

ENCOUNTERS WITH INTELLECTUAL SUPPRESSION

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As I stood in front of the elementary school class, my back to the other students, my nose pressed in the center of a small circle drawn in chalk on the blackboard, my arms held out horizontally parallel to the floor, my palms facing down, the teacher began piling books on top of my extended hands. She warned me in a loud and harsh voice *not to move!*, and to keep my nose firmly pressed inside the circle she'd drawn on the blackboard. She put a heavy book on one of my outstretched hands, and then another on my other hand, and warned me to balance the books and *not, under any circumstances, to let them drop!* Then she piled other books on until my arms shook and it was obvious that I could hold no more. Then, she was satisfied. She told me to stay in this position, and if my nose lost contact with the blackboard, or if I dropped my arms and any of the books, I would be punished more severely.

I don't remember how long I had to stand there—angry, humiliated and degraded—in front of the silent class, but it was long enough to leave an impression that has remained with me.

I had asked an innocent and, I thought, interesting question. We were being taught Roman numerals. I had begun to wonder how it was possible for the Romans to add and subtract, multiply and divide, since apparently this would require a different technique from the one we were taught using our system of writing numbers. (Try putting DIV below MCDXVIII, and proceed to subtract.) So I asked my question.

The teacher—I no longer remember her name, though I remember she was fat and had narrow cold light-blue eyes—stared at me as though I'd committed a crime. She was silent, she frowned, she looked confounded, and then she grew livid. She accused me of “smarting off,” and I was ordered to the front of the class to pay for my transgression.

I was a serious, independent boy. My father was a fine artist and author of short stories and novels. My mother was a professional poet—not a “Sunday poet,” she often had to explain, not a housewife who wrote poetry as a hobby, but a dedicated poet for whom the main meaning in living was to create poetry of quality, to which she devoted long hours of disciplined and hard work—whenever life and its many mundane interruptions permitted. I was my parents' only child. I was treated as an adult and I shared in evening readings aloud of their creative work. I loved to learn, and despite punishment that was not deserved, I loved school.

But through such experiences, at an early age I became aware of intellectual suppression, of being punished for asking unusual questions that forced teachers, and later university administrators and professional colleagues, to become self-aware of the limits of their knowledge and competence, an awareness that made them uncomfortable. I did not do this intentionally or to show off, but because I was still spontaneous in expressing an inborn curiosity to go beyond the limits of what they had been taught and thought they knew, beyond limits they were conscious of, and I wanted to push those limits.

At another school, I remember that we children in the geography class were asked to name countries in Africa. I named one I'd recently learned, outside of class, that had been newly established. My teacher hadn't heard of that country, accused me of making things up, and when I insisted that it did exist, she stretched a rubber band between her thumb and index finger of one hand, and then pulled the rubber band back as

you would a slingshot, ordered me to stick out my tongue, and snapped my tongue with the rubber band. I can still feel the stinging pain, and, again, the degradation and anger over injustice. I was then sent to the principal's office, and then to detention after school.

My poet mother and artist-writer father chose to live gypsy lives. He was in love not only with my mother but with the haciendas of Mexico, and had begun a project before I was born that was to last throughout his life. He visited more than 350 of these old estates throughout Mexico, beginning in the early 1940s when many still remained standing in the form of rapidly crumbling ruins. When I wasn't in school, I accompanied him to about half of these—by bike, on horseback, by motorcycle, on foot, by car, taxi, sometimes by boat. While he made drawings and took photographs, I wandered about the hacienda grounds, talking with the native children, sometimes sitting next to my father as he sketched, working to develop my own drawing ability. My father's goal was to create the first artist's record of the Mexican haciendas, in the form of pen-and-ink illustrations, photographs, and an accompanying text.¹

The sacrifices demanded by the project were considerable: His project was entirely self-funded, which meant that either he or my mother, sometimes both, would work in the States, save enough for another trip to a new area of Mexico, give up the temporary home they'd made in the U.S., and off we'd go again, with a large rack on top of the car, to live simply for as long as their savings would last, and then it was back to the

¹ Paul Alexander Bartlett, *The Haciendas of Mexico: An Artist's Record*. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1990. This book contains representative samples of the many hundreds of the author's hacienda illustrations and photographs. Archives of his work have been established at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, at the University of Texas in the Nettie Lee Benson Special Collection, at UCLA, and at Tulane University in New Orleans. *The Haciendas of Mexico: An Artist's Record* is now available through Project Gutenberg, and may be freely downloaded from <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/48053>.

