Bret and Heather 69th DarkHorse Podcast Livestream\_ Evolutio...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:06

Hey folks, welcome to the Dark Horse podcast live stream our 69th Dr. Heather hying. How goes it?

**Heather** 00:13

It goes pretty well. All right love.

**Bret** 00:15

Well, you know it's it's going reasonably well a little hectic this week, as you know, but, you know, it's it's all happening. We're still here. Let's put it that way.

**Heather** 00:23

We are still here. Those of you who are watching you're apparently still here or at least you're still there wherever there may be

**Bret** 00:29

interesting yes, no, I think that's a I think you nailed it. It's fully described.

**Heather** 00:35

True and uninteresting. True,

**Bret** 00:37

possibly uninteresting.

**Heather** 00:39

Yes. So today we're going to talk about power, race and social media. Right? We're going to talk about or worse COVID mortality and pre existing conditions a little bit. We are going to review a truly sexist obituary and what we should do about it, yes. And review a new finding and occupy or octopodes or octopuses they're all apparently legitimate pluralization of octopus

**Bret** 01:03

as luck would have it. I was speaking with Eric about occupy yesterday, and he prefers octopodes, which I think is legitimate.

**Heather** 01:14

I that is not one of the ones that I run into as I was looking for the proper pro pluralization. I'm sure there are any many many, but the three that I just said, are the most usual generalizations of octopus let

**Bret** 01:25

us agree to drive everyone crazy with octopuses. Which is it's one of the legitimate portals I know but it drives everyone crazy because everybody feels sophisticated saying occupy I think

**Heather** 01:37

I'm gonna go with octopodes, then octopodes. Alright,

**Bret** 01:39

cool.

**Heather** 01:40

So first though, if you are interested in more q&a after the q&a that follows today's live stream, we are having our monthly to our private q&a that you can access through my patreon how they're hiring tomorrow at 11am. Pacific and and next week, you will have your Patreon conversations. And there was maybe one more announcement before we launch into today.

**Bret** 02:07

Let's see. There's at least one more announcement. One is we will be giving away another clubhouse invite to anyone who wants it, they will be immediately useful to somebody who's got an iPhone. Apparently it doesn't work on iPad, which strikes me as odd. But nonetheless, Android is the clubhouse app. I have heard different. You have heard different. All right, well,

**Heather** 02:29

I know nothing about this, except that I have heard from people who are using iPads

**Bret** 02:33

and it's working. Okay, interesting. I looked it up the other day. And I could find no evidence of that. But I hope it does work on iPads. But in any case, even if you have an Android phone, you're welcome to enter our drawing for this by entering the hashtag clubhouse in the chat. And then a winner will be selected at the end of the broadcast. Was that the other announcement? Yep. All right. So then we've we've done all right, let's um, I wanted to start out with You're giving me that look, I'm just laughing, but you're not thinking about divorce? No. Okay, good. All right, then I'm, I'm cool with it. I can I can handle the look. So Alright, let's start out with a little consideration of power. And I must tell you that I'm thinking about this because of an event that took place yesterday on clubhouse and before you all change the channel, those of you who don't want to hear about clubhouse, as I predicted, some people would write and I get it, I get it. But here's what I want to tell you before. Yeah, yeah, you click away, right? If somebody was to start talking to you about face mash in 2003 you could well have the correct reaction. I want no part of hearing about this. That sounds awful. And it's not something I'm interested in. On the other hand, if you fast forward to 2021 and you realize that facemash becomes Facebook and for better or worse starts altering the way the world understands itself. Then being in on that discussion early on,

**Heather** 04:11

Madonna. Was it really cold facemask?

**Bret** 04:13

Yes. Okay.

**Heather** 04:16

That's that's one point of order. Second is just because the thing became important doesn't mean that everything that happens on it in its early instantiation is important. Also, what about my place or whatever my space was called before? I have no idea what any of these things were called. And obviously most of them are disappeared. So so you know, you and I this is actually one of the one of the places that you and I different than most that I am I hold myself intentionally at arm's length from almost all of the new stuff in order to retain my ability to think clearly and do creative work over in this space. Like I just don't want that polluting my head. So I am not buying into the like, obviously you need to pay attention anything here about face smash seriously faceman Yeah,

**Bret** 05:00

I think so i think so. I'm not saying anything like so many things that matter the vast bulk of what takes place there. And even one of the strengths of the platform is the ephemeral nature of what takes place there.

**Heather** 05:14

We're talking about face mesh. No, no,

**Bret** 05:17

we are now talking about clubhouse. But my point is, clubhouse doesn't know what it is yet. Even the people who've programmed it don't really know what it's going to end up being. At the moment it appears to be crashing into podcast world, right? We have all sorts of people coming through we hit last week, Bill Gates was on Sam Harris was on earlier we had Joe Rogan. Ilan Musk has been there. And all of these things have played out very differently. I would say, Bill Gates told us nothing we didn't already know from Bill Gates. On the other hand, Elon Musk interacted, as you might imagine, as somebody who is a denizen of the new online world, right? He actually participated with people. So anyway, something is happening there. And it's figuring out what it is. And my point is, even if your your understanding is that this is just a bad development, which it may well be, it's a development that is going to have a profound impact on your life, even if it's not clubhouse. Now it happens that Facebook and Twitter are now competing directly with clubhouse clubhouse, having discovered that there is apparently a hunger for conversations that are somewhere between Twitter space, and podcast space. And so there's this jockeying for position. And my point is, even if this is all bad, right? What it is going to be is unfolding. And, you know, it's very hard to move Twitter or Facebook now, right? They're too powerful, they're too big. But in the early days, the community that was there had influence. So again, I don't want to be in the position of defending this, this may be the next level of derangement of civilization that's coming. But at the moment, it's happening in real time, it's changing.

**Heather** 07:00

I think both are likely

**Bret** 07:02

could well be could well be, in any case, the event. So let me just set the stage for those who have not paid any attention to what clubhouse is that you want to put up that screenshot I sent you. Okay, so this is not the room in which things went insane. Yesterday, this is a room that is actually I think, currently on clubhouse contains some good people. Some people I know maceo, there's somebody well familiar, you see a nice, mixed group of people, men, women racially mixed. In any case, these guys, I don't know what's going on in this room. But these people are running some sort of an experiment about how to affect room dynamics. Right. Okay, so yesterday, what took place. So what you see on the screen is

**Heather** 07:50

said like, since I have not been on it, I don't think you have said that it's voice only. And then it's a femoral. Maybe you said it was a femoral,

**Bret** 07:58

I'm about to explain it. So there are rooms, the rooms that you see, to go into our rooms that involve people that you follow, there is a wrinkle, that there's the ability to block people. And I think if anybody on the stage has blocked you, you don't even see that a room is available. And inside the room, there are two, there are really three. But for our purposes, there are two levels, there's a stage, anybody on the stage can talk at any time that they want. people in the audience cannot talk in general, people in the audience can click the button in the lower right hand corner and asked to come on the stage. And the moderators have discretion over whether or not to bring them up. So that's the dynamic. What happened yesterday is that Michael Tracy, the journalist started a room in when the title was approximately his clubhouse to obsessed with woke ism or something like that. In any case, I went into this room quite late. I think the discussion was well underway. Michael Tracy was, I believe, having difficulty moderating the room. A person came onto the stage to speak and challenge the fact that there were by her accounting, no people of color, with moderator privileges. Michael Tracy made her a moderator. I did not see that interaction, but that's what I've been told. And then a coup took place. And everybody in the room acknowledged by the end of this discussion that it was a coup. So the person who had been given moderator privileges first kicked Michael Tracy out of the off the stage, then kicked all white people off the stage and the conversation radically shifted. And it you know, so it was a takeover. Now, at one level who cares about some takeover in some ephemeral room on clubhouse on the other And the nature of clubhouse is a discussion. And what took place in that room was stunning not just to me, but to many people, including Peter Bogosian, who is in the audience, and Benjamin Boyce. Now, I would just point out that Peter Bogosian, Benjamin Boyce and myself are three very well versed people when it comes to discussions of wokeness racial interactions, right? It would be hard to impress us. And yet all three of us were impressed with what took place in this room, it was shocking, impressed in a negative way, from endlessly nagging. And my suspicion is that most people have not heard a conversation like this one. And so in any case, the the nature of the eye, I think, probably Peter and Benjamin and I are going to have to discuss what took place there in order that people can get any real deep sense of what it was. But what was just fascinating was the fact that although in general, there is a wide diversity of opinions in any clubhouse conversation above a few people, the diversity of opinion dropped to zero. And what happened was increasingly outlandish things were asserted on the stage with no objection from anybody, which spoke to what I'm going to claim as a kind of power.

