is to produce a new star by discovering nuclear energy and then blowing themselves up.

Weld: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Of course, he was being facetious. But what if?
Weld: Yes.

Jacobsen: It is similar what if in a concrete sense of our intelligence allowing us to manipulate the environment very well and over a short, brief time – a “blip” as you noted.

Weld: I think we need to develop a new ethics called Ecological Ethics that have been promoted for a while now. Because most ethics only consider human to human interactions. I think we need to consider that we are part of a bigger system and what we are doing to our support system, ecological system.

I think that may be done willy-nilly because it will happen whether we like it or not.

That is my hope anyway.

6. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Dr. Weld.

Weld: Thanks for the interview, Scott.

Jacobsen: That was a lot of fun.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Tim Moen
(Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Tim Moen is the President of the Libertarian Party of Canada. He discusses: attenuation of the loss of an authentic self while in the midst of more, and more, public recognition; tasks and responsibilities come with this station with being the leader of the Libertarian Party of Canada; honest mistakes as a leader; how an elected leader demarcates the vision for the political party and conveys the image to the leader’s constituency; the more heartening experiences in political life; the more disheartening experiences in political life; the primary policy of the Libertarian Party of Canada; egregious examples of government overreach in Canada; model of consent; the individual as the basic unit of society; the bad, the good, and government, individuals, and groups; preventing government from harming society; and sub-clauses to the primary policy.

Keywords: Libertarianism, Libertarian Party of Canada, Tim Moen.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What attenuates the loss of an authentic self while in the midst of more, and more, public recognition?

Tim Moen: This is actually a huge question that to properly answer would require pages, but I’ll try and be concise.

A few years ago I was disoriented and alone in a structure fire. The heat was rising very quickly and was unbearable and I knew for a fact that I was going to die. Obviously, I made it out, but the man that emerged was not the same man that went in. I realized I had been wasting so much of my time and not devoting time and energy to the things in my life that mattered most to me.

Having a purpose driven life is the most important part of maintaining a sense of self. I don’t just mean having a purpose like winning an election, I mean having a clear understanding of what I want my life to have meant after my time here is done. Combine this sense of purpose with remembering I’m going to die is probably the biggest force that keeps me honest. Sometimes I find myself saying words because it’s the path of least resistance or because I know people will react favourably and having that clear image in my mind of my life ending and what it felt like having left so much undone and allowing others to control my destiny snaps me back to my purpose.

The other prerequisites to staying authentic and grounded are; having a strong degree of self-knowledge, and having a trusted group of friends and family who are willing to help you check your ego.

2. Jacobsen: A purpose to life brings popular mega-church pastor, Rick Warren, to mind, for
me. He speaks to purpose in life within a theological framework. Many like him; some don’t. Your experience exists in or out of the theological interpretation, though. A realization of the profound nature of death and the proportional reinvigoration of meaning this imports to life. What practical steps follow from the experience (examples) – for staying grounded, gaining more self-knowledge, and developing a close, trusted group?

You are the leader of the Libertarian Party of Canada. What tasks and responsibilities come with this station?

Moen: My job is to be the public face of the party and to speak on its behalf. I believe its also my job to help discover the vision and strategy of our party with our members and communicate it to our members. Ultimately it is my job to serve the needs of our members and our candidates.

3. Jacobsen: What have been honest mistakes as a leader? How does one confront them, admit them in public, and solve them for better performance in the future? All in the ‘public eye.’ How does a federal political party leader remain on amicable and friendly terms with other federal political party members in spite of differences about desires for the direction of the country?

Moen: I’ve met and enjoyed the company of people of all political persuasions. It is easy to ostracize and divide but I think its more productive to look for common ground and then engage in constructive conflict. It is easy for me to do because most people are libertarians in their private lives. They would never hurt someone or steal from them. Generally speaking, I think we all have the same goals and so as long as we can engage in civil discourse and can agree that we want to achieve the same things then we can have constructive conflict and work our way through the haze of cognitive dissonance together. Doing this requires that you view other people not as combatants to fight but rather as other people who share my goal of having a constructive conversation. If they don’t want to hurt people or take their stuff in their private lives yet they think that winning an election gives them new rights then the problem isn’t that they are bad people wanting to do bad things, the problem is that they are good people being led to do bad things because of a bad mental model or idea. On the other hand, it could be that I have a bad mental model and I would value having that mental model corrected so that I don’t do something bad.

The frame or lens through which we view these conversations with people who have different mental models largely determines how successful the conversation will be. I like to think of poor mental models as mind viruses, they spread and cause otherwise good people to do bad things. I am as susceptible to a mind virus as anyone else and conversations with people who challenge my mental models are valuable because at worst they cause me to ensure I have thought deeply enough about a position I hold to have good reasons for holding it and at best they cause me to change my mind and eliminate a mind virus.

4. Jacobsen: How does an elected leader demarcate the vision for the political party and convey the image to the leader’s constituency? Inspiration remains important for collective action.

Moen: At the end of the day my vision can’t part with the vision of my party or I’m not the right person for the job. I travel around Canada meeting with party members and listening to them and drawing inspiration from them and communicating my vision. I try and communicate why I am involved in the party and what gets me out of bed and motivates me to action. It is something that I’m really passionate about and I don’t think it takes much to motivate or inspire other people. When people see a bit of courage and authenticity that is often all they need to take action themselves.

5. Jacobsen: What have been the more heartening experiences in political life?

Moen: When I see people coming together to work for a common goal and see that we are having an impact on public discourse and culture that is very heartening. Meeting so many passionate and committed people is very motivating. Having earnest conversations with people genuinely interested in the conversation and seeing a mind change as a result of that conversation is very gratifying as well.

6. Jacobsen: What have been the more disheartening experiences in political life?

Moen: The most disheartening experiences are when people are focused on tearing each other down rather than putting aside differences in philosophy and personality for the good of achieving team goals. This is an ongoing problem with libertarians. We are very good at picking apart poor mental models and finding systemic flaws and this strength can turn into a weakness when we fixate on problems rather than focus on solutions. I’ve seen many good people leave in anger. I’ve lost a few people I considered friends because of mistakes I’ve made as a leader. People invest a lot in me as a leader and it really sucks disappointing them.
7. Jacobsen: What is the primary policy of the Libertarian Party of Canada?

Moen: The primary policy of our party is to restrain government from hurting people or taking their stuff and limit its role to protecting individuals. We recognize that government is an institution that has a monopoly on and a mandate to use force and that the only proper use of force is to protect people from the initiatory force (i.e. murder, assault, rape, theft, fraud). Basically, we think the government should not violate consent and should protect people from violations of consent. People in government don’t get a special exemption from behaving ethically.

8. Jacobsen: What have been egregious examples of government overreach in Canada to you?

Moen: Taxation, the drug war, the growing surveillance state and healthcare stand out as big issues for me. The carbon tax strikes me as particularly horrific in that it is not just confiscating money under threat of force, it is punishing people for consuming the very thing that allows them to survive and flourish. The drug war has ruined lives and created a demand for violent criminals. Bill C-13, Bill C-51 and now the TPP are artefacts of a growing surveillance state that collects data on citizens by invading our private sphere. Our healthcare system is a gigantic point of failure and when it fails the poor and marginalized will be the first to feel the effects.

9. Jacobsen: Within this model of consent, what suffices to amount to consent?

Moen: By consent, I mean the standard legal definition. Consent means that another person should have your permission to enter your private realm. Consent is the difference between lovemaking and rape, or boxing and assault, or charity and taxation. If I tell you that I do not want you to do something to my body or my property and you do it anyways you have clearly violated consent.

10. Jacobsen: With respect to the individual, does the individual form the basic unit of society to you?

Moen: Yes. Society is a group of individuals. Institutions like government are abstract mental models that are often confused as entities that exist in material reality, what really exists are a bunch of individuals acting in accordance with mental models that may or may not lead to otherwise good people doing bad things.

11. Jacobsen: What defines the bad? What defines the good? How can the government increase the good and decrease the bad? How can individuals and groups in society increase the good and decrease the bad?

Moen: “The bad” can be broadly defined as violating consent. “The good” can be broadly defined as that which serves the needs of individuals and leads to flourishing. A proper government can create an environment for the good to emerge if it focuses on its job of protecting individuals from the bad. Humans are generally self-interested and behave in ways that maximize their personal well, being. For the maximum good to emerge it is necessary for the self-interest of an individual be tied to their ability to serve the needs of others and help them flourish. If self-interest is tied to violating consent one would expect the good would have a difficult time emerging and the bad would have an easier time emerging. So a free market where individuals can profit by serving the needs of others seems like the best place for the good to emerge and big government where individuals can profit by violating consent seems like a good place, for the bad to emerge.

12. Jacobsen: Furthermore, how can the government be prevented from harming individual citizens? Of course, no government can be protected from in its entirety. Nothing is full proof.

Moen: Government, as I just pointed out, is an abstraction, not an entity that exists in material reality that can cause harm. If by “government” you mean the specific group of individuals that people imagine have special rights then the question becomes, “how do we prevent these people from harming individual citizens?” To my mind, the answer is to get rid of the demand for a group of individuals to use force in immoral ways. The demand for a government that imposes on individuals comes from a lack of understanding of governments proper function and comes from a place of fear. At the end of the day, people the demand government action because they don’t see it as immoral and they are frightened of some particular hobgoblin and so they demand a government that alleviates their anxiety. So to prevent the government from harming individual citizens is a bit like getting drug dealers to stop harming drug users. Ultimately the problem would largely go away if the addiction was treated. So I see this as a very similar process to treating addiction. There is no legislative lever that will protect people from the government without a will from people for it to happen. Constitutions, bills, charters of rights are helpful insofar as citizens understand them and inscribe these principles on their hearts and minds but they are only pieces of paper with ink if people don’t embrace them. If people don’t believe in or want the
government to be limited then it won’t…no matter what.

13. Jacobsen: What derivative policies, which have details and acts as sub-clauses to the primary policy, follow from the primary policy?

Moen: Since all law represents threats of violence for non-compliance our goal is to limit laws to only those that protect individuals. This means that activity between consenting adults that doesn’t harm anybody else should not be interfered with by threats of violence, even by people in government. So as an example we would repeal prohibitions on drug use and sex work.

Another area the government overreaches with force is on the financial lives of citizens. Taking money forcibly (or through threats of force) ought to be limited or eliminated. This means we want to dramatically reduce or eliminate taxation and find non-coercive ways to fund the government and eliminate all non-necessary government departments and spending. We also take issue with onerous regulation on individuals owning and running businesses and working for businesses. Raising the bar to enter the marketplace creates an unfair advantage to crony capitalists at the expense of consumers and start-up entrepreneurs.

We also want to improve property rights. Property rights give individuals immediate access to justice and dispute resolution. This includes our comprehensive policy on indigenous sovereignty which gives indigenous people sovereignty over their territory and allows them to push back against government appropriation of resources on their property and allows them to develop or not develop resources in a manner that is determined by them.

Our military is there to protect Canadians and not as a proxy for US imperialism or UN “Peace Keeping”. We would ensure our military isn’t used for a political agenda but to establish Canadian sovereignty and particularly to find ways of ensuring our Arctic sovereignty is established and protected.

A key element of liberty is the ability to exclude others from your private realm and so we would eliminate warrantless spying, repeal Bill C-51 and C-13, and the TPP in whole or in part.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A. (Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A. is the Chairman for Mensa Pakistan. He discusses: time frame for events; vigorous and respectful debates; the one rule in discussions; keeping debates on topic; punishments for poor behaviour; some interactions Mensa Pakistan members can get in-person but not online; similar interactions online as in person but the interactions are simply better, richer experiences for the participants than online; expansions of Mensa Pakistan’s in-person provisions for the membership; technology and online environments improving in-person experiences; and in-person experiences enhancing experiences in the virtual environments.

Keywords: Hasan Zuberi, Islam, Mensa Pakistan, Muslim, Pakistan.

An Interview with Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A.: Chairman, Mensa Pakistan (Part Three)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How long is the standard time frame given in the announcement and organization of an event or meeting prior to its coming to fruition?

Hasan Zuberi, M.B.A.: Standard time frame is usually at least 2 weeks, so that the members are well informed in advance and can manage their availability.

2. Jacobsen: How can vigorous, respectful debates on various political, philosophical, mathematical, ethical, scientific, and so on, happen more easily through electronic media?

I ask because, I know, most people, or everybody, experiences – or has experienced – intense and unpleasant debates, or even simply sour dialogues and discussions, on a number of topics.

Zuberi: Well, simply: Every day, we have a members group on WhatsApp, and there we discuss (not debate) on all topics at hand, be it political, religious, and even social issues. Since it is not a debate, it becomes more engaging and informative.

3. Jacobsen: What seems like reasonable ground rules to set in an online forum to prevent vitriol and maintain respectful communication between the parties involved in them, especially in the cognitively highly capable?

Zuberi: Guess, it’s simply one rule: “Respect others’ opinion.” Senior members, play the role of moderators (if they are not the initiators) and keep the environment to the topic and if there is anything that can be deemed intense, it is politely discouraged.

So far we have not seen getting things out of control, and the credit goes to the fine diversified group of people we have.

4. Jacobsen: In online environments, women and girls get more harassment. Indeed, they receive
more harsh criticism and ad hominem attacks, even if their statements remain, functionally in content and tone, the same as a man or a boy – not in all cases but, from qualitative reportage and complaints of women, probably most cases.

Any tips for women and girls, especially the highly gifted and talented to stay on topic, in self-protection of cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment?

Zuberi: Well, if I talk about our circle, it is very much protected and anything below the line can be communicated to the senior management for immediate action. We encourage our female members to speak up, and often appoint, senior female members/or our national psychologist to be at the listening end.

