



THE DISSIDENTS' RIGHTS AND WRONGS: THE CASE OF JORDAN PETERSON

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This month, we are so very pleased to present this excerpt from Zbigniew Janowski's new book, [Homo Americanus: The Rise of Democratic Totalitarianism in America](#), which is published this month by St. Augustine's Press. It's a book that undertakes an unflinching analysis of the future of America.

In contrast to hard totalitarianism, the soft, democratic version does not seem to create dissidents, and thereby the wider opposition that might resist it. If opposition does happen to emerge, it is quickly condemned as sexist, misogynist, racist, etc., and almost never given mass support. Communism, on the other hand, produced legions of dissidents. The names of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Josif Brodsky, Gleb Jakunin, Andrei Zacharov, Alexander Zinoviev, Vladimir Bukowski, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, Vaclav Havel, and Milovan Djilas are only a handful of the best-known. To them, and to those who supported them, it was obvious that they fought evil, and they were willing to risk and even sacrifice their lives to do so. Yet importantly, they knew they had the quiet or open support of the overwhelming remainder of society. It was almost an instinctual recognition that totalitarianism is evil, and it was the realization of its evil that created the opposition.

Homo Americanus

THE RISE OF TOTALITARIAN DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Zbigniew Janowski

AFTERWORD BY RYSZARD LEGUTKO



The rejection of communism was, among other things, an attempt to free one's mind from ideological enslavement in order to reclaim the idea of right and wrong, good and evil—and all this was accomplished independent of politics. Politics was thought to be subservient to values, and as things stood it was clear that politics could corrupt our understanding of what is good and right. The suffering and death of victims of the new totalitarian regime was one reason to believe that good, truth, and justice are not relative, and there was no compromise to be struck. The opposition manifested itself either as a private and quiet attitude of ordinary people, or in open and loud protests of the opponents. Different levels of participation depended on the courage of each individual, and the willingness to take

the risk. The most courageous of them became dissidents. They were admired and venerated by the quiet majority. In contrast to the masses under communism, the democratic masses are not just quiet, but seem to be almost deaf to a moral call, and often act as if they reject morality altogether.

2.

According to classical Christian metaphysics, evil is privation, or lack of good; it is a force to be found in man, in his perverted will. It was understood that the role of the State is to constrain evil tendencies in man, or, as the Greeks believed, the task of politics was to create conditions for the development of virtues. As Aristotle wrote in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, "The function of a lawgiver is to make citizens good." Such understanding of evil and the role of the State was rejected by the liberal thinkers. The writings of John Stuart Mill, probably the most representative of the liberal doctrine, are virtually peppered with the word "evil." However, the reader of his writings quickly realizes that its meaning departs from the traditional—classical and Christian—understanding of it. Hundreds of sentences in which the term "evil" occurs in Mill's writings allow the reader to infer that evil is of a social nature, and is the result of unequal distribution of power. The terms "fairness" and "social justice," which definitively entered socio-political vocabulary in the 1950s made this a reality. "Fairness" and "social justice" came to signify the situation in which no one has more power than someone else, or that someone does not have more goods than others. Even elevating people out of poverty to the unprecedented level of material well-being and limiting abuses of judicial system are not satisfactory to those who think of evil the way Mill conceived of it.

The shift from a metaphysical conception of evil to a social one stems from the liberal understanding of power. Power, as Mill famously remarked in his argument for freedom of speech, is illegitimate, and therefore evil. Thus, for example, "[The power] of the aristocracy in the government is not only no benefit, but a positive evil." Similarly, the power of husband over wife, of parent over child, etc., are evil as well. Good, on the other hand, is what diminishes the political power and social authority. The purpose of diminishing authority is to expand equality; and because progress is part of a historical process, as history develops so does the scope of equality. At the end of this historical process, as Mill says in the conclusion of his *Utilitarianism*, we will witness a slow death of aristocracies of race, sex, and color. Looking at things from today's perspective, Mill must be given credit for understanding the consequences of his own doctrine. He predicted that as long as there is still a single minority "left behind," to use contemporary vocabulary, the fight against authority will continue. And it does.

