Your Questions Answered - Bret and Heather 43rd DarkHorse Po...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:07

Hey folks, welcome back to the Dark Horse podcast live stream Q and A section. Sorry about the shenanigans with the timer up front. We briefly slipped off our timeline landed on one that was pretty freakin great. And then suddenly zap we were back here, right here right here.

**Heather** 00:24

This one does have cats though. Yeah. Many cat we're always pleased to provide cats for those of you who enjoy them. And for those of you who don't, why not? Seriously, what's wrong with you,

**Bret** 00:32

dog people?

**Heather** 00:33

Well, we also have a dog. Here she is. Looking at the cats wondering why she doesn't get treats.

**Bret** 00:39

She'll get treats. Sooner or later.

**Heather** 00:41

Yeah. All right. We're gonna start with some questions from Episode 42 and then move into this today's today's questions. All right. The first one is just a comment that had to cut that came in a couple times. Please see Wynton Marsalis is the ever funky lowdown. Apparently he was on Bill Maher. I don't I don't know it. But it came in enough times that I thought I might share it. I

**Bret** 01:08

am so curious as to why this would come up multiple times. Yeah, kid's got to be more than just a cool song. Yeah,

**Heather** 01:14

I would think so. Alright,

**Bret** 01:15

it's a great title.

**Heather** 01:16

Yep, indeed. The next question that I had pulled from last episode actually got repeated today. So believe it or not, MD done. I had already decided that we were going to answer your question which last time read. I know they're important, but why do bats have to be so effing creepy all the time?

**Bret** 01:37

Oh, boy. Yeah, they ain't effin creepy. Here's the thing. you encounter bats at a time when you're feeling a sense of foreboding and creepiness because night is falling or something like that. And when you get to know bats, they really aren't this way. For one thing, you probably don't realize that there are something like 1000 species of bats on Earth. That's a large number of different kinds of creatures. That's almost a quarter of mammal species. And they are tremendously diverse. Some of them are even quite beautiful, quite easy to relate to. You probably seen flying foxes from the old world. Those are fruit bats and flower bats from the old world that look like dogs except hung upside down. Yeah, there's one. Can you put this on the screen? Yeah, that's a tarapoto. No, this is a non echolocating bat in a family includes some very large creatures. But anyway, that's I worked on we're New World fruit bats, which are a little strange looking, Zach, could you put up the picture I gave you. Alright, so here's some tent making bats. I took this picture. The last time Heather and I were in the Amazon. These guys are tiny little bats like 10 grams apiece. And you see they have fleshy little appendages on their noses, those appendages do not have any bone in them, those appendages. When you hold one of these animals in your hand, the flat the nose leaf, jitters back and forth very remarkably. If you watch bat mothers tend their offspring. It's absolutely adorable. Right? They're very, they have tiny numbers of offspring. Mothers will fly around with a bat attached to them under their wing. And then when the animal is large enough that the mother can't fly with it at the point that the baby is more than 25% the size of the mother they'll leave it in the roost and they'll come back and they'll ferociously clean its wings of parasites and things like this and and feed the the offspring anyway.

**Heather** 03:51

They really are in mammals a mother's care for her baby is universal. It is universal even in centurio syntax even you would bring up the I did yeah, Zack, would you show scenario senex the wrinkle face bad.

**Bret** 04:05

You've got it upside down?

**Heather** 04:07

Yes, indeed. Google returned it to me upside down it Oh, really? Yeah. Surprising. Right was

**Bret** 04:13

in the dark as it were. So this animal.

**Heather** 04:16

This is another fellas demanded right? Follow

**Bret** 04:19

stomata. Yes, file, stomach bat, fruit eater. And this animal eats fruits that it can't carry. So it kind of buries its face in a large fruit on the tree, which is probably why selection has purged the face of fur. When the animal sleeps, it pulls a flap of skin over its face and that flap of skin has two light spots in it so it can see shadows through it. It's not a handsome

**Heather** 04:48

creature now. Now you have in hides from itself maybe even

**Bret** 04:51

hides from itself. But anyway, I just want to

**Heather** 04:54

import to me You started I showed a picture of flying fox. He started by saying the flying boxes are quite beautiful. But no one living in the new world ever sees those like, they're not here and that you know, one of the misnomers is that there's old world and new world bats, and all the all the so called Old World bats. Are these beautiful flying foxes, no, these, these, these microbots these echo locators are actually the vast majority of bats throughout the world. And there are only a few of the mega bats that are that are quite beautiful, actually. But unless you're in the old world, which includes Australia, and Africa, and some parts of South Asia, you'll never run into them. Yeah. And even so you know, what you might run into is actually we did on one of our first trips, Madagascar is a tree full of them just beginning to wake up at night. And you might effectively startle yourself so much that you embarrass yourself in front of the local people, as we'd

**Bret** 05:54

never happened never happened. But anyway, that the thing is, you don't have good access to bats in general. So you don't realize that all of the characteristics that make a creature endearing, you know, look, you probably think rodents are kind of creepy and gross, right? But then you realize squirrels are rodents and squirrels are actually tremendously engaging, highly intelligent, fun to watch. And I find bats are kind of like this, too. There are some species that are creepy, I mean, vampire bats, that's a creepy animal, and it smells creepy. But a fishing bat is an amazing animal that can basically detect the presence of fish and fish come up to the surface to feed, they make a ripple, this bat can detect the ripple with an echolocation call. And it swoops in over the water and gaffes, the fish. This is an amazing, remarkable thing. And it's not creepy. It's fascinating. When you watch a fruit bat cleaning, it's young, it's endearing And so anyway, I think a lot of this has to do with the fact that a humans are sort of predisposed to be creeped out by things in the dark, and be that our encounter with bats is often at a distance and sort of the jarring discovery that Oh, that's not a bird. But that close encounters with these things reveal that they are really interesting. mammals that if flipped right side up, and in the day, you would feel very differently about them.

**Heather** 07:18

All right, next question. are humans the only species that use dopamine? And does evolutionary biology have anything interesting to say about dopamine and social media? I meant to actually look this up to make sure but I believe that dopamine, dopamine is at least as old as vertebrates, and it may actually extend far, far older than that into the into the history of animals. So certainly, certainly, it's not just humans are primates or mammals, it's at least all vertebrates. And maybe Far, far less than that.

**Bret** 07:51

Right? But what that means and what that doesn't mean, is a little bit tougher puzzle. So you get into this with actually Peterson in his, the reason that he is associated with lobsters, is that his point is that serotonin, I believe, is associated with dominance hierarchies, and it goes back to our branching point with the crustaceans. And so at least that fight goes back. Right? So his point is, this isn't a human thing, get over it, right? This is a really, really ancient thing. And this point is right about this. Now the problem though, if you want to challenge it, is these molecules are part of an agreement, right? And physical agreement, the molecule be at a hormone, or a pheromone is a molecule built to trigger a receptor when it hits it because it has the right shape. And the right configuration of charges on its surface. It could be anything, right? So you could take dopamine, and you could engineer a system in which dopamine did serotonin, this job and serotonin, dopamine is job. And it would work just as well, because the point is, well, it's actually like this. When you hit yourself in the eye, and you see light. Why did you see light, there's no light, right? You see light because those are light receptors, and you've triggered them with pressure, but they detected as light because they send the message to the part of the brain that detects light. And so the point is, what it's wired to is what dictates what it does not the shape of the molecule, the molecule is totally arbitrary. So

**Heather** 09:21

So in the case of for instance, Peterson's lobsters, serotonin is both H is ancient, and hierarchies are ancient. And the link between those two also turns out to be ancient. But that third thing isn't inherently true, just because the first two things are true, right? It doesn't have to be true, right? one of two things. It is in this case, right, but it could

**Bret** 09:40

be that the molecule was associated with hierarchies and lobsters and is associated with hierarchies in us but that wasn't a continuous process, or can be that it was continuous. But it doesn't, it doesn't really matter. In case of dopamine, it will serve a very similar function for me Many, many ancestors, right? So back probably through all of mammals, dopamine is gonna play a reward role. does it play that reward role? You know, in vertebrates deeper than that? I don't know. I would guess it probably does. Yeah, that'd be my guess. But it doesn't really matter. Yes. Very ancient, not not about humans in the slightest.

**Heather** 10:20

Yeah. So the second part of that question, which we're probably spending too long on is really questions is, does evolutionary biology have anything interesting to say about dopamine and social media?