**Heather** 11:34

And one of the obvious results of this will be that anyone who is on clubhouse and paying attention to it, and who knows what you just described in moderator, who is chastised who is out asked to add someone else based on a demographic may well not to do so in the future. And so legitimate inquiries about increasing diversity that might be legitimate, although we can put aside for the moment whether or not seeking diversity across demographic features is going to maximize kinds of conversation quality. But this is likely to cause exactly the opposite thing, this is going to mean quite literally silo people more because future conversations by moderators, who have created a group around them of people who who don't, because it's who they know, look somewhat like them in some regard. If a woman says you need more women out, you need a woman on the stage or a black person says you need a black person on the stage. Those moderators now have legitimate reason to be concerned that what is happening is not good faith, but it's actually a coup attempt.

**Bret** 12:45

So perfect. you've just described the birth of a Kafka trap, right? You're now damned if you do and damned if you don't. And so that, of course, is a very dangerous dynamic, right? Right. One certainly wants and in fact, in general, people have been pretty generous with moderator privileges. And in general, the rooms are pretty well served by having a fair number of people from different perspectives, have those privileges, but obviously, if anybody can kick anyone off the stage, and you know, I mean,

**Heather** 13:16

so the idea is that any moderator has as complete a set of privileges as any other moderator regardless of whether or not you set up the room or just, you know, just added

**Bret** 13:24

Exactly. And so this then goes to minutely gamble. So gamble. And so I wanted to think I wanted to think out loud a little bit on the question of what is power, because what I saw yesterday take place over I mean, I was in the room for, I don't know, three plus hours. What I saw took place was a clear demonstration of power. And in fact, the very first thing that took place in the immediate aftermath of this coup, I think I'm shortchanged the story just a little bit was that a bunch of people on the stage and it's very hard to tell when many people are trying to speak at once who's speaking, it is relatively easy to tell when one person is speaking at a time and rooms differ as to whether or not people talk over each other or wait their turn. But in this case, many people appeared to raise their voice and tried to prevent this. ushering of people off the stage, they wanted a room in which there was room to disagree. All of those people were eliminated. So what you had was inside of, I don't know maybe it was 30 seconds. You had a stage that was diverse, become at least at a racial level become segregated so segregation happened in this room almost instantly.

**Heather** 14:48

But and you know, frankly, more importantly at an ideological level.

**Bret** 14:51

Exactly. That's the thing is not only was it racially segregated, but it was limited to those people who were apparently and this became apparent Over the course of hours, were apparently willing to sign on to anything offered by anyone in the room including completely preposterous ideas.

**Heather** 15:08

I mean, if john McWhorter or Coleman Hughes or Thomas Chatterton Williams or Chloe, Valerie, or you know any number of other, you know, smart black people had shown up and said, I'd like to come up on the stage, I don't think they would have been welcomed. by by by by your account if what it sounds like was happening, right.

**Bret** 15:24

In fact, john McWhorter was Miss portrayed on the stage was portrayed as a conservative, not surprising, but he was portrayed that way I was brought up somebody noticed me in the audience, I was brought up, basically to be cross examined, I was You mean, brought up to the stage or mentioned, okay, I was brought up to the stage and I was asked if I was a white supremacist, I was asked again,

**Heather** 15:48

oh, this, it's almost the four year anniversary, why not play this game again?

**Bret** 15:52

Well, but this is this is exactly it. And so whatever else we can say about this environment, at one level, this was a lot like the ability of somebody, imagine a virtual, I'm not a fan of virtual reality. I'm very frightened about what it's going to do to people's cognition over time. But imagine virtual reality that would allow you to teleport into the Evergreen riots with no physical safety issue. But the ability to be first person in that situation, how much would that do for people's understanding of whether this was or wasn't an important event? Whether it was or wasn't being misrepresented? Right, that ability to just be present is very persuasive. And so I have the sense, frankly, that people generally people on both the woke and the anti woke side would have their viewpoint altered by, you know, the ability to participate in this conversation, even just to sit in the audience and hear it taking place in front of them. What I think convinced a great many people that something important was going on, and many people I expect, even on the woke side would have the sense of Actually, I don't want any part of that, right. Because all of those claims are, I don't want to say although frankly, virtually every claim that was made was extraordinary.

**Heather** 17:11

Okay, so what's to be done then? Yeah, so this thing was a femoral. And you saw it firsthand. It's part of the first time you've seen this firsthand. And so did Benjamin Boyce, not his first time at the rodeo either. Peter Bogosian, same thing, you know, and I presume I know less about Michael Tracy, but I believe that he knows enough about this to have recognized at least in retrospect, what was happening. So, you know, you were not further informed. There you you think there would be value in people in other people who did not choose to be there in hearing or reading this, this thing that was ephemeral? What, what that, you know, what does it mean, or what value can be derived from it?

**Bret** 18:01

Alright, so, for one thing, let's just say Peter was actually tweeting about this this morning about this conversation. And his point was the constant refrain in this discussion, or at least the recurrent refrain was that it all must be burned down, that this is effectively

**Heather** 18:18

that civilization, almost civilization must be burned

**Bret** 18:21

civilization is effectively white, and that whiteness taints it beyond repair, and it must be burned down. Now my point is, for the vast majority of people who have had it, right, who have had it and maybe marching with BLM, the discovery, that there is at least a a contingent wielding substantial power, whose viewpoint is actually our purposes to burn this down, and then things will be better because they can't be worse. Right? That discovery, the discovery that a great many people who call themselves abolitionists, whether they are talking about prisons, or the police, or generally both, right, that abolitionists have taken that honorable term and basically turned it on its head and are think it's clever to uninvent civilization and that imagine that somehow that will improve things that that would be a wake up call that would actually allow us it would be the gateway to the actual conversation that we need to be having. And so, this brings me back to the question of power. So loosely speaking, I would say power is the ability to reallocate or redirect limited resources, right, whether that is people's time, whether it is their attention, whether it is money, right whether it is access to a coveted spot in a school in a an organization, whatever it is, the ability to reallocate a limited resource is power. Now my point is power, tremendous power is being wielded by a movement that is composed of people who act We have positions that cannot be reconciled with each other, the burn it all down people are a substantial contention. But there are lots of people who would not burn it down and know better than to burn it down, who are wielding power together with them. And my point is, those two need to see each other, right. And those of us on the outside need to understand actually, that the movement is these two unreconcilable things. And that means that we potentially have partners inside that movement who we can reach if they will stop signing on to this reflexive reaction.