5. Jacobsen: What is the importance of an online moderator in the prevention of these behaviours by many men and boys – or some women and girls?

What seems like the appropriate punishments, reactions, or mechanisms to acquire justice in the cases of legitimate cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment? That is, how can the bullied, stalked, and harassed deal with these individuals?

Zuberi: Well in our system, as stated above, are the senior members, who are on senior and powerful positions and volunteer for the cause, they serve as the elders and advise on issues, referred to them. Punishments, if required, are mostly related to warning the culprit at first and so far it has been enough just to let members know that Seniors are there to provide all help.

If required further, it can result in suspension and/or expulsion from the organization, and registering a case with Cyber Crime Cell of Federal Investigation Authority (FIA). Fortunately, Pakistan has a very strong Cyber Crime Unit, called NR3C.

6. Jacobsen: Now, to the second aspect, the in-person environment has been the main form of interaction of the highly intelligent in a relatively tight locale. What are some interactions Mensa Pakistan members can get in-person but not online?

Zuberi: It is mostly in our meet-ups, and or other SIG activities, which provides a chance for in-person interaction.

7. Jacobsen: What about similar interactions online as in person but the interactions are simply better, richer experiences for the participants than online?

Zuberi: Well, obviously with technology in hands now, it has become easier for everyone to interact online, than offline, so it is normal.


Zuberi: Culturally speaking, in our part of the world, the in-person meetups are still considered formal and respectful. We as a platform, try to provide our members with the opportunity to come, meet their peers, to share their learning and experiences with others, and to learn from each other.

We are also planning to collaborate with other organizations that provide positive learning opportunities, scholarships, activities etc., for our members.

9. Jacobsen: To the third facet, the nature of the interaction between the two. How do technology and online environments improve in-person experiences of the Mensa Pakistan group?

Zuberi: Above all, the technology and online environment has helped us to engage our long-lost old members who have migrated from Pakistan; or left the country for studies, family, work, to connect with the members back home. It also helps to connect and broaden their social networks.

10. Jacobsen: How do in-person experiences provide the basis for enhanced experiences in the virtual environments of the Mensa Pakistan group?

Zuberi: It serves as the basis. People understand others, especially when they meet them and express themselves in person, and in the online environment; it becomes easier to understand their words.

11. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Hasan.

Appendix I: Footnotes


Abstract

Stacey Piercey is the Co-Chair of the Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights for CFUW FCFDU and Vice Chair of the National Women’s Liberal Commission for the Liberal Party of Canada. She discusses: paths of misunderstanding transgender individuals; misinformation and disinformation campaigns; best definition of a transgender individual; definitions and misunderstandings over time; what is the same in the life-arc of a trans woman from youth to elderhood in those who are trans women and who are not trans; what is different in the life-arc of a trans woman from youth to elderhood compared to someone who is not a trans woman; what are the disproportionately negative life outcomes for trans women in different domains of their lives; and the different paths and shades of those paths available to trans women in terms of making the transition in Canada.

Keywords: Co-Chair, Liberal Party of Canada, Ministry of Status of Women, Stacey Piercey, Vice Chair.

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*
1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: To set some more of the theoretical and empirical groundwork of the extended educational conversation over the coming weeks, I see two streams of misunderstanding about trans individuals. One is simple, relatively benign ignorance; another is deliberate misinformation and disinformation campaigns, through multiple media and social media channels, to scapegoat vulnerable members of society for cultural-political points. To the simple, relatively benign ignorance, what seems like the source of this? What are the individual and interpersonal consequences for trans-Canadians?

Stacey Piercey: You are right to say that there exist two streams of misunderstanding about transgender individuals. There is ignorance, and that is understandable to a degree, not everyone is aware of what it is like to be transgender. It is a unique experience to the transgender individual. I can relate to you some common themes that I have observed. I can share as much information as humanly possible. If it was easy to explain, I guess there wouldn’t be such a need for advocacy or education.

As you know, this is not something that everyone will encounter. There will always be a lack of knowledge and some ignorance. Just like how I don’t know everything about other groups in society. I do trust that their experience is real, and I can understand to a degree the issues that are faced in other communities by relating my experiences. We are talking about intersectionality, overcoming our differences and the knowledge gained from being able to connect with others. That requires empathy. I learned a while ago to relate to people by addressing common interests and not pointing out differences. I like to connect with others and learn from them. That is my style, to find common ground and solutions were ever possible. I see myself often having conversations about being transgender and answering questions asked of me. People do want to understand and want to help, especially since this has become a relevant social issue.

The other type of ignorance has hurt me, and that is the deliberate misinformation and disinformation campaign that seems to be ongoing. I don’t understand the motives, yet it does exist. Sometimes it is political, sometimes they are exclusionary and sometimes this is outright hate. You may say there is no such thing as bad publicity, but there is, what someone sees in media affects me. I find myself judged unfairly, asked to defend myself or explain myself. I sometimes struggle, as I am seen only as a transgender individual. It is hard when every day all you see are these negative stories. And I know the difference, so I can’t imagine the opinions being formed by others as they watch or read these stories.

In Canada, we have moved further along in the conversation when it comes to transgender issues. Our policies are about inclusion and integration. It is no longer about our right to exist. That is happening in other countries, such as the USA and Great Britain right now, as they are having a national conversation. It is a big media machine that has overtaken our story to a degree. I feel like I when back in time watching this unfold, I even forget this is not relevant to me as a Canadian. But it is. You see stories that use outright fear, to pray on these individuals and to make life harder for transgender people in general. We are such a small portion of the population, we have never had privileges, steady jobs, housing or opportunities likes others, and transpeople suffer this incredible onslaught in the media that doesn’t make it easy to live a normal life. My only explanation is that there is money to be made hating transgender people, or there is joy in abusing and oppressing a small minority. It is all beyond me; I was raised to help people, not to hurt them. I honestly have to say I struggle to find good positive stories. And that is wrong.

2. Jacobsen: For the misinformation and disinformation campaigns, what seems like the source for this? What are the individual and interpersonal consequences for trans Canadians?

Piercey: If I was the venture a guess, it is political. For any change to occur for transgender people, we need the support of the media. Good and bad stories bring awareness to the issues. I don’t know if there is a dividing line among groups when it comes to transgender individuals. I have met so many people despite their background, and once they come to know I am transgender, they always say I have a friend, a relative that is transgender. It is a tough life they have, can you help or have any advice. My experience is everyone knows of someone who is transgender in a way. Therefore when it comes to transgender issues, you get every political background creating awareness, some views are extreme, over the top and sensationalized, but it is always someones else’s interpretation of transgender people. In Canada, during our campaign for human rights, we wanted them to come out of the closet, be seen and know it is okay to be transgender. It was time to step forward and say there is a problem that needed to be solved. There were no government statistics; there were no supports, and often these issues were not classified as transgender.

There is another side to this campaign against transgender people, and that is some are not ready for
a change in society. They don’t help you; they want you to go away and keep you out of sight. Or worse as I found, I was used, I would work hard, and I ran into empire building. I would have these great ideas and solutions, and others would take credit. I was not respected. Thus not everyone is supportive. In this country, I have seen change occur very shortly through government and businesses. How I am received now is different than it was years ago. The thing is, as a community, we don’t have the population to instill change; we don’t have the experts, we don’t have the representation and are reliant on others to help. We are small in numbers; we are not in control of the conversation, often we are not included, and there is no consensus. I am into policy, and the problem I see, is that this is very expensive to put a gender-neutral washroom in every building, it is expensive to paint a rainbow crosswalk, and it is advanced law, and advanced medicine. Not everybody is ready to deal with this, it is complex, and it needs viable solutions. There is not enough research, legal precedents and medical history to adequately deal with the problems at hand.

3. Jacobsen: Now, those amount to not knowing/being unaware or having imbibed illusory knowledge. To the factual basis of being transgender or a trans person, what best defines a trans individual – or the type of trans individuals – within the modern context?

Piercey: When I grew up it was simple. It was very binary. You were either a man or a woman. You were born as one gender on the outside and felt like another on the inside. Then you went about the process of transitioning from one gender to another. You go through a transition phase where you are for me as an example, male, not male or female, then female. In my mind that was transgender, it was a term that defined people who transitioned, had their surgeries, did their paperwork and changed their lives from one gender to another.

It isn’t like that anymore; it has become non-binary. We have a third gender concept where people who are gender non-conforming that fit into the terminology of transgender. I have heard over 50 classifications for gender. For many there is no desire to seek surgeries, they are okay with who they are, and I would say this new generation or new perspective is what you are seeing more of today. I met fewer people who have the same background or experience as I once did. They are out there, living opposite from the gender they are born in, you don’t notice them because they live stealth.

For me, that shared experience of transitioning, living a point in your life as neither gender, going through that process of change is what makes a transgender person different. It is not about, sexuality, it is about gender and questioning it and living with the knowledge that gender is a social construct. And at the same time, gender it is a big defining point for many individuals. When you remove gender from the individual, what is left but only the person? I see it now as a very open community, that is inclusive to anyone questioning gender.

4. Jacobsen: How has the definition changed of “trans” or “transgender” over time into the present if at all? How have the misunderstandings changed over time if at all, too?

Piercey: I think in my life the definition of transgender has changed in that has gone from binary to a non-binary. That breaks down any traditional views of gender. I see transgender people as more gender fluid now whereas before it was about going from one gender to another. I am old school in a sense I live female, that is me. But I am floored by some on the new ideas that I have seen. I will be honest I find some of the new terminology and concepts difficult even for me to understand. I am okay with it; I think you should be yourself in this life. I can remember when this was simpler, it was discrete, and not political. That was before the internet and social media. We had support groups. Now it is all over the media; everyone has an opinion on gender. Everyone is sharing what they think. I believe we are watching a gender revolution. And transgender has changed just like society did with technology. I expect what it means to be transgender will continue to follow this evolution. I am all for new ideas, and I believe change is good.

Interestingly enough, the misunderstandings have not changed, for me. It is still the case where I am the representative of everything transgender. If someone sees a transgender story, they think I am like that too. How do you say, I am an individual and not some glorified stereotype.

5. Jacobsen: From your perspective and observations, as you relayed being identified as an elder – an elder trans woman, recently, what is the same in the life-arc of a trans woman from youth to elderhood in those who are trans women and who are not trans?

Piercey: I am an elder, and I understand it is a term of endearment and respect. It is something I have been called personally many times, it is not a cultural thing for the transgender community. For me, it is more about being a survivor. For them, I am a role model, a faux parent, someone who is there with experience and guidance. You see, there are not
many people like myself who have transitioned in life and have lived a long time. I have 20 years of experience and stories. A problem that exists is that there is little-recorded history. Whereas I have watched this grow, and I have watched a whole new generation come into the scene. I was always involved with the public, and I am in the transgender community too. People know I am the transgender Liberal, if they got a problem with the government, I will hear it first. Now if you want to know what it was like years ago, you have to ask my friends or me. In that sense I am an elder, I have within me the culture, the history and I can see the changes that have occurred. Another reason is that I have been called an elder is that I have made friends over the years with two spirited people from the indigenous population. That has grounded me, as I know transgender has been around forever, not a mainstream part of society, but it has always been there. And in other cultures, it is very respected. In Newfoundland and the Indigenous community, there is an oral tradition, and I share in these ways. I have all the knowledge of how to navigate the system, as I helped create it and how to transition legally. I can offer great advice and have over the years to many transgender people. And if you want to know something about transgender rights in this world I have one of the better networks, there is to access information. I am a responsible adult, and I like the term elder, and I have taken it too.

6. Jacobsen: Within the same question background, what is different in the life-arc of a trans woman from youth to elderhood compared to someone who is not a trans woman?

Piercey: I am in my forties. Now I have forty plus years of life experience. But that is not what makes me an elder. You can be older than me it doesn’t mean you are an elder in the trans community. Let’s start with the years of transition. Day one, you are transgender, you are brand new to this world. You may know about life, but you don’t know anything about transitioning. These are trans years, I have 20 of those years, and it is that experience that counts. What you may know about life is irrelevant to a degree when you change genders. People have always come to me at this point needing my help. More so in the past, before services were available, I am an expert in the trans community.

The experience is relatively the same for everyone medically speaking. You want and need to be supervised by a doctor. You have to live full time integrating into society for a year. Then you start hormone. Then you go through a second puberty. Living full time is a real test, and taking hormones that is permanent. If you make it this far, following the doctor’s orders and have no complications with the introduction of hormones and no adverse effects to your body you are on your way to transitioning. Hormones scare away a lot of people, and some people can’t take them, especially the male testosterone. It is a weird time, in a transgender person life. It is when they are most vulnerable, and hormones are new, and everything they thought about the other gender is now real to them. It is a learning and growing phases. Eventually, you settle in and find your way. You may have surgery, which again is a significant change, most of my friends are post operation. Therefore, we can relate to each other. Then you wake up one morning and your body after years now matches the image in your mind. You adjust, and you move on with life, everything is normal, gender is not an issue anymore. All is good. Transgender doesn’t solve problems; it is not an escape from your life, it creates tonnes of difficulties. The whole process takes time; it took me probably ten years to regain my confidence and to be good with who I am. It is very similar to a non-transgender woman entering puberty, and the issues faced, it just happens to them when you are younger, and as with them it takes years being a teenager to come into your own.

7. Jacobsen: In terms of the social issues in the lives of trans women, what are the disproportionately negative life outcomes for trans women in different domains of their lives? How does each of these disproportionately negative outcomes play out in concrete terms?