**Bret** 10:31

Well, yeah, obviously, a mechanism that causes you to release dopamine captures your attention and tends to get you focused on it. So for example, you know, a would be lover who tantalize you, such that you feel rewarded for being in their presence, right, captures your attention and makes it harder for somebody else to get your attention. So that can be a game. Now, in that case, it's a natural game, and you may have an interest in playing along. In the case of the social media platforms, they have gamified their war with each other in order to keep you on site. They have figured out how to trigger rewards that shouldn't be triggered in you. So it may be that you should go out and do some exercise, and go encounter something real. But Facebook is tricking you into staying on Facebook by making you feel as if you're doing something that's good for you. And it causes a self harm. And so anyway, Tristan Harris would be the go to guy on this question. We can have him on the podcast. Oh, absolutely. For sure. But, yes. So it does have something to say mostly when it says is that this endogenous system is being gamed for somebody else's advantage. That's right.

**Heather** 11:48

And final question from Episode 42. What's the explanation for totalitarianism? I don't think the woke left sees themselves to totalitarian. But does that mean? Does that mean it comes naturally?

**Bret** 12:02

Alright, I would say the explanation for totalitarianism is in some ways, just almost too obvious, which is that you can do very good things for you if you have total power over people, right? And so the ways for people to discover that it is the right thing for them to do to install a system that just so happens to put them in charge of what you do. We should that's an evergreen discovery, and in both senses of the term, I guess. But yes, it is. And the whole point for the rest of us is to figure out, hey, how can we stabilize a system that does good for people in some way that's fairly distributed and resists falling into totalitarianism? And what we are facing now is the pole of totalitarianism is we are in a tractor beam and we are being pulled towards something stupid. And it could be one of a couple different times. But it hardly matters. Because what we have is better than that. We should we should fix it. We have so we don't fall into the black hole.

**Heather** 13:01

Yeah. And I mean, there's this this is always a tension between what has been and what could be, which is sometimes understood as conservative versus liberal as the past versus the future as orthodoxy versus heterodoxy. But the fact is that we need both and the totalitarians always come pretending to be well I don't know that always. These now are pretending to be about the future and so come close in the language of the left of course this is it has actually nothing to do with Will this look like the future or the past? It's will this look like it's good for me or good for everyone? Oh, it's gonna it's gonna be good for me. That's why that's actually what it ends up at. and are some people actually confused? Do some people not see that who are engaged in this movement? Probably. But it doesn't matter because that's still what's what's going to be the effect. Okay, this came the next question before we get into questions from Episode 43. came from the discord server well, where they people on the discord server vote on a question one question every week that they want answered here. The unscientific issues plaguing academia and public discourse are not new. pinker note similar conflicts between eo Wilson trevors, Dawkins and radical science, for instance, then specified here but golden Lewington on the spandrels of San Marco, can we solve the problem of ideologically driven scholarship or merely mitigate its effects? What selective pressures are necessary to create a system that rewards objectivity?

**Bret** 14:38

Sweet question, right? Yeah, I mean, I think actually, this is simple to articulate what it needs to be difficult to implement. But if you think back to the good old days, which were not so good, but the good old days in which science discovered things regularly of high value, without So much garbage, they actually existed in an era in which people's incentives were aligned. Now I'm not advocating for a science in which only the rich can participate. But when the rich participate in science, they are in some sense immune from the short term financial corruptions that dog others. Right? So if you had gentlemen scientists, they were free to say heterodox things. And if it, you know, didn't interrupt their ability to earn because basically, wealth was the substitute for earning. So the point is, if you want the system to work

**Heather** 15:38

well, which is a little bit like what 10 years is supposed to

**Bret** 15:41

create, yep, Jr. is supposed to, and it doesn't want us to replicate

**Heather** 15:44

the aristocracy the protections that the aristocracy have, right. And

**Bret** 15:49

let's just say, the reason tenure doesn't work, in my opinion, or at least one of them is that the rigors of what you have to go through to get tenure are mutually exclusive with the instincts that will cause you to use tenure to good effect, right? So they ensure that you're not up to anything heterodox stay

**Heather** 16:07

in line, stay in line, stay in line, okay, you're free, you have anything to say? No, actually turns out not.

**Bret** 16:12

So you can think of this as the same thing as our electoral politics, right? It's like, let's see how good you are at this corruption game, you know, you achieve office, and it's like, well, you know, act on behalf of the public. Well, not bloody likely, you basically, you know, tested people's mathematical ability with a pole vaulting competition or something. But if you want the system to work, you have to align people's incentives with being right. In the long term, that's one of the things that should somehow reward you. So if you're after legacy, if you want to be remembered forever, being really, really, really right is the way to do it. Right? The other thing, not just being really, really, really right. But being really, really, really early. We want you to really write and really early, that's the gold standard. Now the problem that we have, which I have decried many times is that we honor things that are a little bit early, right stuff that's too early, we absolutely murder that stuff. We murder that stuff. And then we never rehabilitate it. We don't go back and say By the way, you know who it turned out to be right? This person who was 200 years ahead of Darwin, right?

**Heather** 17:25

very occasionally, those stories do get do get resurrected. And I can't come up with any of those examples right now. But I'm in part, the problem is that it's by virtue of it being that early, it's unrecognizable by almost everyone. So some of those people have, you know, simply a vested interest in keeping the status quo. Of course, I'm so would not see it even if they could, but most people simply cannot see that which comes so early, but none of the context yet exists, right?

**Bret** 17:51

But our system of peer review is the biggest obstacle to this working right? Because peer review is to keep all of the really heterodox stuff out is a matter of quality control, which means that the point that somebody turns out to have been way ahead of their time, there's likely to be very little evidence of it. And certainly, it's not evidence that you have to deal with

**Heather** 18:14

but it's not just peer review, of course, it's the the market incentives by universities and to have faculty who bring in large grants, because the large grants get 28 to 75 ish percent taken off the top as overhead to run the universities. And so you want scientists if you're a university, who's bringing in large grants from if you're in the United States, probably NSF, NIH, do D, whatever it is. And that means that big science that is big, expensive sciences that which is, is preferred, is selected for and so sort of, you know, the kind of math that you could do on a chalkboard, or the kind of research that you could do in the field with a machete and duct tape and paracord and a plane ticket, not really encouraged by big universities, because they don't bring in the grants that allow the overhead to run the libraries and clean the sidewalks in such

**Bret** 19:08

what I'm imagining many of the people we have known Yes, taking the Methods section that you just sketched out there and duct taping a plane ticket to a machete or I don't know what they would be doing. But Alright. So the problem, though, is we have to the incentives don't allow the people into the system for the reason you just described because the grant overhead peer review prevents the lodging, it's very hard to short the field to the school of thought that owns the field and it's actually they've got it wrong, because it won't be registered anywhere. It'll be treated as Kook stuff and then you won't be able to resurrect it. Even the the preprint servers which in theory should correct for this you have to have a certain credential in order to even use them. So They bar people who are outside who should be able to lodge their shorting of the field. Just as as prominently.

**Heather** 20:07

Well on this, this is one of the few exciting things about early COVID pandemic, actually, as we talked about in our early episodes, right that the preprint servers were suddenly just alive with so many papers, right, that hadn't been vetted. And does that mean that there was a lot of dross? Sure, but that that also mean that there was a lot of stuff that we normally wouldn't have been able to see because it would have been vetted out of existence, but it actually needed to be seen. Yes. So

**Bret** 20:29

the reduction in quality control actually served science beautifully. It was the demonstration that those of us who aren't so fond of peer review, were right, because it was a very vibrant period, I would just point out one other thing. This is a hard game to beat. There's a part of me that actually has a reaction, people don't understand where I quite like it when my colleagues attacked me for being stupid, right? Because in so doing, they are lodging the fact that they and I disagree over something and I you know, so for example, there was this case where I had put out a video advocating for explore modes as an evolutionary phenomenon. And I got attacked by Jerry Coyne and Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker and Neil Shubin, right, and people don't realize, am I feeling fine? Yes, exactly. Do you know what they just did? They just announced that they disagree with this idea, which I am quite certain will turn out to be right now it may take a long time. But at the very least, it's going to be very hard to obscure the fact that they didn't believe it, because they were all very vocal about it. So I would just say we should be allowing people to lodge these objections to the to the dominant school of thought and then if you turn out to be non trivially, right, if you turn out to be right, for the right reasons, and very far out of your time, then the point is actually Well, what else do you know? That's what we should be looking for?