**Heather** 20:33

Well, I mean, I think this is consistent with what we've been talking about since the protests began last May and June. And what Jeremy Quinn in your two conversations with him that are on this channel talked about as well that that he learned by going to many of the protests and I think some of the riots and then also to the the protests that turned into a riot at the Capitol on January 6, by, you know, a totally different group of people. That really, with regard to the people on the so called left. It's not one one thing, it's not one organization. And early, you know, we in fact, we sit we saw some people who identified themselves as part of Black Lives Matter saying what the hell is going on with the anarchists and anti fog? And you know, the anarchists, some of them will say, oh, we're not anti fog, and vice versa, and Black Lives Matter not and like what is trans Black Lives Matter doing in with the rest of this? And we know what Where did wall of moms come from? And, you know, there's so many different moving parts? I think it's actually it's a it's a good way in perhaps to say it's not one thing, it's two, but it's not two. It's it's many, many, many, and many of the people who are just kind of fence sitters, which is a majority of the of the silent people right now who are, you know, think they're good liberals and therefore have to agree to this stuff. aren't sure what all they believe? And also, the Martin Bailey is being played all the time. And so they'll hear something about all white people are racist, like, Oh, really? Okay, I didn't know that's like, Well, you know, probably not you, or you know, whatever it is, that happens then later on, that allows them to say, well, that I know that thing sounds harsh. But I also know I'm on board with this movement, because this is the you know, this is about civil rights. This is the next civil rights, you know, thing that has to happen, the only way forward is to, you know, abolish the police or, you know, abandon all of history, what, you know, whatever, whatever garbagey conclusion is, has come in on the legitimate grievances. They're being wrapped up all nice and tidy in some pretty paper and some nice bows. And I think what you're saying basically is, you know, this was a view behind the curtain. This was this was a view of what the conversation can actually sound like, at times, with, you know, with people who were doing so in a kind of public space, it's not exactly public, because this is invitation only, and they booted, a lot of the people who they didn't want,

**Bret** 23:02

yes, and in fact, the night prior to this event, I was in a room with some of the same people who were playing a very different role. And the ostensible purpose of the room the night before, was to build bridges. And it was, it was, I don't think especially successful, but nonetheless, the, even just the ability to detect that the same people are playing a very different role and revealing a very different side of themselves in different circumstances, is, you know, compel I mean, you know, let's think about, you know, Nyima and the difference between the way Nyima came across before evergreen started to melt down in faculty meetings, long winded but you know, she behaved like colleague and then there was a point at which it was like, oh, okay, we're the enemy I guess.

**Heather** 23:54

Well, I do think that somehow and modernity many people assume that it is not just allowed but expected to have multiple personas and that you know, you'll certainly know we're supposed to dress differently when we go to work and we you know, have a slightly different personality and you're supposed to make sure that whatever you know, if you if you're young, you know, your social media posts from, you know, your party life don't don't bleed over into your professional life, right? So it's sort of it's, it's, like I say, not just not just okay, but sort of expected that you're going to have these different modes of being and this, this was always actually really from the beginning of us being professors at evergreen. One of the things that struck me as hypocritical among our colleagues, and it was hardly limited to the faculty at evergreen was the was the complete change of personality and attitude towards students in particular that happened as soon as they weren't on stage. As soon as the door closes, or now it's just faculty. You know, the mask is off and it was I was reprehensible. That's that was actually deplorable. And I think that this, you know, faculty are, are really encouraged to do this to, to actually have disdain for students. And you know, that's not what we're talking about here. This isn't the faculty student relationship. But I think that this thing is true more widely. And everyone regardless of whether or not they've been a teacher or a college faculty, everyone's been a student pretty much except for those perhaps very few lucky of those who are who have been unschooled. And everyone has had a bad teacher, I think, you know, hopefully, we've all had good teachers too. But I think everyone's had a bad teacher. And many times what bad teacher is, is actually obscuring the fact that the teacher has no respect for you, as a human being sees you as a button, a seat that has to do has to tick some boxes that they can give a grade or whatever at the end, and then be done with you. And many of us can detect that, like we can detect it, even if we're not the ones who are earning their disdain, we can see the disdain directed other people or in ourselves, or whatever. And, boy, if people knew what, at least many college faculty actually say, when the doors are closed. I can't imagine wanting to send my children into a situation where such people had an ability to form an opinion at all. And so you know, this, the fact that you had people one night, sounding one way and the next day sounding a totally different way, and really a kind of an inhuman, or at least a dehumanizing by whether or not they were behaving in a new way. They were attempting to dehumanize others. This is appalling, and I think is sort of one of the horsemen of the existential apocalypse that is happening, but I'm not surprised.

**Bret** 26:45

But yeah, I'm obviously not surprised, either, because it's not the first time I've seen it. Yeah. The, you know, the point you make about professors is so deep, right? And I don't, I don't understand how they even end up there. Right? I

**Heather** 27:01

don't know how you stand up in front in front of people whom you actively disdain. I don't know how you doing

**Bret** 27:06

right? It seems like if that's your feeling about it, then why are you there? Yeah, can be different work. Yeah, get different work. But nonetheless, it is a common feature. Now, I think it's interesting. As long as we're here, you and I dealt with this boundary a little differently as professors right from each other, or from each other perfectly consistently. And I would say there was zero lack of authenticity about you as a professor, but there was a slight layer of increased formality. Right? You didn't you're not, you did not completely let your hair down in the role of Professor except with students that you knew very, very well.

**Heather** 27:44

And, and so knows in the field? Yes, definitely. Now, for me, especially has the farther away the longer you know, as I say to them, and bad luck, we're going to be together for you know, six 811 weeks, like, we're going to be just our human selves with one another completely

**Bret** 28:00

right? And in some ways, the field forces that whether you like it or not, right, because

**Heather** 28:04

well, I don't know, actually, because the vast majority of study abroad programs are crap. And the faculty don't engage with the students and they're not actually spending time with them. And they're like, meeting them for two hours a day, even in a field station and being like, okay, now we have this assignment. And now I'm going to go back and do my faculty thing and you do your student thing. So yeah, it doesn't force it. If you're not if you're if you're trying not to teach, which most people seem to be doing. Yeah, I

**Bret** 28:27

take it back in the field the way we did the field forces it but but the field is not inherently force it you can go back to your cabin and behave and think differently and just only interact with the students a very limited amount. But anyway, in front of the class, I felt like and I think this is just an idiosyncrasy of mine. Right. I think probably the way you did things where you kept a level of formality, right? But it was not inauthentic is so

**Heather** 28:53

are you confusing formality with preparation? No,

**Bret** 28:56

no, not at all.

**Heather** 28:57

Okay. You know, that was a little bit of a dig but I think you can understand what i what i mean by that.

**Bret** 29:03

No, I mean, look at that, that was there two different quests. Okay. But you know, just the fact that you know, I probably shouldn't admit this, but I, you know, I cursed in front of the class. At the same level I do at home, right? It just wasn't distinct.

**Heather** 29:23

Okay, but at home, I curse more than you do. Then in class. I curse less than you do, but I still curse. So it just probably felt like it wasn't a legitimate thing to do. Well,

**Bret** 29:36

yeah, I'm not sure I'm not sure what it means. But I sort of, you know, look, I think the thing is, I was overcoming an obstacle that was unique to me, one that you don't face, which is that because I was such a lousy student is one way to say it. Because I was such a bad match for school.

**Heather** 29:54

That's that that is true. And, frankly, more power do. Yeah,

**Bret** 29:58

yeah. So anyway, In order to do the job of being in the role of Professor, I had to do it in a way that was not inconsistent with I didn't want to be one of those, you know, do as I say not as I do, you know, parents effectively so the role of Professor I wanted to be who I was, and then the point is okay, this is a different kind of end, you know, I will say, in my defense, every time I taught a new class, every time I invested very heavily in telling people exactly what they were getting into. I was merciless, about my flaws, and how they would impact people. And so the point was, look, your sign I'm not saying it's not worth it, but you're signing up for that. Right?

**Heather** 30:41

And most people didn't believe you though, because I mean, even that, this conversation, okay, no, it just I don't, we're, we're farfield Yes,

**Bret** 30:50

we are farfield. Alright, so maybe we should, maybe we should cap this off here. And just say, there is something about this environment that is allowing things to be seen in this context that are difficult for people to see otherwise, and that the ability to tune into it might be worth paying more attention to than just the fact of some new social media platform showing up on the landscape.