However, socializing the idea of evil turned out not to be without serious consequences. In his discussion of fairness as an ethical principle, Erich Fromm notes that the principle of fairness "is the ethical principle governing the life of the marketing personality. The principle of fairness, no doubt, makes for a certain type of ethical behavior. You do not lie, cheat or use force... if you act according to the code of fairness. But to love your neighbor, to feel one with him, to devote your life to the aim of developing your spiritual powers, is not part of the fairness ethics. We live in a paradoxical situation: we practice fairness ethics, and profess Christian ethics." Nothing could be further from truth. Today, sixty-five years after Fromm wrote the above words, we hear the leaders of Christian Churches and Reformed Jewish synagogues announce the same message about social justice and hardly a word about our individual responsibility for our next-door neighbor. The answer to the question of how we reached the point of turning away from the individual man and his responsibility within a social collective, toward impersonal help in the form of high taxation, can be traced to Mill's writings.

Mill's understanding of the nature of the historical process is similar to that of Marx and Engels, according to whom "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." In Marx, it is the class of the capitalists who oppress the workers, whereas in Mill the oppressed classes are minorities. Once we accept such a view of history, we must come to the conclusion that the goal of politics is to end inequality. Accordingly, those who either attempt to slow down or stop the progress of equality are perpetrators of evil. In other words, those who fight authority (of whatever kind) fight oppression, and are therefore on the side of good and right, whereas those who uphold the *status quo* are oppressors who are on the wrong side, are evil.

The idea that authority is evil must sound strange to someone who thinks of evil as a destructive or corruptive moral force to be found in man. But this is what Mill rejected. He socialized the moral right and wrong, and in doing so Mill denied them their former metaphysical validity, rendering right and wrong an instrument of politics. To put it simply, what is good is what promotes equality; what is bad is what prevents its implementation. The consequence of this socialization of good and right, of evil and wrong, is that the words "evil" and "wrong" could no longer be applied to the partisans of progress and equality. Progress and equality are by definition good, and those who are on the side of progress promote the good. In such a conceptual-linguistic framework, the term evil might be legitimately applied only to those who defend authority, or who fight the desired social and political changes.

A perfect illustration of this process of socialization of good and evil is the position of almost all of the current Democratic presidential candidates. In the words of Beto O'Rourke, "Religious institutions like

colleges, churches, charities—they should lose their tax-exempt status if they oppose same-sex marriage." A similar attitude concerning different ills experienced by the LGBTQ community was expressed by Corey Booker, Elizabeth Warren, and Kamala Harris. All of them see the support for the progressive causes, however unrealistic or insane they may be, as using political force as normal. There are no economic, social, or other kinds of problems; everything comes down to fighting discrimination, that is, to bringing about more equality. No one voices concerns that such policies are intrusive, undesirable in some respect, or as a violation of individual conscience. The reason is that the aim of politics, according to them, is total submission of conscience to politics. And if it requires war against Christianity, its representatives being the churches of all the different denominations, let it be. Biblical teaching regarding right and wrong, people's commitment to national culture, transcendence, and conscience do not matter. Their views are simply wrong. And we know them to be wrong because they run counter to the ethics of social fairness.

Let me substantiate my claim with a quotation from a recent news story.

On October 2, 2019, United Kingdom Employment Tribunal Ruled that Biblical View of Sexes is 'Incompatible with Human Dignity.' The tribunal in the United Kingdom ruled against a Christian doctor who alleged that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) breached his freedom of thought, conscience and religion pursuant to the Equality Act. Disability assessor Dr. David Mackereth claimed discrimination after the DWP failed to accommodate his refusal to use pronouns which did not correspond with the biological sex of clients. In its decision, the panel stated that Dr. Mackereth's belief that "the Bible teaches us that God made humans male or female" was "incompatible with human dignity"... In June 2018, about a week after being hired, Dr. Mackereth attended a training course for assessors, including on DWP's policy to refer to transgender clients by their preferred name and title. Dr. Mackereth said "As a Christian, I cannot use pronouns in that way in good conscience... I am a Christian, and in good conscience I cannot do what the DWP are requiring of me.