**Heather** 22:09

Yeah. Okay, we gotta we gotta go faster through these. Now, finally, we are going to get to the first question from today. Is the rise of social justice or religious revolution, that are cultural adaptation? Is the rise of social justice, a religious revolution, or cultural adaptation to prevent religious war? That is a problem or it's not? It's not now. Our cultural adaptation to prevent religious war can't recognize or solve because the standard conception of a religion assumes metaphysical claims? Is it the same for Marxism generally? So I'm gonna try to read it again. It's it's not or but there's some punctuation missing probably because of character limits, is the rise of social justice of religious revolution, which are cultural adaptation to prevent religious war, as in which would advocate for which would preclude religious pluralism can't recognize or solve because the standard conception of a religion assumes metaphysical claims and is the same for Marxism generally. So you know, broadly, social justice has been widely discussed by us, I think, first by john McWhorter, certainly by James Lindsay, as actually fitting all of the rubrics for religion. But the question the person has in the question is saying maybe most people can't recognize it, because it doesn't have the metaphysical thing? And is might that also be the same explanation for why people don't recognize Marxism as a religion?

**Bret** 23:37

So I think there's a lot to this. Yeah, I wouldn't I think it's a little bit too mechanistic? Yeah, sense that I think the elements that are described here are correct, which is to say there is a very strong religious aspect to these claims, right? They are immune to challenge because for the same reason that religious claims are immune to challenge. The fact that you're challenging it says there's something wrong with you, right? But it is not exactly a religion, right. And the absence of metaphysical claims explicit metaphysical claims, puts it in the adjacent category at best.

**Heather** 24:13

Well, we need but I'm going to think McWhorter has really written so beautifully about this and a number of times, but I and I suspect I can't remember what he does exactly, but as a linguist, I'm sure he gets somewhere in this in this in this territory, that we basically Okay, so religion is like one instantiation of some bigger categories. So rather than say like, Okay, this thing is adjacent. Maybe that's so but the Venn diagram needs the larger categorical description of the thing that includes religion and social justice and perhaps Marxism, and a number of other things, all of which have these, I don't know what it would be six 820 you know, whatever. descriptors Well,

**Bret** 24:52

I agree with that. But I would say the larger category, and I don't remember what McWhorter uses as the larger category, A larger category I would use is literally false, metaphorically true. And remember literally false, metaphorically true is about advancing an evolutionary agenda. No, I

**Heather** 25:12

don't think that's right. Literally false. Metaphorically true is important and critical. And you we can approach those things and say, Ah, so I can see why kosher laws and why it's not the story you tell that why it's important and can be assessed and agreed with or not from outside or from inside, whereas the religion part of this, which is its own ecosystem, like a claim that is literally false or metaphorically true is just a claim. But this this is we're talking about the whole ecosystem. So I don't think literally false, metaphorically, true is the bigger category.

**Bret** 25:44

Well, I'm not sure I understand the objection you just leveled. My point would be these, the people advancing these claims are rapidly increasing in their power to shape civilization to their own ends. Yes, that the claims are nonsense, right? Yes, but they are advancing in power. And so I would say that does roughly meet the the definition. Now ultimately, they will be unstable. But let's just put it this way. Literally false, metaphorically true, is a broad category that can be applied to, let's say, scientific beliefs, belief in gravitational potential energy is such a belief, right? You if you believe if you act as if you believe it, you can calculate all sorts of things that you can't calculate if you disbelieve it, but there isn't any evidence for it.

**Heather** 26:40

But so the distinction I'm making and I think it's actually critical, is it's it's akin to, it's analogous to an individual versus population level analysis, that a tenant of religion might be literally false false, metaphorically, true, much as a tenet of a scientific worldview might be literally false, metaphorically, true. But the actual religion, the actual worldview, is the population level, which is it is not just that it has emergent properties that include not just a collection of these tenets, but also some additional structure.

**Bret** 27:14

Okay, you're right, under normal. Under normal circumstances, the beliefs structure would accompany a lineage, which is the reason that ecosystem level analysis isn't the right one, because the evolutionary entity actually isn't.

**Heather** 27:33

So I meant to say that I'm gonna back off the use of the word ecosystem and go back to individual versus population, right, both of which are

**Bret** 27:39

both of which are evolutionary entities, except in this case, the population isn't an evolutionary entity, which is why I've argued it's unstable and will come apart in

**Heather** 27:47

the, in this case, social justice or religions, like in social justice. Okay, so so so you were that are also taking issue with like, okay, it's not exactly religion, there is something less stable because of the lack of lineage. Oh, yeah. Is it but there's, I'm asking is that your

**Bret** 28:02

is? Yeah, because the internal dynamics in which one lineage turns on the other will ultimately tear the thing apart from the inside guaranteed, right? So yeah, in any case, the the falseness of the claims are paired with a strategy that is highly successful at gaining power. This is temporary, but that doesn't rule it out. And the difficulty in spotting it, the difficulty in spotting, it probably does have to do with the fact that it isn't explicitly metaphysical. Yeah, yeah.

**Heather** 28:37

I think that's I think that's insightful. Yeah, yep. But I think

**Bret** 28:40

the thing that in the question that is hard for me to accept is that our, you know, built in resistance, I don't know that we have a built in resistance, the built in resistance to the extent that exists at all has to do with the fact that there are, you know, to the extent you dispense with a claim that is no longer functional, you have an advantage. And so, you know, in this very short time window, that's not the case, these people have the advantage. And that's what's going on.

**Heather** 29:09

Okay, next is just a comment. I'm going to read it because here it is. Shabbat shalom. Bret, please reach out to the mod to the Facebook group. It's a 2000 members in the mods need your help. Thanks for the excellent content,

**Bret** 29:23

please reach out to Yes. Okay.

**Heather** 29:25

What did you think?

**Bret** 29:27

I thought you said please reject and I was like, What the heck is going on? All right, please reach out to the mods. All right. All right.

**Heather** 29:37

Next question. I'm an engineer at a large OEM

**Bret** 29:40

original equipment manufacturer. All right,

**Heather** 29:43

both both the Y chromosome types in the room had that at the tips of their

**Bret** 29:48

old stock. What's up, it was new old stock.

**Heather** 29:53

Okay. I'm an engineer at a large OEM which depends on federal contracts and which is forcing CRT on its employees. My myself included, what can we do to expand the Trump administration's anti CRT memo to include companies with contracts with the federal government?

**Bret** 30:08

I think you've just answered your own question, which is the funding can be made contingent. I don't know what you can do, but to the extent.

**Heather** 30:17

So I mean, obviously, there are risks to in this case, I would want that. Right. Yeah, I think I think this ideology is so dangerous. But once you establish a way for the federal government to decide what can and cannot be taught or said, across things that are beyond the scope of the actual federal government, don't you? We get at least in the slippery slope territory of potential overreach.

**Bret** 30:48

I don't think so. I mean, the route for government abuses there. Yes, point the point that is so central here is that, look, abuse is always a possibility, right? abuse of power. But the, the entire informal nature of all of this is taking the governmental protections against the abuse and sidelining them. So for example, when you establish a an administrative position at a college, whose purpose is to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion,

**Heather** 31:23

which I'm not going to do instantly,

**Bret** 31:25

thank you. You're welcome. But this happened while we were at evergreen, Yes, it did. While we were at evergreen, affirmative action was illegal in the state of Washington. This was an affirmative action program. So

**Heather** 31:37

that should have been prevented by the laws that were already on the books

**Bret** 31:40

it least circumvented those laws, because it would have been inconceivable to hire somebody who was not intersectional into that position. Likewise, I would say these departments, right, they are circumventing the protections against discrimination. And the so will there is there the potential for governmental abuse? Yes, we've just seen some of this, the Supreme Court decision on trans rights and the protection. Supreme Court just issued a decision bringing trans people in on protections and plausibly the decision might force the inclusion of, for example, trans women in sports.

**Heather** 32:26

I don't know, I doesn't matter. The point is this. It sounds like something I should know about. And I can't speak to it, because I just don't know at this point, the potential for

**Bret** 32:33

abuse exists. But the point is, that your university or your corporation, when people with power, start forcing other people to say stuff and teach stuff and things like that. There's no mechanism to challenge it, at least at the governmental level, there is a process by which we can say, Is it fair to bar this?

**Heather** 32:54

Right, we don't we don't disagree on any of the particulars here. I'm just concerned about desiring more federal input into decisions in private corporations.

