



DANNY LENNON: James, welcome to the podcast. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me today.

JAMES LINDSAY: Yeah, I'm happy to be here.

DANNY LENNON: We've got quite a bit of ground to cover and I've got plenty of things that I'm curious to hear your thoughts on. But before we get into anything, I suppose to give people a bit of context for the rest of this conversation, can you maybe give a bit of your background, maybe starting from an academic sense?

JAMES LINDSAY: All right. So, I'll give a little background kind of starting with the most recent and then skipping backwards and filling in the blanks. So, I'm probably best well known, and I think this is what I got invited on for, for my participation in what has come to be known as a Grievance Studies affair. Last October, myself and two collaborators came public with a project we spent about a year and a half or so on in which we decided to examine the academic publishing within a bunch of fields that we kind of lumped under one term that we call the Grievance Studies. So, this would be gender studies, race studies, queer studies, fat studies, and a bunch of other things that are all kind of under the cultural studies monikers. So, what we did was decided to write a bunch of intentionally broken

papers that either had bad methods or bad logic or bad data or terrible methodologies and tried to see if their peer review would be able to pick up on those flaws. And then what happened was we ended up getting seven of our papers published when we went public, which was not at our choice, but rather the Wall Street Journal called us out. We had seven more that were still under peer review and only six of our 20 papers we wrote in 10 months had the status of being retired that we didn't think that they were salvageable or worth the amount of time and effort it would take to retool. The idea is to get them up to scratch. So, we had pretty resounding success. I think we pointed out a pretty dramatic crisis of confidence in academic publishing, within those sectors of the humanities, anyway, but not all of academia and not all of peer review. And I'm sure we'll talk a lot more about that. What led me to do that ... my background originally was in math. I've always had a soft spot for science. My bachelor's degree is in physics, in fact. And so, I got a PhD in mathematics in 2010. Due to the shapes and forces that life conspired upon me, my personal responsibilities, so you know, family and work and things like that, I left academia at that point and I started to do research into mostly religious stuff, trying to figure out how religion works in society and how it plays out both philosophically and psychologically. And then that led me over a period of time to get caught up in the so-called culture war. And so that led me to get curious about this whole thing that we saw coming out of what looked like maybe gender studies or sociology. We weren't sure exactly where it was coming from. That was sort of maybe 2014, 15, myself and my collaborator, Peter Boghossian, and also my other collaborator, Helen Pluckrose, although the two of them, Peter and Helen, weren't working together directly at the time. I was sort of at the apex, of a v, of working with them. So, in late 2016 Peter and I decided to attempt an academic hoax upon them. I think we mostly failed at that, but it did catch some attention. We got pretty resoundingly criticized for it. And so, going through the summer of

2017, we decided to try again and to do it right by taking on all that criticism and trying to figure out what's going on in these disciplines, which we ... going back to my longstanding feeling, felt doesn't quite qualify as science or scientific, although it's kind of being passed off as such. So, it felt like to me a corruption of both academic knowledge production but also of scientific inquiry. In this case, it would be a corruption of social science.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. So, there's plenty that I want to dig into there. Like you say, I think the first thing to point out is probably why you targeted the certain areas that you did and you've kind of alluded to perhaps a lack of scientific rigor in some of these fields in general, as well as obviously the specific journals at play here. I'm just kind of curious as to when you were deciding that, okay, we see this problem. Rather than it's the topic being discussed, it seems to be the lack of, I suppose just scientific integrity that's being used, or the things being published in these journals that completely flies in the face of what we typically think of when we think of peer review research. Right? And I think for a lot of people listening who know the peer review process when it comes to medicine or health and nutrition that the requirements to get published there would seem to be at least have some safety net and stringency and that we can put some faith at least into it. What was that big difference that you were seeing from how science should be carried out to some of these fields in general?