The ruling, no doubt, runs counter to Biblical teaching and common sense. But above all, such a ruling amounts to a violation of individual conscience on the part of the State. However, given that liberalism did away with the transcendent view of right and wrong, what the tribunal declares must be right. Thus, it is not religion that is found to be on the side of right and wrong, but the feelings and claims of the LGBTQ community.

In this, the minorities act like the communists of old who threatened their opponents and made them abandon their values for the sake of equality. Lack of acquiescence to the new or socialist morality means one is destined to end up in the dustbin of history.

3.

The acceptance of such a socialized view of right and wrong ejects the individual who dares to adhere to a different ethical code than that of fairness from the social collective. It also explains why dissent in liberal democracies is extremely rare, and when it happens the dissenters are attacked and condemned as perpetrators of "social injustice," and are being labeled as sexist, racist, misogynist, homophobic, xenophobic, and ageist--that is, as those who oppose progress. Almost nothing else is evil or wrong except being one of the above. Dissent means disagreement with progressive causes, and is viewed as an implicit attempt to restore authority, to roll history back, to return to the oppressive past, to impose the old-fashioned and obsolete moral standards of behavior onto others, or as an attempt to increase the power of the state (or "power structure") over the individual. Hardly ever is it thought of as an attempt to stop or slow down the changes perceived as socially undesirable, sometimes dangerous, or an attempt to restore a sense of national pride and a return to virtue, sanity, renewal of man's moral rectitude, or promotion of decency and sanity.

Once we accept a new understanding of evil, everything is decried as fascist. Mussolini and Hitler were fascists, but so was Aristotle because he endowed the polis with considerable authority over the individual. But even if we leave aside the political projects of classical philosophers, the absurdity of such reasoning does not disappear. After the collapse of communism in Russia, it was natural for the former oppressed countries to ponder what post-Soviet reality should look like. One of the voices in the debate was that of the former arch-dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In his writings, he offers a program of moral regeneration of his country by looking into the past. Soon after, Solzhenitsyn, who spent decades in a gulag for his opposition to communism, was accused by liberal critics (Cathy Young in the *Boston Globe* and Zinovy Zinik in the *TLS*) of being "the theoretician of Putin-style authoritarianism and even a quasi-fascist." Such accusations leveled against former anti-communist dissidents and members of former anti-communist opposition have become almost a norm in today's liberal West.

In the October 2018 issue of *The Atlantic*, Anne Applebaum, a well-respected journalist, historian, and author of several books, including an excellent *Gulag: A History*, wrote a long article titled "A Warning from Europe" as part of *The Atlantic's* larger section: "Is Democracy Dying?" In it, she devoted

considerable space to Poland and Hungary, addressing the rise of authoritarianism, intolerance, and other ills in these countries. The culprit is of course the past and its defenders, organized into political parties whose policies allegedly threaten democracy. The paradox that emerges while reading articles about former communist countries, written by and large by liberal commentators, is that many of those who represent the parties which supposedly threaten democracy are the former members of anti-communist opposition. Given the anti-totalitarian credentials of the new "totalitarians," one wonders how credible is the claim that the former anti-totalitarian fighters have become the destroyers of the freedoms they fought for, and, consequently, whether such a reading of political life in Poland, Hungary, and Trump's America, is correct.

Such claims can be true only if one measures the health of democracy by today's standards of the socialized right and wrong. Thus, democracy in Hungary and Poland is threatened because of a firm commitment to tradition and religious values that helped the nation to survive forty-four years of communism, or German occupation that wiped out one-fourth of the population, or today's anti-immigration stance on Muslims to those countries (the disastrous effects we can observe in the countries that did in fact receive them), and the reluctant acquiescence to LGBTQ demands. Any attempt to resist such demands is perceived as anti-democratic, intolerant, or evil.

4.

Lenin once remarked that he wanted "to purge Russia of all the harmful insects." Such an attitude was responsible for the gulags, murders, brutal interrogations, merciless persecution of dissenting voices, fear, and intimidation. The prime example of such policy exercised today is the case of the Canadian psychologist, Jordan Peterson. Peterson made a name for himself in 2016, during the debate concerning the Bill C-16 in Canada. The bill's intention was to advance human-rights law by expanding "gender identity and gender expression." As Peterson argued, such a law would violate free speech because of the way the 'transgender' and so called 'non-binary' people use pronouns such as 'they' (for singular). The Ontario Human Rights Commission concluded that if public institutions (workplace or schools) refuse to refer "to a trans person by their chosen name and a personal pronoun that matches their gender identity," it could be a violation of non-discrimination principles. Peterson refused and said: "I am not going to be a mouthpiece for language that I detest. And that's that."