States for another period in order to save enough to return once more to Mexico. The frequent moves meant I would attend more than a dozen schools before high school. And this meant, of course, being the “new kid” in one school after another.

In Mexico, this was a pleasant experience, for at that time, and in the small towns in which we often lived, we were the only Americans the people had seen. To the other students, I was an item of curiosity and interest in my classes at public Mexican schools. The children were always friendly, welcoming, kind, and happy.

In the U.S., however, it was altogether another matter. American children were decidedly not curious about me, and they were not tolerant of any signs of difference. Instead, they were provoked because I actually liked learning, with an appetite and intelligence that apparently showed. And so I encountered American anti-intellectualism, again and again, in the form of bullying.

In Atlanta, during my freshman year in high school, a student who was a fish out of water when it came to doing well in school, took an intense dislike to me. He tried intimidation, threats, and insults. But his satisfaction came one day when, with the cowardice typical of bullies, he hid behind the corner of a wall at the top of a long staircase. As I began to go down, he jumped from his hiding place and shoved me headlong down the stairs. These were the typical high school cement stairs with a steel rim on the front of each step. It was a long staircase and a long fall. My right arm was broken—and so was my prize Esterbrook fountain pen, crushed against my chest, leaving a large black stain of ink on my shirt.

It was significant to me, even then, that my pen had been broken by a bully who hated the world of the intellect and the people who found meaning there. The high school principal forced his family to pay to replace my pen, which had my name engraved on the side. I still have the

replacement, my name on its side, now worn by wear. The memory of the black splotch on my shirt recalls for me the ink spilled through the centuries by would-be censors. Anti-intellectual bullying, in its different guises, would come to form a pattern of attempts to suppress the life of the mind that I valued.

There were many similar incidents along the way. All revealed the same three things to me: that pushing the limits of unquestioning belief was an unrewarding task, that a love for learning was not shared and would be punished by those who hated the people who loved it, and that people in one country can be characteristically gentle and peaceful, while those in another can frequently be mean and violent.

Since those early years, I have come to see these three conclusions strongly reinforced in a variety of ways, but it is in connection with the first two—pushing the limits and punishment for love of learning—that I might briefly recount an experience as an university student, for it exercised a lasting influence on me. Nearly half a century has passed since the events I will relate, so time has already passed its wand of oblivion to hide the identities of the guilty, likely to have gone to their rewards by now.

I began graduate work in philosophy at the University of California in Santa Barbara. Since I had still not learned the lessons my experience ought to have taught, with unreflective enthusiasm I completed all required doctoral coursework in a year, which in that department was previously unheard of. I was then in a position to present a doctoral dissertation proposal, which did not take me long to formulate since I had begun planning this project in my second year as an undergraduate.

The normal way in which the dissertation process is handled by most any department, then or now, is to appoint a doctoral committee of three faculty. But because I had been typecast as “different” and “unusual,” and had described my doctoral dissertation project in unwisely honest but

immodest terms as one that would take a step beyond current philosophical thought, “much as relativity physics had stepped beyond Newton’s physics, and as Newton’s had stepped beyond the Copernican” (or in words closely resembling these), the members of the Department of Philosophy reacted much like my teacher of long ago when I asked how to do arithmetic using Roman numerals.

My excessive youthful boldness, or my underestimation of philosophical rigidity, or perhaps a justifiable chutzpah, summoned up a departmental overreaction that lay between neurotic and panicked hysteria. Due to the “revolutionary nature” of my doctoral proposal, the Department insisted on making all of the department’s 19 faculty *de facto* members of my doctoral committee—inflating the usual doctoral committee by the addition of 16. Still apparently insecure, the Department decided it had better bring in a “specialist” (in phenomenology) from Pomona College, flying him in by helicopter to be present on the day of my oral qualifying exam. —This, I assure the reader, is a true story: Kafka’s interest would have been piqued.

