Katie Herzog \_ Bret Weinstein's DarkHorse Podcast #6 (192kbi...

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**SPEAKERS**

Katie Herzog, Bret

**Bret** 00:00

All right. Welcome everyone to Brett Weinstein's Dark Horse Podcast. I am Brett Weinstein, your host, and I am here sitting with Katie Hertzog. Who is are you still the second most hated author at the stranger?

**Katie Herzog** 00:13

I would think that that's true. It's sort of a it's a self proclaimed identifier. So there hasn't been a poll, but judging from my from my Twitter mentions, I'd say probably second,

**Bret** 00:23

still second hated,

**Katie Herzog** 00:24

I'm rising in the ranks.

**Bret** 00:25

You're rising in the ranks. Okay, good. Here's hoping you make it. Thank you the pole position. So welcome. And thank you for doing this. Yeah. Good to see you. It's great to see you. We were on a panel together last night with Heather hying. Where we talked about the necessity of hate speech, which was an interesting, interesting topic near and dear to both of our hearts. I would say

**Bret** 00:47

we both love hate speech. Oh, man. Yeah. So I read on Twitter. Yes, that's

**Bret** 00:51

what I've heard about us as well. So tell me what's on your mind these days?

**Katie Herzog** 00:57

Oh, gosh, what's on my mind these days politics. As usual, I'm thinking a lot about the democratic race for President. I'm thinking a lot about how I think Democrats are failing the democratic race for president and the media establishment. I'm thinking a lot about how it seems like we learned very, very few lessons from 2016 and Sema destined to repeat the same errors. So that's what I'm thinking about.

**Bret** 01:21

We don't democrats always mess up the race for President. I mean, isn't that kind of their role?

**Katie Herzog** 01:26

I democrats do have a higher barrier to success. And Republicans. I mean, the system is built to support rural places, the Electoral College, you know, it's real. But instead of acknowledging that, and dealing with the reality of things like the Electoral College, the democrats just seem to do the same thing, which this year is, you know, the top candidates are moving further and further to the left, I think, to appeal to the media, which is far more liberal leftist than the voting populace. So it's really a catch 22, you know, they have to appeal to the sort of people like me who work in the media, these sort of gatekeepers who determine whether or not you get the attention required to have the name recognition, whether it's required to win the primary. And then if they win the primary they're dealt with, or they have to deal with the fact that they just, you know, came out for non binary driver's license or whatever the thing is, that's not going to appeal to the, you know, the six districts in Pennsylvania that are going to determine who the next president is

**Bret** 02:29

made, pivot to the right, and they pivot to the right.

**Katie Herzog** 02:31

So yeah,

**Bret** 02:32

so I have been quite frustrated with the Democratic Party for decades now. And I remain nominally a member of it because of the structure of politics and the fact that one reduces their say over the system if you walk away from the major parties, but I have described myself as the most reluctant Democrat. And I do think that the 2016 election, established that there is enough momentum behind the idea of breaking out of our paradigm, that something new could happen that which wouldn't have been possible, let's say 15 years ago. But I do wonder if we need to actually do something to step away from the Democratic Party. And unfortunately, there is, of course, a walk away movement, which is disguise for walking towards the Republican Party, which is certainly no better. But is there a play where those of us who have seen substantive change of the kind that we would desire frustrated year in and year out for? Well, essentially, the entirety of your life, and almost the entirety of mine? Is there are a move in which we actually gain some influence over government and move it in the direction of honorable progressive policies?

**Katie Herzog** 04:09

I think we're seeing right now the opposite happened. I think we're seeing a sort of we are seeing a kind of revolution, but it's a revolution on going to the far left part of the party, people like AOC, who has sort of sucked all of the attention out of the room despite being a you know, freshmen, freshman Congress person. So I don't know I'm maybe not as optimistic as you are. You know, the problem with the walkaway movement, as you mentioned, is that you're walking away from one thing and you're going to something worse, that's not a solution. And I have a lot of frustration with with people like for instance, Dave Rubin who sort of is maybe I agree with him when it comes to the Democrats, but his solution to that seems to be pushing the people to the right and I don't think that's the solution. So for me, what I would like to do is I would like to see people Like us, kind of old school liberals stand up and say that we don't like the direction the party is taking. This is why we need to move it into a place of going back to those sort of classical liberal values of tolerance for diversity of ideas, free speech, due process. But I'm not seeing that what I'm seeing instead is people incredibly frustrated by the sort of the wokeness of the Democratic Party, essentially, registering a fuck you vote. They're gonna go vote for Donald Trump, just as a fuck you to the Democratic Party.

**Bret** 05:33

Yeah. Which unfortunately, I understand more than I would like to

**Katie Herzog** 05:37

I agree with that I spoke to a to a Trump supporter, a former democrat who considered himself a lifelong Trump supporter, working class guy who voted for Donald Trump, and I interviewed him a couple weeks ago, and I'm going to talk to him for the next year until the election and check in and see how this guy might my goal is to change one person's vote. So I'm trying to change this guy's. And he explained to me it's not about policy. It was never about policy. He hated Hillary Clinton, because she was elitist. She was condescending, and she called half the country deplorable. And it's so and he recognized that this is counterproductive to his own well being because Donald Trump is not actually fighting for the working man. Right. But he hated Hillary Clinton. And I don't think people realize how strong that is. And maybe part of it's about sexism, maybe I don't know, for whatever reason, people have hated her in particular for the past 30 years. And that didn't change when she was running for president, obviously. I mean, I think one of the problems with Elizabeth Warren is that she looks too much like Hillary Clinton, and they don't really look alike, but they sort of look alike, you know, loosely.

**Bret** 06:37

Well, I must say, I have a very visceral response to Hillary Clinton, I had the same response to Bill Clinton. I was never for one minute of Bill Clinton fan. There are things I found remarkable about him. I think he was very eloquent. And he did speak to something in people, but I just don't trust him. And I just don't trust her. And the thing about Trump is, he did successfully muscle out of the way the crime families that had been holding us hostage for so long. But basically, he's a new crime fan, right? And

**Katie Herzog** 07:15

as stupid are one and a more corrupt one, I think, or worse at this

**Bret** 07:19

and much more inclined to gamble big right, which, you know, he likes to gamble big take credit when it works out, and then he's not going to be left holding the bag for when it goes south, which it will. So he's not a viable answer to this question. Right. nor is he, you know, I just, I think he is just not up to the challenge of thinking on behalf of other people. Right. And, you know, I wish he was. And in fact, I will confess that the night he was elected, where we were all stunned, because you know, whether you wanted him to win or didn't want him to win, we all thought he was going to lose, or almost all of us did. And then to discover that he had one was just totally stunning. But I said to Heather, I said, you know, I'm not expecting it. But given the cards that he has, if he wanted to become the greatest president in US history, starting from this moment, he could do it. Right. what he's done is he's actually gotten a through a style of gatekeeping, designed to keep anybody like him out of the office. And now if he wanted to, you know, if he pulled off the mask and did something visionary, there'd be no stopping him.

**Katie Herzog** 08:34

Well, do you think that if even if he had, people would be happy about that? I mean, Trump has occasionally done a couple things, right. Yep. And the response to that isn't to like, pat him on the back. It's, it's to dislike him anyway. Right. Right, which I just find counterproductive. And a lot of ways I mean, things like sentencing reform, granted, he didn't do this out of the goodness of his heart. He did it because the people pulling the strings told him to do it. Yeah. But still, we should say, it doesn't matter who the person is, when the when the person in power does a correct thing. We should encourage that.

**Bret** 09:04

Well, let's put it this way. If he had done it, he would have had whatever this thing is that is emerging outside of the mainstream media, the real conversation of which this podcast is a part of which you're calling for the stranger is clearly a part. Whatever that discussion is, would have anteed up I believe, had Donald Trump revealed himself to be a visionary Maverick, who was not of the system that had held us hostage. There would have been a lot of us who would have defended him. That's not what emerged obviously, I don't really think the person has it in him. And you know, it's not out of personal hatred that I feel like we have to get him out of office. It's just this is not safe,

**Katie Herzog** 09:51

right? Although I do also really fucking hate him. I hate him. And I would like totally admit that but I also think that you know, that's part of the problem. Mike, I work in the media I have I'm very transparent about about my feelings about Donald Trump. But people like me are all over the media ecosystem. And when he talks about fake news, I mean, he took the term fake news, he took this very real thing. And he distorted the term he rebranded it and made it any criticism of him. The truth is the media is biased against Donald Trump. I mean, no question about it. Right?

**Bret** 10:22

Well, so personally, just the way I tick, I hate very few people, right? I have a very strong, negative reaction to the Clintons. But I wouldn't even call it hate. It's just like, Wait a second, that's influence peddling that that's corrosive to the very things that the country needs to stand for. And frankly, I think so, in short, I don't hate Donald Trump. I don't think it's productive. It's not productive. In fact, it's counterproductive. But with respect to the Clintons, the reason that I maybe even feel more strongly about them is that I my lifetime overlapped a transition in left leaning politics. And basically what I saw happen, and I know I've got a lot of pushback for this. But what I saw happen was a republican party innovated a kind of influence peddling and catering to a corporate entity that did not have our best interests at heart, and I got very good at. And instead of challenging it, the democrats mimicked it, and they became the alternative. So now that we have to two flavors of corporate rule. And what got ushered out, was the historical obligation that the Democratic Party had to working people to common people. Well, if no party represents common people, you end up where we are now. And so the, I guess the problem that I have with the Clintons is that they represent the Democratic Party turning its back on working people. And now the Democratic Party is effectively making the argument every single election. Well, who you're gonna vote for the republicans, you're going to let them win. Are you gonna vote for third party? Are you going to hand this to the republicans? And it's like, Look, how many elections Do you get to threaten me with the republicans winning before? This is your fault rather than mine? Right? You decided to make that bargain? Yeah, want to become popular? There's a very easy, straightforward way to do it. Start representing common P. Right,

**Katie Herzog** 12:34

right. Yeah, no, I think you're right about that. I think that there are a lot of forces to blame for Donald Trump winning the election. But I think the first one should be the DNC and the Democratic Party. And Hillary Lynn was a terrible candidate I was, I was one of the few people who thought that she was going to lose, because I'm from North Carolina. I don't know a wide variety of conservative people, but I sort of know enough to know how people feel about Hillary Clinton. My girlfriend's parents are Alaskan, they hate. They're very Christian. They hated Donald Trump, they still voted for him because they called her a snake in the grass. They're more willing to vote for a man who has thrived like his values are actually less in line with their than hers are in some ways. Yeah. But they were willing to vote for him because they hated Hillary Clinton so much. And when I heard that, to me, it was just like, this is what's going to happen. People hate her. And she grant and she won the popular vote, but it doesn't matter. It actually doesn't matter. And just the fact that like, so the first election i voted in was Al Gore. We know what happened there. Hillary Clinton we know what happened there I just cannot see if the Republicans continue to lose the popular or lose the election after winning the popular vote. I think that this system would have changed by now but the democrats are so ineffective that this system continues to exist

**Bret** 13:52

Yeah, well, so I have been toying with something I don't know how to deploy it or what it even becomes but you know, when when you at the beginning of this discussion we're talking about the left and the democrats catering to them I don't even see it as the left I see it as people who have co opted the left who are being catered to who don't even really know what they want and the extent that this is a well intentioned it's it's a misunderstanding of what left actually is. And so what I want to do is found what I call your other left, right, at that left, your other left right, what is your other left? Well, it's founded on Yes, classical liberal principles, but I think it goes you know, classical liberal has become a kind of a shield for people who are right of center, right? But have some some classically liberal values. And what I would like to do is make a distinction, which is, we actually do need progress. We cannot stay on this trajectory as much as we are being very well. served in the immediate present, a, not all of us are being really well served and be it's not stable, it's dangerous long term, it will come apart, and it will be a disaster. So we have to have progress. And what I would like to see is a very sober discussion of how one moves forward without making the classic errors that people on the left tend to make where they see an opportunity to make things better, and they don't understand that they also are in danger of making things worse, we need to have that discussion. And anyway, I'm, this is a very strange era to be in. But one of the things that's very positive about it is that it is causing people to emerge into public consciousness, who I think under ordinary circumstances would never be heard from people who are very creative and dynamic. And I'm thinking of you actually, in this context, very specifically, that you you know, I don't know how many of my listeners will be familiar with you, a lot of them, but not all of them. Yeah. But you have done a great job of being true to your liberal beliefs. And I would say you're like me quite far left, while being honest about what we don't have straight over on the left. And I think my favorite thing about what you're up to is the way you were wielding humor, in order to be able to say very uncomfortable facts.