JAMES LINDSAY:

Well, there's a few things but I'll try to keep it simple. I think the easiest way to characterize this was that we were recognizing ... there are two main things that we recognize, and I want to kind of list them both, so I don't lose track of them like I tend to do. One of them is that we saw openly anti-scientific sentiment being put forward. And a second one is what we've come in time to call the poverty of Grievance Studies. So, what you have as a series of disciplines here that fall under the cultural studies rubrics that are ultimately within the purview of the

humanities. They are not social sciences. However, they are publishing material that carry sociological conclusions and sociological weight behind those conclusions without adopting the methodologies necessary to draw those conclusions. So, we noticed that they kind of ... they're making broad sweeping claims about society, how society works and everything like that, but these claims are unevidenced. And when we look more into the literature that's appearing in these journals, we noticed, for example, that there were papers explicitly condemning reliance upon evidence or reliance upon reason as though that's a construct of a western and patriarchal masculine way of approaching things that exclude so-called other ways of knowing. So, this is alarming, to say the least, but then we strike upon other papers. In fact, one of the papers that we found that literally triggered us to decide to act was one about feminist glaciology that got quite a bit of press in 2016. In that paper, it complained that the science of glaciology is itself plagued by colonialist, imperialist and sexist biases, and that the only way to repair the science and trust that it's coming out with good information, which would be necessary with regard to climate change issues, would be to start incorporating indigenous mythology about glaciers. I mean directly incorporating, not drawing information from and then going and doing rigorous research based on guesses about what that might refer to. I mean literal indigenous mythology and also incorporating things like feminist art projects that connect humans to ice and in the words of the paper can improve our quote human ice relations. So, this was also extraordinarily alarming. And so, our concerns were ultimately, you know, in narrow scope for scientific integrity and for the fact that these are naked attacks on science that were being generously funded by National Science Foundation money. And in a broader sense, again, knowledge production in general where you have this kind of ... this set of disciplines that are slipped in between what we would consider to be the humanities and the social

sciences. And they're trying to do sociology without using any rigorous methods, but they've abandoned whatever the quest of the humanities is or should be. So, they're producing nothing of any real value. Now, normally, who would care? These are ... you would say they're academic boutique departments that graduate less than half a percent of graduates per year and U.S. institutions. So, who cares? Except that they have an outsized influence. Anybody who's been told to check their privilege would be able to figure out they have an outsized influence on media, on culture and on our institutions, in particular, the universities, which they've dedicated a lot of effort into redesigning according to their ideas of the world, which rely upon this research that's got absolutely poor methodology.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. And I think this wasn't just a case of we're going to see, can we fit in some falsified papers into a peer of you and see does it hold up? It's literally targeting it because of that inherent ridiculousness that they fit in even if we create ridiculous papers. And I think we'll definitely get to some of the specific ones that you've published just to kind of highlight this point, but beyond that, on this podcast we've talked a lot about essentially what is science and why is science such a valuable tool. And the way it's able to essentially take this human element out of decision making because we know we have these inherent biases and cognitive traps we can fall into and therefore there its value. And so, it seems that this is trying to undermine that completely. And one example that I remember from one of your lectures that I've watched that just came to me as you were talking, was you mentioned what I refer to as the Wonder Woman paper, where as it was described at least, this was essentially a peer reviewed piece that was published, but essentially just someone's recount of something that happened to them in their own words.

JAMES LINDSAY:

That's actually a methodology that's, if you will call it that, that's used pretty frequently in these disciplines. That's referring to a particular autoethnography is what they call that. So, you're doing an ethnography, which would be a study of how people or societies are structured and organized in a sense, and you're doing it from an ontological perspective, which means self. So, you don't even just have an N of one. You have an N of me, which is, you know, as solipsistic and bias laden as you possibly could be. The paper you're actually referring to tried to demonstrate the amount of sexism that's in society by this very kind of rambling account of a woman who went with her male friend who drives a pickup truck and I guess is attractive to her on a quest to find a Wonder Woman action figure doll at the store. I don't know which store and couldn't find one. So, there are all of these Superman and Batman, I don't know which ... but all the male characters were there, but Wonder Woman wasn't. And so, this ... the fact that she couldn't find Wonder Woman was indicative that we have a deeply sexist that needs reformation, posthaste. So, and there were other elements built into this whole thing where there was like the, you know, self-reflective psychological aspect that she was looking for the Wonder Woman within herself. And when she recounted this story to her friends, they felt similar things. And I mean it's really as far away from scientific rigor as you possibly could get and I don't even know why what essentially works out to be an academically phrased diary entry should qualify as an academic paper, but even if I'm willing to grant that, which is a stretch, if I'm willing to grant that, I have a real issue with the notion that the conclusion such a thing would carry ... would have sociological weight like that we live in a sexist society.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. I think the conclusion aspect is the really damaging part here because, of course, within science we can make observations and we can look to N equals one data and we can see personal anecdotes. But what we typically do is