These 20 faculty (supplemented by a token member from another department, chosen as inappropriately as possible—from Religious Studies) would turn out to be a true Committee of Recalcitrant Minds. I remember, as though it were yesterday, being seated at the head of a long, narrow conference table, facing the 20 faculty who sat around it (there was, symbolically, no room at the crowded table for the professor from Religious Studies, who sat in a chair off to one side). I gave an oral description of the dissertation I intended to write, and then was grilled on the conclusions—the final conclusions—that my as yet unwritten dissertation intended to reach. (The *method* by which those conclusions would be achieved, which was to be the substance of my dissertation, seemed not to interest my interrogators.)

I did not have the street sense to defer an answer to an appropriate later time when I could realistically be expected to know what those conclusions would be. Instead, I ingenuously gave the professorial assemblage samples of the conclusions I expected: that much contemporary philosophy would be shown to be invalid by its own terms, and that our conventional basic concepts of space, time, causality, agency, etc., would be shown also to be invalid and in need of revision. I believe I said these things mildly, not abrasively, since that is the kind of person I have always been: courteous even to a fault, an anachronism of the gentleman in the old sense.

The outcome was of course predictable. Philosophers are no different from other people: They don't like that which conflicts with what they *do* like; and the beliefs they *did* like, I didn't hold in high regard; and moreover I had told them that I would show that their beliefs were wrong. It was a safe bet that they would balk at what I proposed to do.

Today, living in litigious times as we do, it is doubtful that any graduate student would accept without protest, or without a lawsuit, the imposition of a doctoral committee that consisted of a department's entire large company of faculty, thereby setting the student an impossible task of satisfying their very divergent philosophical inclinations and backgrounds. It was, I felt, manifestly discriminatory treatment, and probably no department today would attempt it. But at the time, protest didn't occur to me—though, as when my nose was pressed inside the chalk circle, I was aware that I had been subjected to another experience intended to subjugate. The ridiculousness, folly, and small-mindedness of this grotesquely overblown response, as well as its unfairness, did not come fully home to me until decades later.

This was one of my first occasions as an adult, which would presage others to come, that gave evidence of the deliberate obstructiveness of

ordinary people to original revisionary work. I chose to leave UCSB, and also the United States, much as I'd left the U.S. to find greater openness and a welcoming spirit during my years in Mexico. I wrote to French philosopher Gabriel Marcel, telling him of my wish to find a dissertation director open to the original project that I described to him.

Within a few weeks, I received a cordial reply from Marcel in French, telling me that he had phoned Paul Ricoeur, that "all was arranged," and for me to come to Paris as soon as possible to study with Ricoeur.

The UCSB department countered that they wanted me to remain—if only I would change my dissertation topic to something that someone in the Department was "qualified" to direct. (At the time, I thought that this was an honest admission, but now, looking back, I realize the implicit irrationality of stipulating that an original project must be matched with a faculty member who, paradoxically, would need to be already a specialist in a radically new, pioneering area of study.) The Department awarded me an M.A., a degree I hadn't sought, waiving the thesis requirement, and we said our farewells to one another.

It did, in fact, take me decades to feel conscious anger toward the innovation-suppressing 19 faculty, the helicopter consultant, and the ill-suited soul from Religious Studies. At the time, I only felt let down, once again, and at the age of 21 felt already tired that I should be compelled to find an alternative path simply to do what I knew to be worthwhile.

As had been the case in Mexico, so it was in France: Ricoeur was welcoming, generous with his time and guidance, and open to what for him was a wholly new approach to philosophy. I learned that perhaps one needs to be an original thinker in order to possess the willingness to allow others to be. It was to be a good decision: Ricoeur had an ability to enter into a way of thinking that was alien to his own, and yet offer encouragement and constructive guidance.

But then, Ph.D. in hand, I returned to the U.S.