Piercey: I can easily say, that if I was with hundred people who identify as transgender twenty years ago. Fifty would not be able to change their lives. This door is not open to them. I would say twenty of them would be murdered or commit suicide or incarcerated. It was a big deal to be passible for safety reasons alone. Now I would say of the thirty left, fifteen have entered prostitution for survival, ten are on income assistant, and I would say you have five who are working, transitioned and you will never know they transitioned. That was me, I was lucky, educated, in a relationship, and I knew how to take care of myself. I came out again later in life because I was tired of seeing what happened to the community and its fight for rights and it was overwhelming me trying to help others. I know there are not a lot of transgender people who live long lives after transitioning. I was given seven years by one professional, it was said to me this is a rough life ahead if I do this. Now, I have some friends who have transitioned as long as I have or longer and I know of some individuals older than me too. The
truth is we are a science experiment. There aren’t that many people who have done this. I am one of those at the forefront.

8. Jacobsen: What is the process of making the transition? Also, this is a nuanced area. What are the different paths and shades of those paths available to trans women in terms of making the transition in Canada?

Piercey: For me, this was a very regulated medical process to transition. As well, legally it is a real pain in the neck to change all of my documentation. It was not fun; it was hard work. Back in the day, the government would only recognize gender change surgeries, if they occurred within the medical system. Without your surgery, you couldn’t change your identity. These rules do not apply as much anymore. It is good, and it is terrible too, I liked all the supervision and supported I received. I was monitored as if I was part of a military experiment. If anything was wrong with me, I knew right away. It was reassuring. I remember transitioning was the scariest time in my life, going from male to female was a stage that I wanted to go through as fast as I could. It takes times to transition. I wanted to travel, get a good job, or have access to credit, I needed everything to be in order. I thought coming out was hard; I found socializing difficult as I was relearning many skills, and it took me a while. What works for me as a man didn’t necessarily work for me as a woman. I was taken care of, supported and helped to transition completely through the medical system in Canada. I have the best doctors.

Today you can now transition, or be gender non-conforming or gender neutral. It is not so much about taking a pill as it is more about changing your identity to reflect who you are. The rules don’t apply anymore as they once did for me, you can start hormones, and you don’t have to transition fully, you don’t have to have your surgery. A lot of people live gender neutral or some other gender that is not traditional male or female. I can’t imagine how different it is now, there are so many supports, and people are safe to be themselves at a young age, and the social stigma is going away. Part of the transgender experience was in hiding, ashamed and coming out, living underground, and outside of the system. I had to develop social skills, political skills, to fight for my rights, I had to know the law, the medical system and government policy as it was all needed to get by in life. Now, if was 15 and felt like there was something wrong with me. I can tell my doctor, and my teacher and I can transition with help. Whereas for me it took years to find answers, and help and support. In a way, transgender, as I understand it will be extinct.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Co-Chair – Ministry of Status of Women Sub-Committee of Human Rights, CFUW FCDFU; Vice Chair National Women’s Liberal Commission at Liberal Party of Canada | Parti libéral du Canada; Mentor, Canadian Association for Business Economics.

An Interview with Catherine Broomfield (Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Catherine Broomfield is the Executive Director of iHuman Youth Society. She discusses: family and personal background; mentors; first work in the non-profit world; touching stories in the non-profit world; situations and difficulties of youth; finding; iHuman Youth Society; reasons for lack of purpose in youth; big negative effects happening to some vulnerable youth; and self-efficacy and self-esteem concerns manifesting in youth.

Keywords: Catherine Broomfield, Executive Director, iHuman Youth Society, Indigenous, youth.

An Interview with Catherine Broomfield: Executive Director, iHuman Youth Society (Part One)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What was family background? What was personal background?

Catherine Broomfield: I was born in England and immigrated to Canada in the mid-1970s. My parents, younger siblings, and I arrived in the dead of a winter snowstorm. It was a big transition, to a new country.

2. Jacobsen: When it comes to community-oriented work? Were there pivotal mentors who inspired you?

Broomfield: Not specifically that I can think of, except, I had the experience of leaving family, being adrift in terms of having no family network other than my own immediate one, e.g., no aunts and uncles. It made me more in tune with the needs of others, more in need of the community, and always being someone who is a helper and a doer.

It led its way into the non-profit world.

3. Jacobsen: What was some of the first work while in the non-profit world?

Broomfield: My first job was as an executive director for a boys and girls club in Alberta. I have been involved in non-profit activities through sports events like Winter Games, Alberta Summer Games.

These were community engagement roles I had been involved in. Then I stepped away from them for quite a few years. I did some GIS mapping work, marketing. Working at the university, I coordinated international exchanges and worked with international students and post-secondary schools.

4. Jacobsen: In the experience in the non-profit world, what were some of the stories that you found touching?

Broomfield: In my experience with the girls and boys club as the first non-profit, there was a lot of interest and need by the young people in the community in which I was working, to have opportunity, to be introduced to new things, which they, otherwise, would not have been able to experience.
Given the economic situation of their families, it was an opportunity to introduce those young people to experiences, which they wouldn’t have otherwise. Secondly, to support a community/sense of belonging for the young people who came regularly, who shared learning and opportunities with one another?

I do not have a specific story from back then other than what many of the young people expressed about how they felt coming to the Club every day.

Now at iHuman, there are similarities to that earlier experience though there are 25 years between them. Young people still looking to fit in and belong somewhere. Still need a sense of purpose, identity and self-worth.

I’ve had many touching experiences of young people sharing their realizations and successes like getting their children back from out of children’s services care, anniversaries for sobriety, getting the first place or finding out they’re going to be parents for the first time, getting accepted for school or job.

These are everyday milestones in life and what is touching is that the youth identify iHuman as the place where they come first to share their news. This tells me we’ve created a space where a young person feels valued and witnessed and that’s about as touching as it can get.

5. Jacobsen: When it comes to some of the statistical data about parenting, internationally, we rank high in terms of single parent homes. Those kids have a harder time. What are some of the situations and difficulties for some of the kids coming into it?

Broomfield: I was, myself, a teenager mother. At the time, going through university, I was a single parent with a 2-year-old. I was working 2 jobs. After I graduated, I was still working and parenting alone. When my son was 7-8 I had to make a difficult decision to take a contract job in the North and send my son to his auntie’s while I did that job. Single parents and their children make a lot of sacrifices in order to survive.

Certainly, I can appreciate the experience from both sides. Because my son was in daycare while I was running a program for other youngsters whose parents were also working full time and could not afford daycare.

There were times during that job when my son came with me.

He participated alongside the other children. We did things over the summer months, where we were doing camping trips and outings around Alberta, Drumheller for example. There is and continues to be a dilemma for parents who are needing to work but also wanting their children to have meaningful, safe activities for their children to participate in. Single parenting is not an easy situation. I think most people are trying to make the best of it that they can.

That experience [single parenting] certainly lends itself to the work that I do with iHuman. The youth that are here. They have experienced a lot of trauma, whether that be primarily because of the youth being Indigenous people or otherwise such as familial or high-risk situations.

Indigenous intergenerational trauma is based on the erasure of culture. For the youth, it is a loss of identity and sense of belonging and sense of purpose and self-worth. This is why these are the outcomes we’re trying to support youth through iHuman to achieve and reconnect the young person to those things.

I am not saying the experience of all single-parent families is why young people end up needing a place like iHuman for support. It is common, however, that there is a breakdown of a relationship in the family.

For the Indigenous youth, there is intergenerational legacies; addiction, gang affiliation, and so on. It is really complex. It sets people feeling as if they have no place to be.

No sense of place. Therefore, a person becomes more attracted to [belongingness]. They go to where they can find it, e.g., drugs, affiliation with gangs. They are looking to fill a need.

And unfortunately, there are people who are there who will fill it, even if it is not healthy.

6. Jacobsen: How did you find yourself iHuman?

Broomfield: It is a combination of the universe [Laughing]…

Jacobsen: …[Laughing]…

Broomfield: …I had a crisis in my personal life, “What am I doing? What am I working for?” I heard about an organization that needed an executive director who could make a commitment for several years. Someone who desired to help and support young people who do not have services and supports.

I realized have those skills. It seemed like a good fit. My values align with the values of the youth and the agency. Being on board, being a leader for this organization is a natural alignment for me.

7. Jacobsen: In connection to some of the difficulties some of the youth face, one experience stands out to me. The purpose void of youth.
That’s key to unlocking the door to meaning in life, to get some meaning from life.

What are the factors that building into the lack of purpose?

**Broomfield:** I am speaking as an observer, obviously. It is not my experience. It is the youths’ experience. So, it is my interpretation of what I see or what they express. I think the key factor is the erasure of Indigenous culture.

The young people here have nothing to tether to. Because of factors stemming from policies such as Residential schools, ‘60s scoop. Those activities of the government have eroded or outright devastated the community.

So, the current generation of young people are seeing their parents and grandparents struggle with addiction, mental health, poverty, lack of employment, lack of education or skills.

Then that is what they observe; if you don’t see others having a purpose or being able to work towards a goal and accomplish a goal, then approaching life this way is something foreign to you. That is an experience of the many of the youth to not have the role modelling.

Then they don’t even know that it is something that is missing, or even know how to describe it. At iHuman, we ask, “What is your purpose? Why do you think you’re here? What is a path for you?” It is often something the youth have not thought of.

Thinking about these things requires being vulnerable. And for iHuman youth to be vulnerable is dangerous because it means you’ll probably end up being exploited in some way.

They have the same dreams as other young people, “I want a car, job, children. I want a family. I want a house with a fence,” but it is not something that they have seen modelled for them.

To have that [purpose] identified for them to see, it is an unknown to them.

**8. Jacobsen: What are some of the other big effects on some of the youth?**

**Broomfield:** Many have not been in school for a long time. Their experiences within any institutional structure tend to be critical and traumatic. They may have struggled with reading, literacy, numeracy, and so on.

They may be at the principal’s office or in the hallway, or at the desk doing little, because the engagement isn’t there. People talk about them.

Being critical against them. They feel stupid. This is how they speak about their experience in school.

So, the opportunity or chance to leave school becomes a relief, I think. A sad byproduct though is it also fractures the opportunity to dream or think, “What can I do with this subject for my life? I really like that subject in school. Maybe, I will be a marine biologist.”

The environment where that stimulation can happen, is gone. You have one less environment where the young person is reinforced as being valuable, or as having done something good. The lack of that; they will seek this in some other way.

It tends to be the ripe environment for people waiting to take advantage of them in some way or other. It is “here, I will befriend you.” The youth are looking for it, the connection. All of our human needs are based on the connection; it is hardwired into us.

If we do not find this in good environments, then we will seek this out in unhealthy ones.

**9. Jacobsen: Not only the education gap but these kids will also have self-efficacy and self-esteem concerns. How will those manifest?**

**Broomfield:** I think, again, because of the environment that many of the youth have been experiencing. Those histories and legacies of trauma passed from generation to generation. They could be seen scientifically in terms of attachment theory.

If a young person does not attach healthily with a parent or caregiver, the strategies that they’ve used as an infant in order to get their needs met; those strategies carry forward in life. If you have not been able to have a safe and caring bond as a child, when you find those, it can feel foreign.

“This person wants something from me”; you can also feel not good enough. Even if you have goals and dreams, you can feel, “I am not good enough to have those.” It is common to see self-sabotage when youth find those opportunities or opportunities come their way.

The identity, purpose, and belonging, they are so innately tied to what the youth need. That they do not even know it. We’re trying to support them, encourage them, and show the youth that those are things that they can find in themselves and use the capacity to then go where they want to go in life.

It is not necessarily something that they have in life. You can find a sense of belonging at iHuman and elsewhere. You can find a sense of purpose. You can explore. You can gain strength and power.
Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Executive Director, iHuman Youth Society.

An Interview with Tim Moen (Four)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Abstract

Tim Moen is the President of the Libertarian Party of Canada. He discusses: Bill C-51, Bill C-13, or the TPP; overarching mission; proper limit and role of government; vision for Canada; principles; activists, authors, bloggers, writers, and so on, that influence him and deserve greater exposure; and philosophers and books that most influenced him.

Keywords: Libertarianism, Libertarian Party of Canada, Tim Moen.

An Interview with Tim Moen: Leader, Libertarian Party of Canada (Part Four)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Would the Libertarian Party of Canada replace Bill C-51, Bill C-13, or the TPP (in part or whole) with other bills or trade partnerships or repeal them then leave things with those actions?

Tim Moen: Yes, we would repeal all of these.

A proper international trade agreement is between two people or businesses that agree to trade with each other.

Of course, governments who are beholden to special interest groups (i.e. ideologues, a business lobby, union lobby) make it their business to introduce trade barriers and interfere with these agreements and so then other governments retaliate with economic and trade policy to punish unfavourable trade conditions for their people.

My approach would be to work on eliminating all trade barriers that were in my power to eliminate so that Canadians could trade with whomever they want to be unencumbered by the Canadian government.

I would then lean on other governments to remove the trade barriers they put in place that make it difficult for Canadians to trade with citizens in their nation.

2. Jacobsen: What is the overarching mission of the Libertarian Party of Canada?

Moen: Our overarching mission is to limit government and decrease the amount of institutionalized initiatory violence being used against the very people government is supposed to protect from initiatory violence.

3. Jacobsen: What is the proper limit and role of government?

Moen: The proper role of government is to protect individuals from initiatory violence. The government gets its authority delegated from us (in theory) and since no human has the right to initiate violence then we can’t properly delegate that right to government, but we do have the right to defend ourselves and others and so it is reasonable to delegate that role to government.

Not everyone is equipped or competent to use violence to defend themselves and so this is the role government takes on as well as dispute resolution.
Anytime a person is in an involuntary position of power the proper thing to do is to eliminate the need for that involuntary relationship by empowering others. As a parent, I want fully actualized children that aren’t yoked to me through dependency as they enter their adult years. I want our relationship to transition to a voluntary one.