**Katie Herzog** 16:30

Thank you.

**Bret** 16:31

I think it's it's wonderful.

**Katie Herzog** 16:32

Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Bret** 16:34

But it's also, you know, a I think this is actually probably an ancient mode. I mean, in other words, that we have a mysteries and adaptation. Yeah, what is humor, right? It's not some frivolous thing to entertain you. Right? Right. It's way too deep for that. And the, the way it functions is way too complex for that to be the explanation. So in part one, it has to be about is navigating stuff that you can't come out directly, right, and so causing people to have that kind of whiplash they get at the moment in the joke where they suddenly have the real meaning reveal if they get the joke, if they get the joke, right. Well, but even even the line between those who do and don't get the joke carries so much. Yeah, meaning I mean, how horrifying is it to be in a room of people when the joke is deployed? And you don't know why everybody's laughing? Right. Right. Or you laugh when nobody else does? I mean, those are that's a disaster. Yeah, totally. Yeah. And for good reason. Yeah. It's

**Katie Herzog** 17:37

an interesting hypothesis. I hadn't ever thought of humor as an evidence of an evolutionary adaptation. That is everything is, you know, in your world especially

**Bret** 17:46

well, what I would say in you know, I've deployed a little test for is it is the presumption that something is an adaptation. Yeah. And basically, if you have something that is complex that persists over evolutionary time, and has a cost that could be reduced, then you know, it must be paying at least that cost and then somewhere it wouldn't stick around. So to me, things like humor, consciousness, religion, music, all of these things are slam dunks, they're adaptations. That's not the hard question. What could they possibly before right that's a good question

**Katie Herzog** 18:24

getting late. Isn't that the isn't that the answer? That almost goes without saying right? Right. Right. Although I'm a lesbian so I don't know how this how keyword to play my humor to bed people who can never bear my bear. My children is really gonna help me. Humans are weird.

**Bret** 18:38

Well, human humans are. So my advisor has a guy named dick Alexander, who was a wonderful guy, very funny. He was he was very polarizing. He was well loved by people who liked him. And in my department, He was despised by people who had challenged him And last, but anyway, he

**Katie Herzog** 19:07

sexuality.

**Bret** 19:08

Now you're talking about the fact that you were deploying him Right, right. who couldn't pass away, right? Did you say barrier? Yeah, that's a good one. So anyway, Deke wrote a paper a great one that was titled, on the human, the human humans as a uniquely unique species. That's not the exact title. But anyway, it's a great paper. And the basic point was that, you know, all species are unique, but humans are uniquely unique. And so when you say that humans are weird, you're a kid. Yeah, we're the we're the kind of species there is. Yeah,

**Katie Herzog** 19:47

there's something I want to ask you about. So Alright, so there's this replication crisis, and specifically in like social science, right. And all of these studies that have been cited 1000s of times and are taken as sort of You're just believes to be true or it turns out they're either not replicable or the or the study was shit in the first place. Yeah. So the the latest one to come out and sort of make a big splash Christina Hoff Sommers wrote a piece in The Wall Street Journal about the blind orchestra study. Yep. Did you see this? Maybe you can explain the study a little bit better?

**Bret** 20:18

Well, the blind orchestra study basically said that the number of women who were hired into important positions in orchestras went up dramatically when the auditions were held behind a screen that masked their gender,

**Katie Herzog** 20:36

right? And it turns out that this was not actually true. Right. Right.

**Bret** 20:39

So anyway, you were gonna make a more general note about the replication crisis.

**Katie Herzog** 20:43

Okay, so everything that's happened in the past couple years, politically, everything that's happened with my own sort of personal awakening to the, to the downsides of the left as watching what's happening with these replication crises, things like this, my set with the big movement, my sense of what is real, and what is not real, has become much blurrier. And, and one, there's one particular Avenue where I find this the most concerning and it's climate change. Yeah. Because what I've realized is that, I realized that I'm not a climate scientist, you know, I don't actually know I can look at the data, and I wouldn't be able to tell you what it says it'd be like reading Esperanto, I could actually probably read us bronto better than I could study on snowpack or whatever. I can trust scientist, I do trust scientist, I trust the scientific method. And I think the right method is right for, right. So there's a difference between climate science and social science, for sure. But I still find myself saying, like, if everything else that I thought was true, wasn't true. What if this other thing isn't true, and it's really fucking with me, I mean, I wrote I covered client, I was an environmental reporter for years, I do believe in climate change. But I also don't believe I don't trust activists, I no longer trust activists. And I know that most of the information when I was a common reporter, most of the information I was getting was filtered through activists, you get press releases, from activists, everything's filtered through this sort of political lens. And I don't trust it anymore. I don't trust the apparatus. I don't trust the methodology. I don't trust any of it. But I still believe in climate change. So I'm just having this like this sort of difficulty here. Like what if that is also not true?

**Bret** 22:26

So this is the real red pill. Yeah, forget that. Conservatives hit this.

**Katie Herzog** 22:30

Yeah. We're about to Yeah, we're about to mainline it.

**Bret** 22:33

Yeah. Well, but you know, I guess look at on the one hand, I actually viscerally feel your pain. I know exactly the revelation that you're experiencing. And boy, is it frightening? Yes. On the other hand, it's really marvelous that you're there, right? Because the tiny number of people on the other side of that thing need you. Right? So you've pushed play on something that has a lot of threads? Let's explore them. And then we'll see where we end up. A this replication crisis has nothing to do with social science, right? Nothing okay with it. Right? what it has to do with is a an opportunity, a niche that exists inside of academic science, right? Social Science is maybe the most vulnerable to it, because the other things that compete with this niche are less strong, right? So because social science is a little bit iffy to begin with, the replication problem pulls harder, right? It doesn't have a countervailing force. But you're going to find this, everywhere that P values have been utilized, and P values have been utilized across science. And I should say, I will pat myself on the back for this one. I was shouting about this long before replication crisis at ever arisen as a term, right? The problem with P values is that they don't say nearly as much as you would like them to say. And so effectively, what they say is, we have a pattern that we've seen, it has a strength, and that strength needs to be above the level where we would expect to see it by accidental random sampling error. And so what we want is a situation in which 19 out of 20 times, you wouldn't get a pattern that strong by random sampling error, right? But one out of 20 you do. Now the problem is if I run a bunch of studies, and they don't get a significant p value, and then I run another study, that's no better and it does, and I publish that one,

**Katie Herzog** 24:54

right, but I don't you don't publish the negative? Yeah, right. The point the p value

**Bret** 24:59

actually means Nothing worse than meaning nothing. What it does is it pseudo quantifies our level of certainty which we have no basis for. So this has been a, a vulnerability from the beginning. Yeah. And what it means is we have no idea that things that are based on p values, unless you have information about everything, all of the work that was done, you don't know how to evaluate them. And then worse is, even if you did have all of the data of all of the studies that were run and didn't come to anything and never got published, you wouldn't know which ones of them were done. Well, some of them may not have been published, because the people who did the experiments felt like you know, I didn't quite get it, right. I think there was a flaw in the way the data was collected. So they jettison those for good reasons. That's not real data. But then the other ones are real data. So we have no, no basis to calibrate

**Katie Herzog** 25:49

our journals less likely to publish a study that has no sort of finding. And of course, yeah,

**Bret** 25:54

of course, because the journals are in an economic competition, that is nowhere in the scientific method, right?

**Katie Herzog** 26:00

Okay. So this is God. So basically, the work that find that the work that would establish some baseline is not being published, and the only the only thing that we're seeing is sort of impressive values. You're seeing

**Bret** 26:12

a sampling error of samples, right, right, seeing those samples that said, x and not those that said, this is happening in the middle, you were the job prospects are artificially bleak in science. And the reason for that is obscure, right? The reason job prospects are bad, if you get your PhD, you probably won't get a professorship. The reason for that is that the universities are involved in a kind of con, where they are trying to get their classes taught on the cheap, so that they can free the professors to get grant right. Now the reason that they want to do that is because half of the grant money or more goes to the university. So that makes a priority of freeing professors from teaching. How do you free professors from teaching a lot of graduate graduate students? Right? So how do you get a lot of graduate students, you make more graduate students than there are jobs, which then puts them in more intense competition when they graduate, which then results in them being much more compromised ethically? Because they can't say the true thing, when the popular thing is what's going to get you the job? So is this going to be in effect in climate science? Unfortunately, it can't help it. Right? Right, right, if you are going to try to get a job in climate science, and you're going to publish something that says, Wait a minute, maybe things aren't as bad as we think. You're going to get crushed. And so the terrible fact here is that if there's one thing we can be sure of, it's that climate science as a social endeavor is polluted by the same perverse incentives that have polluted social science. And that that has a blinding effect. So we don't even know what we're looking at,

**Katie Herzog** 28:02

right? I mean, it makes total sense, right? This idea that like that the world is going to end in 12 years, I sort of like to like to freak people out, because it's a little bit fun. But the reality is like, there are consequences to this, you know, like their kids and middle schools being told that they're not going to get to grow up to be adults, because because my parents generation screwed them over whatever, Exxon did it or whatever. Just psychologically, what is this doing to people?

**Bret** 28:27

Well, but like, we haven't even begun to go down the rabbit. Yeah, because here's the thing. It's not even necessarily wrong, that the world's gonna end in 12 years. It's not going to end in 12 years if we extrapolate linearly or even exponentially from where we are. But there is a pathway there that's very direct, which has to do with frozen methane in the Arctic, of which there is a tremendous amount and stay that way, it needs to stay frozen, right. And the problem is that there is likely a threshold that we will cross where the release of methane from the Arctic will so dwarf our contribution to the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels, that this process will run away. That could happen this afternoon. And there's reason to think we might be close to that threshold, which is, this is the other side of the coin. Do we know that the models that are being published in climate science are reliable? No, we can be pretty sure that there's a lot of garbage there. Now it's possible that the noise is dwarfed by the signal, it's possible that the models are good. They're just not nearly as good as we claim. But it's also possible that the models are really discard. And I would say one thing that is important to understand is that there is a I'm constantly frustrated by the absence of philosophers of science in our science debates, because they're in some ways, we've we've paid to train them to navigate some issues that are very important, but almost none of us understand. One of them in this case would be, those models are not actually good for testing anything. The system is too complex, we don't know enough about it to use them as a test of what's going to happen. But we can use them to generate predictions of what might happen, which then can be tested in the world itself. So if we could navigate that, that boundary carefully, we could use the models and we could find out how good they are. But if we're going to use them to test ideas, then it becomes a delusion. So the question is, if the models are suspect, which they have to be, what do we do? Do we say, Well, this is you know, all a bunch of people, right? wing conspiracy is left wing conspiracy, this, that and the other? I don't think so. I'm sure not where I come out. No, all right, come out is first of all, there are other things that aren't model based, that ought to alarm us. The retreat of glaciers, for example, that's something you can see with your own eyes, it does not require a model. Even more frightening, I would say is the discovery on the Yamal Peninsula in Siberia, of these new craters about No, I don't know why the images of these things are not among the most famous images on Earth. But the story is that some petroleum workers were flying over this Peninsula, tundra Peninsula in Siberia, and they spotted a giant crater that was new. And then they found another one. And the question is Will, right, what process did that we don't even have a name for for what process? Did that Meteor have hit it or what? Right? The hypothesis emerged that these were explosive releases of methane, that had injected a vast amount of rock from these giants holes in the ground. And that would, of course, be alarming, because what we're talking about is the explosive release of methane. And so we've seen things in the ocean where we've seen plumes of methane bubble up that appear to be unprecedented, we don't really know what they mean, because nobody took baseline data 50 years ago, so we don't know if plumes of methane bubbling up should alarm us or shouldn't, but it certainly is consistent with our alarm. But these these craters on on land, the prediction was, well, if these are methane release craters, then methane ought to be highly concentrated in the bottom of the hustings. And people went in, and there was super high concentrations of methane. So you could make an argument one way or the other. But my basic point would be, look, the links in the chain that tell us to worry about climate are actually more secure than people think they have nothing to do with models, they have to do with some very simple chemistry that tells us that things like carbon dioxide and methane trap heat, right? Which is, you know, that's a very long standing hypothesis, well established, easy to demonstrate in the lab.