I found that, once again, for me the U.S. meant bullying, but by now the form that bullying took in my adult life was subtly transmuted among faculty who resorted to more disguised methods of intellectual suppression. At the University of Florida, I learned that, at that time, one needed to be a politically engaged Marxist for a visiting one-year appointment to be renewed; I was not politically engaged, whether as a Marxist or a non-Marxist; I simply wanted to do research and write.

A few years later, I decided it might be prudent to keep my research objectives under closer wraps. This concession, accommodation, or adjustment was probably wise as the only non-Catholic member of the philosophy department at Jesuit Saint Louis University. Tenure came quickly, as did promotion to full professor as the youngest in the Department's history. To their credit, the philosophy faculty were generally congenial and tolerant of my non-historical, contemporary, problem-centered interests.

Intellectual suppression, however, was to come from another quarter: from the students who populated my classes. We seldom think of the effect that students have on their teachers, though the reverse concern is common. Elsewhere I've written about the demoralizing effects on university liberal arts faculty by students who have an impairment that was called *acedia* by the Scholastics.² *Acedia* is a disability, an inability to appreciate and to cultivate *culture* in its classical meaning. This is not the place for an elaboration of that meaning; it is enough to say that the great majority of today's career-driven university students do not, even remotely, understand what the word 'higher' means in the phrase 'higher education'. The Idea that university education should seek to fit a man or woman to understand, appreciate, and cultivate matters that are of value in and for

² Bartlett (2011/1990), (2011/1994a), (2011/1994b).

themselves, irrespective of their potential application in practical, mundane living, and with an explicit *disinterest* in their financial return—that Idea has become an anachronism, a footnote to Idealism in books now dusty from disuse.

What I've called “the demoralizing effect” of today's university students makes it sound as though most are simply depressing to teach. There can at times be some truth in this. But what I am referring to is less the sadness that comes from trying to interest the uninterested and ill-prepared, and more the experience of finding that what one values most is gradually suppressed by the arid mental landscape afforded by the great majority of today's students. If one thinks of a classically trained solo violinist forced to play before members of a primitive society of eardrum-scarred drum-beat enthusiasts, perhaps some inkling may be had of how the university audience has become tone-deaf to the values of higher, cultural, education. The predictable effect on the violinist would be one of demoralization, and likely also a feeling of degradation, a word I used earlier in a different context of intellectual suppression.

University teaching has changed radically. A half-century ago, the university provided an opportunity for a receptive audience that had been drawn to it with a pre-established respect, some even with reverence, for higher learning, to hear acknowledged authorities in their disciplines communicate sought-after knowledge and values. Since then, university teaching has been transformed into a buddy system in which the professor *performs* in as entertaining and engaging fashion as possible so as to *appeal* to students, to create within them a motivation to learn that did not exist in them before. The effect of this shift of responsibility onto the professor and away from the student, where it belongs, is seldom noticed, but its effect—upon university faculty who are still devoted to the classical ideals of culture and higher education—can be stultifying.

Such a faculty member, who during his or her teaching life experiences a succession of generations of students afflicted with a pronounced case of *acedia*, is almost unavoidably damaged by the encounter. The professor's mind suffers from daily contact with the habitual and constricted scope of job- and money-making awareness that limits what the student audience is capable of assimilating. This is intellectual suppression of another kind, different from the forms I've already mentioned, and its effects make themselves felt more gradually and more subtly. But, like encounters with other varieties of suppression experienced earlier in life, this variety can be intellectually suffocating.

Beyond contact with students, the non-teaching responsibility of research-oriented faculty is of course to engage in research and publication. Here, too, I met with intellectual suppression, first in the guise of editorial tampering during the days before the hegemony of peer review, and then later, in the form of the abuses to which peer review is prone. I've written about these two subjects elsewhere,³ but mention their role here in contributing to the suppressive consequences of a professor's daily contact with the new barbarians, who are no longer at the door, but have now taken charge of academia and its publishing.