It would appear, one would think, to every commonsensical person that the debate was over nothing or is simply silly. Plural cannot be singular! Yet Peterson's obstinacy became a social explosion and the

psychology professor was soon the most persecuted man in North America. His public pronouncements about the use of pronouns may have triggered a reaction among some, but it is an unlikely explanation of why the attacks have continued for years and never stopped. An explanation should instead be sought in his views, which he laid out in his *12 Rules for Life. An Antidote to Chaos*. The book is what it says it is, but it is also a well-presented case against enforcing equality of outcome, as well as ideological brainwashing; and it is a defense of hierarchy. Let me use a few quotations to illustrate Peterson's position:

What such studies imply is that we could probably minimize the innate differences between boys and girls, if we were willing to exert enough pressure. This would in no way ensure that we are freeing people of either gender to make their own choices. But choice has no place in the ideological picture: if men and women act, voluntarily, to produce gender-unequal outcomes, those very choices must have been determined by cultural bias. In consequence, everyone is a brainwashed victim, wherever gender differences exist, and the rigorous critical theoretician is morally obligated to set them straight. This means that those already equity-minded Scandinavian males, who aren't much into nursing, require even more retraining. The same goes, in principle, for Scandinavian females, who aren't much into engineering. Such things are often pushed past any reasonable limit before they are discontinued. What might such retraining look like? Where might its limits lie?... Mao's murderous Cultural Revolution should have taught us that.

And:

A shared cultural system stabilizes human interaction, but it is also a system of value—a hierarchy value, where some things are given priority and importance and others are not. In the absence of such a system of value, people simply cannot act. In fact, they can't even perceive, because both action and perception require a goal, and a valid goal is, by necessity, something valued.

What Peterson says, if an additional explanation is needed, is that contemporary progressivists—just like the former communist architects of the gulag—are trying to force an ideological vision on people by turning them into what they think the people should be, by training them to act as they “ought to.” None of it is done with any concern for their individual well-being. Its most likely effect will be what the history of communism was—utter brutality. The second fragment states it clearly: Hierarchy is a

fundamental part of healthy human existence. It is the scaffold without which the world would plunge into chaos, and therefore, the liberal position, according to which all values are equal, is actually morally destructive. One might go further and say that living according to *ad hoc* whims, by which the progressive liberals want to organize private and public life, is a recipe for chaos. This is what the book is trying to prevent.

One should also add that the book is rich in serious philosophical reflections, references to Christianity, Jesus (who is referred to as Christ), poets, and philosophers. Even though it is a book written by a clinical psychologist, it has an incredibly broad humanistic scope. Clearly, it is written by someone who cares for his fellow man. His *12 Rules* is not a personal statement or confession of his religious beliefs, nor is it a book about religion, but Peterson does not hide his sympathy for Christian religion. This in itself, one can suspect, may be a reason why he caused such an uproar. But, more importantly, it explains why he is so difficult to destroy. He was literarily persecuted by his colleagues who wanted his removal from his university post at the University of Toronto. But Peterson refused to give in and bow to ideological dictates that would compromise his moral stance. During the unfortunate two years of attacks against him, he gained many followers and admirers, adding more fuel to the old controversy.

In the *Wall Street Journal* (January 25, 2018), a well-known journalist, Peggy Noonan, wrote the following:

Mr. Peterson is called 'controversial' because he has been critical, as an academic, of various forms of the rising authoritarianism of the moment—from identity politics to cultural appropriation to white privilege and postmodern feminism. He has refused to address or refer to transgendered people by the pronouns "zhe" and "zher." He has opposed governmental edicts in his native Canada that aim, perhaps honestly, at inclusion, but in practice limit views, thoughts and speech... This is unusual in a professor but not yet illegal, so I bought his book to encourage him. Deeper in, you understand the reasons he might be targeted for annihilation.