**Bret** 33:17

And then we've got glacial retreat and things like that. And then we've got novel geology, we've got, you know, rock being ejected by explosive releases of methane, which is consistent with sudden releases of large amounts of this stuff that are frozen in the Arctic, all of that stuff tells me you had best work. Yeah. And what's more, the threshold at which this is no longer a problem that humans could plausibly deal with? could be anywhere, right? We could cross it today, right? We're gonna have crossed it could have crossed. Yeah, right. Yeah. 50 years ago, is unlikely we would have seen spectacular rises in temperature of a car, and we haven't yet seen. But in any case, here's the overarching place that I think those of us on your other left on auto land. The climate crisis is not a problem in and of itself is a symptom of another problem that doesn't have a name. And my point would be, we have to solve the underlying problem, we know that we have to solve it. And you know, it's like that cartoon. You know, what if we solve the world's problems to fix the climate and it turns out it was just a hoax and we made it better for no reason or anything like that. It's still better. It's still better and that serves everybody. I don't care if you're a conservative or liberal. I don't want to see us crash and economy over it. But I don't think that's what what happened. I think you would actually stimulate an economy for the same reason that a war stimulates an economy a direction right industry Get Started effort to solve the problem with an official Yeah. But the underlying problem is one of chronic, unsustainable, where we are addicted to any process that makes a profit. And at the point we discover why it can't be sustained, it can't be reversed.

**Katie Herzog** 35:13

Do you think there's some evolutionary explanation for this, for instance, our ancestors chimps, you know, shit off of a off of a limb or whatever, and don't have to deal with the, with their own byproducts of their own pollution.

**Bret** 35:26

I think it's, it's worse than that a little bit. There's, you know, an indifference, a lack of understanding of the consequences of our behavior. But worse than that, we are the descendants of winners, every single one of us, right? In fact, every single one of us is the product of an unbroken line of reproduction that stretches back three and a half billion years. So as much as being a winner is a pretty rare thing. We aren't that rare. It's rare, but where it is, right? So what were our ancestors doing? Well, one thing they were doing was they were not foregoing the use of resources that they had acquired, right, there was a tendency to capture that which could be captured, and to turn it into something in motion. And, frankly, that can be bad. Lots of populations have done themselves harm, and in some cases gone extinct, because they over exploited a resource. But in general, you know, before industrialization, it wasn't that dangerous, right? There was only so rapidly that people could, you know, deforest the Amazon, right? If they were using hand tools. Right, right. So it was sort of self limiting. Nowadays, right? I mean, have you seen some of these videos of these machines? Yeah. Strip trees. Yeah.

**Katie Herzog** 36:51

And that's another thing that like, you know, so I live in Western Washington, you live in Oregon, lots of walking around here. And there's this and I think there is more, I think I'm speculating here. But I think that logging has uptick since Trump came in office. And there's this idea that, you know, you can sort of sell it to people as a job provider. It's not a job provider. It's one dude with a button. Yeah, you know, there's this is not you don't see, eventually, you know, logging trucks will be automated too. So there's not that's not going to provide to people with jobs either just this sort of slash and burn, it's incredibly depressing to just like drive around these, you know, sort of beautiful forests and see they've all been decimated.

**Bret** 37:28

Oh, see, they've all been decimated, except that they were decimated in a way there was a computer program as I understood it, that actually would predict what a particular clear cut would look like, from various places that it could be observed. Right?

**Katie Herzog** 37:42

So they have a screen on the right. So Oregon has that Washington doesn't have that that curtain as much. So you can actually see it, but like, yeah, if you're driving from Portland out to out to the Oregon coast, they make sure that you cannot you can only see the old growth on

**Bret** 37:55

the road. Yeah, no, it's like blinders. But their road instead of on your head. Yeah, it's very sad.

**Katie Herzog** 38:01

Yeah, I've taken a I've tried to take the sort of the really long view on climate and on on sustainability, because humans are destroying the planet, that's undoubtedly clear. But ultimately, if you take the really long view, it ultimately doesn't really matter. You know, like, you know, 30 million years ago, Arizona was a notion or making up the time if you if you stop caring about humanity, so I tried to be sort of nihilistic about it. Eventually, the earth will recover. Did you feel any different in different ways? Perhaps it might, it's not going to be the pristine globe that at once was, you know, when when humans disappear, all of the nuclear waste will melt down and just dams will need to be torn down. And all of those things, this is why I'm This is why I'm in the voluntary human extinction movement. Because I think if we took a couple generations, tore down dams, decommissioned nuclear power plants, and sort of gradually fade it off, you know, we leave the planet for another species to rise and destroy, and we'll just continue to happen.

**Bret** 39:00

Well, please take whatever efforts that you put into voluntary extinction, very low effort, very low effort, but put them into stable dry cask storage for all of that nuclear waste. Yeah, because it's a problem. It's a real problem. And people don't realize how significant it is. But ultimately, no one gets out alive, right? There's no escape for humanity. Even if we escaped the earth, the galaxy is going to crash into the neighboring galaxy. Even if we escaped that disaster, you don't escape the heat death of the universe. So ultimately, there's no point. On the other hand, you could say the same thing about your own life, for sure you are and yet here and yet here you are having a conversation. I bet you're even going to take your next breath even though there's no philosophical justification for it. I

**Katie Herzog** 39:53

will take my next breath, but I will not have children, although it's so well because I don't want them. So that's the real answer is They don't want them. But I can sort of I can sort of pose it as this heroic like, you know, I don't want to contribute to overpopulation, blah, blah, blah. At the same time, I will not be adopting children either because I still don't want children. Yeah, I like to sleep in. I don't want plastic all I don't want to step on Legos. It's a it's purely aesthetic.

**Bret** 40:17

Yes. Well, I'm a parent, and I suffer from the delusion that it's marvelous. Yeah. And the world needs more children with parents like you. But to the extent that you don't want kids don't have them. Yeah. But the fact that you're going to take your next breath, puts the lie to the idea, right? I mean, we could just wait. Still reading. Yep. All right. So that puts the lie to the idea that it's really okay to let humanity run its course

**Katie Herzog** 40:48

for the individual, right? So, but for the future generations that don't exist, I don't think there's anything inherently sort of tragic about that, oh, there kind of is maybe a poetic way,

**Bret** 40:58

well, let's put it this way. I know I'm gonna die. I know humanity's gonna go extinct. And it doesn't diminish my desire to a see what I can make of the short period of time that I have on the planet. That's an amazingly cool game. And I also think that philosophically speaking, there is sort of an objective that I think if we all thought really clearly and talk to each other, and you know, spent a few years getting getting it sorted out, I think there's a thing that we would land on, that's actually like, the moral imperative, right? The singular top moral imperative, and I know a person who says such a thing has to be kind of crazy, but because life is cool, we are more or less obligated to see how many human beings we can give that experience.

**Katie Herzog** 41:54

Yeah, I agree. I mean, it's a pretty utilitarian argument.

**Bret** 41:57

Yes, except you have to be careful with it. Because that does not mean let's see how many people we can get quality, right, right order for it to be quality in order for it to really liberate us to do cool, amazing stuff, the population has to be low on a rate of consumption has to be sustainable, all of that. But if we could do that, if we could stabilize the earth, so that there was no expiration date on humanity, sure. Right? Then, how many people are we giving this marvelous gift of, Hey, you know what, you're going to get 85 cool years in which to see what you can create. It's the most amazing video game there ever was, you know, you can build you can create insight, art, whatever you want to do. That's a, that's a wonderful gift to give to people and to give up on humanity is to deny it to an indefinitely large number of people downstream of us. I agree

**Katie Herzog** 42:51

with that. But there is also true, it's also true that life is also suffering. I mean, suicide is one of the highest causes of deaths in the Western world. You know, so life is cool, but life is also terrible.

**Bret** 43:07

Um, well, let's unpack that a little bit. There is suffering in life. Life wouldn't make any sense if there wasn't so right, each individual has to face a certain amount of suffering. In fact, suffering is clearly an adaptation. Oh, yeah. Yeah. That does not mean that intolerable levels of suffering of the kind that cause people to kill themselves are okay, we're even though we're stuck with them. Right? So the, the thing I'm imagining that we're sort of obligated to pursue is a world in which nobody has to face that kind of despair. Right? Yeah.

**Katie Herzog** 43:42

So you're not going to real low population here?

**Bret** 43:44

Not necessarily. You know, look, if I was, if I was dictating the course, I would say, look, we've gotten to a place where almost everything can be done, electrically. Okay. So let us shift to electric Why? Well, number of reasons. One, it's healthier at the point that you're involved in the activity, right, electric cars don't pollute, they don't yazma. All that matter. they pollute somewhere, sure, the coal plant. But the more important point is, if you get everything wrong, electrically, then you pursue fusion power. And the thing is, fusion power actually allows us to figure out what it's not the natural carrying capacity that existed before fossil fuels, we might be able to set a carrying capacity, it could be quite a bit higher, right? It could be three or 4 billion people, right? And they could live at a very high quality of life. And if you've made everything electric than the point, fusion energy becomes viable, actually, you could take all the stuff that you're already using and just plug it into a different source. And suddenly you've reached a potentially sustainable alternative mode for human existence. And so the way I see this, we are up against the wall with respect to the unsustained Ability crisis fossil fuels being one manifestation of that, but far from the only one, but we are, you know, we're standing on one edge of a gap. The other edge of the gap is the point at which we figured out how to do something out elegantly with electricity and how to fuel it ultimately with fusion power.

**Katie Herzog** 45:19

Right. But it's also a political issue. So even if it's a technological fix, I mean, you have both Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, one of you might be our next president, talking about not just not building any more nuclear plants, decommissioning the ones that we already have. Oh, I want them to be commissioned. So you want Okay, so So take every all of the existing nuclear decommission that and just focus on

**Bret** 45:42

dead end? Yeah. And it is a deadly dead, right? It's a fascinating bargain of the worst kind. Fusion is a whole different ballgame. Right? for many different reasons. One, it doesn't have the risk of meltdown, it doesn't create fuel as long standing spent fuel that we still have no idea what the hell to do with why can't we

**Katie Herzog** 46:03

just take it up in the in the sky and dismiss it?

**Bret** 46:09

Oh, launch it into the sun? That's a great idea, except for one problem, which is that launching stuff into space a? And B, it doesn't work all that well. Yeah,

**Katie Herzog** 46:19

things blow up and we would end how do we take it to the moon and launch it from the moon?

**Bret** 46:23

Well, you got to get it to the moon. Okay, so look, this is not a bad idea. Yeah, if you could generate fusion power in space, beam it into the atmosphere safely, which I don't know that we know that we could it's possible, even if you could put the reactors and space beam the energy down, that you would end up ionizing the atmosphere in a way that would be the next devastating crisis. But if you could do fusion power in space, and then launch the product into the sun, I'm all for it. Yeah, yeah. It's not that I'm against fusion. It's just not safe.

**Katie Herzog** 46:56

Fusion still has a branding issue. They may want to stop calling it nuclear. I mean, it just it seems it sounds like the same thing.

**Bret** 47:03

Yeah, except Boy, am I going to love being its champion.