**Bret** 33:04

I would say it the other way, I would say that the only prevention of some false belief system taking over and forcing its way through your institutions is protections against that at the governmental level where there's a process to establish this is actually a fact. And that isn't, right.

**Heather** 33:25

Yeah, I mean, I there will, there will be for any one of these, there will be someone on the on one side that says we absolutely need this or else democracy will fail. And someone on the other side who says we absolutely can't have this or else democracy will fail. And we, we feel certain from as many domains as we could possibly have, that this particular critical race theory, woke ideology, etc. is, is is actually an existential threat. At the societal level. Yep. But that doesn't mean that once you have some power that has been instantiated for this particular example, that it can't be used badly elsewhere.

**Bret** 34:06

I agree. And this is the kind of thing that libertarians are constantly saying, who will watch the watchers, but my sense is, we're stuck with that because it's better than the alternative, which is no process at all. And so there we are,

**Heather** 34:20

okay. Would you agree that Kennedy and D'Angelo took a kernel of truth and grew a very misshapen crop? Perhaps people have racist impulses which they resist? Say the reptilian brain seeks to tribalism, which higher function must rebuke.

**Bret** 34:36

You're not suggesting appointing Kendi and D'Angelo, the kernel of truth one thing that would be kernels of truth I believe, I know you're going to tell me it's spelled differently.

**Heather** 34:46

I would I won't bother because you already did it for me. Yeah, there's there's a kernel.

**Heather** 34:54

Yeah, I want to say no actually like that. There are some D'Angelo I think correctly diagnosis her own personal problem. And then yeah, extrapolates to every other person who shares her skin color, and that extrapolation is wrong. Right? So the kernel of truth in that case is Robyn D'Angelo turns out to be a racist like she just has a racist thoughts and she is embarrassed by them and she's decided to make bank on that embarrassment candy seems to be and I have not finished the one book that I am willing to read his and I don't think I need to put myself through any more of that but I'm still not done with it. But Kendi are I'm not even sure like he has true observations about past and even current examples of racism but the the leap that he then makes to anti racism is equality of outcome and everything else is racist doesn't even connect so there's not even like i don't i don't think that the examples of racism that are true that are the kernels of truth would grow into the crop that he makes. So it's just it's not even. There's only a connection but

**Bret** 36:15

i don't i don't think so. Okay, I mean, what we're disagreeing over then is the question about the kernel of truth and the continuity between that and the thing that they ultimately arrived

**Heather** 36:25

that's that's my objection to seeing the to this framing for candy At any rate, and then for D'Angelo, it's Well, yeah, for her. I see how she got there for her but then she extrapolates and no you can't you can't claim that you are everyone because you're not right.

**Bret** 36:41

But the kernel of truth is that there are you know, these are both numbskulls who have

**Heather** 36:45

candies, no numbskull. I think D'Angelo actually probably just isn't very bright. But Kenny's clearly quite smart.

**Bret** 36:51

I'm not saying he's not smart. Yeah. I still think he's a numbskull for pulling this on us because it go with asshole. Alright, fair enough. But the point is, people like the Angelo exist. Yeah. So her extrapolation to it's all of us is clearly absurd. But the kernel of truth is, yeah, there's some low level thing that exists in some fraction of the population. Yep. Right. And in Candy's case, you know, there, there is a activity against racism and active activity against racism that is warranted, and I will use an example from my own life. When we were teaching, yeah, I used to be very conscious about the fact that if I was looking for an example of a person engaged in a behavior, and I just googled for somebody to put together a lecture, if I googled, you know, love, right? Or a couple, I would just get a sea of white people. Sure, right. And so I would actively search for something that didn't come out of that sea of white people just so that my examples, not always,

**Heather** 37:59

but sometimes, well, it's not this, whenever used white examples,

**Bret** 38:03

I attempted to equalize the thing, so that my students did not have the sense of like, Oh, this lecture about humor and white people, you know, it's like, in

**Heather** 38:11

the case of love, or humor, which are human universals, your examples should actually be reflective of the background demographics of humanity, right, which turns out to be in that case. But that means like, in the case of, for instance, software engineers, you don't have to make all of your examples, you know, one to one male to female, because actually, right know that background demographic is not going to be a match. And that's not because patriarchy.

**Bret** 38:34

And it turns out to be a diminishing returns problem. If you try to obligate yourself to deliver a set of lectures that has no racial bias in it, like you'll spend the rest of your life trying to build, it can't be done. Because for one thing, even if you try to correct it through Google, Google, you know, to the extent you use search terms, it you know,

**Heather** 38:52

becomes your full time job, which is exactly what we're seeing it becoming for many people, right.

**Bret** 38:56

And I tell you, I talked to my students about this at some point, and they pointed out that there were that if you google things from different places, you got different racial biases in the results, you

**Heather** 39:08

mean from different like ISP user, yeah, fraud from different

**Bret** 39:11

nations or use the VPN? Oh, so anyway, you can see the wheels turning inside of the thing. But anyway, the point is, yeah, if you if you want to give a lecture on the nature of humor, I actually think it's much better to find a, you know, cung people laughing than is to find, you know,

**Heather** 39:28

in order in partner, mouse, the universality exactly, because if you're talking to a bunch of American undergraduates, they know that people in Manhattan can laugh, right? And they don't necessarily understand that it is universal. And this, frankly, is the cure, in part for racism, right?

**Bret** 39:42

So I think the important and growth of this is you do want somebody in our position to make a good faith effort to deliver something that's maximally educational, and that means does not feed people's inherent biases about these concepts. But do you want the right For people to wag their finger at you, if you do put a white person on the screen, they say, Aha, why do you do that? Right? You don't you want everybody to make a good faith effort to be properly inclusive and you do not want some power structure structure empowered to, to look over your shoulder and, you know, seek errors. Yep.

**Heather** 40:20

Okay, next one is just a comment. There is no way to not feed the craze left. All stories have forced conclusions for them. If you can't talk, then you fight. They won't allow us to talk to them. A fight is coming. Trump 2020 stay safe guys.

**Bret** 40:37

All right, agree with some of this. Yeah, I did do not feed the craze left. And

**Heather** 40:41

it's he says there is no way to not feed the greatest left?

**Bret** 40:45

Well, I think what he's saying is other than fight. And I agree that at some level, no, one must fight, but that it's not nuanced enough, because there are a great many people who don't giving people an alternative is important. And so a lot of the people who are espousing this stuff superficially in order to keep themselves safe are not actually consumed by it. And reaching a handout to those who can be reached is both strategically smart and ethically right. But yes, a fight is coming clearly.

**Heather** 41:27

Well, we got to get through a few more of these. Oh, actually, sorry, this is the second part of question from the same person, like a child. No, these two are two parts of one question. I lost where I was, from what thoughts on an Tifa Black Lives Matter and Black Bloc using the same weaponize control the narrative tools, learn from the mainstream media in order to influence public opinion, it's now justified as a taste of your own medicine argument and the defense of their actions. It's like a child reanimated abusive parental behavior. Please speak to altering the child's behavior while the parent is still acting abusively. Thank you both for being brave, mature, intelligent adults. Yeah,

**Bret** 42:08

yeah, I agree with this taste of your own medicine thing is, I mean, in fact, you've chosen the perfect example. Right? To the extent that somebody is abused, and that triggers abusive tendencies in them, that's understandable, but who gets abused, it's not the people who abused them. It's so it's not a taste of your own medicine, it's inflicting it on another generation of people.

**Heather** 42:32

And the way the way he ends before the the gratitude for which we are ourselves grateful. Please speak to altering the child's behavior, while the parent is still acting abusively. And, you know, I think this is this is the mess we're in everywhere we term that trying to get people to start acting honorably, when they can easily point to And usually, you know, people don't have the sort of ordered thought processes to carefully point but they're sort of thrashing about going but the thing that I'm objecting to is still going on, how dare you expect me to stop and this you know, this is some of the rhetoric that we're hearing, even from, you know, the like, and Tifa, Black Lives Matter, Black Bloc, and even, even if some of their examples aren't true, and the narrative isn't what they say it is, and all of this, are they reacting to something real? Have they been handed a bad deal as a whole generation of Americans been handed a deal? That doesn't look like the one that people used to get handed? Yeah, yeah, they have. And that doesn't, it's not necessarily incumbent on them to understand everything that they have had to contend with, in part because their parents and the drugs they were given and the schools they went to, and the screens, they were sat in front of broke them sufficiently that they don't have an ability in some, to some degree to actually diagnose themselves.