Noonan is right on two counts. First, screenings of the new documentary about Peterson in Toronto and New York were recently cancelled, signifying that some desperately wish for the public to forget about Peterson. "ShapeShifter Lab, an event space in Brooklyn, has cancelled a screening of the newly-released Jordan Peterson biopic because of staff complaints. The New York cancellation mirrors a similar incident in Toronto, where a scheduled week-long theatrical run of *The Rise of Jordan Peterson* was cancelled after some members of the staff vented their displeasure with the film." Noonan's

prediction about annihilating him was, no doubt, prophetic. However, the idea that one can understand why anyone should “be targeted for annihilation” simply for refusing to use personal pronouns in an incomprehensible and ungrammatical manner, is truly mind-boggling. But perhaps not so much if one keeps reminding oneself that Peterson's case is not an isolated incident.

In August of 2017, a young software engineer James Damore was fired from Google for circulating an internal memo in which he suggested that the disparity in employment between the sexes may be due to biological differences. Here is a fragment from an article he wrote for The Wall Street Journal (August 11, 2017).

I was fired by Google this past Monday for a document that I wrote and circulated internally raising questions about cultural taboos and how they cloud our thinking about gender diversity at the company and in the wider tech sector. I suggested that at least some of the male-female disparity in tech could be attributed to biological differences (and, yes, I said that bias against women was a factor too). Google Chief Executive Sundar Pichai declared that portions of my statement violated the company's code of conduct and “cross the line by advancing harmful gender stereotypes in our workplace.

My 10-page document set out what I considered a reasoned, well-researched, good-faith argument, but as I wrote, the viewpoint I was putting forward is generally suppressed at Google because of the company's “ideological echo chamber.” My firing neatly confirms that point. How did Google, the company that hires the smartest people in the world, become so ideologically driven and intolerant of scientific debate and reasoned argument?

Echo chambers maintain themselves by creating a shared spirit and keeping discussion confined within certain limits. As Noam Chomsky once observed, “The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.

Mr. Damore became an instant celebrity, but his fame did not last for very long. His case, like Jordan Peterson's, is symptomatic of how liberal-democracies operate and punish people for their convictions. Neither Damore nor Peterson were sent to a gulag, but the former suffered the highest punishment that the dissidents can suffer in a democracy: losing a job, becoming a social pariah and being decried as an enemy—the enemy of equality. We may never have communist style gulags, but then again nor do we

need them. Ideological training, reminding people that there is no right and wrong independent of the social context, that Biblical teaching is wrong, that the 'good' is what diminishes authority and expands equality, is all that is needed. And the American educational system is doing just that.

What we all seem to know, but are too afraid to say clearly and openly in public, is that we fear "being purged like insects," the way Mr. Damore was, and that we are being intimidated daily by the Leninist policies of minority groups instigated by a class of egalitarian ideologues. Those who insist that anyone should use "zhe" and "zher," (or "comrade," as was spoken under communism, or "citizen," as used during the French Revolution), or that we attend various "training" to learn the new norms (unless we want to be fired), are political terrorists. We all should admit that the new progressive terrorists have hijacked public life in America, Canada, and elsewhere, and that America and Canada are not much different from the Leninist State.

Let us also note that policies that require mind-transformation, stifling free speech, thought and actions, are not the work of the right, ultra-right, White-supremacists, or nationalist parties. These policies stem from the liberal ideological dictates. It is enough to compare eastern European countries, such as Poland and Hungary—described by liberal journalists as places where democracies are dying—and the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and ask: In which of the above countries does one find greater freedom, and which parties or segments in their respective societies impose ideological rules on others? Or, to put it differently, which of the above countries are closer to being totalitarian?

Anne Applebaum's article is symptomatic of the perception of danger. Such a perception, if accepted by a large number of people, may miss the real threat to the existence of democratic institutions. She sees one side of the problem and ignores the other--namely, the rise of totalitarianism in America, which poses a greater danger to the health and preservation of a democracy than anything else. The expansion of equality, which can only be done if the State forces the entire population to accept certain views, while ruling contradictory beliefs illegal as was done in the UK (whose tribunal ruled biblical teaching wrong) will transform democracy into a totalitarian system. Even if we agree with her that some of the policies and laws (or, attempts to establish them) in post-communist countries are restrictive and misguided, they are, and always were, simply part of a normal political game: the struggle for influence and power, conflict between social and political claims, competing visions of a nation's future, all of which stem from normal human motivations.