**Katie Herzog** 47:07

So is this going to be small reactors and people like micro? micro grids or whatever? Do you picture this as like, actually large, large vision or

**Bret** 47:17

large fusion reactors? They don't have to be immense, but it's not you don't get your personal fusion reactor? As far as we know. You know, if, you know, unfortunately, fusion is going to lead us to cold fusion, which is a morass. Because for lots of reasons, probably there is no cold fusion, but it ain't as settled as people think. But anyway, I'm talking about hot fusion. But the nice thing, among the nice things about hot fusion, is that as soon as your hot fusion reaction stops abiding by the rules of your machine, it shuts itself dead. Yeah, right. Which is quite the opposite with fish, right? fusion, it's like you have you have to maintain, maintain control over it. And the minute you lose control, or the water evaporates, or whatever, right, the amount of water you have to pump through to keep it cool enough not to melt down is amount. So anyway, fusion power may have an effect. But I always say is, nuclear power isn't one thing. It's two opposite things. Right? And fusion power is the one we should be betting on. Unfortunately, the nuclear power industry is really the fusion industry. Right? Right. Or not backing it, right. And the fossil fuel industry obviously has a tremendous amount to lose, right? Okay, well, where have we ended up?

**Katie Herzog** 48:37

I feel I feel reassured that climate change is happening, and less optimistic about the future than I did 10 months ago. So I feel both better and worse.

**Bret** 48:49

Well, okay, so let me suggest and approach philosophically here. First of all, let me just point out something I've called the activists dilemma, which is that about half the people are motivated by their fear of what's going to happen if we do nothing, and half the people are motivated by hope about what we might accomplish. And you can talk to either group in isolation with no problem, but if you try to talk to them at the same time, you're always at cross purposes with yourself and it never goes well. So the fear that you were describing that maybe it's too late, maybe the problem is too big, maybe, you know, maybe you're gonna live to see the end of this. Right, right. That's an abyss. And I think, you know, you and I don't know each other that well, but my guess would be that you want to spend a little bit of time staring into the abyss and make your peace with it. Yeah, right. Yeah. Cuz at the point that you realize, you know what, we've already misplayed our cards. We're in very serious danger and this will probably it's Probably not rescue bubble. But I don't know it's not rescue bubble. And if we did rescue it that would that's a noble thing to dedicate yourself to while you're here. And it's pretty exciting, right? It's, you know, it fits the superhero ethos of the moment, right to sort of say, well, should we actually do have to save the Earth? And, you know, we have to figure out how to take the tools we've got and address that problem. And you know,

**Katie Herzog** 50:30

well, what do you think about you know, people like Jeff Bezos saying, like, what did you say the only way to deploy my wealth would be to set it to space? You know, this idea that what are Elon Musk, this idea that what we need to be doing is colonizing Mars and uninhabitable planet rather than deploying our resources to save the one that we already have?

**Bret** 50:47

Yep. It's nonsense. It's nonsense. Yes. And it's not that I don't understand what they're saying. And I, you know, this pains me a little bit, my brother has a version of this too, which is we've got to break the the speed of light speed limit that limits us because it's keeping us from getting to places we might actually be able to persist, which in principle, I don't disagree with but but we are not going to send people anywhere faster than the speed of light. Anytime in the foreseeable future. It's unimaginable if we could send a message right across the galaxy that would reach the other side. You know, while anybody alive was still alive, that would be a miracle in and of itself, right? Right.

**Katie Herzog** 51:31

And the message would probably be like you up.

**Bret** 51:38

But in any case, I think there are a lot of escapist fantasies. And the problem is that a, some of these escapist fantasies are probably serving a purpose to a point. In other words, I am sure that if you were to unpack my internal program, what's driving me this, you know, this spackle in some places, it's not perfectly worked out and logical, such that it all stands up to scrutiny, but it doesn't that's not its purpose, right? Its purpose is to make sure I get up in the morning and do the stuff that needs doing right. And, you know, it's a little bit like, our visual understanding of our world. You know, it's got heuristics all over the place. By and large, they keep you from crashing into shit. Right, right. So that's good. These stories may be doing that job for certain people. But my fear is that when Ilan musk talks about colonizing Mars, people take him serious, right? And it's not that getting to Mars isn't possible. It's not that it's even inconceivable that you could colonize it, but it's not in the immediate offing, no matter how

**Katie Herzog** 52:48

good he I don't even see this desirable. I mean, I saw that movie with Matt Damon, like he like he has to use his own shit to fertilize his potatoes, like we just we have a miraculous planet. I mean, that's where I sort of see the most hope. And the most sort of fear is I spent a lot of time in nature. And it's stunning. And you and I live in one of the most beautiful parts of the country. And it's sort of remarkably, I'm blown away every day, every time I take my ferry ride, I'm blown away by the by Mount Rainier, and the landscape around me. And at the same time, I'm just so depressed about what is happening to this much more, I'm much more depressed about the state of the planet about pollution sustainability than I am sort of what's happening socially in some ways. Well,

**Bret** 53:34

you know, the answer to how you address it has to be philosophical. You got to find a way to make your peace with the cosmic joke. You are on the greatest planet that we are aware of. It is being degraded, but it's still absolutely marvelous. And at every scale, you know, I mean, look into moss with a microscope. And yeah, see amazing stuff. Yeah. And so there's plenty. This is a tragic moment. But it is also a moment at which your life matters a lot, because what happens next is uncertain. And I think everybody is going to need to find their individual way to make peace with the the absurdity and the horror and the possibility of this moment. But having done so, you sometimes I call myself an accidental Buddhist because although I've never studied Buddhism, I'm not a religious person. By nature. I feel like many of the thoughts if you push them far enough, that's where they end up right in that neighborhood. And I think there is a kind of There's a kind of enlightenment, once you realize what this moment is and how improbable you are, and how improbable it is that you would land in this moment and be aware of what it was and actually potentially have some influence over it because people listen to you or something like that. Well, I call it the cosmic joke, right? I mean, it's a very funny joke in a way that you would end up in that odd situation. And it does potentially give meaning to every day. Yeah,

**Katie Herzog** 55:32

do you? If you could go back and tell yourself, you're, you know, from 10 years ago, or whatever, you know, 10 years from now, you're not going to be teaching anymore. But you'll be a sort of public figure. Would you have been surprised by this?

**Bret** 55:47

In truth? Yeah, no,

**Katie Herzog** 55:50

I sort of feel the same way about myself. I feel like, I don't believe in fate or anything like that. I don't believe in predestination. I've always thought, and I've done very little work to like, actually get myself to this position. But I've always thought like, there's one paper I want to work for. And I work for it. And I didn't do that much work. Like, you know what I did, where I did work. It's not like it's totally stumbled in this. But there have been this sort of, I don't know, series of happenstance things that have happened to put me in this position, not getting some jobs, getting some jobs, that it once seems incredibly random and also totally inevitable. Yeah.

**Bret** 56:27

Yeah, I think there's a couple of reasons for that one. It might be that this is one of these heuristics, that you sort of need to think that otherwise, you'd spend a lot of time trying to figure out how the hell this happened to you. Right. But no, I I sort of feel like everything that led up to this was a an oddly perfect training camp. Right? Like, I got to see this in microcosm, before it suddenly became large scale. And anyway, it does feel oddly natural. I feel like an odd person for the job. Right? I feel like looking from the outside, it'd be a bit of a head scratcher. But from the inside. Yeah, it feels. It feels. feels right.

**Katie Herzog** 57:16

Yeah. Yeah, I felt the same way. But also tear. It's also terrible, but also, right, you know, well, but I mean, you know, circumstances that have led us to being in the positions that we were in are not necessarily positive ones for the culture.

**Bret** 57:28

They are not right. They are not on the other hand, you know, you're the type specimen for this. But the number of really fascinating, truly decent people that I've been put in contact with by what happened is stunning. And the just the fact of being able to participate in the conversations that matter is, you know, it's a privilege. It's delightful most days. And so anyway, I mean, one could one could exert a lot of skepticism at it, but I'm not sure. I'm not sure why. Yeah, thing is, this is a very odd thing to have happened. But

**Katie Herzog** 58:11

do you have any? Is there one sort of belief that has changed for you since all this happened, something that you're very shocked to realize that you now believe is true, or something that you didn't, that you didn't believe in? Now? Don't?

**Bret** 58:25

That's a good question. And I wish I had a really compelling answer for it. I would say I have been surprised by some people who I otherwise would have dismissed. Any words, periodically, I encounter somebody who I would have guessed was just dangerous and broken. And then you talk to them. And it turns out, they're actually on about something real and yeah, that sort of thing.

**Katie Herzog** 58:57

Yeah, I've had similar experiences. And I You and I have also had a similar experience in I've never invited on left leaning or even mainstream like media shows. I did the jest, which is a slate show, but that's but it's hosted by Mike pesca, who's sort of a heterodox thinker. But I'm in convert. I'm on podcast conservative podcast every week, or shows like this that are more heterodox. Never, never like I've been on NPR a couple times with those invitations have really driven really dried up. Yeah. And that's surprising to me.

**Bret** 59:34

Yep. But I think it really tells us where Yeah, yeah. And you know, I don't hate it. I sort of think it comes down to people like you and me who can tell that story. Just say, look, the left didn't show up, right. This other thing did, it's the true lab and you don't know it unless you've been paying attention to certain quadrants, but but it's the Real Deal,

**Katie Herzog** 1:00:00

I find it problematic in the sense that to borrow a phrase from our SJW friends, I find it problematic in the sense that I would like to I would like the things that I believe to be reaching a wider audience of not just conservatives and heterodox thinkers who are probably more inclined to, you know, believe me, and trust me in the first place. You know, I would like to be reaching an audience that is of the left and disagrees with me in a way that we could have some constructive dialectic, but it doesn't happen. They don't want to engage. I think

**Bret** 1:00:33

it is happening. And I think the problem is that we have a wrong story in our heads about what to expect about the way people change their minds and broaden their minds. And so I see a slower game where you say something, you get mocked, or crushed, or whatever it is that happens. But in that some number of people change their minds. And the point is, the next time you confront that same thing, the dynamic unfolds differently in a way you can't detect is the result of what happened the first time, but it is Right, right. And so as you and I've talked about, I felt very much like there was a deliberate attempt to throw me out of the left because it was very inconvenient for people who were self described leftists to have me around I okay, same thing is true for you. There's a point at which you don't accept the offer of Okay, now you've been red pilled. Now you're conservative, right? You keep saying no. Yep. Same liberal I was, I'm not backing down, you know, out. I'm listening to arguments I'll grow if I've missed something. But I'm not backing down because I'm unpopular on the left. Right, right. Right. And that has an effect. People see it, and they listen. And so you know, on Twitter, for example, sometimes you'll say something, and you'll get a ton of pushback, like mean pushback. But you also get a huge number of likes. And it's like, you can track these things almost separately. The pushback, is the reply. It's true. Yeah. Yeah. It's designed to, you know, to penalize you for saying something out loud. And then the likes because they're cheap, and they're not totally anonymous, but they're close if you've got a large number of them. They're actually indication. Oh, I heard Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

**Katie Herzog** 1:02:33

Yeah. This I interviewed Yasmin Muhammad the other day, who's excellent ex Muslim. Yes. Brave, incredible thinker. And I interview she has a new book out and an Amazon has declined to to allow her to purchase ads for her book. So they're selling the book, but she can't place an ad for the E book. Because according to Amazon, her book is controversial.

**Bret** 1:02:59

So wait, they're Islamophobia phobic?