I personally think that the future of mankind will look very different and that our relationships with institutions like the government will eventually transition from involuntary to voluntary. I think it is limited thinking to imagine that there are some services that can only ever be provided through involuntary means.

4. Jacobsen: What is the vision for Canada through the Libertarian Party of Canada?

Moen: We are not utopians, we don’t have a central plan or vision for Canadians. Our vision would be for a Canada that is full of people who are free to pursue the destiny and vision they choose for their lives.

Amazing positive unexpected consequences occur when people are free and it is our belief that Canada will flourish in a way that we can’t imagine or predict.

5. Jacobsen: What other principles besides freedom contribute to, or would contribute to, the flourishing of Canadians within the Libertarian Party of Canada’s view?

Moen: Beyond the obvious benefits of having an economy on steroids, there would be immense social benefits. Liberty implies that you are self-owned and so you own both the positive and negative effects of your actions in this world.

People often forget that liberty doesn’t just denote freedom but also accountability. If you do harm it is your job to make things right. So, for example, we believe justice ought to focus on restoration of victims by criminals as well as protecting society.

Personal accountability also means that you have a greater sense of duty to your fellow citizens. That if you have a neighbour that falls on hard times you help them out as opposed to outsourcing their care to a soulless institution.

More closely connected communities and families, more charity, a greater sense of civic pride, an internal locus of morality and control, and far less anxiety are all things that I believe emerge in a culture that embraces liberty.

6. Jacobsen: Who are activists, authors, bloggers, writers, and so on, that influence you, and deserve greater exposure?


A few authors that have been particularly helpful to me in my personal development are Marshall Rosenberg, Michael Shermer, and Tony Robbins.


Moen: Ayn Rand’s writings had a big influence on me. The logic and precision of her writing and ideas helped me understand the reasoning from first principles. Thinking from principles instead of intuitions has helped me develop my political philosophy.

Marshall Rosenbergs’ book “Nonviolent Communication” had a huge impact on my personal life and relationships. I see this book as taking the principle of non-aggression and applying it to communication.

Being able to engage in conversations, not as battles of domination, but as a way of having our needs mutually met had huge benefits in both strengthening relationships with the people I love but also being able to communicate more effectively with audiences and constituents.

8. Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Mr. Moen.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Gissou Nia

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Abstract

Gissou Nia is the Strategy Director of Purpose. She discusses: family and personal background; interest in world politics; and religion as a force for good and religion as a force for bad.

Keywords: executive director, Gissou Nia, international relations, law, politics, Purpose, religion.

An Interview with Gissou Nia: Strategy Director, Purpose[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What was family background and personal background – geography, culture, language, and religion or lack thereof?

Gissou Nia: I am Iranian. I am Iranian-American. I was born in the US. Usually, people of my age were born in Iran after the Revolution and made their way out during the Iran-Iraq War.

We wanted to move back to the country when I was young. But it was during the war. In the end, we decided it was best to stay in the US. My work has been focused on Iran and looking at the human rights situation in Iran.

I grew up in the US. I have since then lived in many places and live here. Nothing remarkable in terms of upbringing [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Nia: I went to law school because the people doing the most impactful human rights work were attorneys. I got my J.D. I worked in the Hague and worked war crimes and crimes against humanity trials for many years.

While there, there was a disputed election in Iran, in June 2009. I found myself unable to think about anything but the unfolding situation there. The fact that there was a peaceful protest and then there was the violent crackdown on those protestors, who were simply asking for their votes to count in an election – in free and fair elections.

That was the extent of those demands. Those demands were not taken seriously and were, instead, met with violence. That left an impression on me. Twitter was a new platform. It was the first example of people organizing on Twitter discussing what was happening on the ground in Farsi tweets and English tweets.

I was gaining a sense of what was happening on the ground. I realized the skills I gained in The Hague in terms of investigating human rights abuses, preparing an evidentiary case to established grave human rights violations.

All that could be really helpful in the Iran context. Because I spoke the language. It could be helpful in gathering the evidence and preparing dossiers, essentially, against perpetrators of human rights violations there.

That motivated me wanting to work in Iran-specific work. I did that for 6 years. More recently, I have been working on refugee and migrant issues. That came out of the Iran work.
In the sense that a lot of individuals I would interview, a lot of the Iranians I would interview about human right abuses that they were subjected to while in Iran had fled Iran and were living in Iraq, Turkey, and Malaysia, wherever Iranians do not need a visa.

It is where folks do not need to seek asylum or be in the UNHCR process to get refugee status and be resettled in a new country. Being in that experience, it really showed me the gaps in the refugee resettlement process.

The fact that so few people who are seeking protection are afforded that ability to be resettled elsewhere and to escape violence & persecution. That motivated me. That field experience with Iranian Refugees made me want to look globally and holistically at the people and helping them find resettlement throughout the entire journey.

2. Jacobsen: You lived in Iran shortly but also travelled around the world quite a bit. Did the travel around the world influence the international, global perspective and interest in world politics?

Nia: For sure, there are different labels for it, like Third Culture Kid. When you’re a product of East and West, you are going to not view things as black and white. I think there is a growing sense of that among everybody, especially with the fact that more and more of us are digital native.

They will be exposed to the world based on what they see online. It is different than two decades ago, where there would be real barriers to exploring that. When you’re product of different cultures and speaking different languages – and fluent in that in-between space or acting as a bridge between cultures; it is going to shape you, no matter what.

You will notice people are very similar regardless of where they come from. It sounds cliche, but there is so much more that we have in common than different. Unless you’re intimately familiar with it.

It can be hard to understand. Anybody who grows as a “Third Culture Kid” gets a very innate sense. In my particular case, I am the product of two governments that have for the duration of my life been hostile to one another.

That influences my perspective in terms of seeing people as separate from the government. That is not always the case in the way people view different countries and people within them.

Oftentimes, they see them synonymous with who the rulers are, or this somehow speaks to the character of the people. That is even less so in countries where the leaders are not democratically elected.

They are not seen as representative of the people because the people did not express the will to vote them in via the ballot box. We shouldn’t view the people of the country through what the leaders decide to do or not to do.

That has been impressed upon me because the two countries that I am a product of. Certainly, if everyone around the world viewed Americans as synonymous with Donald Trump, it would make one half of the population unhappy.

It is similar to no other country’s people wanting to be viewed that way.

3. Jacobsen: In terms of looking at these two governments, religion influences politics in different ways. Looking at these two countries that have different majority religious groups, and the different forms in which religion influences politics, what do you note in terms the ways religion can be a force for good in terms of politics as well as a force for bad?

Nia: That is an interesting question. Obviously, in the case of Iran, Iran is a theocracy, so religious platitudes are written into the law. Where, in the US, it is influenced by Judeo-Christian tradition but, of course, is secular. It is a secular democracy.

That feels different what is official policy versus what is done in practice. The thing that I think is distinct about the US, which I think we’re all aware of, is how it may differ culturally than states in Northern Europe, for example.

It appears to be relevant, in the US, if somebody who is running for office is a person of faith; whereas, I don’t know how relevant that is in Norway, for example. I do think there is a bit of a distinction there.

There is certainly much more that is ascribed to morality in the US, personal morality – how somebody conducts themselves in their personal lives. Personally, we are seeing this on display with the Kavanaugh hearings and what he is doing.

It wades into the criminal. So, that is a separate thing. But it speaks to how important that is to our evaluations of who should be in positions of power in this country. I think there is a deeply influential stream of religion, culturally, in terms of how we do politics here in the US.

So, that is not enshrined in the law. It is relevant. It is certainly relevant. As a force for good, in the work that I do with refugee and migrant populations, I
think one huge target audience in our work has been communities of faith, actually.

Because, although, members of some of those communities in the US might, actually, vote for conservative candidates in office who, sometimes – it depends, are more often supporting policies that restrict the number of newcomers coming to the US.

Although, they might support those policies. These folks that are voting for those candidates for other reasons might be welcoming to refugees. They feel that their faith calls upon them to serve those who are in need of protection.

You see, certainly, among Catholics who believe in this right to work and freedom of movement philosophy and this idea of providing for one’s family. You see these strong currents. Some of the most activated audiences, engaged populations, and motivated to deeply help, have been those from a faith background.

I think religion can be harnessed as a force for good. But any time it is used for an exclusionary purpose or used to divide, I think that is where we run into trouble.

4. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Gissou.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Strategy Director, Purpose.

An Interview with Catherine Broomfield (Part Two)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Catherine Broomfield is the Executive Director of iHuman Youth Society. She discusses: the narratives of iHuman; belief systems and ways of life; initiatives for 2018/19; ways to become involved; and other organizations.

Keywords: Catherine Broomfield, Executive Director, iHuman Youth Society, Indigenous, youth.

An Interview with Catherine Broomfield: Executive Director, iHuman Youth Society (Part Two)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Before I touch on the topic of belonging, I have observed something in life. People who have the self-worth void. That perpetual feeling of lack. One group will go into the path of not really knowing what to do with themselves and their negative feelings.

Another group become super high achievers. But they hit a wall. Because this stops working in terms of dealing with the fundamental emotional and self-esteem issues that they might be harbouring. It is a reaction as a driver, but an unhealthy driver.

Does that path come forward in narratives through iHuman or elsewhere?

Broomfield: Honestly, I can only speak to observing the youth here, not those who do not come here. There is an observation that some people are able to use their early life as a motivator. Yet, that still has its limits. I think that’s true.

There are so many barriers, deficits, and challenges that the young people at iHuman come to us with; that’s why they come to iHuman is actually the belonging, which is expressed by their peers, and out in the community.

It is our street credibility. It is the word of mouth to say, “Hey, come here. I found a place where it is safe. People know my name. They know what I’m up to. Let me introduce you to iHuman.” Maybe, the belonging is the first route to being at iHuman and to us being given the gift of trust by the youth.

Trust is so invaluable. It is risky to be at an organization, to share your story, acknowledge that you need help. At iHuman, they recognize peers’ similarities in the traumas that they’ve faced. Also, their experience of being somewhere safe is in some ways unnerving.

iHuman is an experience in belonging. It is a gateway in. We have a guiding principle: we are relational. The relationship with the youth is the driver of the organization. It is not something that we compromise on. Therefore, we do things differently.

We look to the youth to tell us, “How would you solve the problem? How would you do it?” We build what they want us to build. For example, the way in
which a meeting, sharing your story can feel safe and so on.

2. Jacobsen: Youth live in a context with parents and grandparents with trauma. That trauma coming from formal institutions within a nation. Those, basically, get passed on as avoidance stories, “Do not get involved in that institution. Distrust it.”

You mentioned earlier on the Residential schools as well as the ‘60s scoop. With regards to the Residential school system, it is 150,000 kids for over a century. It was both the mandate of the Government of Canada and the Christian religious sects in the country.

I know there’s an admixture now. Because I note that there are Indigenous spiritual beliefs around Creator and creation. There are also Indigenous Christian beliefs. It is a new phenomenon. But it is a certain form of reconciliation.

There are new Native American and Indigenous theologians cropping up, who work to reconcile the Indigenous spiritual beliefs and their Christianity. There are others who reject the Indigenous spiritual beliefs and something enforced through family lineage with Christian belief heritage.

So, youth, not necessarily a belief in a Creator or not – Indigenous or Christian – but a kind of cultural milieu that comes with both, coming in without a belief in either of those.

Do you try to bring back some of those beliefs or work with the youth where they’re at? They don’t want that belief system in their manner of being, in their way of life, moving into the future.

Broomfield: We work from a place of where those youths are at. Not only in the spiritual sense but holistically, “Where are they at emotionally? Where are they at intellectually? Where are they socially?” We are providing a space for that exploration, those realizations, or expressions of needs to be shared.

From that, we are individualizing an approach for the young person, which may include our creative studios and spaces that we have. It would be both from an art as therapy approach or art as an expression for creativity.

It could also be that the young person is interested in our caring services, which would be more focus on the basic needs, e.g., mental health working in partnership with the local health unit that comes and works with the social workers.

Or the other way we weave all this together is through the authenticity pillar of our portfolio. We, as we say, “Keep it real.” It could be from a cultural safety perspective. We are offering to the young person an opening to reconnect and re-identify with their culture.

However, [Indigenous cultural opportunities] is not something that we actively offer because we are a non-Indigenous organization working primarily with Indigenous young people. We invite exploration through role-modelling. It is through the youth who will identify, acknowledge, or ask questions to be able to learn and to understand, to talk things through.

Because you’re right.

There could be a mix of shame, guilt, resentment, exclusion. There are many layers there. It, certainly, isn’t something that can be generalized. That every person comes to that question in a different way. They will seek out the answers in a different way.

We are here to encourage or support or provide something if we can; if not, then that’s the need for a provision of a referral in order to help this young person find answers.

3. Jacobsen: Moving into 2018/19, what are some of the initiatives that you’re hoping to build on or found for iHuman?

Broomfield: We have recently gone through a weeklong closure at iHuman. The youth acknowledged that we need some training. We spent some time looking at the values and principles. We have not examined them, since 23/24 years ago. We wanted to examine them.

Do these still fit for us? We have trained around attachment theory and how this may manifest in behaviours that we see in youth, and in us as staff because we’re are fallible humans too. We have trigger points and so on.

How can we recognize when we cross that boundary of being here as an advocate to a young person versus satisfying our own ego or some other need?

It has to be about what we do for the kids and what they need. One of the things that we are looking to continue out of the week is implementing a review of our entire programming structure using social design and how the outcomes we’re after can be implemented in the best possible way in order to get to those outcomes.

Something that we also learned and are exploring is Principles Focused Evaluation. How can we use the principles of the organization to evaluate the quality
of the impact on young people and to share the story? For the next few years, we will look under the rocks of what we do: is it useful? Does it honour the youth and our principles?