What one cannot say about politics in those countries is that the parties propagate mind-enslaving

ideology as the Democratic Party does in the United States, or like such publications and news outlets as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, CNN, MSNBC, and NPR. Right-wing or conservative magazines exist in Poland and Hungary, just as they do elsewhere, but their influence is limited to a small group of readers who have a certain way of thinking, but are hardly the outlet for ideological brainwashing. Neither Poland nor Hungary have a Canadian-style Bill C-16, the United Kingdom's 2006 "Racial and Religious Hatred Act" (or the 2016 M-103), sensitivity and sexual harassment training, mandatory ideologically driven courses for students, the De Blasio American bill—which threatens people with a fine of 250,000 dollars for the use of the term "illegal alien"—or a bill that prohibits students in New York schools from eating meat on Mondays. Polish and Hungarian languages are still in good shape in contrast to the American Newspeak, which permits certain phraseology and discards others, such as requiring the use of "maintenance hole" instead of "manhole." What is more important, unlike the Delaware Regulation 225, which says that "all students enrolled in a Delaware public school may self-identify gender or race" without even consulting their parents, Polish and Hungarian parents have control over the mental well-being of their children. No political party in those two countries worries about parts of the population following Sharia Law, and the Biblical teaching that there are only two natural sexes is accepted by the overwhelming majority of the population. Absence of such regulations, laws, and views leaves the population of those two countries a considerable degree of freedom, something one cannot say about America and Canada, which embody Lenin's ideal of the State.

5.

Whence came such similarities between the former Soviet Union and North America? Liberalism and Marxism operate according to the same principle: Both view history as teleological, moving in a definite direction. Its aim and end are known. It is the ultimate realization of equality through man's liberation from the shackles of oppression, which in liberal ideology is authority and hierarchy. Opposing any progress toward equality is tantamount to opposing history that unfolds itself in an inevitable way. The individual is helpless to stop it, nothing can be done to redirect its course. The conviction that "nothing can be done" and that the notions of good and evil, right and wrong, belong to the discarded dictionary of past historical formations forced many people to resign themselves and accept communism. But it also allowed the totalitarians to keep the atrocities they were committing from occupying their minds. Their moral numbness and dismissal of the idea that they did anything wrong can be explained by their exclusive focus on bringing about more equality. Progressive interpretation of history provided them with absolution for destroying those who opposed progress toward equality, or who had little or no faith in it.

However, it was not the communists who invented the idea of equality. In his *Gods will Have Blood* (*Les dieux ont soif*), the French writer Anatole France gives a fictionalized account of the French Revolution, which he had written long before the rise of fascism and communism.

Did you know, Louise, that this Tribunal, which is about to put the Queen of France on trial, yesterday condemned to death a young servant girl for shouting 'Long live the Queen!' She was convicted of malicious intent to destroy the Republic.

And:

You must be more careful, Citizen Brotteaux," he begun, "far more careful! There is a time for laughing and a time for being serious. Jokes are sometimes taken seriously. A member of the Committee of Safety of the Section inspected my shop yesterday and when he saw your dancing dolls, he declared they were anti-revolutionary.

Anatole France's description of how the revolutionary spirit operates aptly renders the atmosphere in today's America, where the Barbie doll—her color and size—became a matter of serious controversy, and the Oreo cookies—black on the outside, white on the inside—found themselves in the midst of an ideological whirlpool.

Communism is gone, and, ironically, it was brought down by those who retained the belief that truth, right and wrong, good and evil, are not man-made categories, and yet they are not the product of a historical process, either. They are objective and transcendent standards in which private and public life should be grounded. Only then can human existence, individually or collectively, be fully experienced.