**Heather** 31:17

Granted, alright. Excuse me. Um, all right, where should we go next? Um, there's a new paper called, let's do this next. Coronavirus, disease 2019 hospitalizations attributable to cardio metabolic conditions in the United States colon, a comparative risk assessment analysis. That is a mouthful, but that is the title of the new paper. o'hern at all 2021. And before, I'm just going to read a tiny bit from it before we talk about it. But I will say that, unlike I have, I've ended up dissecting a number of papers on this podcast. And that is what I like to do. And not not hopefully not to find tragic flaws, although a lot of the papers we've talked about here have been tragically flawed. But in order that we don't just take the author's word for what it is that they found. And so you have to spend actual real time with the methods and results. And still you don't have the actual data. So you can actually redo the analysis. But you have to, in some cases, like some some one of the review papers, that was finding asymptomatic transmission, and I thought I revealed I think that this was a total crap paper and a total crap conclusion, you could actually discern where it was that they had generated those data. In this this paper, though, is really complicated. And, and there's a lot of layers that make it more difficult to assess it independently. So we are basically going to stay at the level of if the if the author's assessment of what they found his true, this is what it means deductive

**Bret** 33:02

logic working forward from the conclusions. Yeah, yeah, exactly. So rather than the just section and sometimes vivisection of papers that I have seen you do participated in here on the pod,

**Heather** 33:15

which I have to say, as much as I wish that no papers are worthy of vivisection. I do find it a somewhat enjoyable task.

**Bret** 33:22

Do you do it? Well, thank you.

**Heather** 33:25

So I'm not I will have you share my screen, but not yet. sec. So just in the introduction, they say, in the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis of available national data among individuals diagnosed with COVID-19, a 35 year old with diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, obesity, or other chronic conditions had a similar risk of COVID-19 related hospitalization as a 35 year old with other comorbidities as a 75 year old with none of these conditions, and a similar risk of COVID-19 related death as a 65 year old with none of these conditions, a dramatic biologic aging effect of poor metabolic health on risk of severity of a viral infection such as COVID-19. So that is a pre existing piece of research from the CDC that this paper is citing. And then I want to Why does my company as soon as we plug the computer into this system for live streams, everything goes awry. Okay. Here is this is just the paper. It's in the Journal of the American Heart Association, O'Hearn it all just published, and I'm just going to read their set aside box here clinical perspective, what is new meaning what is new in this paper? patients with cardio metabolic conditions in particular obesity, hypertension, diabetes mellitus and heart failure have a high risk of poor outcomes from Coronavirus disease 2019 infection, that's actually not new. We already knew that. Those are some of the major comorbidities for COVID-19 for bad outcomes. And for actually getting the disease at all, among nine among more than 900,000 uS Coronavirus disease 2019 hospitalizations through November 18 2020, nearly two thirds 63.5% were estimated to be attributable to these cardio metabolic conditions that is preventable if these conditions had not been present. Top risks were obesity, which is explaining 30% of that nearly two thirds hypertension 26% Diabetes mellitus at 21%. And then heart disease was I think about 12 or so. And then what are the clinical implications, clinicians should educate their patients who may be at risk and consider promoting preventative lifestyle measures such as improved dietary quality and physical activity to improve overall cardio metabolic health and potentially minimize the risk for Coronavirus, disease 2019 severity at some level, again, assuming that they have done this, you know, this is like massive data review and analysis accurately, which includes lots of places where there are models and lots of places for it not to have been done brilliantly. At some level, I feel like, finally, finally someone is doing this kind of work and talking directly about, about actually what makes you as an individual more likely to have a bad outcome among those factors that you actually potentially have control over. You know, there's been a lot of talk about age. And it's true, right? The older you are, the more at risk you are of getting and of of having a poor outcome from the disease. But you can't do anything about that we don't we don't have the solution to that yet. Sex, men are more likely to both get slightly and have bad outcomes more so COVID-19, then women, and then race and actually, to some degree, black people, but really, Latina what is often described as Hispanic people have much worse outcomes compared to their many more Hispanics are affected than you would expect from background rates of Hispanics in the population. So those are those are all true things about what you can't do anything. Right? You can't just frankly, you can't just declare yourself a different age, or a different sex or a different race, right. But these comorbidities, you potentially can't not all of them and not if you're really you know, really far gone. But if you start to eat better, and be more active in your life, you can reduce your obesity, and your hypertension, and potentially deal with your diabetes mellitus. All of these are at least affected by and in some cases, majorly affected by lifestyle choices.

**Bret** 37:53

So I of course, fully agree with that. And there is an obvious discussion to be had about the absurdities of this moment. And the idea that to discuss such things is to pretend that a particular body form is more healthy, when in fact, of course, a particular body form is more healthy. Now I'm fat shaming, right? You could be dismissed as fat shaming, and to the extent that the data seem to reflect that this is not fat shaming, this is just analysis, then we can also complain that data, the very idea of data logic sciences, white supremacist, whatever it is, and so obviously, the right analysis is No, none of that is true, right? That is not to say science hasn't been put to bad ends or bent to particular populations, desires or needs or whatever. Of course it is. But the point is, those tools are actually indifferent to who you are, if you use them, right. And the thing that I want to point out is that there's a whole set of analyses that one wants, in effect, there are going to be dozens of factors involved in how likely you are to contract COVID-19. And what happens to you after you do right, type O blood appears to be involved, it seems to be somewhat protective as compared to type a.

**Heather** 39:01

So we talked about that in like our first or second live stream. And I haven't seen anything about that for many months now. Have you seen anything?

**Bret** 39:08

Yes, I did see something recent, but I don't have it, maybe but that seems to be holding seems to be hold. But here's here's the point. Type O blood is not going to be independent of all these other factors. So does the fact that black people and Hispanic people are facing more COVID does that hold if we control for vitamin D? Probably because the comparison between blacks and Hispanics likely involves blacks making less vitamin D as a result of just being on

**Heather** 39:37

average, darker, or if we control for obesity and hypertension rights, right?

**Bret** 39:41

And so that's what you really want to do is figure out how many of these things are correlated indirectly through something else, right through some through cultural factors, right? How many people live in a household can have effects. You know, it could be genetic factors, but indirect like melanin production and its interface with by Deep production,

**Heather** 40:01

one of the things we talked about earlier, a paper you brought to the discussion was the local subway lines that people were forced to take more than people were more likely to be forced to take to get to work if they lived in low income areas in New York City, this was in New York City based subway and rice,

**Bret** 40:16

which was a beautiful case of something that had nothing to do inherently with biology, but was having impacts on biology by virtue of the way the city is constructed, right?

**Heather** 40:25

This, the neighborhoods in the city were effectively segregated by ethnicity. And so people of certain ethnicities were at more risk of getting the thing, because they happen to live in places. And we're taking these subway lines where they were stuck in these tiny cars with lots of people getting on and off all the time.

**Bret** 40:43

So anyway, one wants the analysis of variance that picks apart all of the factors figures out which ones are actually directly correlated, and which ones evaporate when you control for their connection to other things. And then you would be maximally armed. And so in some sense, we all carry around this, you know, this stuff from the beginning, which is very probably true. In fact, it's hard to imagine how it's false that age is this dominant factor, but the point is, okay, if in effect, obesity causes you to behave like somebody who's much older, right, with respect to contracting COVID-19, then the point is, well, you don't have control over the age, but you might have control over the obesity, right? And so thinking in these terms, like, okay, we all probably have a few tick marks against us with respect to COVID-19. And then we have some other places where, you know, we may have the opportunity to do something. And the question is, well, how low can you get your risk? And, you know, if you can't get your risk metabolically low, maybe you need to correct for it behaviorally, right. So the point is armed with information, you are in the best position to manage this, which also means stopping the focus on death, which is worse, you know, death is very important. But from the point of view of, actually, you may get over this thing, but it may rob you of a decade of life by virtue of what it's done to your lungs or your circulatory tissue. That's a very important factor. And anyway, the only right answer here is for us to figure out how to do these analyses. So they're not polluted. So that our information and therefore our models, both formal and informal, get better over time, which then arms us maximally to protect ourselves and to, you know, to, to, to choose our future, you know, collectively, like, at what point do we, you know, say, Well, this is under control enough, that we have to prioritize the world moving forward, right, that's a discussion we can only have if we have really good information on where we are and what our actual risks?