when we make that observation is that is just saying, look, this is something that happened and now let's hypothesis maybe why and let's maybe construct a study to work that out and then we can put the scientific method to play. Whereas here it's almost short changing that whole process. It's making some observation and then jumping to a conclusion as if it's known fact.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Yes. It's in fact what we're talking about in the process here is the theory building process in science. So, in science you'll collect observations and look for a coherent ... I mean this is kind of, you know, a little bit dreamy, I guess to characterize it this way. It's the ideal, but you would gather observations and you would, you would try to fit them into a model and maybe even a coherent narrative that explains and has predictive power, what might be going on. And we would call such a thing a theory. And so, that scientific theorizing starts with the data and works outward. This is the exact opposite. It starts with what these people literally call theory, which is an abbreviation from a postmodern critical theory, which is its own rabbit hole we need not get into, but the idea is that they have this theoretical explanation for how society works. And then they go, if you will call it that, which I don't think we should, but we'll say gather data and then fit it to the existing theory. It's the exact backwards way to go and that's really the problem. Within health, for example, you might see this in any kind of a discredited approach. So, let's pick one that we ... I don't want to offend anybody. It's kind of funny that I say that. But let's pick one that's pretty widely accepted to be completely discredited like phrenology, where you read the bumps on somebody's head and you determine their personality. So, if you are absolutely possessed of the idea that phrenology and phrenological theory, if we'll call it that, has these explanations, then it's easy to go, you know, massage somebody's head and come up and talk to them to figure out things about their personality and come up with, oh, here's a data

point that fits, here's a data point that fits. And then to just kind of use the parts that fit to say, oh, so according to theory, this works. And so, then the jump is therefore phrenology theory is worthy. So, that's kind of what's going on, is they're starting with the conclusion that they want to have, which is that the theory is valid and then they are shoehorning whatever they're finding into that theoretical construct and then proclaiming tada! The theory was correct. I mean it would be super easy from within a perspective of say nutritional supplements. It would be super easy for people to scam the living crap out of people. I mean that's the definition and you go into nutritional stuff of snake oil. If that method were appropriate, you know, we would really have some trouble. And I think this is probably a legitimate problem that your podcast, to guess, touches on sometimes with, you know, supplement peddlers saying, you know, oh, well when you take this, it gives you more energy; therefore, it's, you know, doing whatever blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's just some, you know, broscience is often the term thrown around on that when it could just be that they put caffeine in it or something.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. And I mean, we've plenty of time addressed this issue. I think people are pretty savvy that listen to the show about when people make such claims, being able to have an objective way to tease through those claims to see whether the conclusion that they're saying actually happens. And even beyond that, if something happens, to be able to know why and to be able to look at the mechanism. And it's why something like the whole field of biology is so important and it's interesting how that can be become so discredited, particularly in some of these cultural based issues now we're facing, where even biology is being called into question.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Right. It's literally kind of the equivalent, not to put too fine a point on it, of using the testimonials and the customer reviews as essentially all you need to know about how a supplement works. Even knowing that the

company that produces a supplement might be paying people to write those reviews or delete ones that they don't want to have up there. So, it's very much that bad. But in cultural studies on topics like race and gender, which is everybody now realizes are of tremendous sociopolitical weight.

DANNY LENNON:

And I think the thing that's so ... I suppose there's a couple of things we'll get in to in terms of how problematic this is. Later, we'll probably talk about it in general for science and just the value of peer review literature, but from the actual area that it's hoping to or claiming to help in terms of whether we call it like social justice or just some of these cultural issues around sexism and racism and so on, which are very real issues and very important. The thing to me is that this whole ridiculousness that can come up almost undermines those things and the true conversations we need to have in those areas end up getting bypassed because we're getting bogged down by this complete ridiculousness.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Right. I think that they do tremendous damage to both our ability to find real answers to questions on those topics and to people's general ability to trust answers that are being found. That extends further too because we're also seeing, at least from conservatives overall, we're seeing a tremendous drop in trust in the academy or in scientific research at all. And this has to be connected with that because this is, you know, clearly being trumpeted by their media aggregators and it's creating a crisis of faith in both the university and in peer reviewed research, which is ... it's not, you know, we've tumbled back into the dark ages, but it's a big step in that direction. It's really not something we want to have happening.

DANNY LENNON:

Just to circle back to maybe give some people some actual context for some of the things we're talking about. When it comes to the papers that you've published, you mentioned I think seven got published in total. Of those, what are some of the biggest hitters from your perspective?

What one's got into fairly decent journals in this area and what ones I suppose made the biggest headlines?