**Katie Herzog** 1:03:01

They're Islamophobic Yeah. And so I saw I wrote this piece about Yasmina we had a great conversation and she brought up something that I found incredibly telling, which was, you know, Megan Phelps from the Westboro Baptist Church also has a book out right now. She's been on fresh air. She's been on Morning Edition. She's been on Good Morning, America. She's been all over the media ecosystem, and she is viewed as a survivor and a hero. Yasmin Muhammad who was arguably treated worse under Islam than Megan Phelps was under her fundamentalist Christian cult. You know, she's not a hero. She's not a survivor she's not a victim, she's an apostate or an islamophobe or a racist that's a beautiful parallel it's it's so obvious when you see it you know it's so obvious and obviously Sam Harris and other people have been talking about this for years that any you know criticism of Islam is considered racist. However, you can criticize Judaism or Christianity that's totally fine. Anyway, so I wrote this piece about it. Interview jasmine and i and i don't often read the comments on my on my posts for the stranger because it's not a constructive use of my time. But I did I read the comments cuz I wanted to see what you know what people thought of her. And the piece. And the first one was, you know, it said something like Herzog, when are you going to go work for the Daily Caller? And this idea that because I object to the beating of children and the oppression of women all over the world that somehow is a conservative value is just what's the what like, how did we get to this point, it blows my mind. It's everything I'm talking about is liberal values. Freedom, you know, independence, fighting the actual patriarchy and I'm not talking about this American version of the patriarchy, which is man's flooding in a you know, mythical wage gap. I'm talking about real fucking patriarchy here. And that somehow is a conservative value to push back against that.

**Bret** 1:04:51

So first of all, I resonate with everything you just said. Do you have the experience, you must have the experience of you get that nasty voice that's trying to cause you self doubt or cause you to think that you're being that you appear loathsome in the eyes of outsiders or something like that. But you must also get people defending you.

**Katie Herzog** 1:05:14

Oh, for sure, for sure. And it's one of those things where it's like, you know, you don't think of the defense you know, you remember that you remember the one tweet from an from an anime avatar for somebody I've ever heard of, you know, who probably doesn't exist is probably a bot or whatever, like you think of the one you remember that you remember the hate and not the praise? I mean, my I do get I do get a lot of support. I've also found that support often comes privately and you might have had disappears as well. The support is emails, the hatest tweets.

**Bret** 1:05:45

Yeah, although, first of all, as you point out, and I don't think just because it's some account, that may not even be a real person, that it doesn't matter. I think those are there to steer the conversation. So what there you may blanch it something, but the idea is, they're trying to steer the conversation about what you're saying. So that it lands on certain things.

**Katie Herzog** 1:06:08

It's Oh, it's always ad hominem. Yeah.

**Bret** 1:06:11

Well, here's one. So I get in trouble. There's certain topics which I get in trouble on. One of them has to do with my view of sex and the way it is unfolding in. In Western civilization, I have the sense that we are treating sex very frivolously so

**Katie Herzog** 1:06:30

it doesn't exist.

**Bret** 1:06:31

No, I'm talking about sexual attraction. Okay. Okay. And the interaction, right? And my point would be more or less, this is really powerful stuff. And we are treating it in an incredibly frivolous way.

**Katie Herzog** 1:06:48

So we talking about online dating, swiping that pornography, that kind of,

**Bret** 1:06:51

yeah, I'm anti porn. I'm anti casual sex. I think I'm very pro sex, I think. I think it's very powerful stuff. But it should be treated with respect. Same I actually, I feel about hallucinogenic drugs, which is, these things are power tools. I encourage people who think that they should be experimenting with them to try it. But I would encourage you not to think of them as recreational. Right? So it's sort of that sort of thing. But what comes back at me, of course, on the sex front, is that I'm approved, right? Or worse, right? conservative that I'm an in sell. Ah, yes. Right, which I find this is just an amazing accusation. Because whatever else you can say about me, you have two children. Not only do I have killed two children, I'm still married to their mother and people stop me on the street. And they tell me that I've married up. Yeah, which I agree. Right. But okay, so I'm at least not an insult. But I think the idea is, I'm not going to buy this. It's a weird insult, because it just doesn't have any content, right. But if you pointed me and you accuse me of being an incel, then other people who maybe don't know who I am, or don't know who I'm married to write you off, right? Well, a incel is like it's a really grotesque category. Right? The stigma to it. And so if you can just get that stigma to land nearby, something that people like, Oh, I don't want any part of that. So what do we do about the fact that these conversations are being steered around us with you know, I don't know what those accounts are. There's a particular signature that I look for. somebody throws something at me, that's particularly awful

**Katie Herzog** 1:08:40

pronouns and bio, is that a signify?

**Bret** 1:08:42

That's not that? The one I see is, and it's a weird one? It's, they follow a bunch of people, a false 700 people. They are followed by a tiny number of people 150, something like that. They're in general, not followed by anyone I know. And the account is old. Right? They registered in 2012. What an old account that has 40 followers,

**Katie Herzog** 1:09:16

so not someone who participates that much.

**Bret** 1:09:19

Well, the thing is, I was puzzling over this because if it was a new account, I would know what was going on somebody registered new accounts and is using them to steer conversations. But an old account went

**Katie Herzog** 1:09:28

well, I wonder what's the average number of followers have I mean, they're I don't know how many millions of people are on Twitter. But I would assume that the average follower count is probably pretty low.

**Bret** 1:09:36

Well, the average follower counts pretty low. But you wouldn't expect somebody who follows a ton of people to have a low follower count after a long period

**Katie Herzog** 1:09:44

of time, right? Unless they're terrible at Twitter, which is right also possible.

**Bret** 1:09:48

Well, a friend of mine who is sophisticated about this sort of thing, made the argument that what these are old dormant accounts that had easy passwords that have been hacked by Mmm hmm. That is using them to steer conversations which actually strikes me as very plausible. Interesting.

**Katie Herzog** 1:10:05

I hadn't thought about that. Yeah, that seems, that seems a little conspiratorial to me in the sense that like, a lot of, I know who my haters are, I don't know who they really are. But I know like, there's so the stranger, we have a fairly vibrant comments section. And it's not nearly as vibrant as it was, you know, before social media took when, when blogging was at its height, there would be a post with one line, and there'd be 200 comments or whatever. So we don't have that. But we do have a community and ecosystem for sure, in the same name show up and I can sort of, I know who's who I know who doesn't like me, because they're super fucking obvious about it. Which is why I stopped reading the comments. I've also I did something recently, I turned off notifications from people who don't follow me and has changed the conference. It's changed my Twitter experience from one of dread to one of just it's it's all positive, because the only people who respond are people who follow me already, they already they presumably don't hate me, they're willing to follow me. And I feel a little guilty about that. Because I've, I believe in open dialogue. I don't think that criticism is cancelation I do want to be sort of open to, you know, to legitimate good faith criticism. But I also am sick of fucking hearing it, you know, and not the good faith criticism. I'm sick of hearing ad hominem attacks. And so for me to sort of function as a as a person in the world. If I have something that's coming out, that's going to be controversial. Or if there's been something written about me or whatever, I just turn off, you know, I mute notifications from everybody who doesn't follow me and I'll just disappears, which is a pretty remarkable feature of the of the platform that you can just the criticism is there, I've just shielded myself, I've made my own personal echo chamber, and I realized there are consequences to that.

**Bret** 1:11:54

Well, I think that this is an unsettled question for all of us who inhabit this landscape. So there are people like Dave Rubin, Sam Harris, and others who have tuned out the criticism, right? entirely.

**Katie Herzog** 1:12:15

Dave muted me. Did he? Oh, yeah. After I mean, granted, I was being a huge pain in his ass because I was trying to get him to respond to a piece that I wrote in response to some something. He said, I mean, I had written, you know, 1000 words about this. This wasn't a personal attack or anything, but he, I'm pretty sure he muted me because I tweeted at him every day for like, a week trying to get his attention. It failed. Well, I understand I mute people all the time. Well, but here's the thing, right?

**Bret** 1:12:39

You have to understand, Dave has deployed a filter that is very intense, in part because what comes out after him is quite intense. Yeah. And largely unfair. Yeah, I'm not saying that there's not a critique to be leveled, and I've leveled against him, not against him, but to him multiple times. But some of what he gets is just tremendously mean and unfair. And not decent, right? So we all have to set the slider somewhere. Are we going to listen to nothing from the landscape? Are we going to listen to everything which is bewildering in and of itself? Or are we going to go somewhere in between every place you set the slider has significant costs. I think you'd be a fool to set it all the way in one direction or the other and doesn't sound like that's what you've died. But how you how you filter what you hear, so that the critique that you need to hear gets through and the critique that you maybe can't afford to take seriously because it's not legit. And it's designed to, to tie you in knots, right? How you sort between those things, is a little bit of an art form. And it's also a moving target, because whatever it is that's trying to get to us, whether it's individuals who are just trying to get into our heads or get something more organized than that, that wants to do away with the alternative conversation. It is trying out new stratagems all the time. And so, I don't know exactly what to say. But I will say if Are you on Reddit at all?

**Katie Herzog** 1:14:24

I'm I don't post I look at some alerts. And yeah,

**Bret** 1:14:28

yeah. I do more lurking on Reddit than anything. But I've noticed that subreddits go toxic, right. Sam Harris's subreddit has gone absolutely toxic. Toxic

**Katie Herzog** 1:14:46

left, is it so is this infighting among his fans or is this infiltration of people who don't like Harris in the first place?

**Bret** 1:14:53

I think so I think there are two Sam Harris subreddits and one of them has been effectively captured by some woke something or other. And it just impossible to have a conversation. But the point is I don't think Sam necessarily knows that, because I don't he doesn't do it. Right. And the problem is, it is having some effect on how Sam has understood in the world, right that Sam cannot navigate because he's unaware of it right. And anyway, I think all of us are in some danger. So I don't know where to set the slider. But yeah, that it is a slider is important.

**Katie Herzog** 1:15:33

Yeah, it's interesting. Every online subculture that I've observed has turned toxic, everyone knitting mushroom hunting, podcasts, you know, fans of murder podcast, or whatever, at some point, a community that seems, you know, supportive and just there for the love of the thing always turns toxic. And I don't know why that is, if there's something particular about, about online discourse, or the moment that we're in or human there, you know, the nature of what it is to be human in general. But I just see it over and over again, every every Facebook page, every, you know, there's, there'll be a, there'll be a group, the group will, will splinter off because there's too much infighting in the main group. And then that group lasts for a little while, and then that group falls apart because there's too much infighting in that group. It just seems to be a feature.

**Bret** 1:16:26

I wonder, so Eric, said something, I forgotten where he said it. But publicly, he said something about the necessity to to have a degree of elitism. And it was badly misunderstood by people. I know exactly what he was saying. It had to do with the necessity to restrict conversations to those who are ready to have them and take them serious. Right. And I think the problem you're pointing to is that every online discussion, a there's a kind of social entropy phenomenon where it's much easier to disrupt a conversation than it is to build one. And so how long can a conversation exists before something gets into it? That just ties it in a knot? Yeah. The only antidote would be a force that allowed you to bar more gatekeeping. Yeah, more gatekeeping which then does have an elitist problem, which is you don't want to bar people from the conversation who are heterodox Right, right. Right. So anyway, that's a an unsolved problem. But I do think we're suffering from too much gatekeeping in some places, and too little gatekeeping. In others.

**Katie Herzog** 1:17:37

Yeah, I would agree with that. Yeah,

**Bret** 1:17:39

it's a serious problem. So I heard you say something on the panel last night, which reminded me of something I've heard her say, and I think it makes sense for us to talk about here. You said that because you were a tomboy that you're afraid that if you were young, in this era, that you might find yourself pushed towards transitioning. And that that would be a regrettable,

**Katie Herzog** 1:18:13

right. So I so i think that i think that I would have if I were 15 years old right now, and I was online, and the people around me were transitioning or saying they were non binary, or whatever. I think I would be one of them. I was, you know, sort of the new narrative is that if you are a girl who likes quote, unquote, boy things if you have short hair, and like the color blue and place words, I was the only girl in Little League was that kid, that you're not a girl, you're a bit your literal male. And I think I would have been captured by that. That said, I also happened to be the child of a man who taught human sexuality and evolutionary psychology for 30 years. And who is very familiar with the the work of Michael Bailey and Ray Blanchard. And so I happen to have a father, who is much more probably critical and aware of the evidence and the data around transition than most people would have. So I'm not sure that my parents would have allowed me to do some sort of, you know, juvenile transition. But that's most people's dads are not sex professors. Yeah, yeah.