**Heather** 42:46

Yes, no, that's right. And, you know, unfortunately, all of the new variants are making that conversation even harder to have. Because, oh, you know, we, we might have expected that, in fact, I think we predicted early on that this was, you know, this, this is likely to become less Fairyland over time, it's effectively I have seen a number of other scientists propose this is likely to become just a circulating background disease that effectively children get exposed to, and thus have some immunity to going forward. I don't know that I've seen no one attempt an analysis of what these different variants that are wildly different in terms of both transmissibility and death rate might do to them analysis, right, like or even like how we proceed with analysis in the light of those really.

**Bret** 43:40

And, you know, I mean, we've got two novel factors here, one, the ultimate wildcard if this isn't a natural virus, if this is a modified virus, then it will not abide by our expectations, evolutionarily that are based on what wild viruses do when they jump. Now, it's also quite possible that it would be novel in its own right, having jumped from nature with no human tinkering, maybe this is just going to follow a different pattern, and we're going to learn something about viruses we didn't know. But if it's modified, if it is enhanced, then one expects a very different pattern to emerge from this. The other thing is that these vaccines are, it is increasingly clear to me that these vaccines are novel not only with respect to the frightening interaction that they have with systems where we can't predict what the long term impact is going to be because we haven't seen it yet. And we're

**Heather** 44:39

talking specifically about the mRNA vaccines are also about the DNA vaccine. So just to so we've talked a lot about vaccines on the show before but we've got Pfizer and Madonna, Pfizer and Pfizer and violin tech and Madonna vaccines, those two, which are widespread in the US at this point, which are both mRNA vaccines. Then you've got the AstraZeneca slash Oxford vaccine, which It looks like there's not going to be available in the US, but it's available a few other places and Johnson and Johnson, which may be about to get FDA approval in the US, both of those AstraZeneca. And Johnson and Johnson, are DNA vaccines, also not traditional, but they use a delivery mechanism of an adenovirus, rather than these lipid nanoparticles. Yep.

**Bret** 45:19

And I see in, you know, various comments that we get in various places, we're having trouble conveying the evolutionary approach here. So to the extent that the AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson vaccines are not a tried and true technology, there's somewhat more tried and true than the lipid nanoparticles that are used for the mRNA vaccine, one part of them is tried and true. One part of them is more traditional vaccine wise. But what it also is, is something that we have evolutionary experience with that has nothing to do with vaccines, that is to say, experience with a dino viruses, right. So that experience with a dino viruses that our ancestors, and probably each of us has had actually makes us safer as well. But in any case, the so when I'm talking about the novel factor of the vaccines I'm actually talking about so we really got two categories. We've got the mRNA vaccines and their lipid nanoparticles, and the adenovirus vaccines,

**Heather** 46:21

DNA vaccines and their adenoviruses just to be very careful about mRNA with lipid nanoparticles, DNA with the Dino Crisis. So the

**Bret** 46:29

adenovirus vaccines are carrying their information in the form of DNA, which then gets translated into RNA, which then creates spike protein, which then alerts the immune system exactly as the mRNA vaccines do. But there is another unique factor here, which has nothing to do with the delivery mechanism at all in which in both in all four of these vaccines, the two different categories for vaccines, and that is that we are very narrowly targeting the spike protein. And by very narrowly targeting the spike protein, we are creating a an evolutionary, a concentrated evolutionary force, where as cruder, more primitive vaccine technologies that you know, take a whole virus and either break it up or neutralize its pathogenic effect, those things are much more general. And so the comparison

**Heather** 47:26

be more precise about that. But when you say they're much more general, you're basically you're giving your body an attenuated or you know, pieces of the original virus on your body can then develop an ability to recognize lots of different parts of that, whereas the four vaccines that we named the two mRNA, and the two DNA vaccines only provide the body with an ability to recognize the spike protein, which means that if the spike protein is to change just to list one possible problem with this, if the spike protein is to evolve, then all the all of these four vaccines are rendered useless,

**Bret** 48:08

not useless, less useful, less useful, but it does two things. I mean, this is the thing we're in, if this weren't so politicized, this would be incredibly fast, so politicized and so dangerous. This would be fascinating, because what we're doing is experimenting with a much more targeted vaccine, right? narrowly targeted, that narrowly targeted vaccine increases the likelihood of our vaccines becoming more useless over time, because we're creating a very precise attack that the virus will be favored to resist. However, it also creates the possibility of effectively swapping out the information in these vaccines without going through the rest of it,

**Heather** 48:52

which is part of why at least, I mean, I know much less about the DNA vaccine development, but the mRNA vaccine development has the potential to be so fast, and indeed, apparently one of them I don't remember, which was actually created in a weekend back in like, February or March of last year. And you know, if they turn out to be as safe and effective as the whole world is hoping that they are, then this really does mean that future pandemics could be halted pretty quickly, with you know, widespread inoculation by new rapidly developed mRNA vaccines

**Bret** 49:27

potentially now what you really want to know is how much of the variance in the risk that comes with these things is due to the delivery mechanism? And how much is due to the the informational content, whether it's in mRNA? Or DNA? Yeah, because if the danger is in the informational content, then you can't make the safety process rep more rapid, right? You have to go through it. On the other hand, if the danger is really in the delivery mechanism, then a maybe we can refine that right, we can reduce the danger and still get the delivery, and then be swap out the information. And you could even imagine a future not so far down the road, where you might not have to have centralized creation of these things you could have, you know, effectively, like printing newspapers in each town, right? You could have a factory printing for vaccines, the equivalent, right, you could have that sort of thing taking place. So that as the thing as we got really good at tracking pathogens and epidemics, we would also get really good at delivering, you know, it could be targeted in the sense that your vaccine could be built for the particular strains that are circulating in your municipality. So anyway, there's lots of possibilities here. But boy, what a dangerous experiment, we're discovering this stuff in

**Heather** 50:50

Indian. And then anything else there?

**Bret** 50:54

No.

**Heather** 50:55

All right. We move on to sexism in science.

**Bret** 50:59

I thought we were gonna go to the the vaccination of children.

**Heather** 51:06

I don't I didn't follow through on that. So I have some links, but I don't I didn't spend any time with the research.

**Bret** 51:15

So you put up the the paper.

**Heather** 51:17

Yeah. Well, I don't think you have it. sec. I have this. This isn't an original paper. This is just a report. Yeah. This is a science news article published this week. So in science vaccine trials ramp up and children, adolescents. And let's see, there's a quote here, if memory serves, here we go. Adult deaths from COVID-19 worth those children. In the United States, for example, young people make up about 250 to 500,000 total deaths. But for children COVID-19 is still quote causing more deaths and influenza doesn't a typical season, says Douglas dykema, a pediatrician and bioethicists at Seattle Children's Hospital, quote, those are unnecessary deaths and should be prevented.

**Bret** 52:03

So I found this report a bit upsetting. Not only. So first of all, to say it still causes more deaths than influenza in a given year. A turns out to be questionable. So I've got that blank. Yeah, you want to show that.