It is to evaluate ourselves and make ourselves efficient. It is to get some funders and resource streams to see what we do here is unique and provides for young people who come here. To understand the value and appreciate how transformative it is that these young people attain goals that they have.

That is the aim of us being here. Society has already invested millions of dollars in each of these children/youth: education, the court system, police, and so on. All these institutional structures are pouring money. But that is a model about the negative and the punitive approach.

We are a strengths-based approach. What are the gifts this person has, if they can see it, they can go back to the sense of purpose and worth? They make the journey with self-affirmation rather than some outside source saying, “You’re only good enough for this.” “This’ being jail, incarceration of some other kind, wandering the streets homeless or dead.

There is so much that these young people have to share if given the opportunity. They can turn down a different path and then have a different outcome. They are contributing to reconciliation in a lived way. They can have healthy families with their kids and break the cycle.

The violence and intimate partner violence and these things; it starts with giving young people a platform where they can work on some things while having role models.

4. Jacobsen: What are some ways to be involved with iHuman?

Broomfield: We have opportunities for volunteers, champions out in the community. We are selective. Because we want to make sure safe people come here, for the volunteers and the youth. We have board positions available, staff positions available, and so on.

We need to be sure people connected to iHuman know where these young people are coming from. What brought them to this situation? There are structures and institutions in society that have helped create this situation. So, it is understanding that.

It is being aware, fundamentally, that there are things wrong in society and communities. People informing themselves about our national history around the genocide of the Indigenous people. Our failure in honouring the treaties that were signed. It is educating yourself about that.

That is a start. If you know, it will be less likely to happen again. That, in itself, will be positive.

5. Jacobsen: Any other organizations? Also, any books or authors who write on this topic for a lay public in a clear, concise but educated way?

Broomfield: Any organization that is doing good work. That fits with your values; you can align with them. That is a good use of anyone’s time to support in the community. In terms of writers and researchers, I think there are a number of Indigenous writers, who we can look to and their stories and narratives.

Richard Wagamese is an author I’d recommend especially the book “One Story. One Song”. “Speaking my Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School” is a collection of stories well worth reading.

Also, there are a couple of textbooks that touch on relevant aspects to iHuman’s work. A text was written by a colleague, Peter Smyth “Working with High-Risk Youth: A Relationship-based Practice Framework”.

While I don’t like or use the term “high-risk youth” because it isn’t the youth that is high-risk it’s their behaviours, their choices, their associates and networks; the book is descriptive of this demographic or this population.

Peter has worked within the sector for many years – he knows what he’s talking about. The book is trauma-informed and strengths-based. Another is “Learning Social Literacy” by Joyce Bellous & Jean Clinton.


6. Jacobsen: Thank you very much for your time, Catherine.

Broomfield: Thank you, Scott. I appreciate our conversation. Usually, it is not the case where you get reciprocal conversation. I appreciate that. Thank you, too.

Appendix 1: Footnotes

[1] Executive Director, iHuman Youth Society.
[2] Individual Publication Date: November 8, 2018: http://www.in-sightjournal.com/broomfield-
two: Full Issue Publication Date: January 1, 2019: https://in-sightjournal.com/insight-issues/.
An Interview with Aynsley Pescitelli
M.A., B.A. (First Class Hons.)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Aynsley Pescitelli M.A., B.A. (First Class Hons.) is a doctoral candidate with some research into cyberbullying, transphobia, and homophobia. She discusses: cyberbullying; prevalence data; and transphobia and homophobia.

Keywords: Aynsley Pescitelli, cyberbullying, homophobia, transphobia.

An Interview with Aynsley Pescitelli M.A., B.A. (First Class Hons.)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You work on cyberbullying. What defines it?

Aynsley Pescitelli M.A., B.A.: My interest in the topic has always been on the groups that are understudied or have not previously been given a voice in the research literature. Both postsecondary students and LGBTQ+ persons fit into this research gap; the bulk of the work in this area continues to focus on elementary, middle, and high school populations, and students are examined in large-scale quantitative studies that either do not include LGBTQ+ students or include them as an afterthought or comparison point for non-LGBTQ+ individuals.

I was interested in adding rich, detailed, individual-level data about the experiences of LGBTQ+ postsecondary students to this area of research to examine how their experiences compared to younger samples and the existing limited information about postsecondary populations to hopefully start to fill that glaring gap in the literature.

2. Jacobsen: What ranges of prevalence exist throughout the world based on the best data available

Pescitelli: This is a tough question. In terms of the LGBTQ+ experience specifically (and more explicitly in the postsecondary arena), there really is not enough research to provide a clear answer to this question. There just has not been enough of a focus on LGBTQ+ students specifically, so incidence rates are either absent or tough to quantify due to missing data and problems with operationalization in large-scale datasets.

In terms of my own work I cannot really speak to this, since my study was a small-scale qualitative one and one of the criteria for inclusion was that participants had experienced cybervictimization. So, everyone in my sample had been cyberbullied in one form or another since starting college or university.

In terms of the general postsecondary population, as Chantal mentioned at the book launch, the rates vary greatly from study to study based on definitions employed and other study characteristics (e.g. who was sampled, what the research questions were, time of victimization (lifetime vs within a specified time), etc).
Even within the book, the rates vary greatly from chapter to chapter (ranging from 12.5% in the Chilean sample to over 50% in the chapter from France; other authors found rates somewhere in between). It certainly appears to be an issue that continues beyond secondary school, regardless of location, but the degree of cyberbullying varies quite a bit throughout the world (at least in terms of the studies conducted to date).

3. Jacobsen: What defines transphobia and homophobia? Why focus on these topics within the research on cyberbullying, as this seems niche subject matter?

Pescitelli: The definitions I employed in my study were as follows:

Homophobia is often referred to as a “fear or hatred of homosexuality and gays and lesbians in general” (Pickett, 2009, p. 93). It is also often used to explain orientation-based discrimination experienced by bisexual, pansexual, and questioning individuals (Blackburn, 2012; Conoley, 2008; Weiss, 2003).

While homosexuality and bisexuality relate to sexual orientation, transgender relates to gender roles and identities (Nagoshi et al., 2008). Transgender is likely often subsumed under the wider LGB category because it has only been distinguished from homosexuality within the past century (Pickett, 2009; Weiss, 2003). Transphobia is described as “fear and/or emotional disgust towards individuals who do not conform to society’s gender expectations” (Watjen & Mitchell, 2013, p. 135).

I think it is important to focus on populations that are understudied or have not previously been afforded research attention. I would not personally describe it as a niche, but I can understand it appears as such. The research that does exist points to LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing higher than average rates of both in-person and cyberbullying in postsecondary settings.

So that was what initially drew me to the research area; while this group may be a small one (depending on the institution or location), existing research at all levels of education indicated that this group experienced higher rates of online victimization when compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

So, I wondered why, despite the persistence of this finding, there continued to be such a dearth of research in the area. Most of the studies that included LGBTQ+ students did so in what felt like an ad hoc fashion (e.g. they noticed there was a difference in experiences, but the sample of students within that group was too small for them to unpack those differences), where the difference was acknowledged but not expanded upon.

Or it was used as a simple comparison point among a large sample of students but, again, not really explained or properly unpacked. This led me to wonder what similarities and differences existed, and to want to focus on an in-depth study on this under-researched group so that I could perhaps start to expand on some of the earlier findings that had little explanatory value.

While I was not able to comment on overall incidence rates due to my small sample with a qualitative focus, I was able to learn a lot about the individuals I interviewed and their recent and historical experiences with homophobia and/or transphobia in online settings. They had all experienced cyberbullying of this nature at very high rates and in various locations.

This was not a new experience to any of them; while they continued to experience online bullying frequently, they also had experienced such victimization prior to starting their postsecondary studies. As I mentioned when we chatted in person, the forms of cyberbullying (e.g. modes of perpetration, location of bullying) did not seem to differ a great deal from non-LGBTQ+ individuals studied in related research, but there were some differences in the focus of the bullying, the perceived or known motives for the bullying, and some of the ways the bullying was experienced.

So certainly, many similarities, but some unique factors that lead me to believe that a one-size-fits-all approach to combating cyberbullying might not work to eliminate all instances of online homophobia and transphobia. So, I think more research needs to be conducted with various groups (including members of the LGBTQ+ community) to determine if there are specialized needs or differences in the ways they experience online victimization if such actions are ever to be fully addressed.

4. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Aynsley.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Ph.D. Candidate, Criminology, Simon Fraser University.

An Interview with Blair T. Longley
(Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract

Blair T. Longley is the Party Leader for the Marijuana Party of Canada. He discusses: background; influence on development; and early involvements in activism and politics prior to the Marijuana Party of Canada.

Keywords: Blair T. Longley, Canadian Society, Cannabis, Marijuana Party of Canada.

An Interview with Blair T. Longley: Party Leader, Marijuana Party of Canada (Part One)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of culture, family, geography, language, and religion/irreligion, what is your background?

Blair T. Longley: I was born on the barbaric fringe of the British Empire, i.e., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in 1950. I grew up in Dollarton, North Vancouver. In retrospect, it was sort of “frozen in history” when I was young. The natives had been genocidally wiped out by viral diseases, and then relegated to small reservations, many miles away from Dollarton. The area was only beginning to be developed when I was young. There were many miles of beaches and forests that I could explore around my home, where there were almost no other people. Those areas are developed now, such that it is no longer possible for me to go back “home.”

The community I grew up in was almost totally White Anglo Saxon Protestant (there were a few Catholics.) Up until the year 1971, when I was 21 years old, Dollarton had a clause in its property titles which explicitly stated that those properties could not be sold to anyone who was not Caucasian. Therefore, the elementary and high schools that I went to had zero “diversity,” as people would now think of that kind of multiculturalism. I grew up in a family that may be referred to as “third generation atheists,” inasmuch as for three generations nobody in my family had believed in any of the established religious dogmas. When I went through the academic and technical educations of the British Columbian schools systems I was taught to respect rational evidence of facts and logical arguments. In high school, I did best in science courses. Therefore, my primary ways of thinking were based on mathematical physics. My first philosophy was statistical materialism.

2. Jacobsen: How did this influence development?

Longley: When one pursues the prodigious progress made in mathematical physics, one learns about the history of scientific revolutions, whereby there were series of intellectual revolutions, and profound paradigms shifts. Those trends that follow from attempting to more seriously consider what mathematical physics is telling us about the “real” world. One finds that those more and more re-converge with ancient mysticism. I have spent several decades pursuing those convergences between mathematical physics and
mysticism, with particular emphasis upon attempting to reconcile physical science with political science.

3. Jacobsen: What were your early involvements in activism and politics prior to the Marijuana Party of Canada?

Longley: My first participation in registered political activities was going to the founding convention of the Green Party of Canada in Ottawa, in 1983. In 1984, I became a Green Party candidate in the General Federal Elections, in order to help the Green Party become a registered party under the Canada Elections Act. At that time, my main concern was the nuclear arms race between the USA and the USSR, which became quite insane during the 1980s, and reached its most insane point in 1986. (Of course, now, that situation after getting somewhat better for a while, has now become worse than it has ever been before.) Back at that time, the Green Party was tending to become more mainstream, and therefore, my kinds of radical politics were not approved of by the more mainstream members of the Green Party. That ended up with my also being endorsed as a Rhinoceros Party candidate on the last day of the nomination period, which made national news, due to my becoming a Green Rhino.

During the 1984 General Federal Elections, one of the most important turning points in my life took place when I attended an election expenses seminar given by Elections Canada official, where the political contribution tax credit was explained. I realized the awesome potential of that tax credit, and spent the next few decades attempting to realize that potential. I became a registered agent of the Rhinoceros Party, which enabled me to work on using the tax credit, as political experiments that enabled me to build the factual basis for a court case against the government of Canada regarding the uses of political contribution funds.

From 1982 to 1987, I was publicly cultivating cannabis plants in university family housing gardens, first on SFU’s campus, and then on UBC’s campus. During 1986 I engaged in substantial correspondence with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and some of his other ministers, regarding the criminalization of cannabis. In 1987 I was growing several dozen marijuana plants in the center of the family housing garden, in order to gain standing to challenge the constitutional validity of the marijuana laws.

However, when I went to court, the RCMP witness, crown prosecutor, and judge, conspired to make deliberate errors in laws, so that they could summarily acquit me, and therefore, not have to bother to look at the evidence nor listen to the legal arguments that I had prepared for that case. In other words, that court case ended in a completely goofy way. Since then, it has been repeated, over and over again, that Canadian courts were too corrupt to engage in a proper Charter of Rights examination of the original purpose and subsequent effects of the laws that criminalized cannabis.

After my own efforts had resulted in clearly demonstrating that was going to be the case, I stopped doing any more activism on that topic, but rather, devoted all my time and energy, from 1988 to 2000, in working on my court case against the Canadian governments regarding the political contribution tax credit. After I finally won that case, by proving that the government had been arrogantly dishonest about the legal use of that tax credit, in 2000, I attempted to interest all the other registered political parties in adopting my ideas.

NONE of the other registered parties were willing to adopt my ideas regarding the possible uses of that tax credit, EXCEPT the newly registered Marijuana Party. Therefore, the reason that I became associated with the Marijuana Party is that it was the ONLY registered party that was willing to attempt to realize the full potential of the political contribution tax credit.

In 2004, the Canada Elections Laws were changed in ways which deliberately decimated the Marijuana Party. After the Marijuana Party had been effectively destroyed by those changes in the Elections Laws, I became Party Leader, because there was nobody else who was willing and able to do so at that time. I primarily did so in order to continue to work on the political contribution tax credit potential, by finding ways to work around the changes in the Elections Laws which summarily criminalized most of what the Marijuana Party had been successfully doing from 2000 to 2003.