**Bret** 43:52

Yep, I agree. for another time, we should talk about a broader view of this where meritocracy, coupled with a brutal lack of a safety net results in a certain number of people who don't have any reason to defend a meritocratic system because they will be on the losing end of it. So yes, they were these people were mis educated and betrayed by a medical system that drugged them and all of that, but it should not be surprising that those who don't see themselves as winning in a meritocratic system attack it.

**Heather** 44:28

Yeah, that's right. Ignoring facts that conflict with a desire to truth is widespread. What's the solution? You see it with Ted Wheeler, but also at Boeing management with 737 Max?

**Bret** 44:43

Do you know this example? trying to remember it?

**Heather** 44:45

I don't know these at all.

**Bret** 44:47

I was aware of it but I can't resurrect it.

**Heather** 44:51

But, you know, what's the solution to ignoring facts that conflict with the desired truth?

**Bret** 44:56

Well, the solution is the have incentives, right? The fact is a system that's right, that causes you to pay the price for ignoring facts that you had at your disposal is a good one. And so, you know, just to take one example, red teams that have an incentive to find the weakness in the structure you have built, incentivize you not to build a weak structure.

**Heather** 45:21

So this is a term of art and engineering or something. Yeah, I

**Bret** 45:24

think it's mostly in computer security. Okay, but it can be in anything right? You have a red team that is going to try to exploit your security for your building, right? Can you get in you make it a game where they win if they get in? And then you find out if you're, if you've got a flaw and read to you know, we need intellectual red teams to this is why I say you should never allow one school of thought to take over a field. At the very least you need the next best school of thought there to keep them honest. Otherwise, they're all going to go crazy, which they do.

**Heather** 45:55

It's the loyal opposition. The loyal opposition guys are declawed not by me cat sharpened her claws on a cardboard edge? Why instinct? habit? Unlikely haven't seen it before. Yeah, yeah, I think I mean, the idea that you can declaw cats is new and I think I hope it's no and don't do it, like really horrifying. And I appreciate the person asking the questions as it wasn't by her. But yeah, I think it basically as moving it's it's both honing the the nails, the claws and and getting the muscles working? Well.

**Bret** 46:40

I've always imagined that it has something to do with causing the claw to curve that basically there's like, what would you be like? the process by which plants bend towards the light? That actually in this case of 10 putting pressure. But in any case, why does the cat do it? If it doesn't have claws? Well, presumably, there's something wired in where the cat experiments with this behavior and discovers Oh, that feels really good. Yeah.

**Heather** 47:05

And it feels good because when they do have claws, it helps them you know, maybe it's get the right curve. Maybe it maybe I don't know, maybe claws are a little bit like teeth. And they're actually sort of connected by ligaments such that you know, getting the right pressure on them makes them stronger and aligned. Right? whether or not they're shaped, right. But whatever it does for them, it does something that selection wants to encourage more of and so it feels good. And so the feels good. The feels good circuit persists, even when the claws don't Yeah,

**Bret** 47:32

I can see the cat in your lap. He just believes all of this. Yes, it's wrong.

**Heather** 47:37

He just wants more cream now. Okay, do shortlived species such as mice adapt better to changing circumstances because of greater generational turnover? If so, is there any evolutionary advantage to being a very long lived species? or live species? Oh, yeah, none. That's why there are no long lived species. You heard it here first.

**Bret** 48:00

This is so does a great question. You're not gonna see where it's going. But yes, your instinct is right. Our mammalian immune system provides a very interesting example that more or less proves your point, it's the exception that proves the rule and the correct version of the use of that phrase, your immune system evolves on an hourly basis, if you were challenged by a pathogen, you actually actually have evolution taking place in the specific immunity, that is to say, the cells that respond to the pathogen, which is how you ultimately defeat it. So in a sense, your pathogen is a very short lived species that evolves very rapidly to parasitize you, you are very long lived species, which makes you a sitting target, right? In order to be a sitting target and persist for a long life, you have a subsystem of you that evolves on the same scale as the pathogen so that you can beat it right? Because basically, you have microbes that are you that are evolving to counteract other microbes and viruses and things. So yes, you would be probably unable to live a long life as an animal plant can do this in a different way. Basically, by you know, a plant can drop a limb and not die basic plant is not composed of vital organs in the same way. So an animal in order to not die of being a sitting target in a world of pathogens has a subsystem that evolves on the same timescale, proving your point.

**Heather** 49:35

Great. Okay, we'll do one more here. And then go on to Super Chat from this hour. I will say that there's another question here advise on you to reach out to the monster Facebook group, so Okay, different person. So something is going on there. Dangerous question. How is encouraging medical transition for trans people any different from encouraging breast implants, etc for women with body dysmorphia? good faith reason the former is okay, but not the ladder. Question mark.

**Bret** 50:09

This is a tough one I would say it is there's a distinction. I have a sense that the body dysmorphia in straight women, presumably,

**Heather** 50:20

you mean non trans women,

**Bret** 50:23

the women who are getting breast implants because of body dysmorphia, I believe are in large measure responding to a advertising and media apparatus that is making them insecure about something they needn't be insecure about, because that enriches those who are making them insecure. And so we are creating a pathology. And they are remedying that pathology with an augmentation. And at some level, the right answer to that is not the augmentation. It's the refiguring thing so that making other people insecure is not a profitable business model.

**Heather** 51:02

Yeah, I mean, this is it will, the borders of the categories will always be hard to know exactly where they are, always. But with regard to women getting plastic surgery of any sort to better fit their, you know, the beauty norms that they perceive as the ones that they want to better fit is largely market driven, and advertising driven. And some of what is going on with with trans and you know, the the mini, the orders of magnitude rise in the number of for instance, teenage girls who are declaring themselves trans would appear also to be some combination of social contagion, and encouragement from larger society who are jumping on the bandwagon for reasons that we won't go into right now. But, but can and probably will elsewhere. So those two kinds of desire to to change your body, I think, are actually very similar. Whereas they're, you know, trans is real. And there are cases where people really do have such a mismatch in their heads between what they feel themselves to be and what they were born as. And I, you know, I see, I think it is an honorable, and, and fair thing to do as a society to allow such people to, to have a match between their their brains and their bodies. But it is a tiny minority of humans, and is also I would say, a tiny minority of people who are currently describing themselves as trans.

**Bret** 52:45

Yeah, I would say we also don't have a tremendous amount of information on, you know, as you say, trans is real. And, until recently, surgical interventions and pharmaceutical interventions would have been impossible, right? And many cultures make allowances for trans people that legitimize them in their original form. And I guess the question is, are we doing people a greater service by experimenting with surgery and pharmaceuticals? Would we be better off just figuring out, you know, how to, you know, bring them fully into the protections and understanding of society

**Heather** 53:26

right. Now that would be that would be the more honorable move, I'm sure of it. Okay, next question. From this hour, the dictionary has changed the definition of female and male to include gender identity. How can we defend against this type of Newspeak? So I, I'll bet it has, I'd love I'd love a reference. I'd love to know which dictionary we're talking about. Although I believe at least some dictionaries have begun to I know a couple of months ago, there was a move to change the definition of racism in Webster's, I believe, and Webster said, Sure, why not? Can't see what's gonna happen downstream of this decision. How can we defend against this type of Newspeak? I think, I think we're trying to do it. And we're trying in part it's not most of what we're doing. But in part by having conversations between us that are unscripted and real and the kinds of conversations that we have at least sometimes we're not on camera to give to you watching and listening. The some of the language that allows the will allow you to push back in conversation. I don't know how, what the push back against the dictionary changing will look like. But those changes happen because there is a widespread acceptance and the widespread acceptance happens because in conversation, people who disagree are quiet and people who disagree. being quiet is in part because they're scared but it's also in part because They're not really sure they know it doesn't feel right weight, male and female are are our biological sex, this is real, but they don't have the certainty of their own footing to defend themselves against the frankly, the crazy that comes at them. So part of what we're trying to do, I think we haven't ever talked about this, but is to is to share a language that other people can use to discuss these things with people when when it comes up.