**Bret** 1:19:23

So okay, so you believe that you would have been drawn in that direction. And I

**Katie Herzog** 1:19:30

think I think I would have been, I think my parents probably would have been resistant to it and I would have

**Bret** 1:19:34

pushed, you would have pushed, which puts you at the very least we can say it would have created a corrosive problem for your relationship with your parents.

**Katie Herzog** 1:19:43

And teenagers already have corrosive relationships with their parents. So this, this just would have been the thing instead of whatever it was the thing when I was 15, or whatever.

**Bret** 1:19:50

And if we generalize, because most people's dads don't, right, teach evolutionary psychology, the toolkit to know how To even respond to this, there's no tool, there's no toolkit. And this raises so many frightening questions. I mean, so you know, Heather was absolutely a tomboy also and I must say one of the things I think it takes a while to understand about what Heather and I are saying about sex and relationships and stuff is that on the one hand, there are some traditional aspects that I think we're throwing away too easily. On the other hand, our relationship isn't traditional at all it's really symmetrical right? Right. She's very much the woman I'm very much the man but you know, we play similar roles in the world. So anyway, there's a lot of room to read navigate stuff for modern realities. But Heather was a tomboy she also feels that she would have been pushed towards trans in the modern era and the fact is you're gay. She's not gay right? I don't think either of you were born in the wrong body now right you both reach this conclusion now his body still function clearheaded adults, right? And so the point is, there is this, it's its nature, there's this knee jerk thing over on the authoritarian left, where it's like, we've got a litmus test, right? If you do not subscribe to this thing, then it is because of this motive, right? And so anybody who resists anything, trans is a trans folk, right, right. The problem is trans is intention, therefore with gay and with straight tomboy. Yes. Right. So the problem is you've got historically oppressed people in three different categories whose interests are at odds. Yeah, right. Yeah. There has to be an adult solution to this where we acknowledge there are trans people. Not everybody who presents in some non standard way is trance, there's, you know, as your variation, right, right. It's it's a complex scenario with a bunch of different DIP switches, and we get every combination. Right. And all of them, as far as I know, all of them are valid, but a simple minded rubric. That forces people. Are you following? Natalie? When 100 points? Yeah,

**Katie Herzog** 1:22:33

she's not a fan of mine. But yes. Interesting. She, I wrote about her. She was invited to UBC in Vancouver to do a talk with Blair white. Yeah. And there was of course, this was several years ago, there was of course, a huge conflagration show response to that. And I wrote about in defended her, you know, willing to go have a conversation with a conservative trans woman. And we had a nice sort of dialogue and then her, you know, she's sort of through Jessie single under the bus, sort of weird internet drama stuff. So I'm a fan of parents, but I don't think that it's mutual, not

**Bret** 1:23:08

mutual. Well, I guess I have I have also seen her react in ways that I don't think are sensible relative. She's in a difficult position. Extremely difficult. Right. And you know, this recent episode with her where she had What's his

**Katie Herzog** 1:23:29

name? Buck, no, Buck, Angel bucket bucket. Yeah.

**Bret** 1:23:32

Do a 12 second voiceover for one of her, I think rather remarkable videos. And she got skewered for being, you know, they're two made up terms, I guess, trans med, trans medical list and transcom. Is that though, yeah. And it's like, Okay, you've made up these two terms. You've set some sort of tripwire, and, you know, and Contra points tripped over your tripwire and now you're going to skewer her and buck

**Katie Herzog** 1:24:02

I mean, so buck is a buck is a friend of mine. Buck was in this piece that I read about D transition years ago that he was he also vetted it before it was published. So buck is a trans guy who was was on the forefront forefront. He was one of the earliest people to have top surgery. He's done remarkable work sort of talking about you know, he calls himself the man with a vagina he really embrace it embraces his body. And he's so he's an old school transsexual. I think Natalie is too, and the tension between old school transsexuals and the new school transgenders is just remarkable these are just these two groups are at at odds with each other they have different goals one wants to abolish gender and one wants to actually just appears the opposite sex, you know, passing would be the goal not to sort of say like, so you have a situation like that where you have, you know, a bunch of liberals or whatever progressive standing around, talking about, you know, mostly straight people, probably just people, you know, talking about their pronouns, and there's the one trans person in the group Hilton then has to it becomes this sort of excuse for us all to talk about pronouns when really all that person wants is just to fit in.

**Bret** 1:25:08

Well, the same so I mean admittedly I'm you know, I'm in the easiest position here. I'm just you know, straight guy,

**Katie Herzog** 1:25:16

right? Yeah, yeah, we got to read the required privilege disclaimer here.

**Bret** 1:25:21

Yeah, well, I'm not even using this a disclaimer, I'm just saying from the point of view of my figuring out what these other positions that people are in our I have the easiest right role now straight married guy, you know, pretty much. nobody's getting to trouble me on this front. But

**Katie Herzog** 1:25:39

let me interrupt you real quick there. So there is this there's this other there's a lot of people like you who are straight married guys, who look like you beards, short hair pants, all this sort of trappings of being male, who have decided that they're not male now, either that they are non binary, or gender less, or a gender or whatever. And nothing that they haven't changed their physical presentations, nothing in their lives have changed, still married to the woman still have the kids. All they've said to the world is, I don't want my power. I don't want my privilege. Yeah, give me this give me this special pronoun, and they're not dismantling gender. They're just trying to trying to opt out of it themselves, because they feel bad about their own privilege, or whatever.

**Bret** 1:26:17

Yeah, they bought this sort of central line inside of the authoritarian left Pantheon that says that the thing to do if you regard yourself as having honor and privilege is to give it away, right? Which is pointless game, right? Theoretically,

**Katie Herzog** 1:26:31

they're not even possible you giving it away, doesn't give it to somebody else, right? Or I'll take it, or

**Bret** 1:26:36

you do give it away, you will end up giving it away to the people in the category technically in the category or at least deserving right? They're out there collecting other people's privilege, right? So what I would say, first of all, I have a response to this, which is I do believe that unearned privilege is a problem. But I believe that if you have some, the thing that you should do is spend it honorably. Spend your unearned privilege honorably, right. And I tried to do this. But anyway, from the perspective of somebody who has none of these problems in my life, right, I do think the solution on the question of trans medical ism, transcom. Buck Angel, all of this is pretty straightforward. Let us just admit that the truth of trans is complex, and nobody knows

**Katie Herzog** 1:27:26

what it is it is it I mean, it is incredibly complex. I mean, a lot of sex researchers argue that's an orientation. Right, you know, or, you know, which is an incredibly unpopular position to take when that got, you know, Ray Blanchard and Mike Bailey dragged in the 90s and early 2000s.

**Bret** 1:27:41

Sure. So if it is true, though, that it is complex, and nobody's got it nailed yet, then relax and stop dragging people over opinions, right? Fact is Natalie Wynne is entitled to an opinion on trans medical ism if she wants now she's not of this opinion, but where she it doesn't invalidate who she is, as a person. Now, I don't know if she will see this, I kind of hope that she will. I would say to her, that I think she is badly misunderstood by the world. And she is not doing herself any favors by burning people like you and me and Jesse single, who actually do appreciate what she's up to.

**Katie Herzog** 1:28:25

Oh, I agree with you. I mean, that's sort of my interest in her is because she, besides the fact that she does amazing work. You know, she's really lifted up viewed as a hero by this group that also doesn't seem to get her or even like her when she's when she steps out of line. And to me, that's the interesting position to be in, because it can be so transformative. Yeah. But you have people like I, you know, I think Lena Dunham in his in his category, someone who is hated for lots of reasons, some of them legit, some of them not. But instead of sort of using absorbing that criticism, transforming it and becoming a more empathetic person, a more tolerant person, a more open minded person, I'm person, we're willing to cross these arbitrary ideological lines, which she does instead is become a bully. That's what I can't stand when you are when you have gone through something that like you've gone through, or I've gone through, or anybody's gone through, and it just hardens you. And if you're talking about Lena Dunham, Lena Dunham I'm not talking about it, I think No, I think Natalie is in the position now where she could go either way. Yeah, if she wants to maintain the audience who has supported her until now, most of which are lots of both trans folks and their allies. While she's got a choice to make, you know, she can be she can catch just keep that audience or capture anyone.

**Bret** 1:29:41

Well, I think the problem is she's doing two vital things if I understand what I see correctly. One thing that she is doing is, she is in excruciating detail. allowing people to Participate in her transition to sort of understand how she thinks about it her own, you know, internal conflict. I mean, it's amazing what she's actually put on video and let us hear, you know, it's like hearing her internal monologue as she's on this very difficult journey, right? That's interesting, if you care at all about this trans thing. It's not like what she's describing as General, but she's giving you a window into one person's experience that is unmatched, I think. And the other thing she's doing has almost nothing to do with trans at all, which is, she is a very insightful person who has a unique capacity to teleport herself into the mind of somebody with whom she does not agree. And so her little teleplays. And for those who don't know, her work, she does these very elaborate, very visually provocative videos in which she plays all of the characters. And the characters give voice to lots of stuff, including, you know, she's got an all right character, she's got an authoritarian left character, right? She's got all of these entities, and she is simultaneously lampooning them, but also giving voice to their best arguments, which, if you haven't seen it, it's definitely worth paying attention to because it does. For me, at least it provides insight into how these people view themselves in a very, very visually, I don't want to say compelling because some people will find it repellent. And other people find it compelling, but doing it in a way that it holds your attention. And it's very hard to dismiss

**Katie Herzog** 1:31:52

it. She's almost You know, there's the criticism that everybody gets who's sort of in opposition, like I think Dave Rubin probably gets more than anybody that you know, there's a sort of guilt by association and if you engage with anybody who has these ideas, whether it's Candice Owens, her Mike cernovich, or whoever, you know, the goalpost always moves that you're platforming this person and that is bad and you can't do that. Well what she's doing is, is sort of exactly that. But without the without the added controversy of the person. You mean by using these characters right by voicing the characters instead of having Candace Owens on the show she can do Candace Owens which really I think saves her sort of a lot of grief in some ways it's all it also is visually just really stunning.

**Bret** 1:32:34

It's really stunning. It's really well done. Yeah. And she's multi talented. I mean, she was a I think she bailed out of choose EP and bailed out because she couldn't stand it. You know? nakusha couldn't hack it. She's clearly very good at what she does.

**Katie Herzog** 1:32:48

Yeah, as a filmmaker. I mean, I don't know if she has any training as a filmmaker, but I think she does everything sort of one camera, very few people helping her it's Yeah, remarkable. It is.

**Bret** 1:32:57

It's really remarkable. She's also musician,

**Katie Herzog** 1:33:01

right? But she then you know, someone like Christina Hoff Sommers will say something that Christina seems like a big fan of Natalie, you know, and the response to that is like, is from her fans get your get her name out of your mouth?

**Bret** 1:33:13

Yeah, it's so anyway, I think I think she's in a very frightening position in which there is a good move. But because the the case the shift that would occur if she made the move would be massive. It's got to be very frightening from her perspective. But if she embraced the wider world, people who find value in what she's doing, even beyond the trans stuff, she would lose a bunch of her most authoritarian, radical trans fanbase, right, and she would gain, I think she would gain a world of people outside. And in effect, I think she would do a tremendous service for trans because her value, her primary value, is that she's insightful. The fact of a trans person who is wildly insightful and can enter into this landscape of new political entities and, you know, understand them well enough to do a play in which she's doing all the parts, that person has a unique contribution to make. And so for her to be making that contribution. And for that contribution, not to be fundamentally about trans ness is in some sense, the ultimate defense. Yeah,

**Katie Herzog** 1:34:39

the trans community needs really sane trans people like her and I actually don't know if she is saying so. Let me take that back. the trans community needs sane trans voices, because right now what's happening is, you know, there's these small issues and sort of the big scheme of things you know, trans women in sports. This this case in Texas, this aluna slash James kid who is, you know, going through the this custody battle, and the right wing media takes these issues, and they log on to them. And it's not hard to see why because they're interesting, and they're disturbing. And this is going to these two things, trans women in sports, and pediatric transition is going to hurt the trans community is that the right wing media has attached on to it. And so regular people who aren't even sort of right wingers who do maybe have objections to trans women in sports and pediatric transition, if they want to go get information on it, they can go to Breitbart, they can go the Federalists they can go to these, like tea party blogs, where they can't go is the New York Times, or slate, or most mainstream publications who are just parroting the sort of most outrageous claims like trans women are female trans women get periods, you know, these things that any sort of normal person can look at and say, This is bullshit.