As a consequence of these changes, scholarly-academic publishing has become dominated by measurements of popularity. The ascendancy of peer review as the gold standard for the acceptability of publications functions as a professionally and socially endorsed form of pre-publication restraint, while the "citation scores" of an author's publications are now for many researchers synonymous with a rating of their

³ Bartlett (2011/1993a) and (2011/1993b). See also "The Psychology of Abuse in Publishing: Peer Review and Editorial Bias," Chapter 7 in Bartlett (2011), and "Peer Review, an Insult to the Reader and to Society: Milton's View." The latter is available as an open access publication from PhilPapers (<https://philpapers.org/rec/BARPR-7>) and CogPrints (<http://cogprints.org/10261/>).

significance, validity, and importance. Reliance upon peer review and citation scores as measurements of the value of publications reflects an unquestioned belief that their quality is best judged by the amount of peer applause they bring—that is, by the degree of their popular approval, by the number of citations these works receive in the publications of others, or, as in online forums like ResearchGate, by polling. As I've argued elsewhere, the psychology underlying this trend is one of intellectual immaturity, expressing a need for paternalistic judgment, whose authority, so it is presumed, can be counted on to pre-certify what should be considered acceptable and good (safely and with lessened risk of depending upon the individual reader's fallible judgment).⁴

The academic world has, in short, developed an infantile dependency upon a democratic society's uncritical elevation of high school popularity contests. Cultivation of independent critical judgment by both the reader and by the surrounding society is effectively suppressed in the prevailing repressive atmosphere of conformity, of rules of political and disciplinary correctness, maintained by the gatekeepers of publishing—mostly junior, inexperienced faculty who are willing to volunteer for this often thankless drudgery, but who of course have the weakest background for this work. The juvenile tail is wagging the dog, but no one seems to notice, or mind.

Since peer review ascended to the publishing throne, it is now routinely the case when I submit a manuscript that I'm asked to respond to comments and criticisms by the most juvenile, inexperienced, and outright ignorant reviewers. Once I've done this, which not uncommonly takes more than the time it took to write the original manuscript, editors eventually appear to see the light, though perhaps only dimly.⁵ And then I can-

⁴ For further discussion, see the publications cited in the previous footnote.

⁵ Two recent journal publications stand as evidence of the extreme to which the peer reviewed publication process has degenerated. In one case, there were 65 lengthy e-mails, exchanged among the peer reviewers, the editor, and me, before

not avoid asking myself whether the time, aggravation, and publication delay that all this entails are justified.

That peer review is intellectually suppressive of many attempts to push the boundaries of a discipline has become transparently clear to me and some of its critics.⁶ There are undeniable and unavoidable pressures upon university research faculty to publish, whether they like or approve of the peer reviewed process or not. But the pressures do lessen as one gets older, once one has jumped the hurdles into tenure, once the addition of one more publication in a professional journal adds an insignificant increment to one's vitae or to one's annual salary. When this professional stage is reached, some established authors may find it wise to choose to avoid further peer reviewed aggravation. At such a point, open access online publication may serve their work just as well, and can sometimes reach more readers than publication in professional journals that restrict access to paid subscribers. Especially in those instances when disciplinary boundaries are nudged more than peer reviewers like or will tolerate, authors may decide in favor, for example, of ePrints deposited in online archives, or internet-searchable papers made available as free downloads from the authors' own websites.

When an academic has reached this stage of maturity—that is, this degree of persuasive clarity about the real world—he or she may embrace Isaac Asimov's point of view, without a sense of false embarrassment or arrogance:

... *I don't welcome criticism from any fellow writer, however qualified he might be to offer such comments. Nor do I make much distinction between "constructive criticism" and any*

final imprimatur was obtained, all of which served only to fill gaps in the reviewers' spotty knowledge, leaving the original article unchanged. In the second case, there were 47 e-mails, with the same result. In both instances, the resulting delay to publication was substantial, more than a year.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion, see Bartlett (2011), Chapter 7.

other kind. I find no criticism constructive. (David Frost once said, “What a writer thinks of as constructive criticism is six thousand words of closely reasoned adulation.”) (Asimov, 1987, p. 140)

I don't believe Asimov's words were chosen purely for humor. They're rather an honest statement of what many seasoned authors have come to feel. They have come to realize the truth of H. G. Wells' observation: “No passion on earth, neither love nor hate, is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft” (Asimov, 1987, p. 57). This passion most assuredly takes up residence with extreme rapidity in the heart of virtually any newly appointed peer reviewer; it is much like the seduction of authority witnessed by Zimbardo in his famous prison experiment, which found that even role-playing jailors will, in the blush of newly found power, soon begin to abuse their role-playing prisoners.