**Heather** 52:22

So again, I just I did not spend any time here. So I just I went and looked at the CDC on influenza. And this is Oh, boy. So in the 2019 2020 influenza season, there were 188 reported pediatric flu deaths. And that was a fairly high year, apparently. But you scroll down, and you find that again, you like I was not ready for this. Oh, here we go. Well, any death in a child from a vaccine preventable illness is a tragedy. The number of pediatric flu deaths reported to CDC each season is likely an undercount. For example, even though the reported number of deaths during the 20 1718 flu season was 188, CDC estimates and that turns out to be the same number, I think this year, CDC estimates the actual number was closer to 600. It is likely the actual number of children who died from flu during the 2019 2020 season is higher as well. And I would say this is you know, based on no data, but that given the ways that COVID deaths have been counted, that I think if there is an error in attributing deaths to COVID in children, it's the other way, it's an over count. And the CDC is telling us that they think that deaths attributable to flu and children is reliably an undercount. And if those two even if those things aren't true, those two numbers of deaths so far from COVID, and deaths this last year from flu, and children are so close, that you would at least need to do his testicle analysis. And you know, this, this claim from this pediatrician and bioethicist, that it's it's higher, higher deaths and COVID, in children from COVID, than from flu is suspect at best. And the idea that we are making policy based on this policy, which involves vaccinating children, is scary.

**Bret** 54:18

Yeah, not only making policy, but doing so in a way that has hidden hazards that aren't discussed here. So actually, Zack, would you put up the graph that I sent you? So this is also CDC in origin. This is 2019 2018 2019. And you can see there that the number of flu deaths in zero to four is at two. Can you read it? Yeah, it's

**Heather** 54:51

252 6667. But then five to 17 is to 11. So I don't know you know, I don't know what the children do more. occasion is for COVID. But certainly it's over four.

**Bret** 55:03

Right now.

**Heather** 55:04

So that's that's a bigger number than we were saying

**Bret** 55:07

right now. Go back to the the report, the science news article. Yeah, the science news article. Okay. Now, unfortunately, what sector show this? Yeah, you can show it and scroll up. Unfortunately, I can't see it there. But I believe that the numbers here. So I saw wasn't here, embarrassing, but they had a deaths in the zero to one t range. And by saying zero to zero to 20 years old years old. Exactly. I can't find it there. But it creates a bias because effectively what we've got is evidence that very young children are pretty well protected, and that the numbers are very low. What they're not saying here and what troubles me is that Okay, first of all, it's manipulative, to say any these deaths are preventable and any is too many, right? Coming out against the death of children is, you know, not it is a position that everybody will embrace, and many will strongly do so on an emotional basis.

**Heather** 56:18

No, but it at best pretends and at worst, no, it at best, doesn't understand and at worst, pretends that trade offs don't exist,

**Bret** 56:27

right, exactly. And so there is reason to keep children away from these vaccines that comes from the fact that they, by virtue of their age, are very well protected from catching and train and early transmitting and transmitting and suffering bad outcomes, right? And they've

**Heather** 56:47

got the most of their lives to live to experience what we hope are no, but might be long term side effects of these new vaccines.

**Bret** 56:55

That's exactly it. Not only do they have more of their lives ahead of them in which bad outcomes could emerge, imagine outcomes that are delayed 30 or 40 years, right? If you're 50, and you get a vaccine that has a delayed bad outcome, right? You may not live to experience that or it may not compromise much of your life. But if you're young, of course, it will. But But the other thing is developmental. Right. The question is, what is the age at which it is most reasonable to start vaccinating right now You and I, in dealing with vaccinations for our children, and we did fully vaccinate them. But we had a rubric, which was to delay each of the vaccinations as long as possible, so that we would get the full protection of those vaccine, there was no point in vaccinating kids against things that they weren't going to encounter. So we vaccinated them at the point that an encounter with the pathogen was likely

**Heather** 57:51

and we delayed, we delayed travel, you know, the reason part of the reason that I was doing study abroad alone for many years, when I was just driven to do it, and I wanted you to be part of it, and our children to be part of it. And you know, you really pushed back against it and said there, you know, yes, lots of people live in these places. But you know, we're we're not going to put our children in the situation where we have to choose between exposing them to diseases and vaccinating them earlier than, than we think they should be vaccinated. And so we didn't take them, for instance, to, you know, the Ecuadorian Amazon, until we felt that they were old enough to get the full, you know, yellow fever and all the rest of the vaccinations that they really, we felt they needed to have in order to be safe there,

**Bret** 58:30

right? So, okay, we're gonna vaccinate kids who are better protected, are more are going to have likely to have greater impacts, both because of the amount of time and because of the early stage in their development in which they're encountering these vaccines, which open up possibilities for bad outcomes that adults won't have. And at the same time, in that article, it describes the fact that because we have pretty good data from the the safety trials that have already been done, these trials are being scaled back in terms of the number, right, so basically, this is being treated as pro forma, which is exactly the opposite of a responsible approach to this, the responsible approach would say, kids have less to gain and more to lose, we should be very sure about the safety. And then we should figure out what the age is rather than clumping people's zero to 20. Right? Which is crazy, because you know, kids 1819 do have some substantial risk. So anyway, but the elephant in the room, of course, is the perverse incentives surrounding the profitability of vaccinating everybody. And so I increasingly think we have to worry about what role that is playing Yeah, does not make sense to me. Maybe somebody will explain to us why, why we don't get it, but doesn't make sense to me that all of the people who definitely had COVID, and I understand there's a problem with people who may have had COVID, right, but people who definitely had COVID, they've had the equivalent of a vaccine, and it's not obvious that this couldn't be compromised immunity and waves that we discussed last time. Or at the very least, be needless and expose them to risks that we can't say much about because they could be very well delayed, and we haven't seen the outcomes here. So at the level of a desire to vaccinate everyone, as the vaccination is inherently good, and the more people we can get it to the better, that does not pay proper heed to the fact that the cost benefit analysis is very different, depending upon who you are. And that means we should be hedging out those risks for several different groups of people.

**Heather** 1:00:35

Exactly. Yeah. The the three populations that I've mentioned multiple times are you you've already mentioned two of them as children. It's people who've already had COVID. And it's pregnant women. Yep. Absolutely. Yeah. All right. Now, can we talk about sexism? Yes. Awesome. All right. Okay, so um, this, I just ran across this remarkably sexist obituary of a female, just

**Bret** 1:00:57

the right responses, you just please just don't not go ahead.

**Heather** 1:01:02

I just don't want you giving something away here. Because of the way I'm not

**Bret** 1:01:05

gonna get you permission to talk about sexism. Oh, thank you,

**Heather** 1:01:09

sir. Thank you. You're welcome. Wow. Okay. So this really sexist obituary of a female chemist came to my attention this week. And before I read just a bit of it to share just you know how obnoxious it is. Let me say a few things about what what our contributions were because they don't show up in this obit at all. She made contributions in electric arc lighting and sediment transport. She run the she won the Royal society's illustrious Hadley medal, and she held 26 patents. So this is you know, this is no slouch in in science land. But this excerpt written by one Henry E. Armstrong, includes is out this this obituary includes the following two paragraphs. Mrs. Ayrton was one of those who aspire to prove that woman can be as man as an original scientific Inquirer, did she succeed? If we are to frame a psychology of the scientific mind regarding this as a species apart, we must carefully note and analyze the doings of sets a she, I have put small qualification for the office yet she was my colleagues wife, and we often met and we're in fair sympathy, I was able to take notice of her idiosyncrasies and of the conditions under which she was placed. In other paragraph a few of you few paragraphs later by God, speaking as he does, as this obituary writer does throughout the entire thing, really speaking of the husband, who was also a scientist, and she's just like the the hanger on says, so this is the obituary writer, and the him here is the husband, not the person who betrays about I often told him that he and his wife were an illustrated couple being both enthusiastic and having cognate interests, they constantly worried each other about the work they were doing. He should have had a humdrum life and active useful sort of person, such as Lady Catherine recommended Mr. Collins to marry who would have put him into carpet slippers when he came home, fed him well, and let him not to worry either himself or other people, especially other people, then he would have lived a longer and a happier life and done far more effective work I believe. like God, right, like just just incredible, right? So

**Bret** 1:03:17

the, the problem is that because she was scientifically productive, she could not properly tend to him, which made him less productive.