Peterson's *12 Rules for Life* is not a silly 12 step program book for idiots or dummies. It is an attempt to return an insane world to normalcy, from the subjective whims in which we create our own personal and collective destiny, language of standards for right and wrong, or strange personal pronouns according to which one person can be many. It is a book about the human psyche, God, politics, culture, society, human decency, and compassion for the weak. In this respect Peterson, as a psychologist, can be put in the same category as one of his great predecessors, Carl Gustav Jung—a man of infinite compassion for human frailty and understanding of man's place in the universe. Like Peterson, Jung understood the danger of totalitarian systems. If there is an explanation for why

Peterson is still around, it is because of his unwavering commitment to values, religion, hierarchy and decency. That is probably why he is so difficult to destroy, and why he infuriates his foes.

The experience of brutality and death, as in the Soviet Union, made communism a fertile ground for breeding opposition and dissidents. The absence of brutality and death in soft-totalitarianism makes it more difficult to perceive the evil of equality. However, the other reason why dissent grew under communism was a strong sense of moral right and wrong taught by religion. The communists, despite their efforts, did not succeed in entirely socializing right and wrong, and where they did, the opposition was weak, as in Bulgaria or Romania, because religiosity was weak. In Poland, on the other hand, where the Church was strong, ideological opposition was unprecedented.

Given the different faces of opposition in communist countries, one can say a few things with confidence. A rapid decline in religiosity among Americans may be one reason why the country is becoming totalitarian. Young Americans' sense of right and wrong seems weak, and if it is strong it is often limited to students who graduated from religious, predominantly Catholic, schools. One can also add that the weak perception of evil may stem from the fact that Americans have not experienced the atrocities that other nations have; they don't even know about them. Furthermore, the high standard of living also contributes to the changes to perception of what real evil is.

The infusion of ideology into education, which is partly responsible for moral weakness, is truly unprecedented. There is no point of drawing any parallels between communism and today's America because one could not find such parallels. The young American's sense of right and wrong comes from schools and training, college orientation meetings where students are being told about new sexual rules, the use of proper pronouns, and being addressed by their "chosen" names (Peter can choose to be called Molly, and Barbara can be called Roger). If one adds to it a number of courses, some of which are mandatory, others, if they are not, are often still stuffed with ideological content, the picture of the young American mind is terrifying. For example, "feminist philosophy" might be equivalent to a seminar on Kant, Descartes, Plato, Hume, etc. There are other courses, such as "environmental justice," "racial justice," "social justice" and the like. History and sociology classes are often simply about slavery, White privilege, or the discrimination of minorities. Not much is left for real education, which when compared to the one and only class students under communism had to take—that is, "Foundations of Marxism and Leninism" offered only to students at a university level—socialism looks like an educational paradise of orgiastic free-thought.

All of the above is destructive intellectually, but also morally. If, as Peterson claims, human beings need a sense of values to act, socialized norms of what is good and evil, right and wrong, can become a substitute for a real moral compass. But there is a danger in this. Today's social morality can become tomorrow an instrument for the destruction of others. A temporary moral ersatz is unlikely to build a community of moral beings responsible for each other, due to a lack of the sense of commitment to transcendental reality into which human life is inscribed. All such an ersatz can provide is a sense of temporary belonging to a collective, which over time produces its own leaders who will always ultimately demand mind subjugation. All of that sounds like what we know from fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the communist Soviet Union, Mao's China, and the Kims' North Korea. We may not have a single leader, but a strong, frustrated desire to implement ideology can cause social unrest and generate the need that someone do something. This was Tocqueville's prediction.

One may not expect great moral courage from ordinary people whose preoccupation is daily bread. But one would absolutely expect such commitment from intellectuals, academics, or generally 'men of letters.' They, however, have turned out to be most cowardly, and it is they who planted among ordinary people the seeds of moral destruction. They committed what Julian Benda calls the betrayal of truth in his classic work. Persecution of Jordan Peterson by his university colleagues makes Benda's *The Great Betrayal* as relevant today as it was when it was published a hundred years ago. The survival of Peterson says something further. It is a testimony that dissent in a democracy is possible, but given the isolated nature of it, one is bound to wonder: Is Jordan Peterson the only man in North America who knows and has courage to say, "this is right and this is wrong?"

[*Homo Americanus: The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy in America*](#) is now available for purchase.

The [*featured image*](#) shows an untitled work by Zdzislaw Beksinski, painted in 1978.