**Bret** 55:26

Yep, I would say there is an argument that the market should solve the dictionary thing. And the problem is that those who are fighting to poison language, are trying to stigmatize entities that attempt to give you higher quality definitions. Yep. So we have to figure out how to protect those entities. But I would just add one other thing that I think we are doing. And I think this was something that we did a lot as professors was demonstrating that what we are saying is part of a worldview, that if you just kind of let it interact, make sense. In other words, you could come up with some of the things that we claim are true. And they could just exist in isolation. But if you tried to have a conversation based on those premises, it would fall apart. On the other hand, what we're talking about is part of a deep toolkit of understanding that's well tested. And the question is Will all right, how comfortable would you be at their table? If you were trans? Could you sit at their table and listen to this conversation if you were trans and the fact is, we've had lots of trans students and interacted with them very easily and comfortably. And so the point is, when extrapolated from this worldview holds up, in light of true variation. Yeah, right, which is an important thing to demonstrate.

**Heather** 56:46

Next question, Heather, could you come? Could you please share some of your exercises for teaching math to children? Thanks a lot. You're both heroes be blessed. Yeah, I don't, I'd be happy to share some of how I have taught math. And I have, you know, the work that I've, mostly when I've taught math, it's been to undergraduates, which are usually not the people I think of when people say children, but of course, there's an argument to be made there. Let me think that I have to think on how to answer this question. And probably it warrants just having something written out and shared. But one thing that is absolutely true is just pointing out the math in daily life and pointing out it's it's power and beauty everywhere. And so, you know, when when we're going somewhere with with the children, talking about how far we're going and whether or not how far actually, you know that the number of miles on a bike actually is a full measure of how hard it is, and what that means what you know, number of miles doesn't necessarily track to, to how difficult so what other things might you measure what other things might you be be counting and keeping track of. And you know, it's this is easy to do in the kitchen, where, if you take a recipe that is using sort of an American Standard of, for instance, weight, or weather volume, and you want to use weight, you already want to double it, you know, you say the kid, okay, this goes for two cups of flour, and there's five ounces of flour and a cup, and we're gonna double the recipe, how many ounces of flour Do we need, and you just start making it backgrounded like you did just start, I am grateful to have never heard from either of our children, what useful math be to me, I cannot imagine ever uttering those words myself, and I would have felt quite a failure if either of them had ever said that not to say that they either them enjoyed everything that I did to them, or every time I threw math at them, but just making it part of the background. And part of the fun is is a big way to do it.

**Bret** 58:56

I would just add something else that I know your dad did with you, and you now do with our kids, which is there's kind of a an understanding that the purpose of math is not to get to the answer. So you can stop doing it. Right? So the fact that you can get to the answer doesn't really mean anything, if you don't know how it was that it worked that you got there. And so going through some other way to get there in order that you can see what the process meant. And why is the key to understanding it and treating it other than take your medicine kind of endeavor.

**Heather** 59:28

Yeah, and this is I mean, this is part of the A, it's also about the journey, but also the journey is fun. The journey isn't a slog.

**Bret** 59:37

And I guess I would just say one of the things I am still stunned by my own experience in college with calculus, right? I had calculus from two different teachers. And one of them who was not well liked i thought was absolutely phenomenal because at the board he just took a joy in illustrating why things were functioning the way they did and showing us how to do things and It totally worked for me. And the other one who was pretty well liked was very mechanical. And it was just very hard to care, right? Because it was just simply a matter of here's how you do that. Right? Right and recipe. Yeah, right. So anyway, it's all about incentives and to the extent that the person up there is motivated by the right stuff and can convey the joy of doing these things properly. That's the hardest part. The math itself isn't that hard it's the you know, getting you oriented to it correctly and knowing that you want to go through it because what you get at the other side is rewarding that's the important part

**Heather** 1:00:40

Yeah, no, that's that's right. I do I mean, I do remember bringing math homework home when I was a kid and having my dad look at how I was being told to do things in the late 70s and just for God's sake no you're you're not going to memorize a bunch of stuff you know there's there will be no way that at the end of doing this you will know you will understand the beauty and the truth of the math you will only know how to do this current thing that is fashionable which frankly math isn't about fashion sorry no

**Bret** 1:01:12

yeah he he was shaking his head analog back before it had become an online Yeah,

**Heather** 1:01:19

yeah, it was okay, I was gonna say something else but you just he just put that right in there. I don't remember what it was. Okay. What is the best Star Trek series and why is it Deep Space Nine says hollymount

**Bret** 1:01:31

Deep Space Nine is the one on the space station where nothing ever happens why would that be the best

**Heather** 1:01:35

so we have to admit that we we enjoy Star Trek but haven't watched much of it. And I don't honestly remember I believe it I don't have an

**Bret** 1:01:45

opinion in the space station where nothing ever happens so

**Heather** 1:01:48

well but but do you have an answer to the first part of the question?

**Bret** 1:01:51

I mean obviously the answer correct the best Series B Why

**Heather** 1:01:53

is the best Star Trek what is the best Star Trek series and why is it Deep Space Nine well I couldn't even name them all I mean, I couldn't even name more than two.

**Bret** 1:02:03

I think Holly is clearly this is a backdoor to meditation that oh didn't nothing happened oh nine makes it more contemplative.

**Heather** 1:02:15

This is a link to the Buddhists

**Bret** 1:02:17

There you go. Yeah, yeah, okay. Good one. Yeah, no, I I can't imagine what you're thinking actually.

**Heather** 1:02:24

Okay, and I just I don't know enough which we should get some Yeah, we should probably watch some more Star Trek on my walk in Deep Space Nine okay. at my university student org is pressuring faculty to have mandatory anti racism courses and training they are surprisingly effective at organizing and lobbying How can regular people push back so you don't say Sam jam author of this question if you are a student or faculty and the answer it's hard either way for sure. But the answer is somewhat different depending on which position you're in what

**Bret** 1:03:02

I'm just thinking that you know, literature has everything to teach us about this and there's this I unfortunately was not prepared for this question but in catch 22 there is a scene in which the pilots are being instructed in some way and one of them causes havoc by asking some question like when is now why is right and where the snowdens of yesteryear so you might take that kind of approach you in seriousness you might take the approach of asking good natured but impossible to field questions and then letting the thing collapse of its own accord I think if

**Heather** 1:03:50

I like you are the master of this and it's really hard for the rest of us to either it's one of two things like to come up with the thing that will that will effectively be the stick in the gears right yeah, in real time or if you come up with it like imagining saying it with a straight face like just like getting it out of your mouth like I've been in that position I've learned enough from you in this regard that I can sometimes come up with exactly the thing I might say like I'm gonna burst out laughing like there's no way I could do this the street yes you really you have to hone you got a skill and

**Bret** 1:04:23

you go Yeah, but but it's worth honing especially if you're going to be subjected to this nonsense so yeah, see, see if you can't perfect it and just you wouldn't you want to just love the question that causes the thing to reveal itself. Right? There's the to the extent that you can learn that you will find it is a delightful exercise.

**Heather** 1:04:41

Yeah. And I haven't I haven't gotten there yet. But I think the last chapter of Helen pluck rose and James Lindsay's book cynical theories, actually gets at some things that they are saying you can you can do to push back against this. And so I said, I haven't I haven't gotten there in the book yet, but I imagine that it's got some some very good advice. And I and I got there from having just listened to, Megan Dom's latest podcast, which is a conversation with Helen, pluck rose. And it's it's quite good. So even just that just listening to that hour of conversation between Megan and Helen on Megan's new podcast, which is called the unspeakable, I think the unspeakable podcast is is quite good. And she has one particular piece of advice that I can't remember throughout, but maybe it'll come to me as we're answering other questions. Okay, to what extent is political ideology hereditary? What evolutionary advantages? Are there two different proto political ideologies?

**Bret** 1:05:44

What heavily evolutionary advantages? Are there two different proto political ideologies? So here's the problem. Every time you raise the question of heredity, are hereditary or heritability, you run into the same predicament, which is that these words have a meaning in common parlance that has a relationship to their technical meaning, but the relationship is not straightforward. So to what extent is it heritable? You mean genetically, because heritable is a genetic phenomenon. Technically, it shouldn't be because there are multiple pathways for heredity. And to the extent that you include something like cultural heredity, then it is highly heritable. The how all household you grew up in has a lot to say about what you end up thinking, though, probably not at all transmitted on a genetic pathway. And I would say, if I can just cite Eric here for a second, a long time ago, Eric and I were talking about the problem of these wrong beliefs that are very powerful, politically powerful. And he said, truth is the second best strategy, which is one of the smartest things anybody's ever said to me. And the meaning was instantly clear in the context of our conversation. What it means is, some of us default to truth as a mechanism for getting through the world, right? Doesn't mean we're right. But it means that we seek to be right, because that provides you with some power, but it's not the best route to power at all. And best route to power is affiliation with something and that thing can be saying totally wrong stuff. But if it's powerful, it will carry you along with it. And so what is the evolutionary advantage to different pro political ideologies, some of those political ideologies may be inventing something marvelous. In other words, the American experiment is really about creating opportunity that is broadly distributed. And that does not pay attention to what lineage you come from. That's a great idea. And it was very powerful, and maybe it will be again. So signing up for that. political ideology is a noble thing to do. On the other hand, signing up for woke ideology that's going to tear that all down in order to get some stuff is a terrible idea, but it's powerful. And so the advantage is power. But the question is, what is the basis of the power is the power derived honorably because the system discovers good stuff and distributes it? Or is the power derived falsely by stealing stuff? And corralling well being for example?