JAMES LINDSAY:

I'll kind of break these into three categories and just give a quick overview at first. So, in terms of papers that I would say were kind of biggest journals, we had two, one of which paper was geared up along the idea of a gender scholar goes to Hooters to try to find out why it exists. And the conclusion was that men want to sexually objectify and boss pretty women around and have them do what they say. That's the whole purpose for Hooters to exist. And, of course, that men are very boorish and everything they do is wrong and problematic, etc., and indicative of toxic masculinity and violence and all kinds of crazy things. A second one in a big journal was actually about us. We wrote a paper arguing that it's unethical to make fun of social justice pretty much at all, and in particular it's unethical to make fun of social justice using academic hoax papers, which then referred to us explicitly from our previous failed attempt. It cited us explicitly. So, there's kind of a bit of humor there, but that paper was actually ... those two papers are actually closer to serious than they were absolutely ridiculous. Perhaps most big headline papers, one of which is the most ridiculous and one of which is kind of scary ... well, as the scary one would be that we actually rewrote a chapter of Hitler's Mein Kampf, in terms of intersectional feminism by replacing ... it was a chapter that calls for the building of the Nazi Party and what it would require of its members and we just took out our movement or party and replaced it with intersectional feminism and then made it all work. And so, it was a call basically that feminists need to all be in solidarity with more oppressed people all the way down or they're doing their feminism wrong and it used Hitler's outline for how to organize a political movement as the guideline. A second one is probably the funniest one. The one that's most well-known, biggest headline by far. And that was one where we tracked the idea that of rape culture by

examining dog humping in dog parks in Portland, Oregon. And we said that we examined the genitals of slightly fewer than 10,000 dogs and interrogated their owners about their sexual preferences and then we concluded that dog parks are a petri dish for canine rape culture, that their rape condoning spaces. This is all indicative that we have an epidemic of rape culture also in human spaces and that a possible remedy, which we claimed to derive from black feminist criminology, would be to train men as we train dogs if only it were politically feasible. So, I mean that one's pretty ridiculous and it won an award for excellence in scholarship. It didn't just get in. It didn't squeak by. They gave it an award and said it's one of the best papers they've ever had. So, yeah, that one's bad. And then probably just a third category, the one that you're ... your podcast, it's like geared the most toward your podcast where you want to talk about concerns about this getting into medical science was one for fat studies, which is a discipline. It's pretty niche, but this discipline is dedicated not to studying fat from a perspective of health or obesity from a medical perspective, but rather to denying that. And so, we wrote a paper and had published for fat studies was a call to expand the sport of professional bodybuilding to include fat bodybuilding in which the participants would go on stage and display their fat because one tissue is roughly equivalent to another and if you don't think so, you're being bigoted against fat people. I guess that's five of the seven that were accepted.

DANNY LENNON:

It's incredible when you hear those listed out. I think the thing that you've touched on previously, but just to kind of circle back to make a point of it is some people may say, okay, these are obviously ridiculous and these journals that have accepted them are obviously making some huge errors. But number one, how widespread is this issue within these fields; but also, number two, beyond that, even if this field in general has these huge problems, what sort of or how much of an issue is that for broader

society? And I know you've kind of touched on that one. How did you as an overview touch on those two questions that people may typically have?

JAMES LINDSAY:

So, how big of an issue is it within the disciplines themselves? So, to name them specifically, things like gender studies, fat studies, queer studies, race studies, indigenous studies ... we can just go on and on, but if it ends in studies, it's probably on the list. The problem isn't just common within those, it's definitional. It's what these fields exist to do. It's leaked out into some other fields in various degrees. Anthropology is probably to put a guess at it, 40 or 50%. In fact, sociology is probably 30 or 40%. In fact, there are some papers showing in particular that sociology has some serious problems with this, although sociologists were very quick to come out after we went public and say not our discipline, but it turns out that yes, their discipline to a degree, but no, it's not a complete takeover. So, the disciplines themselves are small. They graduate a small number of students. The issue is that every student they graduate is an activist. So, every student they graduate is an extremely ... I shouldn't say every. Nearly every ... so, the students and the faculty in these are extremely motivated. You can view them essentially as a PR company that's been working for 30 years to give things like straight, White, male, western values to give those bad publicity and they've got maybe the most motivated worker base that you can possibly imagine because they are activists and they do what you usually ... I mean, there's an old joke, you know: Those who can, do; those who can't, teach; those who can't teach, go into administration. And you kind of have that whole thing going on here. These people are largely becoming educators and administrators. They are extremely motivated to become administrators and to go after administrations and to change the institutional structure. In so doing, they've dramatically remade in the past 20 years our educational system, including at the university but also dipping into K thru 12.