**Bret** 1:35:59

Oh, you're exactly right. And the presidential

**Katie Herzog** 1:36:01

candidates are doing I mean, the presidential candidates at the LGBTQ cnn Town Hall, which should not have happened in the first place, this was a terrible idea. They kept talking about the quote unquote, epidemic of murder the the epidemic of trans homicides, right, the epidemic is 20 people. Yeah, this is not an epidemic, this isn't even higher. This isn't isn't even disproportionately high rates of murder. And most of the people who murdered have been black trans women. And the murder rates are actually lower than that of black males. Right? So this is not like there isn't. There is a murder epidemic. And it's black males. This is not it's just, it doesn't make any sense. Everybody can see it. And when politicians and the left continue to parrot these lines, they're driving people into to the right, Oh, absolutely.

**Bret** 1:36:49

You're taking a group of people that has a difficult, for sure, a difficult fight. And you are fusing them to arguments that are so obviously backwards and confused. And what's more, it's not even that this is abstract, most of us who aren't trans, like, there's a force that wants to argue that if my child shows signs of, you know, feeling like the other sex, that I'm obligated to not only endorse this, but that surgery, I mean, irreversible stuff, right? You want to this is stuff that gets to the very core, right? Like, I am not in favor of a world in which we are forced to defend our rights with guns, but when you start talking about coming after people's children, and permanently altering them surgically based on what could be evidence of a permanent state of mind, or it can be phased or it could be a phase, you know, childhood is confusing, you at the very least need to grapple with the fact that lots of people who go through some phase come out of it, it straightens out on their own. And you have no right to transition those people. So yes, you are right. This is the naive, full strength, position, nothing but a full embrace of everything trans, including former men competing against women in sports, and, you know, former men going to pro women's prison, even if they've just, it's mind boggling that we've been having this discussion, right, you know,

**Katie Herzog** 1:38:37

so I learned something interesting recently. So there are these clinicians sort of there's a few very famous clinicians in the US who are really at the forefront of things like pediatric transmission. They run their own gender clinics, you know, they have lots of supporters. So one of them is in San Francisco, her name, I'm gonna butcher her last name, it's on trough or something like that, Diane and Jeff, and I see these I see a lot of parallels with what's happening right now with previous moral panics you know, the satanic Panic of the 1980s. The false you know, a daycare scammers, right, right. So, there is you know, some of the forces are the same to like, you know, there are feminists like Ms magazine and like 1990 had a the cover of MS magazine said, there's a picture of it like a devil and said, like, Santa's satanic ritual abuse is real believe them. Now, there have been a hashtag it would have just been it could have been right now, right? So this woman in San Francisco, Diana tref, one of the one of the foremost gender clinic people pro affirmative transitions, she talks about, you know, if you're, if your three year old pulls the bow out of her hair, she might actually be a boy like that. So in the 80s, or 90s, she wrote a paper that recently came to light about how satanic ritual abuse is real. So it's not just sort of the same sort of vague feeling like we're in a moral panic that we've seen this before. It's the same people.

**Bret** 1:40:03

Yeah. Well there is there is something to this it's more it's more than an analogy, right? It's the same people sometimes I'm reminded when the Evergreen thing went down I remember speaking of it as a weird time when I took a certain amount of flack for that as you would imagine and then later it emerged that a few days before the protest at my classroom the guy who had organized it had posted to his Facebook page a you know one of these Facebook things where you get a color and then you get it's basically like Twitter for Facebook. He posted something to the effect of never have white men hid from the shadows of themselves in a witch hunter something like even clearly planning a witch hunt even he was a witch right

**Katie Herzog** 1:41:00

but a virtuous which I'm sure in his mind well maybe not.

**Bret** 1:41:03

But that's the amazing thing is you know to me witch hunt is an indictment right very term because there are no witches the

**Katie Herzog** 1:41:10

that now I read this something in like Forbes or something last I don't remember what it was about something you said there was some some stupid Halloween article about you how you shouldn't dress up as a witch because my 11th my grandmother going back into the nation, the nation, of course. You know, my grandmother going back 11 generations was an actual witch.

**Bret** 1:41:27

And the New York Times published a piece in which they interviewed. Uh, which, I mean, it was the most absurd,

**Katie Herzog** 1:41:33

which is, which is our thing now? Which is there also a meme? Yeah, I mean, there's astrology is in which is around. It's all it's all very aggravating, to me that is that the same sort of same people who, you know, believe in climate change. say they believe in science or even evolution, things like that. It's also believed that you know, the position of the stars at the moment of your birth is why your dentist or whatever, yeah, aggravating, which if

**Bret** 1:41:58

your dentist was into astronomy, yeah, sure. Yeah, it's, it's, uh, well, I don't know, there is sort of a there is evidence of widespread confusion. Yes, at the moment. And I wonder, I wonder what its genesis really is?

**Katie Herzog** 1:42:18

Well, this, to me, it seems cyclical, you know, this is not the first time and it will not be the last time, you know, I keeps coming back to a couple things, which is just sort of the viral nature of human behavior with the trans stuff, which with actual witch hunts, with the satanic panic, you know, we take ideas, and we spread them, and now we have the internet. So we don't even have to do it in person.

**Bret** 1:42:43

Yes, although I also think there is something to be said for, you know, and I don't know how far back this goes, the internet is the maybe the version of this with the least viscosity. But these new modes of communicating are not anticipated by our evolutionary wire. And they result in positive feedbacks. So, you know, as Douglas Murray, points out, suddenly, we've forgotten many things that we fully understood yesterday.

**Katie Herzog** 1:43:18

I like the difference between or the fact that male and female are distinct categories from each other. Yeah,

**Bret** 1:43:22

exactly. Yeah. Right? Like, a, were you to discover that male and female were not real categories, you would certainly imagine a long period of transition, figuring out what that meant. Not only have we not actually discovered anything of the sort, but you are imagined to have instantly come around to the new wisdom. Right? Right universe. does that even happen? Right? Yeah. So anyway, all I'm getting at is there's a clearly a Ghost in the Machine, right that ghosts in the machine may have been what scheduled network television for decades. And that now that goes to the machine as the algorithms that control surgeon feed, because they are shaping conversations in ways we don't understand. But to the extent that as you point out, people who believe in climate change are also you know, have renewed interest in tarot cards, or whatever it is. The whole thing is evidence of not having any idea what the fuck to believe.

**Katie Herzog** 1:44:25

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think it's I think it's that I mean, I think there's sort of man's eternal quest for meaning and explanation. And I also think part of it is just straight up viral. It's just like this just like a unit. You know, it's just a, it's a meme. And the same way that golden doodles are more popular than they were 20 years ago or babies names or whatever the fact that you know, I can go the dog park now and every child his name like kale, and Sonny and every dog is named George and Frank like, part of this, to me also just seems like just the absolute nature of, of of human connection. Which is taking one idea and passing it on.

**Bret** 1:45:03

Okay, which raises maybe the most important question for people like you and me. It is. After World War Two, there was a period of time in which social science was actually pretty productive. And it was focused on the question of how the Nazis happen, how the Holocaust had occurred. And the Milgram experiment in particular, which was run many different ways, ultimately,

**Katie Herzog** 1:45:31

has this been has milgrom yet been as been hit by the replication crisis yet, or do we still trust this one?

**Bret** 1:45:36

I still trust this guy, frankly, even if it were hit by the rep, still trust it. I believe I know it to be true. through personal experience having seen even saying that, yeah. So anyway. Yeah. The evergreen version of Lord of the Flies, experiment, I doubt all that stuff. 1984. Yeah. But anyway, the there is something to the idea that the vast majority of people are wired, such that they do not have the ability to refuse certain kinds of authority. Sure. And some of us aren't wired this way at all. Right, right. I mean, so the kids with the authority issues turn out not to be so easily persuaded by some of this new received wisdom, right, right. Now there are areas I'm convinced that there are areas in which those kids with the authority issues, that is people like you and me, are out of place. Right? That's not the job of the moment.

**Katie Herzog** 1:46:45

Their job is to go along, right, right needs doing

**Bret** 1:46:47

right. And then there are other moments, when those are the only people who can think straight, because there's so much of the steering going on through these other mechanisms that anybody who's at all susceptible to it is persuaded of wrong stuff. And it's, you know, I joke sometimes that zombie movies are really about preparing people for what their neighbors look like when they're starving. Yeah. It's that but it's also I do sort of have the sense of like, there's, there's a zombie movie unfolding around us. And it has to do with bad software programs that are spreading virally, and causing people to embrace stuff that their conscious mind should know better than, but internally, their fears allow them to be captured by. So I guess the question is, from one kid with authority issue to another, what do we do?

**Katie Herzog** 1:47:50

That's the question. I mean, I feel like there's another problem here, right? Which is like Alright, so you have people without people like us, the kids with the authority issues. I think Alice grant Drager would probably say the gala land, you know, personality types. So let's think Jordan Peterson for example. I recently saw the you know, this Jordan Peterson documentary, The rise of Jordan Peterson that is pissed some people off who haven't seen the movie, it's been cancelled in various venues. When I was being shot in Portland, you know, and Tifa threatened to bring out the guillotine and respond to this movie that was being shown at a church in the suburbs, because they don't go they don't go out to the suburbs. You know, and, and so I was watching this, I mean, I've always been taught one of those people who thought that the the reaction to Peterson is outsized. It's the criticism of him is counterproductive if the goal is to shut them down, and that he's not dangerous, and that his message is one of sort of basic common sense, independence you know, conservative values, in some ways, sort of small, see conservative values, you know, take care of yourself, take care of your family, so nothing inherently problematic there. But I watched this movie, and so I've defended I mean, I've said he's not a Nazi. He's not he's, he's, he's, he's not a threat to the Republic. If your child is watching Jordan Peterson videos on YouTube, don't write an article about it in the fucking New York Times talking about your kid being outright like this is not this is not a step to the alt right, if anything is to step away from it. But watching this film, this documentary, and you know, I've spoken to a lot of his his followers. I do see the danger there for the first time, and the danger is in the adulation, right? It's the fact that yet Peterson might have good motives, and he might be highly attuned to the fact that what he's trying to do is resist authoritarian ism. He's been obsessed with this his whole life. But his followers are his followers, right? And so even if the message is one of independence and thinking for yourself and not following along with the crowd, most people are going to follow along with the crowd. And so I don't even so if even if you're telling people don't listen to me, Think for yourself. I don't think you can do that. I think that what they're going to do, it's just a sort of fandom.

**Bret** 1:49:59

Well I think you that's the perfect response actually. And for my listeners who don't know, Jordan Peterson was in Seattle. And I called you up and was like, do you want to go? Yeah, when I went Yeah, thing together, and then you wrote an article about it, which was, in some ways. I mean, it was a tough article. You were not easy on him. But I thought it was a very decent article in the sense that what she said, if I remember correctly, is I Katie Hertzog don't need Jordan Peterson.

**Katie Herzog** 1:50:40

Don't clean.