**Heather** 1:08:31

Have you heard of Parker Crutchfield morality pill to make people complacent to lock down measures? suggested adding it to water supplies? Thoughts? I don't, I'm not sure I heard about one that was microdose. And with psilocybin, I don't know if this is that. Either. Either way, either this is that or this is something else. Adding stuff to water supplies seems a really, really dangerous game. Another time, we can talk about fluoride, and why that itself was likely a very dangerous game. But the idea of adding the beauty of drugging the population against their will not so much, not really terrible idea. Now, if this is the same thing that I'm thinking of, which is a suggestion, suggesting basically people microdosing on something like psilocybin, in order to deal with justified anxiety from the state of the world, there are potentially large advantages to that, but it has to be on an opt in basis. has three. I would agree. Brett, your idea of a place advertising its hospitality, to those escaping the devolving West Coast is good. What is stopping existing or new educational institutions from doing the same to those escaping our broken Academy? My God, yeah, I mean, we've talked about this so much, and even the University of Chicago Yeah, even the University of Chicago with its statement of principles, the Chicago statement of principles, I can't remember what it's called now is as begun to cave to some of this woke ideology. And it just seems so obvious that there are so many would be college students out there. And so many parents would be college students out there who are interested in paying tuition to a school that isn't work, that would be flocking to a school that was pushing back against this, that maybe if you were the 200th institution, to declare yourself and actually follow through on not being woke, that you wouldn't attract a flood of students. But I think even if you were the 200,000 institution to do that, you would certainly if you were in the first 10 like, why doesn't any one of the number of now struggling because of COVID, as if they weren't struggling enough already, liberal arts colleges or even our one universities, make a stand and be firm about it. And I think then watch the applications and then tuition dollars pour

**Bret** 1:10:59

in? Yeah, so the fact that the strategy seems like it would be such a slam dunk that, you know, any college president who figured out how to pull it off would be heralded as a genius and a great hero of the institution and all that, and yet they don't tells you something about the horizontal nature of this revolution. The point is, inside of each institution, there is enough firepower to drive out or destroy anybody who tries it. So every institution goes over the edge rather than it spreading from the top of institution institution and spreading horizontally within them. And yeah, I guess I should just add that that's not a good thing.

**Heather** 1:11:37

Oh, I thought you were advocating for it. No, no, no, no,

**Bret** 1:11:39

quite the opposite.

**Heather** 1:11:40

Okay. Now, I guess we're on the same page now. Okay, let's do four more. Ebro max Kennedy is giving zoom presentation of my university this week. What should I ask him, I want to be respectful, but push back on Kafka traps. So again, it's different if you're a student, a faculty or admin. If you're student in this case, I would say you actually have a little bit more freedom, a little bit more leverage. To be a little bit pushy here with him. If you're faculty or admin, you might end up behind the scenes getting metaphorically beaten up for pushing back on the sage of the day.

**Bret** 1:12:21

Well, I would, I would ask him, and mind you, I have not read his book. But I would ask him whether or not there was an endpoint, how you would know when you reached it. And if there is no endpoint, how this isn't simply even if we follow his prescription going to result in an equally unfair, terrible, unstable and dangerous situation on the far end of it.

**Heather** 1:12:45

Yeah, I guess Actually, I'm remembering now what Helen pluck rose said in this conversation when making dumb and it has to do with the saying, you know, I don't know the politics of the person asking, but Helen is speaking as a liberal. And she says, you know, the, I don't know what we should call them. But in this case, Kendi, speaking for anti racism, a term that he is defined. Don't speak for all of us on the left in any way. And so as if you were a liberal, you could do what Elon suggests and say, Look, I am also grateful for all of the many wins that liberalism experienced in the 20th century, you know, for in for civil rights, and for women's rights and disability rights, and you know, freedom of religion, including not having any religion, all of this. And I have a very different understanding of how best to continue to make progress. And that different understanding does not make me the enemy. And if you think that it does, then and this is this, I don't think Allen says this, but this is sort of where I would take it. If you think that my different understanding of how we might get to what you say you would play by our shared goals, then I would suggest that maybe the goals that you have are not the ones that you say they are.

**Bret** 1:14:08

Nice. Nice. That's really good.

**Heather** 1:14:14

The next one merely says meow. I've still got the Kitty in my lap. So we'll do three more after that, because that was an easy one. What's your opinion on the idea that the struggles and adversity of adventuring out of Africa in part makes up the disparity of IQ differences? While the premise is not one that we are going to agree with? But even if you accepted the premise, I would say it misunderstands what Africa is, Africa is not a little plot of land in which things are easy going. And you have to, you have to leave it before things get difficult. Africa is a giant continent with many, many different types of ecosystems and, and, you know, Darwin's hostile forces live in all of its forms in Africa as well. So The idea that moving between continents is the thing that makes you smart isn't a very savvy argument.

**Bret** 1:15:08

Yeah. Yeah, I just think there's nothing, nothing to it. Yeah.

**Heather** 1:15:12

I mean, really like if that were true, you would predict that the people who ended up in Tierra del Fuego would be the smartest of all, because they traveled the farthest across the most domain. Changes. Right? Yeah. And okay, penultimate question. At least cm health, a startup with PhDs claims that their na D plus supplements activates situations and promote, quote, cellular health and healthy aging. Is this bs unverified or supported by science?

**Bret** 1:15:47

Sure, sounds like bs to me. Yeah.

**Heather** 1:15:49

I feel like I've heard of these people. And I can't I don't I don't. I can't pull up pull up more than I feel like I've heard of these people. At the moment without looking it up. But yeah, it sounds like BS. And

**Bret** 1:16:01

so I think the thing the, the key thing is this, if you're deficient in something, it can cause ill health. If you've got some pathway and upregulating, it makes you more healthy. Why isn't it being upregulated? Right? So there can be answers to this question. But in general, the idea that you have read some paper in which some pathway is involved in some health thing, and some Corporation decides it's going to trigger that pathway and then say, Aha, we've found the key to more health. It just never pans out in terms of the data.

**Heather** 1:16:31

He's got good graphics, though. Well, really good graphics go kind of a long way. Yeah. And then a good brand name.

**Bret** 1:16:39

So anyway, I think, you know, there's a smell test here. And there are loopholes, right, there are things about us that are rigged sub optimally, because of some environment we came from my go to example would be we are rigged very stupidly for cold when we go into the cold, our capillary shut down in order to protect our core and preserve heat because our ancestors didn't have enough food. Whereas we could just we could up ratchet the circulation to the extremities. We could pump heat into them, and then you could eat more at dinner. And yeah, you'd be great. But but we don't do it. And so we risk frostbite, and we become inept. And all of these things in the cold that are needless Yeah,

**Heather** 1:17:17

for the modern overfed human it would be when when you don't experience the cold, and you get to eat more without getting fat,

**Bret** 1:17:22

right. And in fact, if we could turn down our discomfort of being in the cold, it's it's the go to way to burn extra calories. But the problem is, you're wired not to do it because your ancestors didn't have enough food. And so the point is spending energy keeping yourself warm is something you're wired to avoid at all costs. It's like, physiological laziness. But it means what it is, yep, sort of theological laziness. So anyway, there are places where there's a loophole that you know, if we could figure out how to turn down our sensitivity to cold and up regulate our circulation in light of gold rather than bring it to the core, that'd be great. In general, these things are hard to do right? For the same reason it's hard to do things like turn down appetite by interfering with the the chemical pathways involved. But anyway, there are up there possibilities, but in general, these things are nonsense. Yep.