So, their ideas are being taught as fact pointing to the literature that we were hoping to expose has serious problems. And they have used that to influence the educational system rather profoundly to the point where diversity or race ... race in America type classes are often required in most universities now. So, every student gets their dose of this stuff. That's sort of a problem. And they also are extremely invested in media. Media studies would be another discipline that's overwhelmingly infected with this and probably to the point where it's lost. And what do those people go on to do? Well, they go on to become the people who produce media. So, now you have this whole thing, I don't know if you've heard of it, post-comedy where now comedy doesn't have to be funny. It's not even supposed to be funny. It's supposed to make a political statement about social justice issues. Or you have these ... I mean, so one of our group members, there were three of us that wrote the papers and we have a fourth turtle, if you will, who is a filmmaker in Australia who got interested in the same topics on his own from a filmmaking perspective, wanted to figure out what was going on in the universities, ended up getting hooked up with us and has been documenting us from the beginning. His name's Mike Nayna. But he was looking at it in Australia and he's seen their media industry basically collapse to this in the past, I don't know, just five years to the point where, you know, there are these different things and I don't understand Australian politics and all this, but there are these different things where money is given to people trying to do, you know, films or shows or whatever. And over the march of the past few years, it's gone from some of those awards go to social justice initiatives to now all of the awards go to social justice initiatives and if you present something otherwise, you don't get invited back to apply next year. So, it's taking over media. So, if you have media, you have education, you know, how does it affect broader society? Well, if you've been asked to check your privilege or something like that in the last couple of years, that's Peggy

McIntosh, 1989 folks. That's straight out of the literature. What started in the university doesn't stay there. If you see this stuff where everybody in the universe is racist for things that aren't racist at all, by any sane definition, then that's straight out of critical race theory. That's straight out of intersectional heuristics. So, that's Kimberlé Crenshaw and her forefather Derek Bell and maybe Bell Hooks. And I mean, you can start naming these people that have done the work of this. The biggest one in critical race education right now is the fairy godmother of so-called white fragility, which you probably have now heard of. And that person's name is Robin DiAngelo. She wrote the seminal paper on the idea in 2011. Here we are about seven years, eight years later, and she's got a full length book out about it. Last year, she's on this huge lecture circuit and it's changing the world. It's not in the university. It's on billboards. You can Google it. Google a billboard and Portland, Oregon. Portland is your white fragility showing. So, it doesn't stay in the university. It's really become ... since, especially 2015 is when it really blew up in the kind of public sphere, it has become the thing that everybody can't get away from. The New York Times has a gender editor, for example. The Washington Post published a high-profile piece in the past year by an editor of one of these gender ... a feminism journal called Signs. The editor's name is Suzanna Walters. They publish an article called, why can't we hate men? That's in the Washington Post. I mean, these are major national daily newspapers that are heavily dedicated to pushing these views. So, how does it affect broader society? Well, it's everywhere. They're firing Google engineers over talking about science.

DANNY LENNON:

Right. The whole James Damore thing.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Exactly. He's a friend of ours now.

DANNY LENNON:

That was incredible. When I see some of this stuff, it kind of seems so paradoxical or ironic that movements that are claiming to be against either sexism, racism and so on, so often seem

to be committing what is essentially the definition of sexism and racism and so on in some of these cases by how they are ... the solutions they're offering or the problems that are saying that are there and really the solutions aren't solutions because you can't do anything about a lot of this. And just as you were pointing to now the problem with these studies getting published that we talked about earlier and of people wondering: Well, why is that such a big issue? Now, you're saying when real decisions are being made at an administrative or policy level, now certain people can point to ... well, this is backed up by research. Right? Here's a study to show this.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Yeah. Called that idea laundering very early on when we first came public. And then, you're right, it's making its way into policy. You had, for example, and I don't know where this ends up going, but Senator Kirsten Gillibrand not long ago tweeted that the future is female, and the future is intersectional. She's running for president. I have had members of the European Union parliament reach out to me and talk to me about the emergency they feel is going on about how gender studies, specifically papers and postcolonial studies papers, are being cited to design ... I don't know that curriculum is the right word, but to design interventions to go into and try to work with humanitarian aid, etc., to Africa that are focused on all the wrong things. And I've had people that were in, you know, sort of the unwitting victims of those programs reach out to me and explain how, you know, it's this quest to try to say shoe horn in a certain proportion of women into the government of Ethiopia isn't actually helping Ethiopia solve its problems. But this is a top-level initiative and it's billed as the method that we're going to use to solve climate change because something, something gender study something. It's really ... it's working its way into policy globally. So, this stuff is definitely affecting policy in a rather profound way. And maybe some of these initiatives that they're coming up with are good and right, but you should be able to have the