(That is what I continue to do now through authorizing autonomous Marijuana Party Electoral District Associations.) Becoming Party Leader enabled me to have another court case against the Canadian government regarding Elections Laws that made votes for big parties be worth about $2 per vote, per year, for the big political parties, while votes were worth nothing to smaller political parties. We originally won at trial, however, we lost under appeal in 2008, which effectively made sure that the Marijuana Party could not compete with the bigger political parties.

The big parties actually made money from participating in General Federal Elections, while the
smaller parties went broke by attempting to do so. The Elections Laws are set up in every possible way to favour the big parties, while screwing the smaller parties. However, since the big parties also appoint the judges, the typical patterns are for the courts to uphold as constitutionally valid the laws regarding the funding of the political processes which accumulate to result in Canada NOT being a “free and democratic society,” but rather, being a runaway fascist plutocracy juggernaut. Overall, Canada is deteriorating from colonialism towards neofeudalism, while the vicious spirals of the funding of all facets of the political processes are the main factors driving that to happen…

4. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Mr. Longley.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Blair T. Longley (Part Two)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Blair T. Longley is the Party Leader for the Marijuana Party of Canada. He discusses: being the leader of the Marijuana Party of Canada; derivative policies; the advancement of society; important individuals; and the research on marijuana.

Keywords: Blair T. Longley, Canadian Society, Cannabis, Marijuana Party of Canada.

An Interview with Blair T. Longley: Party Leader, Marijuana Party of Canada (Part Two)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You are the Leader of the Marijuana Party of Canada. What is the primary policy of the Marijuana Party of Canada?

Blair T. Longley: The Marijuana Party was primarily founded as a single issue party, based upon the related aspects of “legalizing marijuana.” The only founding policy beyond those related to “marijuana legalization” was to change the voting system, such that there would be better representation achieved than the existing first-past-the-post electoral systems, which tends to wipe out smaller parties, while possibly giving total power to the dominant minority.

Of course, I have always, without making any effort to do so, been riding along with the waves of events that were happening during the historical times and places where I happened to exist. Hence, it is consistent with my continuing to surf the waves of change that the current Liberal Party Canadian government is currently working upon both those issues, of “legalizing marijuana” and “electoral reform.”

2. Jacobsen: What derivative policies, which have details and acts as sub-clauses to the primary policy, follow from the primary policy?

Longley: That depends upon to what degree one is able and willing to accept and integrate the more radical hemp truths, that hemp is the single best plant on the planet for people, for food, fiber, fun, and medicine. Neolithic Civilization has always been based upon being able to enforce frauds. Within that overall context, marijuana laws are the single simplest symbol, and most extreme particular example, of the general pattern of social facts: only a civilization which was completely crazy, and corrupt to the core, could have criminalized cannabis.

3. Jacobsen: Do cults, ideologies, and religions restrict the advancement of society to greater technological, socio-cultural, and spiritual levels?

Longley: That is quite the hyper-complicated question! One of the first sociologists, Emile Durkheim, explained some of the various ways that paradigm shifts are achieved, which have been restated by many others, such as represented in these quotes from Gandhi & Schopenhauer: “First they
ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.” & “Every truth passes through three stages before it is recognized: In the first it is ridiculed, in the second it is opposed, in the third it is regarded as self-evident.”

Those patterns were documented happening over and over again by Thomas Kuhn in his book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Similarly, there is a famous quote from John Stuart Mill regarding how: “Yet it is as evident in itself as any amount of argument can make it, that ages are no more infallible than individuals; every age having held many opinions which subsequent ages have deemed not only false but absurd; and it as certain that many opinions, now general, will be rejected by future ages, as it is many, once general, are rejected by the present.”

Within that context, Globalized Neolithic Civilization is running out of enough time to be able to adapt. The facts are that sociopolitical systems based upon being able to enforce frauds are becoming exponentially more fraudulent, while there appears to be nothing else which is happening which is remotely close to being in the same order of magnitude of changes to be able to adapt to that happening, because Globalized Neolithic Civilization is the manifestation of the excessive effectiveness of being controlled by applications of the methods of organized crime through the political processes, in ways which overall are manifesting as runaway criminal insanities. That society appears to have become too sick and insane to be able to recover from how serious that has become. Marijuana laws illustrated the ways that the repetitions of huge lies, backed by lots of violence, controlled civilization, despite that doing so never stopped those lies from being fundamentally false. Everything that Globalized Neolithic Civilization is doing is based upon the history of social pyramid systems of power, whereby some people controlled other people through being able to back up lies with violence. The history of successful warfare was the history of organized crime on larger and larger scales. Being able to back up deceits with destruction gradually morphed to become the history of successful finance based upon public governments enforcing frauds by private banks. It was within that overall context that it was possible for a whole host of other sorts of legalized lies to become backed by legalized violence, which included the example of criminalizing cannabis.

4. Jacobsen: Who are important individuals in the party of the aim of the legalization of marijuana apart from you – or general statements about the membership at large?

Longley: A registered political party can not exist without individual members. Each and every individual who agrees to become a registered member is vital to the overall existence of the party. After having 250+ members, during general elections, the party has to have 1 officially nominated candidate for election. The Marijuana Party operates in totally decentralized ways. Our candidates are practically in the same situation as independent candidates. Our electoral district associations are as autonomous as the elections laws allow them to be.

5. Jacobsen: What does the research state about the benefits and harms of marijuana – by any means of intake such as smoked, ingested, and so on?

Longley: The overall answer continues to be the same as the Royal Commission reported in 1972, that marijuana is the safest of drugs. The history of pot prohibition was always based upon huge lies, which grossly exaggerated the harmfulness of marijuana, which set of lies may be referred to as “Reefer Madness.” In my opinion, smoking marijuana is the worst way to consume cannabis. My view is that smoking should only be done ritually and ceremonially. Due to the history of the criminalization of cannabis, cannabis culture became similar to a slave society, within which context many people became proud of the relatively stupid social habits that they developed during those decades of prohibition. Cannabis should be food, first and foremost. Vapourization is a superior alternative to smoking.

Appendix I: Footnotes


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An Interview with Blair T. Longley
(Part Three)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
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Abstract
Blair T. Longley is the Party Leader for the Marijuana Party of Canada. He discusses: regressive policies in the nation’s history regarding marijuana; responsibilities with public exposure; and those deserving more exposure.

Keywords: Blair T. Longley, Canadian Society, Cannabis, Marijuana Party of Canada.

An Interview with Blair T. Longley: Party Leader, Marijuana Party of Canada (Part Three)[1][2]
*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What have been the most regressive policies in provincial, territorial, and national history from your perspective for the legalization and regulation of marijuana?

Blair T. Longley: The total criminalization of the cultivation of cannabis, which took effect in Canada in 1938, wiped out the hemp industries which could have grown hemp for food and fiber. We are living inside of Wonderland Matrix Bizarro Worlds, where everything has become as absurdly backward as possible, due to society actually being controlled by enforced frauds. Everything regarding the history of how hemp became marijuana, and thus, cannabis became completely criminalized, is but one of the tiny tips of an immense iceberg of integrated systems of legalized lies backed by legalized violence, which almost totally dominate Globalized Neolithic Civilization. The ruling classes, the pyramidion people in those entrenched social pyramid systems, are becoming increasingly psychotopic psychopaths, while most of the people they rule over are matching that by becoming increasingly impotent political idiots. People who do not know anything but what their schools and the mass media tell them know nothing but bullshit, which they have been brainwashed to believe in their whole lives. They may be told relative truths about trivial facts, but otherwise they are massively LIED TO BY OMISSION regarding the most important facts, as well as generally misinformed about everything, in proportion to how important those things are. Again, the ways in which the schools and mass media, operated by professional hypocrites, have presented grossly disproportional and irrational risk analysis regarding the exaggerated harms and dangers of marijuana, simply symbolized the ways in which the vast majority of people were brainwashed to believe in bullshit, in ways which have become more and more scientific brainwashing, as manifested within the context of an oxymoron scientific dictatorship, which has primarily applied progress in science and technology in order to get better at enforcing frauds, while adamantly refusing to become more genuinely scientific about itself.

The biggest bullies’ bullshit world views have been built into the basic structure of the dominate natural languages and philosophy of science, such that almost everyone thinks and communicates in ways
which are absurdly backwards, and moreover, are tending to actually become exponentially more absurdly backwards, as the progress in physical science and technology continue to be applied through sociopolitical systems based upon being able to enforce frauds, which are thereby becoming exponentially more fraudulent. Since the most socially successful people living within systems based upon enforcing frauds are the best available professional hypocrites, there are no practically possible ways to prevent that from continuing to get worse, faster… Although the laws of nature are never going to stop working, and therefore, nothing that depends upon the laws of nature is going to stop working, natural selection pressures have driven the development of artificial selection systems to become based on the maximum possible dishonesties, which are not getting better in any publicly significant ways, but rather, are actually becoming exponentially more dishonest. Globalized Neolithic Civilization is headed towards series of psychotic breakdowns, a tiny component of which is the psychotic breakdown of pot prohibition.

2. Jacobsen: You have moderate exposure in the media. What responsibilities come with this public recognition?

Longley: The public opinions regarding the Marijuana Party tend to be similar to the rest of the systems of public opinions, which are based upon generation after generation being brainwashed to believe in the biggest bullies’ bullshit world views by their schools and mass media. The general public opinions of the Marijuana Party could hardly be lowered by anything that I could possibly do. In my view, the vast majority of Canadians, literally more than 99%, always behave like incompetent political idiots, (while the fraction of 1% that are the pyramidion people in those social pyramid systems are more competently malicious.) Inside that context, I tend to not want to volunteer to be a performing clown, who can be drafted into the narratives which are presented by the mass media. Meanwhile, I regard those people who have been made become more relatively famous by their greater mass media coverage publicity as being mainstream morons and reactionary revolutionaries.

While I may still somewhat entertain vain fantasies that I should promote more radical truths, including more radical hemp truths, from any overall objective point of view society has become too terminally sick and insane to recover from the degree to which that has become the case. One tiny manifestation of that are those ways that the “legalization” is currently indicated to become based on compromises with the same old huge lies, while more radical hemp truths are not expected to be able to change that. Therefore, “legalizing” marijuana now looks like it is headed toward becoming ridiculously restrictive regulations, which will actually amount to “Pot Prohibition 2.0” based on “Reefer Madness 2.0.”

3. Jacobsen: Who are activists, authors, bloggers, writers, and so on, that influence you, and deserve greater exposure?

Longley: I am not aware of any particular sources which I would unreservedly recommend. My opinions are due to sifting through vast amounts of information, such that what I have distilled is nothing like anything which was similar to what was originally presented in those sources. In my view, it is politically impossible for any publicly significant opposition to not be controlled. I am not aware of any “alternatives” that are more than “alternative bullshit.” The best one gets is relatively superficial analyses, which are correct on those levels, but which then tend to collapse back to the same old-fashioned bogus “solutions” based upon impossible ideals. It is barely possible to exaggerate the degree to which almost everyone takes for granted the DUALITIES of false fundamental dichotomies, and the related impossible ideals. I am not aware of any publicly significant “opposition” that is not controlled by the ways that they continue to almost completely take for granted thinking in those ways. (Of course, that includes the publicly significant groups that the mass media have most recognized as those who have campaigned to “legalize” marijuana.)

Ideally, we should go through series of intellectual scientific revolutions and profound paradigm shifts. Primarily that means we should attempt to better understand how human beings and civilization live as manifestations of general energy systems, and therefore, we should attempt to use more UNITARY MECHANISMS to better understand how human beings and civilization actually live as entropic pumps of environmental energy flows. However, I am not aware of anyone who is publicly significant that sufficiently does that, especially because going through such series of profound paradigms becomes like going through level after level of more radical truths, which amounts to going through the fringe, then the fringe of the fringe, and then the fringe of the fringe of the fringe, etc. … I present what I call the Radical Marijuana positions as being those Fringe Cubed positions, which are based upon attempting to recognize the degree to which almost everyone currently almost totally takes for granted thinking and communicating through the uses of the dominate natural languages and philosophical presumptions,
which became dominate due to those being the bullshit which was backed up by bullies for generation after generation, for thousands of years.

Not only has civilization been based on thousands of years of being able to back up lies with violence, while progress in physical science has enabled those systems to become exponentially bigger and BIGGER, but also, those few who superficially recognize that then still tend to recommend bogus “solutions” which continue to be absurdly backwards, because they do not engage in deeper analysis regarding how and why natural selection pressures drove the development of artificial selection systems to become most socially successful by becoming the most deceitful and treacherous that those could possibly become. Since those are the facts, everything that matters most is becoming worse, faster … Within that context, the bogus “legalization” of marijuana, based upon recycled huge lies, is too little, too late, and too trivial to matter much. Rather, what is happening is that the Grand Canyon Chasms between physical science and political science are becoming wider and WIDER!