**Heather** 1:18:13

Okay, the next two are also quite a comments and then we'll get to one last question before we stop for the day. Just enjoying the discussion want to donate formulate questions, as at some point, I have many love the pod. Thank you. Hello, and thank you both for the fantastic work that you do. I'm a professional artist, and would love to assist with Unity 2020 and your work in some way. Much love to you both. I don't know if you have like a email to set to suggest to the artists who would be interested in,

**Bret** 1:18:43

come sign up. And there's an onboarding process and we can put you in touch with our slack team that makes art. Anyway, it's a good thing to do.

**Heather** 1:18:55

Great. Okay, one last question. Yeah. One last question for today, who at a considerable donation, thank you. I turned to the outdoors during these times, but I'm also drawn more and more to pornography and alcohol. What advice do you have to lessen my consumption of these? It's not an addiction, but it may be becoming a habit. I don't like it but oddly hard to stop. These activities seem to creep up. That's that's a terrific, terrifically worded question as well. And I appreciate your distinction between addiction and habit. habits are things we should all enable ourselves to form when they're good and to try to stop when they're bad. But at what point do they become addictions? You had something?

**Bret** 1:19:39

Well, I would say one thing that you know, we talked a little bit about addiction and our broken model of it on a past live stream. One thing is better options are the key to avoiding addiction. Alright, so to the extent that you have more entertaining things to do, you will tend not to default to the stuff that you feel is destructive. In the case of porn, it's probably I mean, you don't say enough about what your relationship status is to know. But to the extent that it scratches an itch, that if you had to work harder by interacting with people to scratch the same itch, you would end up more rewarded, because you would be interacting with them in a way that you know, had a proper challenge to it and all

**Heather** 1:20:28

during lockdown, that's if you don't have a relationship, it might be very hard to know how to proceed. Yep.

**Bret** 1:20:37

I think the thing, and if I've said this anywhere yet, but the thing about porn is that it gets in the way, it is a consumer solution to a business ability to generate fantasy internally. And so at some level, you're denying yourself something and exposing yourself to the hazard of what the market wants you to be fantasizing about. And you'd be far better off to just say, you know, this is blocking some a cognitively productive activity. I know, it's a weird thing to say,

**Heather** 1:21:18

No, but I mean, you're making an argument that is sounds superficially similar to a familiar argument, but it's actually quite different. So the, the argument that many people will have heard a lot of places is that you end up seeing this sort of menu of options that are actually mostly not at least for women, what women want to be engaging in, but this is now what's in men's heads, for instance, about what it is that they, they think it good sexual activity looks like. And you are saying not just does it put these wrong things on a menu. But it actually having a menu at all, having being handed a menu makes it less easy and less easy for you to create your own sexual life and explore whatever your own sexual fantasies might be, such that you actually may live in impoverished, you know, sexually impoverished, fantasy and actual sexual life forever after because you thought from the beginning that it was about a menu that it was about someone handing you something that this was that sexuality was about market forces that, you know, narrative was about market forces in the case of, you know, a slightly slightly related concept. And I think that's, I think that's apt.

**Bret** 1:22:34

I think it's good. I want to add two things to it. One, you had an excellent piece come out in Aereo magazine this week on pornography, and it's also about lizards, and about lizards. I mean, of course, the two things like hand in glove, but

**Heather** 1:22:49

the sex love and sexual autism in Aereo. Yep.

**Bret** 1:22:53

The other thing that I would say is, if we're comparing your internally generated sexual fantasy with porn, right? Here's something we can say for sure. porn is a market phenomenon. As a market phenomenon, different producers are driven to compete with each other in a market saturated with stuff are they delivering the ideal thing they can't be so they deliver the ideal thing what separates them from everybody else? So what they're delivering is an increasingly extreme view of sex and sexuality in order to get attention you have to push the envelope in order to stand out and so what we know is that porn has pushed the envelope way the hell out into crazy directions that you wouldn't think to desire if they weren't being pushed at you as normal. And so the question is, do you want to open your sexual life to this market force that pushes in the direction of extreme or would you rather figure out what you actually want? Right? These are two very different views and basically, I think points hurting you so stop right the internally the endogenously generated stuff is natural and therefore your tendency towards this that or the other is much more likely to be healthy for

**Heather** 1:24:23

you. So I agree with you, but alcohol is also hurting you and we both drink alcohol We both are probably drinking more alcohol than is optimal for us probably any alcohol Well,

**Bret** 1:24:34

in our defense it is 2020

**Heather** 1:24:37

Well, but this I mean this this is the question yeah. And you know, just read it again, I think this is where we're going to stop and but you know, I turned to the outdoors. I imagine this as a man. He says during these times, but I'm also drawn more and more to pornography and alcohol. What advice do you have to lessen my consumption of these we've already spent time talking about porn, but with regard to alcohol, he says it's not an addiction, but it may be becoming a habit. But I don't like it but it's hardly hard to stop these activities seem to creep up I feel very much this way about about alcohol actually. And you know the fact that the person asked him the question begins with I turned to the outdoors you know, I felt I am feeling the end of summer coming and I was lucky enough to be able to have the time to get up early this morning and strap a paddleboard on top of the car and go out to the Willamette and spend an hour on the water that changed my outlook on the day until I got back on the internet but certainly if you can do that do that not that particularly necessarily but there you know there already was pretty early and there were already so many people out there families with kids fishing fishermen, people in kayaks not too many at that time. People with jet skis and such. And it really is healing but also figure out what else you do. To feel your best and most complete self you know, do do you create, do you discover? Do you heal other people? What What is it? That is your truest and best self? And can you either do more of that or expand your ability to do it, you know, hone your skills. So, you know, it was sort of it became a trope early in COVID lockdowns that everyone was baking sourdough bread and because of your gluten sensitivity, that's not something that I ended up doing I probably would have if we had all been able to eat sourdough bread. But, you know, if, if you live with other people and enjoy making things for them, you know, cooking cooking for and with other people making art, writing words and sharing them with other people. I think you know, making things out of wood if you have access to it wood or metal or you know anything, just there are so many ways I think that you can expand what it is that you were finding value in and it probably won't completely replace alcohol and maybe not porn, although i would i would advocate that you should try to completely replace the porn. But it will probably lessen the poll on you. You will probably feel less than need at some point every day. Yeah, I can really go for a drink right now.

**Bret** 1:27:32

All right, two things to add. Yeah, one saw an interesting where was it Reddit or something? expos day? Or maybe it was a response to one of these ask Reddit questions about the amount of exploitation of young people involved in the porn industry. So it's hurting people, right? So the basic answer is, look, if it's hurting people, that's probably incentive enough not to participate, right? Because by by consuming it, you are driving that harm to continue and you have an alternative on the other front, the alcohol front. It's great if you can take days off. Also, if you're not going to take days off, less is better. And here's a solution based on your scenario here. A I can't drink bear anymore cuz of the gluten thing but pint of cider or a pint of beer followed by a bike ride. It's really in some ways kind of ideal maybe not in heavy traffic. Right? Well but you wouldn't don't want to be biking heavy traffic anyway. So anyway, consider instead of having two or three pints have one pint and go for a ride and see if it doesn't get you there with half the consumption.

**Heather** 1:28:49

Yeah, well, I mean it's it's also true for alcohol like almost all drugs that taking a break makes the effects when you go back to it more interesting and powerful anyway, so you know it's been years since we've done this but for many years, I would I started and and you decided to adopt as well a habit of saying, okay, every month, every month is going to be at least one a week with no alcohol at all. And you know, no drinking more than what was it two days in a row or some two days or three days in a row? I don't remember exactly what the rules were. But it just, you know, it keeps you keeps you honest. And it also means that when you go back to it, you will actually feel it more and you enjoy it more and you know, what are you doing it if you're only doing it to numb the pain? Then there are there are bigger issues and probably hopefully, for someone in enough control to write this question. There are some better ways to to find to get rid of some of the pain.

**Bret** 1:29:45

Yep. Think of it as tantric drinking. All right. I think with that we have reached the end of the q&a section reached the end of something Yep.

**Bret** 1:29:59

That we did. All right, cool. Yes, the dog has reached the end of the something with us. So is there anything else we need to announce?

**Heather** 1:30:07

Yep, I consider joining us on our Patreon for access to a private q&a. Once a month on mine access to the discord server on either film access to Brett's monthly conversations with a small group of people. The next one is tomorrow.

**Bret** 1:30:21

Tomorrow I will send out another invite in case anybody signs up between now and tomorrow to make sure that you get the link.

**Heather** 1:30:30

And yeah, we will probably be back this Tuesday but we'll definitely back at some point soon. All right, be well