While senior professors and well-published authors can afford to refuse the indignities, inconveniences, and irritations of peer review, some younger researchers do succeed in summoning the courage to stand by their uncompromised convictions. Outstanding recently among such brave souls is mathematician Grigori Perelman, who developed a proof of Poincaré's Conjecture. Perelman held a research position at the Steklov Mathematical Institute in Russia. He did not think highly of the general ethical integrity of mathematicians, and was frustrated by their conformism (in *The New Yorker*, he was quoted as saying, “...there are many mathematicians who are more or less honest. But almost all of them are conformists. They are more or less honest, but they tolerate those who are not...”).⁷ Perelman did not have high regard, either, for the critical acumen found among many mathematicians: the prestigious prize offered him by the European Mathematical Society he turned down on the

⁷ Quotations from Perelman are from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%20Grigori_Perelman, accessed 05/05/2015.

grounds that the members of the prize committee were unqualified to assess his work, even positively.

In 2002 and 2003, he presented his proof of Poincaré's Conjecture in three papers that he deposited in the online science/math archive, arXiv.org, avoiding a potential gamut of gate-keeping conformists, the nit-picking pettiness of peer review, and consequent publication delays. Perelman's method of publication will doubtless serve as a precedent for future intrepid, self-reliant souls.

But Perelman's fierce independence is of course a rarity. He was offered a Fields Medal, which he was the first recipient ever to decline, then was awarded the Millennium Prize in 2010, which would have given him a one million dollar award, which he also declined (and he is far from being independently wealthy). The main reason he gave: "To put it short, the main reason is my disagreement with the organized mathematical community. I don't like their decisions; I consider them unjust."

There are, to be sure, many reasons for discontent with this less than the best of possible worlds. The current publicly endorsed standard of peer review is just one of them. A broader reason is the prevalence of general intellectual suppression in society itself.

Broader than pre-publication restraint is the effect upon both creative openness of mind and the incentive to widen disciplinary horizons that results from the active opposition of the wider society to intellectualism and to elitism in all its forms (with the sacrosanct exceptions of sports and celebrity worship). Societies may offer admirably rich or sadly impoverished environments for the development of culture. But when social values exclude the "higher" values of culture and learning, a dark age results, as human history has seen before.

Human mediocrity and stupidity, the main players that bring about a dark age, have seldom been studied by psychology. Both are expressions

of what in other publications I have called “internal human limitations,” and both function to suppress intellect. I examined the psychology of mediocrity and the psychology of stupidity in some detail elsewhere,⁸ and will here mention only a few of their intellectual sequelae.

As commonly conceived, mediocrity is merely the characteristic of typically average, uninteresting, usually dull people. But it is a good deal more than this: It is a kind of internal psychological brake that halts both individual and social development. The psychology of mediocrity has a number of distinguishable dimensions; the one that is relevant here is *intellectual mediocrity*, which is true poverty of mind. It is often accompanied by destructive resistance or opposition to those who excel intellectually, and it is frequently expressed in the subordinate form of *educational mediocrity* as vocational education is allowed to infiltrate and take over what used to be genuinely higher education.

Intellectual mediocrity is characterized by resistance to culture, and is firmly welded to an inability or unwillingness to attain an effective level of critical reflection concerning the dogmas shared by one’s group. It is a form of internal human limitation that restricts the intellectually mediocre to attitudes and behavior that have come to be habitual and comfortable and that do not require the individual to expend effort in serious thinking. It is a form of internal limitation that leads the mediocre to fear ridicule and expulsion from herd membership should he or she be seen as different.