discussion about them and you shouldn't be able to justify them by pointing at scholarship that is using dubious methodology. And if you point out that the scholarship has dubious methodology, you shouldn't be called a racist for it.

DANNY LENNON:

And that's, I think, the real big problem when it comes to a lot of social justice issues in general and that they're super important. But generally, at least in my view, the best way to approach them is if you have open dialogue between people and discussion in a rational way and being able to talk through opinions that you're able to make some changes. But rather than all that good work that can be done, you have this certain group of ... whether you want to call them social justice warriors or people who just see themselves as full-time activists. A lot of the time their behavior seems to be ... a default is make a position and anyone that goes against it, we'll shout over or shut down and not listen to. And it just seems crazy of how that can be a default position of like ... it's the opposite of what you'd want from a democratic state. Right? So, it's kind of crazy.

JAMES LINDSAY:

And from somebody who spent the better part of the last two years just absolutely immersed in their scholarly literature, I can tell you that their scholarly literature is filled with justifications for why they feel like they should be able to do that. And this doesn't trace back, you know, two or three years, although there are lots of papers about that in the last two or three years. This traces back easily decades at this point. Why it's justifiable to essentially cast everything that isn't agreement with their position as some form of complicity and racism, sexism or other forms of bigotry which therefore need to be dismantled right alongside every other type of racism, sexism or bigotry. So, you're left with the options of agreeing, in which case you've capitulated to their view and accepted it as fact, even though it may not be or disagreeing and in the process getting labeled complicit with the system that needs to be dismantled in the first

place. So, you're just part of the problem and there's copious amounts of their literature. Robin DiAngelo's white fragility concept that I mentioned a few moments ago is precisely one of those and that's all built on other literature that's steeped back, you know, going back now several decades into making sure that they essentially have an impenetrable fortress that makes it so that they're not allowed to be wrong, which of course means it's an orthodoxy and it's left the path of knowledge production if you want to be literal. But I was going to use the Gandalf reference and say it's left the path of wisdom. It's done both, really.

DANNY LENNON:

One of the things that has kind of kept me half sane is this blind optimism I have that certain fields, at least within biology and medicine and so on related fields, can be just by the way they're currently set up, hopefully immune to some of this. Do you feel that is an overly optimistic outlook? And do you think there is real dangers of some of those fields slipping into this what I would call anti-scientific processes that are going on?

JAMES LINDSAY:

Yes and no. The reality is to just kind of phrase it simply is that the harder the field and I don't mean difficult, you know, the more mathematical the field, the less susceptible it is to corruption. Physics itself won't be corrupted. They instead target physics department administrations and say that the departments themselves are sexist and try to remake who's allowed to work and so on. It's very unlikely that we'll see feminist physics take off. Although there was a bit of a persona cool around that in the seventies and eighties with the French feminists and then some of the anti-science crusaders. They kind of got shut down in the nineties. I don't think that's likely to be a big deal going forward. Sandra Harding is probably the most famous of those or Luce Irigaray. Luce Irigaray said that $E = mc^2$ is a sexist equation because it privileges the speed of light over other speeds and she said that physics are sexist because it favors problems using uniform

rectilinear emotion as opposed to fluid dynamics because fluid is female and you know, projectile emotion, etc., is male. No awareness whatsoever that the Navier–Stokes equations are just hard to solve. But that's sort of out of fashion. Yeah. Sandra Harding was famous for calling Newton's Principia Mathematica a rape manual of nature.

DANNY LENNON:

Wow.