**Heather** 1:03:24

Yes, the obituary author believes that the man who I don't even know if he's dead or not, like would have been even more impressive scientist if he had simply had a a humdrum wife and active useful sort of person. Yes. So this in the obituary of the woman, right. Okay, so there's been a call to retract the sexist obituary, right? Here's an excerpt from the call to retract and as I said, there, I didn't read the whole obituary, but it didn't include any of the you know, and that's just a few of her remarkable achievements. The called retract includes. Its brazen sexism serves only as a monument to how long and hard women have had to fight for an equal place at the scientific table and it's anti semitic. This meaning this mean anti eulogy is by someone who knew little of Ayrton or her work, the chemist Henry Armstrong errs doubts about whether women could be scientists and cast aspersions on Elton's originality and intelligence. by striking contrast other obituaries such as that in The Guardian, celebrate her remarkable scientific achievement. After a letter of complaint. Armstrong with breathtaking arrogance chided his critic for lacking a sense of humor, and requested one correction to a typographical error. So, these are some good points, right? This is a terrible, really terrible obituary, and it's sexist. It's awful. It frames the side his career entirely in terms of what her husband was and how if she had been less interesting her husband could have been more so maybe. But you know, in general, calls to retract are antithetical to science journals. On the other hand, an obituary isn't a science paper. But there is one other salient point in the story that That I think is worth pointing out, which is that the call to retraction was published last week in 2021. And the obituary was published in 1923 98 years ago. So truly stunning, really, that we have a call to retraction for a 98 year old obituary, which if, if it happened, it disappears history like, it's actually important to know, that accomplished scientists from 98 years ago, were being written about in this way, we need to know these things.

**Bret** 1:05:34

Well, I'm actually for the retraction. Oh, if it would bring her back, I was unable to find any information on whether that would be the consequence. But

**Heather** 1:05:43

if not, what wouldn't we need to bring her husband back to he probably is dead by now. And given that, you know, she was best with him. She would need him back as well.

**Bret** 1:05:50

All right. I hadn't thought about that dimension. I admit it's always raining the husband. Yes. Always forgetting the husband. But yeah, you know, look, my sense, exactly as your sense is that it is absolutely essential that we not retract this, right, that are present, right? I mean, precisely because it teaches exactly the right lesson. It's just so obvious, right? Like, it's, it's adorable, right?

**Heather** 1:06:19

Kevin's Gendry, Armstrong proves how adorable he is,

**Bret** 1:06:21

right? How well but I mean, how provincial and absurd and how, you know, how different a world we live in. I mean, you remember the, the elders in the museum where we learned our craft, right? Yeah. spoke of many things. One of them was a generation prior, the concern that women couldn't do field biology, because where would they pee? Right? I don't actually remember that. Remember this? Oh, that was it was a story that, you know, Dick like to tell, right? And, you know, think Alexander Alexander, my PhD advisor who mentored many, many women, he didn't, he wasn't ever fooled by this kind of nonsense, but

**Heather** 1:07:04

the idea was not sexist in any way. Right?

**Bret** 1:07:07

So in any case, how important is it for, you know, modern women in science to be able to go back and say, Oh, well, on the one hand, 1923 is a while ago, and on the other hand, it's not that long, right? And look how far we've moved. Right? That is that is significant. So it just goes to the whole instinct to tear down the monuments, right? To some era to pretend, right? That it didn't happen somehow. It's

**Heather** 1:07:35

just, it's not going to make the problem worse, bring back sexism. And you know, it is it as actually as a canvas like a historicity, which also, I think, obscures a little bit of an innumeracy in which that thing that happened in the past is now imagined to be what is happening right now. And you know, that the person who's advocating for the retraction doesn't pretend that this didn't happen 98 years ago, but she still says we should retract it. And in fact, I don't I don't have the whole thing right here. But it reminded me a little bit of hell again, to go full circle here, the claims when evergreen was blowing up, that what was happening on this college campus, there's, you know, the most progressive college campus in the US maybe, in which literally, no founded claims of racism ever came to the fore. We were being compared to Alabama in the 1950s. Like, literally, that was the claim on stage by various people before the blow up and during the blow up, and like, you know, this is Felix, this is insane, yes, by staff out the college, who were supposed to be bringing us together and creating an educational environment. And of course, he was doing exactly the opposite on both fronts. So, you know, I am grateful to the person who was called to retract this obituary, because I got to go back and read this obituary and thought, Wow, I didn't know I didn't know that a woman who died in 1923 would have, you know, would have been doing all of that work, right? Like, you know, we all have sort of Marie Curie as, like the example of a female scientists from early on. And actually, you know, like, the great woman of mathematics account on Twitter is also celebrate some of the older, the historic figures from mathematics, but to have had this person be so actually accomplished. And then so denigrated, and death is really useful to know like, I'm glad I know that even though I find this modern letter to nature, absurd and part indicative of exactly the problem that we've been talking about.

**Bret** 1:09:45

There's a kind of defect of thinking that I'm sure it isn't local, to the left always, but I'm seeing it very, in a very concentrated form on especially the extreme left The woke left, which has to do with a sense of. Because we look back at history, and we recognize certain things as clearly absurd and wrong, there is a desire, which I think is totally legitimate to be on the right side of history. And I, I'm one of these people who disagree is people are always complaining about those who say, be on the right side of history, or this is the right side of history or whatever the claim is, the problem is, you never actually know for sure. But the idea that that's where you're supposed to be, right, you're supposed to understand how history will judge, you know, this or that, and being on the right side of history is a laudable goal. But because of that, there is this manipulable nature to people who understand that to be the objective, where the point is, you can paint this as that, and then the person will jump because the point is, well, the last thing they want to be is discovered to be on the wrong side of history. And so I see this unfolding in and around the issue of trans where I tweeted this week that you didn't actually need to surrender the sexual binary, which we've pointed out so many times goes back 500 million years and in our lineage, nor do you need to, at least, at least, nor do you need to invent any new pronouns or force people to say they them. The fact is, you can fully honor and protect trans people by just allowing them to choose whether they want he, he or she right. And so in any case, the point is that the desire to portray these modifications of language as the right side of history, right, and then we can look back at, you know, what happened with homosexuality, right? And so people then immediately jump to I'll do whatever it is, so that I'm not, you know, I'm not the villain, in this case, causes them to embrace things which actually don't naturally follow. Right. And my point about the pronouns, for example, would be that, look, I'm perfectly persuaded that there are trans people, and that the right thing to do is to honor whatever their choice of pronouns is. Among the two normal choices, it becomes, though an exercise of power at the point that you say, you're going to call me, sir. Right?

**Heather** 1:12:26

It does, and, sorry, going

**Bret** 1:12:29

Well, anyway, but my only point is that the the ability of people to be manipulated on the basis of a strong desire not to be caught out by history is tied up in the same thing where where, instead of leaving this absurd obituary, as a monument or leaving, you know, the statue of a great president who is compromised by his having held slaves, right, leaving that to, you know, spark the proper curiosity of people in the future, how?

**Heather** 1:13:02

Maybe they're teaching moments, right? Like, remember how education was, you know, and when I first heard this phrase, I thought, Oh, my goodness, that's ridiculous. But like, you use the surprising, the offensive, the unusual as a teaching moment. Now let's figure out what it means. Let's Let's go forward from here.