Intellectual mediocrity, in short, is essentially limitative: a ball-and-chain that prevents individuals as well as their societies from developing.

It is much the same with the psychology of human stupidity, which psychology has so far failed to study as a disabling condition with its own

⁸ See “The Psychology of Mediocrity: Internal Limitations that Block Human Development,” Chapter 8 in Bartlett (2011), and “Moral Intelligence and the Pathology of Human Stupidity,” Chapter 18 in Bartlett (2005).

special traits and a dynamic not captured merely by labeling it a deficiency of intelligence. Human stupidity, like mediocrity, functions as an internal brake, blocking people from recognizing the extent to which they possess traits that predispose them to engage in destructive thinking, emotion, and behavior.

Together, human mediocrity and stupidity function much as their mechanical analogs do, the flywheel and governor: The first serves to maintain momentum and in that sense is self-reinforcing, while the second acts as a self-limiting mechanism, to prevent accelerating change that would exceed the safety tolerance of the machine.

Intellectual life in a society dominated by the psychology of mediocrity and stupidity inevitably imposes a painful challenge for original thinkers, one which exercises their frustration and absorbs their energy as they run up against the limitative obstacles set in their way by the very natural, habitual, predictable, and viciously circular, willful recalcitrance of society to expressions of independent thinking on the part of the minority that values intellectual life. Independent thinkers who voice their criticism of the anti-intellectualism and anti-creative surrounding society can expect to receive its disapproval, as even children learn who still read Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books*: "And remember, child, he who rebukes the World is rebuked by the World" (Kipling, 1948/1895, Vol. II, p. 85).

Critical thinking, efforts to extend conventional boundaries, to develop innovative ideas, all run the likelihood of running afoul of deliberate obstruction by people who are only normal, ordinary folks who wish others to *like* what they believe and therefore to *believe in*, who mistake what they like to believe for evident truth, and who will do what they can to suppress signs in others of an intellectual life that goes beyond those likes.

Humanity has made a few halting steps to free itself from its self-chosen mental fetters, to end what Milton called a self-imposed "famine

upon its minds,” to grow beyond bias, bigotry, and ideological provincialism. We may believe ourselves to have come a long way from a heretic’s neck in a noose to a mere nose in a chalk circle drawn on a grammar school’s blackboard, but from the standpoint of freedom of thought and its free expression, human beings continue to display the same characteristic rigidity of outlook that brought tragedy to Savonarola, Bruno, and Galileo. The methods we are willing to use to suppress the intellect have generally become more moderate and less openly cruel, but they persist, in anti-intellectual bullying in the schoolyard, in its incarnation in academic narrow-mindedness and the opposition to publish work that conflicts with current fashion, habit, and self-interest, and in the suppressive atmosphere of narrowed attitudes and shallow values that are championed by a society permeated by the dysfunctional psychology of internal limitation. Even in this less than the best of possible worlds, the obstructiveness that innovators and revisionists must still continue to cope with is inexcusable, for by now we should know better.



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Steven James Bartlett was born in Mexico City and educated in Mexico, the United States, and France. He did his undergraduate work at the University of Santa Clara and at Raymond College, an Oxford-style honors college of the University of the Pacific. He received his master's degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara; his doctorate from the Université de Paris, where his research was directed by Paul Ricoeur; and has done post-doctoral study in psychology and psychotherapy at Saint Louis University and Washington University. He has been the recipient of many honors, awards, grants, scholarships, and fellowships. His research has been supported under contract or grant by the Alliance Française, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, the Lilly Endowment, the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, the National Science Foundation, the Rand Corporation, and others.

Bartlett brings to the present work a background in epistemology and clinical psychology. He is the author or editor of more than 20 books and monographs, and many papers and research studies in the fields of psychology, epistemology, mathematical logic, and philosophy of science. He has taught at Saint Louis University and the University of Florida, and has held research positions at the Max-Planck-Institut in Starnberg, Germany and at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara. He has received honorary faculty research appointments from Willamette University and Oregon State University, and now devotes full-time to research and publication.