JAMES LINDSAY:

That was in her 1986 book, *The Feminist Problem in Science*, or something. A *Woman Problem in Science*, something along those lines. I forget what the title is exactly. So, I mean, that was a thing. Like 30 years ago, that was a big deal. Now, what I see is that the squishier the science in a sense, and medicine is certainly going to fall pretty into the squishy, the more susceptible it is. Biology ... there are people ... in fact, somebody sent me something about it today. That there are people pushing for feminist biology. That was a push also that was in the eighties and nineties. I don't know where that will go. But biology is possibly more susceptible. Medicine I get a little bit more concerned and that's where I can circle back to our fat bodybuilding paper because I know not an enormous amount. I wouldn't say that I'm most well versed in fat studies. But fat studies is actually a direct grievance studies-based assault upon medical science where it concerns weight and obesity. You also will see it come up and ... medicine is going to have to face issues where postcolonial studies will increasingly say that western medicine is a colonialist approach to medicine that discounts or ignores witch doctors and acupuncture more or less. So, you know, other ways of knowing how the body works. So, you'll see some of those things and they ... if they are given enough space to brow beat their way in and to shame researchers and medical professionals into complying, which is the tool that they use, then you may actually see some of that. You may actually see doctors making the point, for example, that treating obesity as the cause of disease is inappropriate

because it medicalizes an identity and therefore makes it an other that is discriminated against. That obesity actually is a narrative that's largely or completely unrelated to health and that there's no good reason to prioritize health over other ways of being. They call that the opposite attitude that health matters. They call that health-ism. And they use the word fat rather than obese because they say that obesity is a medicalizing term and therefore that it's a term that creates a stigma around fat. Like all that fat stigma which is put in contrast to thin privilege. But it's something to be aware of that just because it's in a peer reviewed journal doesn't necessarily imply that it has weight. And I hate to say that. I hate to say that as somebody who believes that peer review is the gold standard - has been, should be, etc. But when you have ... we have I think a crisis of trust in certain journals and we have also therefore ... because this stuff has been allowed to go unchecked, like it does, it extends a crisis of trust among people who aren't savvy on it, who aren't well read on it, who aren't well informed on it to other types of journals.

DANNY LENNON:

So, let me finish with this. When it comes to this whole mess, in general, do you see things getting worse before they get better? Or do you see that society can kind of move away from it? What is the solution? How do we prevent this from turning into an even bigger problem and falling into some of the pitfalls that look like they could play out in general at a wide population, cultural level?

JAMES LINDSAY:

So, society is too broad a thing to say. It's really interesting because my feeling is that something in the past 12 to 18 months, certainly before we came public with our work, something changed. The wind shifted. We recognized it before it went public. As we were trying to figure out our messaging and how we were going to write these things up and present this information to the public that we were gathering, we realized: Something's changed. We can get away with saying a lot more than we could have before. We

don't have to be as circumspect. We don't have to be afraid to get blasted for writing this up. And something changed and I feel like that is continuing to change. So, I'm overall optimistic. Within the narrower set of society that is deeply invested in or highly sympathetic to these views, I think they are going to continue to double down as the problem. As society starts turning away from their way of thinking, they're going to interpret that as evidence that there's a crisis that their way of thinking is the only possible solution for. So, they will double down and get worse. For example, I think that's what happened ... not to drag this into politics, but I think that's why you've seen an intensification of this following Trump's election. Rather than what many people hope for was that the left in America would reconsider their scolding moralizing ways that many people were complaining about. You've seen them kind of dig deeper in and the reason is that they see this as actually having been a vindication that society is as they say, that their theories are correct and that their prescriptions are more needed than ever. However, what you're seeing is ... I think the best data on that show that it's maybe 8% of people in the U.S. are deeply invested in that kind of view and then you have some percentage that are going to be pretty sympathetic to it but are not deeply invested. And the rest of the country is basically like turning ... they're turning away from it. They're just not having it. So, you know, when you start breaking down into different groups, I think we're going to see an intensification of it from people who are deeply invested in it, which is what you always see in these situations. As you know, Leon Festinger showed with the alien cults in the 50s. And then, within everybody else, what we're seeing is a slow turn away and what we've seen is that people used to whisper ... they whispered to us: I support you, but I can't tell you that. And now they're saying it publicly, sometimes anonymously, but they're still saying it publicly and sometimes they're putting their names to it. So, something has shifted. Something is turning. So, I think overall the