Human beings and civilization have developed in ways whereby they deliberately deny and misunderstand themselves living as entropic pumps of environmental energy flows in the most absurdly backward ways possible, while yet, almost everyone continues to take that for granted, which includes the degree to which the central core of triumphant organized crime, namely, banker dominated governments, are surrounded by layers of controlled “opposition” groups, which stay within the same bullshit-based frame of reference. There is almost no genuine opposition, but rather, the only publicly significant “opposition” is controlled by the ways that they continue to think and communicate using the dominate natural languages and philosophy of science, without being critical of those. Of course, that characterizes the controlled “opposition” groups, which have been campaigning to “legalize” marijuana. As those campaigns have become more mainstream, those campaigns have become less radical, and therefore, have tended to even more be able and willing to compromise with the same old recycled huge lies. Therefore, in general, one is watching the “legalization” of marijuana turn into a mockery of itself, whereby what is actually happening is becoming more and more absurdly backwards to what was originally being promoted by those who long ago were campaigning to try to “legalize” on the basis of promoting more radical hemp truths. Instead, “legalized” marijuana is being more and more forced back to fit inside the established monetary and taxation systems, which are almost totally based upon public governments enforcing frauds by private banks. The current news trends indicate that “legalized” marijuana is only happening INSIDE the systems that criminalized cannabis in the first place. Hence, overall, the campaigns to “legalize” marijuana are more and more being betrayed, such that what is most probably going to actually happen are sets of ridiculously restrictive regulations. (Of course, we will have to wait and watch to see what finally happens in those regards during the next couple of years. However, there are no good grounds to be genuinely optimistic about that at the present time.)

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Greg Vogel
(Part One)

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Greg Vogel is the Chairman of Mensa France. He discusses: family and personal background; influence on him; giftedness as a child; giftedness in primary and secondary school; and working as a community on gifted children.

Keywords: France, German, Greg Vogel, intelligence, IQ, Mensa France.

An Interview with Greg Vogel: Chairman, Mensa France (Part One)[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In terms of geography, culture, language, and religion/irreligion, what is family background? What is personal background?

Greg Vogel: I was born in Strasbourg (France), a city which was in German side during WW2. My grandparents were forcibly incorporated in the German army, so we have a specific culture “between France and Germany.”

All my grandparents and parents talked french and also German. About myself, I’m not as good as I would be in German. I think all members of my family were baptized, not me. My mother refused and tell that it would be me who will decide my religion. So still not baptized now [Smiles].

2. Jacobsen: How did the family background feed into early life for you? How were these an influence on you, either directly or indirectly?

Greg: Well, to be honest, I was not the desired child. My mother thought she was a barren woman (hope this is the good expression). She was no more in a couple with my father when they “slept together.” My father did not want to have me, but my mother assumed myself.

So I’ve been raised at 80% by my mother; I lived with her and having her name. We were very poor. We have the equivalent of 7.50 Euro to buy food for a week for me, my mother, 2 dogs and the cat (the cat was necessary as we had mice in the flat). My mother usually said that the animals ate better than us [Laughing].

Our apartment did not have any shower, bathroom, heating, flush (we had a seal) and hot water. It was horribly cold in winter; I was sleeping dressed even with gloves sometimes. Once I brought a thermometer in my room it was -4°C Celsius and, as it was too easy, I had a stepfather, who was violent.

About my father, he has some quality; but even after 38 years, he still does not know my birthdate and still does not know how to write my first name (I promise this is not a joke). Well, I could continue like that, but I prefer keep it for my future autobiography book [Laughing].
So, I think that all of this contributes to offering me a special vision of life, as I do have different references than most of the people. It helps me a lot now.

3. Jacobsen: When did giftedness become a fact of life for you, explicitly? Of course, you lived and live with it. When was the high general intelligence formally measured, acknowledged, and integrated into personal identity, and family and friends’ perception of you?

Greg: I was 15-years-old. I was doing a woman’s homework at my father’s apartment, a friend of him was here too. She looked at my work and said: “It’s the handwriting of a very intelligent person.”

So, we talked a bit. My father talked about Mensa. But it was in 1995, so no internet and everything we have now with it. It’s only in 2006 that I joined the association. At this time, I was in the university, but it was a bit complicated with my classmates as usually when I was talking with them, most parts of they did not understand – or told me that I was wrong.

So I thought, “Well, 2 possibilities, I’m dumb, or they are dumb.” So, I contacted my local Mensa to pass the test. In my mind, I went to the test session to pass the test, not to make the test.

It was a very personal process, so no one knew that I was in Mensa. Little by little, I told my friends and my family. It did not change anything in our relations. I’m still watching soccer, wrestling, making sports, martial arts, playing video games, etc. So, my friends accepted this specificity. Just my father does not understand why I’m a national chairman if I’m not paid for it. Sigh.

4. Jacobsen: Did personal giftedness get nurtured throughout primary and secondary school?

Greg: No, lol.

Life was too tough at this time for my giftedness to be exploited. When I talked about my problems, people may think that I was lying, but whatever. If you have problems, you’re just a problem for the others that are not necessary to solve.

A problem that you can let down. It’s also a fact that you will more likely be rich people than poor people, and my teachers thought also like that when I was in college. It did not nurture my giftedness, but it helped me to understand more about life and people.

5. Jacobsen: Why should governments and communities invest in the gifted, identification and education? Where can communities and governments disserve the gifted – do them wrong? What are the consequences in either case?

Greg: Governments should do all they can for education, not even for gifted but for all. The more your people will be educated (not the same thing than cultured which is also very important), then the more people will accept differences (sexual, religion, “color”, giftedness, and so on), so the smart people will understand that gifted people can make great things for humanity.

He’s not a Mensa member, but Elon Musk is making, in a few years, what N.A.S.A. never did. He’s just proving that if you have the intelligence and the financial resources you can make great things. Hell, I want to travel in space before I die! So go Elon!

[Smiles]

The smarter you are, the faster you can find a solution to your problems.

6. Jacobsen: How can families and friends help prevent gifted kids from a) acting arrogant and b) becoming social car crashes (with a) and b) being related, of course?)

Greg: Well, the same answer, you have to educate people. Maybe, I’m factually smarter than some of my friends, so what? Do I know everything? No. Do my friends know a lot of things that I don’t know? Yes.

Your kid is arrogant? OK, let him fill in your tax form or just let him explain to you what is love.

Life is not only about intelligence, but it’s also about relations that you will have with your family, your friends, your love(s), and your children. Making experiences of traveling, working, having children, enjoying life is not necessarily something in correlation with intelligence.

Thinking because you can answer well at some IQ tests makes you Superman is the best way to have it all wrong. IQ is like the body: you have to use it well to make great things and it’s not because you have facilities that you will be always on top; it’s all about work.

You have to make understand at your kids that being smart and/or strong is a gift, but a gift that you should train as much as possible. If you stay all your life alone without talking to anyone and making nothing of your day, it’s useless to have high IQ.

And whoever you are and whatever you’ve done, there always be someone who will do better than you. But if you’re kids is a real genius and that he’s done everything well so send him at Elon Musk and tell
him to build a spaceship and some people on Earth really want to travel in space [Laughing].

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Rahma Rodaah

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Abstract

Rahma Rodaah is the Self Published Author of Muhimma’s Quest. She discusses: life prior to the Somali civil war; coming to Canada at age 8; the experience being the only black girl; enduring and recovering from bullying; the assumed responsibilities as the eldest in the family; the move to Edmonton in 2001; international business at the University of Ottawa; current position, and tasks and responsibilities; the reason for motto “where there is a will there is a way”; having a child; being a self-published author of children’s books and a Muslim; feedback on the books; and plans on a next book.

Keywords: author, Islam, Muhimma’s Quest, Muslim, Rahma Rodaah, Self-Published Author, writer.

An Interview with Rahma Rodaah: Self Published Author[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Being born in Somalia, what was life like prior to the civil war?
Rahma Rodaah: Life for us was very comfortable. My father worked in the Financial sector, but he often traveled so most time it was just my mother, my two siblings and my grandmother at home. I just remember spending my days outside and being surrounded with a large family. That’s the one thing we don’t have here in Canada, our extended family.

2. Jacobsen: You moved to Canada at the age of 8. How was building a life in Quebec and starting to learn French?
Rodaah: Our transition to life in Canada has not been an easy one. It took us a long time to get here, including a detour in the USA before we crossed the border. We left everything behind so it was initially very hard for my parents. The language barrier, getting used to a new surrounding and the climate were the biggest struggles we had to overcome.

3. Jacobsen: What was the experience of being the only black girl, the only Somali in the French classrooms?
Rodaah: It’s only recently that I have started uncovering memories of this period in my life. The bullying I endured in those years was very traumatic. There was even an incident where a teacher tied me to a chair because she thought I was too “disruptive” I was unable to speak the language, and I struggled immensely because of this. Children pull down my pants; they would taunt me and tease me endlessly. They were most curious about my skin color and my hair which I had never seen as an issue before. It was, and my parents didn’t understand, or rather they had their own battles to overcome.

4. Jacobsen: How did you endure and recover from the bullying?
Rodaah: The bullying did not stop until we moved to Ottawa two years later. Ottawa offered more diversity due to more immigrants settling there, and for the first time, I was no longer the only black or Somali girl in class.

I was able to speak a little French, and I was able to make friends. After some time in a shelter for new
immigrants we moved into a neighborhood were a lot of Somalis lived and therefore we found a sense of community, and it started to feel like home for the first time since we arrived.

5. Jacobsen: As the eldest in the family, how did this affect assumed responsibilities within the family?

Rodaaah: I always thought of myself as the third parent. My father constantly worked to support us, and therefore my mother relied on me to help with my siblings as well as to help her overcome her inability to speak the language.

I also felt compelled to set an example for my younger siblings. A lot was riding on my education and my success. I was the first to graduate university in my household which for my parent meant their sacrifice and migration worth it.

6. Jacobsen: In 2001, why did you move to Edmonton?

Rodaaah: You know at first we had no idea why our parents decided to move us from a place where we felt comfortable and had tons of friends. But years later my mother told us she decided to move to Alberta for better work opportunity for both our father and us.

Edmonton in early 2000 looked nothing like it does today in term of its diversity and number of Somali in its population. In fact, our family was one of the first Somali family to enroll in our French High school. But we quickly got used to it, and we now love being here.

7. Jacobsen: Why did you choose international business in university and to complete a degree at the University of Ottawa?

Rodaaah: I actually enrolled in the program of International business with the University of Alberta, but after two years I realized it wasn’t the right program for me. I applied to many universities in Canada, but I decided to move back to Ottawa, and I received a degree in International Development and globalization from the University of Ottawa.

8. Jacobsen: What is your current position? What tasks and responsibilities come with the position?

Rodaaah: I am currently working with the Government of Alberta where I work as an income support adviser. We help Albertans receive information and apply to funded programs such as Health benefit and funeral benefits.

9. Jacobsen: Why is your motto “where there is a will there is a way”?

Rodaaah: I value hard work and determination. My parent’s journey and their will to get here has always fuel that belief in me. I knew that if I wanted it bad enough and I worked hard for it, anything would be attainable.

10. Jacobsen: How did having a child or becoming a mother influence personal perspective on time, life, and responsibilities in life?

Rodaaah: Once I became a mother, I began to reflect more on the things I had gone through and overcome during my childhood. Both my husband and were plucked from our home country due to the Civil war. We had to leave so much behind and forge a new identity and life.

I noticed that my kids are still being asked where they are from even though they are the first generation born in Canada. They have not been or seen Somalia so as far as they are concerned Canada is the only country they know.

I also noticed that as a black Muslim my children would have to overcome these two marginalized identities. Things such as bullying and racism are still prevalent, and I want my kids to have enough confidence to defend themselves and enough knowledge to educate these ignorant views.

11. Jacobsen: As a self-published author of children’s books and a Muslim, what is your hope in portraying characters to the young through the books?

Rodaaah: My goal is to showcase black Muslim in a positive light. These two identities are often time the most stereotyped, and it’s important for me to change that narrative. Positive imagery can have a significant impact on children and its one of the biggest reason I choose to write children books.

I hope my books will enable children the opportunity to see themselves in books they also enjoy to read. I also want to show that as Black Muslim we also have stories to tell and often we go through the same things as others do.

12. Jacobsen: What has been the general feedback on them?

Rodaaah: I have received an enormous amount of positive response. I have had a lot of none Muslim advise me they learn something about our culture and faith. So many kids have told me they were extremely delighted to see themselves in the characters.

Parents have commented that the message of inclusion and embracing our differences is an
important one they have enjoyed discussing with their children.

13. Jacobsen: What is your next planned book?

Rodaah: I am currently working on two new pictures books, but I also plan on writing a chapter book for teen and early readers in the future. I just had my third child, however, and it is taking me longer to complete any work.

14. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Rahma.

Appendix I: Footnotes


An Interview with Professor Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam

Interviewer: Scott Douglas Jacobsen


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Abstract

Professor Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam is a Professor at Universitetet i Oslo (UiO) and the Founder of Iran Human Rights. He discusses: Iranian juvenile offenders are given the death penalty; religion as a political tool; countries telling women what they can and can’t wear; justifying the death penalty; advanced postsecondary training and neuroscientific research; problems in the brain; substantia nigra; and different cells having problems.

Keywords: Human Rights, Iran, Iran Human Rights, Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, neuroscience, professor.

An Interview with Professor Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam: Professor, Universitetet i Oslo (UiO); Founder, Iran Human Rights[1][2]

*Please see the footnotes, bibliography, and citation style listing after the interview.*

1. Scott Douglas Jacobsen: With respect to some human rights issues in Iran, as you founded Iran Human Rights, there are particular issues to do with juvenile offenders who are given the death penalty. Why? How does this compare to the international context?

Professor Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam: To answer the second question first, Iran has ratified several international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which clearly bans the death penalty for offenses committed under 18 years of age.

So, it is illegal. But they still do it. Why do they do it? I would say, in general, victims of the death penalty in Iran and, probably, in many other countries belong to the weakest groups of society.

I think that it is the same in Iran. These are normally children from marginalized groups because of poverty or other socioeconomic factors. Basically, they don’t have a voice. During the last 40 years, Iran has been among the countries issuing the death sentence for juveniles, and in the last 5 years Iran has been the only country implementing death sentences for juvenile offenders, in 2018, at least 6 juveniles have been executed by the Iranian authorities.