**Bret** 1:50:41

I don't Yeah, my room is clean. That's good. But he is not what he is being portrayed right now. Funny, he's deprecating, he's decent, etc. Yeah. And I think that this is a message a lot of people needed to hear and I wish that that piece had gotten wider circulation. But you're exactly right about Jordan is a decent guy. Right? A lot of what he's saying is common sense. And the part that's not common sense is carefully thought out. And it is about decency, right? That's like a core mission of his I'm convinced of that, as somebody who knows him pretty well. The followers, if Jordan were a bad guy, we'd be in big trouble

**Katie Herzog** 1:51:28

that Exactly, exactly. Yeah,

**Bret** 1:51:30

thank goodness, he's not right. Right, right. And I don't know what happens if something happens to him and that movement is captured, right? But for the moment, let us not freak out. And let us say actually, thank goodness that somebody you know, I do think he's too backwards looking. Right? He's looking for us to go back to a place that we can't go back to right. But the point is, pay attention to what you're doing. You're hurting yourself, stop it. And it clearly works at an individual level. Absolutely. Lots of people are getting a lot of benefit from it. And it is the alternative to one of these corrosive destructive, not what they say, movements so so I believe the caution is exactly the right one. There's nothing frightening about Peterson. But there is something frightening about if he was not what he appeared to be what that move, right? And you

**Katie Herzog** 1:52:28

can say that about anybody you can say that about Roxane Gay, you can say that about anybody. I mean, this really, it's just the nature of fandom. But I think that's the problem is like, you have people like us who maybe are a little bit more, I don't know, resistant to the call of authority. But most people aren't like us. Yeah, right. So we can you and I can get a big following and sort of preach our values to these people. And maybe they would listen to us and, and uphold what we think are you know, the correct classical liberal values, tolerance, diversity of thought. But that doesn't mean that people are going to absorb the wider message or if they're just going to be following along. And I don't know an answer to that. I mean, I think that's what Peterson is trying to do is to teach people to resist the call of authoritarianism and groupthink. Yep. But I don't know how it works. I mean, you know, Orwell was writing about this in the 40s. People were writing about it before then it's just, it's the conundrum. I do know, though, after going through all of this, what I do know is that, you know, when I was a kid, and you know, we studied the Holocaust in schools, and I would think like, you know, of course, I would be the one to resist the Nazis. Absolutely. I know that now. Yep. I actually do. I know that too. Yeah. Which is ironic, because I'm called a Nazi all the time, all the time. Yeah, the

**Bret** 1:53:45

irony is never stopped with the authoritarian left. I agree. Yeah. What I think needs to be said, is it you know, it feels very good to know, right? You wouldn't be a collaborator. The problem is, we would very probably be dead because of that. Right? Right. It's not like it works out in the end. You would resist right? There were there was a resistance, there wasn't resistance. And there were uprising, right? And, look, you know, you were

**Katie Herzog** 1:54:12

free. We're hate speech laws. I didn't stop the Holocaust Holocaust from happening.

**Bret** 1:54:16

Absolutely. I think, though, there there is a kind of evolutionary subtext to all of this, that I don't think has been well explored yet and holds the answer to what you're getting at. And what it has to do with is the fact that people in general are kind of prone to herd like behavior and it's very frightening because it does end up in things like the Holocaust. They also have another mode though. I'm not sure absolutely everybody does. But I think it's in everybody at some level. Even you know, if If it's Dharma to law, maybe it can't be awakened. But the question really is, how do we behave in such a way as to wake the part of people that actually will resist? You know, a Jordan Peterson who isn't well intention, right, exactly right. And it's a tough it's a tough problem. Because, you know, if you make that the message, wake up and don't follow too easily, you know, it's, it's Monty Python, right? You know, right. You don't have to follow anyone you are all individual right? We are all

**Katie Herzog** 1:55:35

indoctrinate them with the with the message that they are all individual. Right, exactly.

**Bret** 1:55:39

But, um, you know, there's another thing, I don't know how seriously to take it. But for people in my generation, the matrix had a special meaning. And in fact, I am kind of annoyed that red pill, right and stolen from us as a metaphor, because it's kind of a necessary one. And it has nothing to do with one side or the other politically. But one of the things in the matrix is you're not supposed to wake people past a certain age, they can't handle it. Right. Now, I don't know that a certain age is really what we're talking about. But there is a question about the ability to wake becomes more complex, the more stuff that you have stacked upon a particular received set of wisdom. And I do think that we should be trying to figure out how to wake people, but I think we also need to be aware that that carries dangers that we don't know because in general, most people are you know, not highly Cognizant. Right? Right. So I don't know what to do about it but but we are sort of stuck in that puzzle.

**Katie Herzog** 1:56:49

Yeah. It's the more people who stand up a better position will be in but you know, as you know, it comes with a lot of personal costs.

**Bret** 1:56:57

It does that article that that came out the New York Times that talked about this question, actually, do you want to say anything about that article?

**Katie Herzog** 1:57:07

Um, I don't have that much to say about it. I mean, there are so this article for the listeners, this article came out in the New York Times. Last week, it was written by a guy named john McDermott. I think it was called like those people we tried to cancel they're all hanging out together. And I was just you single Dave Rubin. Christina Hoff Sommers, I think, maybe not Alice Drager sort of be you know, our tribe, I suppose. But the reality is like, for one thing, the headline is bullshit. None of us are hanging out together. The we tried to cancel the they put a lot of emphasis on that. I thought that the piece was a little strange. I thought it tried to fit a narrative that doesn't truly exist. Because the reality is there are tons of professional networks and having a common experience with someone does not make you best friends or anything like that. But it is also true that you know, when a when I see someone sort of going through the wringer on Twitter, I do reach out to them not often, not always, but often. Yeah, and offer a few words. And I think it's true that there's gonna be something really transformative about it, which other people spoke about. But still the piece was a little bit weird. There was like a line in it that said something like, you know, Katie Herzog is part of an emerging group of journalists, thinkers, public figures, whatever who've been canceled for having bad conservative or offensive opinion. Yes.

**Bret** 1:58:28

Which was your case? It's all three.

**Katie Herzog** 1:58:29

Yeah, all three. I only have that conservative or offensive opinions. So that line was aggravating. Yeah. Because this idea that, you know, the only reason any of us have been through this because we were wrong, as opposed to right. Yeah, that's it seemingly had not occurred to their editors.

**Bret** 1:58:47

Well, I should say first of all, McDermott reached out Oh, Diddy and Eric got their first actually and you know, there's always a question yeah, man, reach out. Is this one safe right and in this case, we talked about it and

**Katie Herzog** 1:59:05

decided no, sorry, it was not safe. Yeah. So my I, I had a lot of conversations in the back channel with other people he approached, we were all talking about that. And after speaking with him, my feeling was that I trusted him because he and I seem to be on the same page. I don't trust the editors of the paper and I especially do not trust the editors of the style section. So that was my concern the whole time was that red pen was going to get introduced and my photo was in the paper and I told I told john I said if you know, if you if it is if it comes out that this is this paper, this is going to like paint us all as Nazis are members of the KKK. I will revoke you know, your might your permission to use my photo. But the the idea of you know, triggering all my girlfriend's was too powerful. So I just I could imagine someone who like really doesn't like me, you know, opening up the Sunday New York Times and seeing the photo and I just could not resist My ego just got to go. And then I didn't like the fucking picture anyway, so it was a good pic. Oh, thank you. Yeah.

**Bret** 2:00:06

So I did want to say something about it is that I think that there's a I got into a back and forth on Twitter about it. And I said something which triggers people every time I say it, which is there's a dangerous message in telling people that you know, those who have been canceled are actually hanging out together, right? It's a very powerful inducement to people right to stand up. And the problem is, I do want people to stand up. Whenever green happened, Heather, and my point to our colleagues was, you know, if we all stand up, they can't do it right and didn't happen. One, right one person,

**Katie Herzog** 2:00:45

and now he's the only person on campus.

**Bret** 2:00:48

Now, but But anyway, my point is two things. One, we don't know how many people have been canceled, and never heard from totally right. We don't know how often that happens. And so we have a survivor bias issue. That's a statistical term, meaning that we see certain data points and we don't see others. Right, right. You know, we see the fossils of creatures that were widespread, we don't see the fossils of ones that never got to a large population size, for example. So if you interview the people who somebody tried to cancel, and now they go to the heterodox Academy meetings and bug, podcasts and things, you're able to get a very wrong picture of life. This is what kind of life you will lead on the other side. And those of us who were in this position, I believe, has have a near sacred obligation to tell the truth to those who are contemplating what to do. And yes, I do want them to stand up. But I do not want them to stand up on the basis that it is safe or glamorous on the other side, because it might be but it probably won't, right. And what we need are people who are ready for life in the fucking foxhole. And if you're not ready for life in the fucking foxhole, you're a liability in the foxhole. Right? So we can't have that. So anyway, what I would say to those who are contemplating what message to broadcast about this, don't downplay the dangers. And don't take the responsibility for other people and say, yes, you should stand up, darling, if you're not going to be there for them when shit goes south. Yeah. Right. So that when people do make this decision, if you've been honest with them, when they when they do make the decision to stand up, then a, they're taking responsibility for what happens and be, they'll be more robust in the face of what comes back at them. Yeah, the worst thing which I now see too regularly, is somebody will make some effort in the direction of standing up, something will come back at them, and then they retreat. And it's like, oh, you're making things worse? Don't Don't do that. Right.

**Katie Herzog** 2:02:56

Right. never apologize. Yeah. In this particular case, apologize when you're, you know, you've cheated on your whatever, apologize

**Bret** 2:03:02

when you're not right, wrong. Right. Right. Don't apologize to get out of the situation. But I actually think it's very powerful. To the extent that we are all out here playing a very complex game with unwritten rules. We do make mistakes. Absolutely very powerful. If you demonstrate that it's not that you're constitutionally against apology, it's that you're against using apology for the experience. Right? Yeah. Then

**Katie Herzog** 2:03:29

being well admitting that you're wrong is is so interesting, because it's this, it can be this intensely painful experience. You know, it's sort of a just an ego blow to say, like, I was wrong about that. But all it does is increase the perception of you from the other side, or from whoever you're in dialogue with people like it when other people admit that they're wrong. That's a it shows a level of maturity and sort of flexibility and good judgment. And yet, it is a very difficult emotional experience to get through.

**Bret** 2:03:57

Well, I think, because if you said, well, it elevates you in people's eyes when you admit that you are wrong. So you know, do it a lot. Right, then people don't trust you, right? Because then the point of how you're wrong, you're doing it right, right. Or you're doing it knowing that you have to get out of jail free card, man. But if you reserve it if you're very careful, so that you don't have to apologize very often. But you do it readily when you need to, then that creates the right the illusion of being a really good versus Hell yeah. And that's what you say. The other

**Katie Herzog** 2:04:38

senses conservative a bad bet. Oh, yeah, just bad. powerful words. They're bad. That's partially redundant. Well, I guess john McDermott didn't get you in the piece, but we are actually hanging out so he was a so he's talking about that one.

**Bret** 2:04:50

The writer they might guess we are hanging out. So there there's that? Yeah, yeah. All right. Cool. Well, this has been a very interesting discussion. I'm always pleased to talk with you. It's never exactly what I expect. It's always enlightening, though.

**Katie Herzog** 2:05:10

I feel the same way. Thanks for having me on the show.

**Bret** 2:05:11

Thank you. So people can find you. You're in the stranger regularly. Yep. Twice a week.

**Katie Herzog** 2:05:18

I'm on the I write something for the blog every day. So I have a daily deadline. A daily deadline. Yeah, it's a it's difficult. It's

**Bret** 2:05:26

grueling. It is grueling. And are you writing while we're talking?

**Katie Herzog** 2:05:30

I've already written this morning. I actually already had it. Yeah, I like even on even when I'm like down in Portland on vacation I already wrote. So yeah, I write every day for the stranger. And I'm active on Twitter at Katie Herzog. I can't promise that I will apologize on Twitter very often. But when I deserve it, maybe

**Bret** 2:05:48

well, I can promise if past performance is any guide that you will be wickedly funny, both on Twitter and in the stranger and very regularly so I highly encourage people to find you, and read your stuff. And anyway, thanks so much for being on dark horse podcast and I look forward to our next conversation. Yeah, thanks

**Katie Herzog** 2:06:08

for having me.