bulk of society is starting to turn away from this. But like I said, they do control some very influential institutions - education and media. And then for whatever set of reasons, I don't know about politics and other countries to speak to them, but in the United States, the Democratic Party right now is just absolutely going whole hog into this stuff instead of away from it, which is frightening to say the least for our election next year. I'm terrified in fact that I ... I don't think there's enough time to turn that ship around. I only use Twitter to do it, but I basically begged the Democrats to let me consult for them on their messaging and where the party needs to go. They don't pay any attention to me. So, not just speaking, I think from ... I tried to be as detached in this as possible and I say so, but I do position myself I guess on the left, but I don't think right now that the right, in general, is presenting much of a good alternative. And so, it's just in my opinion a huge testament to how horrifying this extremism on the left is to people that they're willing to flirt with characters like Trump or, you know, these other characters. Hungary's another one that's got this whole right-wing thing going on. It's frightening. So yeah, it's really concerning and like I said though, I feel like the general shift of the population is ... and just reading their mood, I'm not talking about politics at this point, is to start like this ... the feeling is this stuff's losing. It's cool. It used to be the thing you had to be up with and keep up with to be cool, to fit in, to feel like a good person. And now people are just kind of like, you know, I've heard enough of this racism, privileged crap. Let's have a different conversation. Let's do something. That's not working. I feel like most people, something in the wind has shifted and I'm generally optimistic, but it might be a bumpy decade.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. I sense that as well. Particularly when you look in the real world as opposed to online. I think you get that feeling that there's only certain ... so many times that like genuinely good decent people can be told that they're doing something wrong. They're acting sexist,

racist, etc., and when they're operating as a decent human all round and there's probably only so much of that that people can put up with.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Now the bigger concern I have is with the credibility of the university. And, of course, with the Internet, things may be changing anyway with regard to that and I don't know how I feel about that yet, but I do feel like we are in a major crisis of confidence with the university and I think that this stuff in particular is the overwhelming reason for that. There are other reasons that contribute, but this isn't ... the overwhelming reason that there's a crisis of confidence in education and higher education, at least in the university and even in academic research, peer reviewed research is because for so long now and now in the past five years, so visibly this kind of pollution has been allowed to come in and corrupt academic scholarship. That's why we titled our original write up exposing what we did Grievance Studies and the Corruption of Academic Scholarship.

DANNY LENNON:

Before we finish, James, where can people find you online? Anywhere on the Internet that they can find more about what you've got going on, your work. Keep up to date with stuff.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Yeah. The best thing to do if you want to hear straight from me is to follow me on Twitter. It's @ConceptualJames. It's pretty easy to find. All the things are spelled the way they usually are. I don't have something that I particularly need to plug in terms of myself, but I will remind everybody about Mike Nayna's YouTube channel. That's sort of our hub for what we've been producing. Mike is an award-winning documentary filmmaker from Australia. He's been tracking us. He's putting out, you know, he's keeping up to date with the story as it unfolds with what's happening with us going forward. He's working on a feature length documentary. Trailers and things for that will start to appear. He's doing some side stuff. Most recently we've been working on connecting the

stuff that's going on in social justice to being sort of a fundamentalist religion and I think we're putting a pretty persuasive case out there. And Mike's got some good videos and a short documentary about that. So, I encourage everybody who wants to keep up with what's happening with our work to go to his YouTube channel and subscribe. That's YouTube and Mike Nayna. N-A-Y-N-A. And Mike is spelled the way you usually would spell it. So, that would be definitely the two spots you're going to want to pay attention to, to find us and what we're doing. My Twitter and then his YouTube channel. My colleagues, Peter Boghossian is @PeterBoghossian on Twitter and Helen is @HPluckrose. Helen Pluckrose is her name. She's pretty easy to find. There's not very many Pluckrose's out there.

DANNY LENNON:

Cool. And for everyone listening, I will link up to all of those that James just mentioned in the show notes so you can click through and go and give all those a follow and keep up to date with that. James, with the final kind of minute or so that we can get here, I'll finish on the final question I always ask everyone. So, maybe, refreshingly, it can be completely detached from what we've discussed today if you wish. And it's a broad question, so apologies for putting you on the spot, but it's simply: If you could advise people to do one thing each day that would benefit their life in any aspect, what would that one thing be?

JAMES LINDSAY:

Spend five minutes remembering you're going to die. I wrote a book about that also, if anybody wants to check it out. It's called Life in Light of Death. It was published in 2016. It's on Amazon.

DANNY LENNON:

Oh, awesome. I definitely know a few people who dig that through conversations I've had with some good friends. So, awesome. I'll link to that in the show notes as well for everyone. And with that, James, let me say thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today. You've been extremely kind with your time. But also,

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for the work you've been doing and thank you for being a part of the podcast.

JAMES LINDSAY:

Yeah. Thank you very much for all of that and I'm glad to have participated.