I think the first time this issue started getting serious attention was the after 2000, thanks to the internet and the emergence of new human rights groups. So, people started focusing on issues of juvenile execution.

I think, at the same time as we started, several other rights groups started focusing on juveniles on the death row. One was in Canada, Stop Child Executions – founded by Nazanin Afshin-Jam. This (the issue of juvenile executions) has been an important issue when it comes to Iran’s international partners or countries having a dialogue with Iran, e.g., the European Union.

The death penalty is not banned by international law but the execution of children is banned. It has been
on the agenda. The Iranian authorities have been subjected to lots of pressure, international pressure. But they still keep doing it.

It is, I think, because they have different excuses for the use of the death penalty. I call it “excuses.” Because I think the death penalty is a political instrument, regardless of what the person sentenced to death has done, whether it is a normal crime or anything.

But the instrument is political. It is, in my view, what Iran uses to spread fear in the society. You remember when ISIS took over parts of Syria and Iraq? What most people remember were the scenes of the executions.

It is the most powerful instrument to spread terror and fear and keep the control of a country or of a people. Iranian authorities, since they don’t have popular support, depend on instruments like the death penalty.

Until recently, the majority of those executed were charged with drug offenses. There were years when we had 1 to 2 people executed each day for drug offenses, like 2015. Iran has executed several thousand in the last 7 or 8 years.

Again, because of increasing international pressure, they had to pass new legislation that restricts the use of the death penalty for drug offenses. When it comes to the death penalty, related to the juveniles – because they have allegedly committed murder, murder, according to Iranian law and what Iranian authorities say, is punishable by retribution in kind.

If the family of the murder victim wants retribution, which is the death penalty, then they do it. That way, they put away the execution responsibility on the shoulders of the plaintiffs. So, why does Iran continue juvenile executions?

Because they use the same excuse. Their excuse is that this is according to Islam or Sharia. We cannot change it. According to Sharia, a boy has a criminal responsibility when he is 15 and girl when she is 9.

They say, “We can’t change Sharia. That’s why we have to continue these punishments.” Because once they step back from Sharia, the next step would be to back off from many of the punishments, inhumane punishments, used in Iran which are based on Sharia.

It means they could be able to back off all those punishments. Most people are sentenced to death for murder charges. If they say that they can start using 18 years of age for criminal responsibility, it means that they can make, basically, any changes in their version of Sharia.

For them, it is a kind of red line. They have already been pushed by the international community to pass the legislation to limit the use of the death penalty for drug charges. They can’t execute political opponents as easily as they used to do in the 1980s because of the high political price. It would lead to international outrage. Now, the only thing left is for them to say, “We follow the religion.” Unfortunately, juvenile execution is also part of it. They are using the religion to keep on with the policy of the death penalty, which has nothing to do with the religion.

But it is a political tool. There are so many Muslim countries that do not practice the death penalty and as I mentioned, in the past few years Iran has been the only country in the world implementing the death penalty for juveniles.

On the other hand, the age limit to get a passport or a driving license in Iran is 18, like in other countries. The authorities do not regard a 15 years old boy mature enough to get a driver’s license. But when it comes to the death penalty the age of criminal responsibility becomes 15. So, the Iranian authorities can change the age of criminal responsibility to 18, but it requires much stronger and more long-lasting international pressure.

2. Jacobsen: So, you mentioned religion in its theocratic form used as a political tool, as a last-ditch political tool, for “justification” for the death penalty. However, this probably represents a disjunction between the general population and the religious leadership.

Is there a disjunction there? How much? Why?

Amiry-Moghaddam: Absolutely, first of all, ordinary people do not think the way the authorities do, even in murder cases. For example, for the past few years, we have been monitoring many of these retribution cases.

Since the law allows plaintiffs to either forgive or ask for retribution. There are a significant number of families who choose forgiveness. According to our statistics kept for a few years, the numbers of families who choose forgiveness over the death penalty via retribution is much higher.

That’s one thing. Iran probably has the biggest or the largest abolitionist movement in the Middle East, at least in the countries practicing the death penalty. One of the reasons is people see the authorities using the death penalty as a political tool.

The authorities’ way of using religion; the whole issue of political Islam arrived to Iran 40 years ago. Before that, it was only among a small group of the
priests or the clergy. So, many people were not familiar with that.

Let’s say my grandfather or other people who were practicing Muslims, who were believers, they never shared the authorities’ idea of combining religion with politics the way they do it. So, I think that it is a paradox that Iran, which was probably the least religious country of the Middle East, has had an Islamic state over the last 40 years.

This is also one of the reasons why they have to use force to enforce the rules. For example, you have for the compulsory hijab. They have thousands of specific police forces to go around and make sure people are following the hijab rules.

You have probably seen the pictures. When ordinary people have the chance, they violate these rules. I would say Iranians do not share the authorities’ opinion. Not all, some have the same views. But I would say a larger group or, maybe, a majority do not share the authorities’ view on it, or on the tools used to continue their rule.

3. Jacobsen: As a caveat or an add-on to that [Laughing], we see some countries in the world with either an interest in telling women what they have to wear or [Laughing] what they can’t wear [Laughing].

Amiry-Moghaddam: Right, that’s the thing. It is when what you wear becomes the main issue. It is for all sides [Laughing]. The real issue is much different than what people wear. The clothing becomes a symbol of something.

People forget that it is just a symbol. For them, it becomes a real thing.

4. Jacobsen: Outside of juvenile cases and the death penalty as a political tool through religious excuses, fundamentalist religious excuses, what cases, either in history or at present, would the death penalty seem justifiable to you, as you know more about this than me?

Amiry-Moghaddam: To me, the death penalty is not justifiable in any cases. First of all, it is an inhumane punishment. I can come back to that. Another thing, there is no indication or there are no studies showing that it has a preemptive effect on crimes.

It’s not reversible. We have seen so many cases where many years later; they find the person was innocent. I think that the law is responsible for the values that we’re transferring to our children and society.

When the law says, “Violence is not good. Murder is not good,” they cannot have exceptions for themselves. Not talking about self-defense, the law says, “It (killing) is wrong,” but when they practice the death penalty that is what they are doing.

Basically, it means that there are exceptions to things that are our deepest values, “Killing is wrong; unless, I decide it.” It sends the wrong signal. There are so many negative sides to the death penalty. It outnumbers the possible benefits if any.

So, that’s why. For example, in Norway, where I live, you probably remember. There was this guy who first put a bomb in a government office. Then, he went to an island and started killing young people. He shot to death 69 people. Most of them were teenagers.

In some countries, he would probably have been executed. So, what happened to him? The Norwegian judicial system spent thousands of Norwegian Kroner to have a proper trial for him. He could choose his lawyer.

It took several months. He could appeal again. Finally, he was sentenced to a lifetime in prison. I think, let’s say, what this process did to the society was extremely important, also with regards to healing the wounds of those directly injured or those who lost loved ones, it says, “This man did not manage to change our values.”

The society showed it has much stronger values than what one man can do to them. Probably, there were some people who wanted to see him dead. A good thing about a society with rule of law is that the authorities do not put the responsibility of the decision on the shoulders of someone who is a victim of violence. They do not have to think about it.

They have their grief. That is more than enough responsibility. Imagine if, in addition to what they went through, they had also to decide if this person should live or die; eventually, it is for the benefit of anyone, including those directly affected by violence or crime.

I don’t say that we should not have punishments, but the punishments we have should not violate our deepest values, the respect for the right to life and that killing is wrong.

5. Jacobsen: To pivot into the other research work, you are highly trained. You have a Ph.D. and an M.D. You worked at Harvard Medical School. It comes from an interesting background as a refugee and then went to Norway, as a kid.

This leads to questions about interesting work and background, and the diverse set of education. Most people do not have that level of education.
So, what is the main question you’re asking in the neurological research?

Amiry-Moghaddam: Right now, we are working at what we call the neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson’s disease. Those diseases that affect the central nervous system. Mainly, as we get older, but these diseases can affect younger people as well.

We do not have any preemptive treatment. We don’t have any cure. The reason for that is we still do not know enough about how our brain works and what happens to the brain when these diseases occur.

If I simplify it, in Parkinson’s disease, a hallmark is a loss of a specific population of brain cells, neurons, at a specific part of the brain called substantia nigra. Nobody knows why exactly those cells start dying. By the time people are diagnosed, more than 60-70% of the cells are dead. We do not have a cure.

Despite several decades of research, we don’t know enough about it. The brain is fascinating enough as an organ. I find research on these diseases meaningful, because I know there are so many people who suffer because of those diseases.

That is what we are focusing on right now. But I think, as a scientist, we are very privileged because my job is to be curious and try to make new discoveries in one of our most complex organs. I really feel privileged for that.

6. Jacobsen: If you look at the substantia nigra, and if I remember right, it produces dopamine. So, in a way, this amounts to a dopamine depletion syndrome, Parkinson’s Disease. As with any evolved system, it will have flaws.

Anyone can look at the list of cognitive biases of the human mind to know how many are known just about the mind. We also know in other organs the failures which arise. We see this with diabetes. We see this with eyes. We see this with auditory disorders.

But people get mechanical devices to replace some of the function that is lost. Not to the same degree, but to some sufficient level for functionality in the world. I am thinking of people who take insulin, diabetics.

Others who need hearing aids. Others, such as you and I, who get glasses because our eyesight is bad in some way. Others that I remember or recall reading about, which were fascinating, and shone a potential line, not necessarily solving but, of alleviating the problems for some people who have Parkinson’s.

Something akin to the pacemaker for the heart, a Parkinson’s pacemaker. Is this an area of newer research? Is it a hopeful area for research? Or is it, more or less, going off the rail? What is its status?

Amiry-Moghaddam: Yes, there are some, let’s say, more modern attempts to help people with Parkinson’s. First of all, let’s call it the dopamine pacemaker, we don’t have it. It wouldn’t stop or cure the disease.

Because, right now, the most efficient treatment, which has been helping many patients for many, many years is giving medication that increases the levels of released dopamine in the affected areas of the brain.


Amiry-Moghaddam: Yes, but it works as long as there are dopamine-producing neurons. When there are no more dopamine-producing neurons in the substantia nigra, this medication does not help so much. After that, people are trying. Things are still going on regarding the use of stem cells because the regeneration of new dopamine-generating neurons is something fascinating.

There are some trials. There is also deep brain stimulation. But in my field, it is much more basic. What I am trying to look at, why these specific neurons are vulnerable? Because there is something else interesting about Parkinson’s.

One finds a clear link with environmental toxins and Parkinson’s disease. That’s interesting. It means that these neurons are selectively vulnerable to toxins. What makes them vulnerable? Let’s say, my research goes much more back to basics. Why? What is the reason?

But, of course, we believe the knowledge about that would help us to find a cure or contribute to thinking differently about Parkinson’s disease. With all respects to all those who are at the same time trying to find a treatment, an efficient treatment with the current knowledge. I think both of them are necessary.

So, we haven’t been looking into how to increase the dopamine levels in the brain. We wonder why the dopaminergic neurons start dying. Specifically, the reasons for why they are vulnerable to particular toxins and why other neurons in the brain are not.

7. Jacobsen: When the substantia nigra begins to deteriorate, or to 60-70% fewer than the original number this may have cascade effects. If this is the
case, what other systems deteriorate alongside it over time?

Amiry-Moghaddam: When the dopamine release falls below a certain level, the connections between the substantia nigra and other parts of the brain do not function as they should. These dopaminergic connections are among others important for modulation of our movements. That’s why some of the most apparent symptoms are related to our movements. The symptoms typically start around 50-60 years of age, which is not old, but it gets worse with aging. There is also an increase in the prevalence of Parkinson’s disease as people get older. Age is an important risk factor. As people get older, we see there is comorbidity between Parkinson’s disease and other kinds of dementia. That’s the reason. Parkinson’s, whether some people have several of the diseases at the same time. One of them starts first; we do not know much about it.

But there is comorbidity. At the very minimum, the higher the age, the more we see general dementia but also specific types like Alzheimer’s Disease.

There are also several common features among Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, even ALS.

You have an accumulation of specific kinds of protein, either inside or outside the cells, e.g. beta-amyloid in Alzheimer’s Disease. In Parkinson’s Disease, we have α-Synuclein. It gets too specialized for a general reader.

But other parts of the brain and other organs of the body are also affected. We still don’t know as much about that. As science develops or progresses, we find out more about how the disease affects other parts of the body, like the gut and other parts of the brain.

But the reason we haven’t been looking at it or focusing on it, previously, is that it is typical for us looking at the areas that give the stronger symptoms – or more characteristic symptoms. Because of the dopaminergic neuronal loss.

The Parkinson’s patients have a very specific way they walk. You have probably seen the way they walk. It is similar to other parts of the body. I would say that the more we dig into these diseases; we find that there is a lot more to find out and learn.

Another focus of my research. It is looking at the other cell types in the brain other than the neurons. It is called neurology or neuroscience because most of the focus or activity has been on the principal cells of the brain, the neurons. We want to see how the other cell types contribute to neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson’s disease.

8. Jacobsen: So, for instance, compared to the glial cells or something like this?

Amiry-Moghaddam: Yes, especially the astrocytes, the star-like cells.

Jacobsen: Yes.

Amiry-Moghaddam: According to some studies, they are the most abundant cell type in the brain. I think they play a more important role than previously anticipated. I think one of the reasons we lag behind when it comes to finding treatments for neurological disorders – compared to other parts of the body – is that the focus has been too neurocentric.

My main focus is on astrocytes or much of my research is on astrocytes.

9. Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Professor Amiry-Moghaddam.

Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Professor, Universitetet i Oslo (UiO) Founder, Iran Human Rights

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