**Bret** 1:13:21

Right. And, and, you know, the contradiction, right? Yeah, George Washington could have been King. Right? He refused out of moral decency. Yeah, and yet he held slaves. So the point is, all right, that sounds like a human story. And it sounds like one that one doesn't want to shortchange by turning it into a cartoon, and you know, by pretending Well, of course, he's so compromised by his flaws, that we can no longer even pay attention to his accomplishments, you know, or his decency that you know, we did builds a totally phony history

**Heather** 1:13:57

Yeah. So just to get back to pronouns for a moment is you know, one of the essays that I'm sort of working on in the background as to do a lot with with pronouns and what it what kind of a power play it is, but you know, the thing, the thing that's absent from your just thumbnail analysis there is the moving target. And you know, it didn't we're no longer even just talking about trans we're now talking about non binary and non binary has no place in this discussion at all it's just it's a total fabrication. Right? And you know, you present how you want but you know, the pronouns refer to your sex and and if you you know, really feel that you need to be referred to as the sex that you were not born to then all of us who are interested in respecting you, we're going to do that. But the creation of new pronouns is a perfect match for the invocation of 93,000 genders and you know, like an off the wall Have this other ridiculousness that that just just departs entirely from reality. It's just not pretending anymore really. And it's it's it some people I'm sure are actually enjoying watching the goodhearted trying to play ball and you know, get on board the next civil rights thing. Liberals like us, but you know the the confused. Go like okay, I'll call I guess I'll call you that thing I guess I'm not sure what that is for anyway. And like what? Why can we not agree universally on some of the things that until yesterday to use Toklas Murray's formulation? Everyone knew.

**Bret** 1:15:46

Right? Okay, you have caused me to formulate exactly what, what I'm seeing that that's troubling me, which is the recognition that there is something that must be done. And the false connection with past examples, causes people to trip over themselves to try to get out in front of the race to be out to be decent to some oppressed group. And the problem is that the desire, hey, whatever it is that needs to be done to, to honor trans people, I want to be in front of it, right? I want to be in the lead, that desire to be in the lead is what causes people to say, Oh, I know what we can do. Right. And it allows bad actors to tack on these things that amount to power. Yep. And that is where the whole thing falls apart. And so you know, now why why does the discussion about trans require us to pretend anything at all about the sexual binary, right? Yeah, it's trans, it actually is built from the sexual binary, right?

**Heather** 1:16:52

It depends on if trans is real, than the sexual binaries,

**Bret** 1:16:56

and the sexual binary is real. And interestingly, my tweet garnered at least three responses I know of from people who are famously trans, who were you agreed? Sure. Yep. All right.

**Heather** 1:17:12

Good segue to octopus Of course. Okay, this is this is just brief. But here we have a science news article. And I can link to the full article too, but it's pretty it's pretty dense. No, actually, this is Editor's Choice. So each week the editors at science go and look at papers that are published elsewhere and, and talk about what they think the readers of science might be interested in. And so this tiny little blurb says among other things, cats at all the authors of the original research published in the Journal of Experimental biology, found that octopus arms display a photo tactic response to light automatically withdrawn when the arm especially the tip is eliminated. So this is akin to mammals or if you're not familiar with other mammals, the human response when you reach towards a hot stove, and retracted that this is you know, this this is actually a spinal cord reflex. And this isn't even going through the brain. I think that reflex, and yeah, obviously, cephalopods aren't vertebrates. We don't they don't have a central nervous system that's evolved in the same way ours is but this, this photo Taxus in the tips, without any without connection to the brain is incredible to me. Yeah, it's just incredibly it's

**Bret** 1:18:34

fascinating. Now, I did go back to the original paper, and it said something that caught me totally off guard, which I couldn't track down the reasoning, but it basically assumed that that that occupy have poor proprioception,

**Heather** 1:18:52

which, yes, it does, doesn't it? Yeah. I

**Bret** 1:18:54

don't know why it would assume that. But nonetheless, this was Yeah, no,

**Heather** 1:18:58

it's it's it's built into the assumption. Yeah, I've got the paper here. I don't it does assume that it is also it. They also only started out with four occupy, and then one died during the experiment. So they ended up with three. So yeah, it's a tiny sample size. Yeah. As you would expect, like as you would really hope for with a, you know, a lab lab experiment on such intelligent creatures that they're not using, you know, hundreds of animals. But

**Bret** 1:19:25

yeah, I don't know if you saw in the footnotes that two of them actually escaped, and they caught up to them at a bar across town. Yeah, yeah. But anyway, yeah, this is really interesting. And I think it actually it's weird. Eric and I were having a conversation about occupy yesterday.

**Heather** 1:19:42

Yes. You mentioned his insistence on a non standard plural, though. Yes, I

**Bret** 1:19:45

did mention that. And in any case, the there is a question about why occupy are so unusual and have so many features that we regard as emblematic of intelligence and maybe consciousness without being Social, a topic I would like to return to later. I think there's a lot to be said on this topic and this little bit may begin to tell us something about it the well, the paper did say that they believed that the animal had the ability to override the response, unlike the touching of a hot stove. Yeah. Which would almost have to be given what what occupy are capable of doing with respect to moving their limbs, and obviously, they do go out in the light. And so if it was like touching a hot stove, they wouldn't do it. Yeah, yeah. All right.

**Heather** 1:20:36

Yeah, sir. I was looking at this abstract. It's It's a strange paper by this interesting result.

**Bret** 1:20:41

Yeah, definitely. I've got it. All right. We've arrived, you've

**Heather** 1:20:46

arrived, we have some announcements, and then done, we're done for the week. All right, for February, we're gonna take a 15 minute break.

**Heather** 1:21:01

In about 15 minutes answering questions from the Super Chat that you posed this hour and the ones he posed next hour. Once again, the Dark Horse membership, private q&a is happening tomorrow at 11am Pacific for two hours, the questions have already been asked for that. But if you join at my Patreon, you will at the $5 level, you will have access to that and we leave it we leave it up as well. So even if you can't join live, you will, you'll be able to see it, although the numbers are small enough that we actually view the chat while we're doing it and are able to interact some and it's it's it's fun. We're joining a lot. Yeah. You can also join Brad at his Patreon, where you're gonna be having cool conversations next weekend. Actually, the first one next Saturday will be before our next our next live stream.

**Bret** 1:21:50

That's true, it's going to be nine o'clock Pacific. That way that'll give me a little breathing room afterwards. So

**Heather** 1:21:57

I will just go on your Patreon.

**Bret** 1:21:59

Gotta switch that on the announcement.

**Heather** 1:22:01

Yep. You we we need to get out some new merchandise. And a while ago, you indicated that we might be interested in hiring an artist and applications poured in to our our moderator, a Darkhorse moderator@gmail.com. And we have we have now and so our our moderator, basically put together PowerPoints for us and so we couldn't see anything about who or where, or what, or cost or anything, and just showed us all of this art. And we have now selected some finalists. And that's not to say there weren't amazing artists among among there were quite so many amazing ones, and also many different types of of art such that for different types of projects, we might reach out to some of the people who, who contacted us who haven't yet been but all the finalists have been contacted at this point. And you can also use so you don't need to send more art to Darkhorse dot moderator@gmail.com. But if you have questions, you know, I've actually begun to seeing questions to me directly. Oh, I heard you had a PO Box. Where can I send a letter so you can get that information from Darkhorse at mitre@gmail.com? Maybe that's it. Maybe that's it. Maybe that's it.

**Bret** 1:23:16

All right. We will see you in 15 minutes. And for those of you listening on audio, we'll catch you next week.

**Heather** 1:23:22

And in the next 15 minutes. We encourage you to eat good food and go outside go outside.

**Bret** 1:23:26

Also, what we didn't mention is the Tristan Harris. Oh, yes, Dark Horse podcast is up. Anyway, it was great conversation. I think you will really enjoy it. But check that out.

**Heather** 1:23:38

Yeah, I'm looking forward to listening to it. All right. Well, everybody