



Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics

JIME

ISSN 2601 - 5749, ISSN-L 2601 - 5749

published by

Center for Socio-Economic Studies and Multiculturalism

Iasi, Romania

www.csesm.org

TABLE OF CONTENT

Editorial.....	3
Julian Warter	
Duality Leadership at Atkinsrealis: From an Execution to Exploration and Growth Culture...	5
Fons Trompenaars, A. James Cullens	
The New Inquisition: Woke and Cancel Culture Vs. Western Societies	27
Thomas D. Zweifel	
The Ethics of Sustainable Development Reflected in the Financial Reporting of Companies. Case Study at Romanian Post	44
Aurelian Virgil Băluță	
The Role of Management Accounting in the Application of the Economic Ethics Judgment	57
Mihaela Bebeselea	
Dialogue and Diagnosis	63
Mircea Gelu Buta	
Beyond the Bedroom: Exploring Gender and Relationship Status Variances in Hypersexuality: Ethical Implications and Recommendations	67
Paula Pricope, Tudor-Daniel Huțul, Adina Karner-Huțuleac	

THE NEW INQUISITION: WOKE AND CANCEL CULTURE VS. WESTERN SOCIETIES

Thomas D. Zweifel¹, Ph.D.
University of St. Gallen (HSG) & ThomasZweifel.com, Switzerland
E-mail: thomas@thomaszweifel.com

*For at least two thirds of our miseries
spring from human stupidity, human malice
and those great motivators and justifiers
of malice and stupidity,
idealism, dogmatism and proselytizing zeal
on behalf of religious and political idols.*
Aldous Huxley

*Fanaticism comes from any form of chosen blindness
accompanying the pursuit of a single dogma.*
John Berger

Abstract

This article examines how the “woke” agenda and cancel culture have entered the mainstream culture in key areas of Western society, including politics and law, business and healthcare, education and science, literature and even sexuality. The article identifies five causes. Are woke and cancel culture merely fad and fashion, akin to a pendulum swing that will swing back, or do these cultural changes indicate a seismic shift in Western culture that will be irreversible since it has gained a foothold on institutions, laws and norms? If the change is permanent, if ideology and dogma trump freedom of thought, if people’s race or ethnicity, gender or class determine whether they are victim or oppressor, then the foundations of the Enlightenment—such as liberty, self-determination and tolerance—are being eroded. Finally, the article explores ways to stop and even reverse the trend toward ideological dogma and restore the Judeo-Christian core values and ethics of Western societies.

Keywords: cancel culture, woke agenda, LGBTQ, DEI, United States, Europe, values

Introduction

The year 2021 began ominously. Congressman Emanuel Cleaver ended the official New Year's prayer in the U.S. Congress with the word "amen"—only to solemnly add: "...and a-woman." The parliamentarian apparently overlooked the fact that "Amen" comes from the Hebrew word *la'amin* (to believe) and has nothing to do with men or #MeToo.

The Democrat later explained that he had “concluded with a lighthearted pun in recognition of the record number of women who will be representing the American people in Congress during this term as well as in recognition of the first female chaplain of the House of Representatives whose service commenced this week.” (“US congressman”, 2021).

But the damage was done: The Congressman’s *faux-pas* was seen as yet another instance symbolic of a *Zeitgeist*. In the name of anti-racism and so-called “equity” (which

¹ Dr. Thomas D. Zweifel is an independent author of 11 books, including *Culture Clash 2.0.*, *Anti-Crash* and *Gorilla in the Cockpit*. From 2001 to 2020 he was Adjunct Professor at Columbia University in New York and Guest Professor at the University of St. Gallen. He lives with his family in Zurich.

used to mean shareholder value, but now also means justice), well-meaning activists, politicians courting votes, and marketing managers distort language, history, and ultimately reality. The consequences are both radical and far-reaching. Ultimately, at the risk of sounding like an over-dramatic Cassandra, nothing less than the achievements of the Enlightenment, including reason, individualism and the integrity of science, are at stake.

To safeguard these underpinnings of Western society, we must first recognize the extent of the trend—in various sectors, including education, healthcare, media, politics, economics, and law—and then explore its origins so we can tackle its dogmatic facets at the root.

Broadly, woke as dogma claims that the USA was born in sin (namely through slavery), that the imperialist "White" West is to blame for the suffering of the world, that the USA (and Whites in general) can pay off their historical debt only by providing "reparations" and "corrective racism," that your achievement no longer counts but your origin or sexual preference does, that it is more important to hire Black or transgender members than those who offer the greatest competence, whatever color, gender or sexual preference they may have.

Whoever thought that *woke* and cancel culture are outgrowths of academic ivory towers or fringe groups at the periphery of society, is learning otherwise. Take the law: since April 2022, Americans can freely choose their gender in their passport, regardless of their biological sex. "You can select male (M), female (F), or unspecified or another gender identity (X) as the gender marker on your U.S. passport book and card. The gender you select does not need to match the gender on your citizenship evidence or photo ID." The U.S. State Department adds helpfully: "You do not need to provide medical documentation to change your gender marker." (U.S. Department of State—Bureau of Consular Affairs, n.d.).

Corporate Re-education Programs

Major corporations have integrated woke in their policies. Bank of America is conducting an anti-racist re-education program that claims the United States is a system of "white supremacy" and encourages employees to become "woke" at work. In particular, white employees are instructed: "Decolonize your mind" and "give power to people of color." (Rufo, 2021)

As part of an "equity" initiative called United in Action, employees participate in a 21-day "challenge" partially funded by the bank and based on "Critical Race Theory." On the first day of the program, the bank teaches employees that America is a "racialized society" that "uses race to establish and justify systems of power, privilege, disenfranchisement, and oppression."

According to the training program, all whites—"regardless of their socioeconomic class, background, or other disadvantages"—"live a life of white skin privileges." Even children are involved in the system of white supremacy: The program materials state that white toddlers develop "racist biases at the age of 3-5" and "should be actively taught to recognize and reject the 'smog' of white privilege."

People of Color, on the other hand, cannot be racist at all, because "racism is used to justify the position of the dominant group and the supremacy and superiority of whites." Therefore, according to the discussion guide, "reverse racism and discrimination are impossible."

On days 5 and 6, the banking giant encourages white employees to confront their "white privilege" and "white fragility" to "discover where [they] are on the privilege spectrum."

Bank of America employees complete a series of diagnostic tests in which they assess their

racial and sexual identity, check boxes to determine their "white privilege," and examine racist attitudes.

On days 7-16, the bank covers advanced concepts and policies, including "microaggressions," "racial trauma," "police abolition," "the school-to-prison pipeline" and "environmental justice." The training program states that racist microaggressions can contribute to post-traumatic stress disorders in black Americans and that "racism can be as devastating as a shooting or sexual assault."

America's economy is described as a "caste system" through which "African Americans are exploited and geographically segregated." The American police system, according to the training materials, is based on "slave patrols whose task was to capture, control and brutalize enslaved people" (an ahistorical invention); the system is so "woven into the DNA" of U.S. society that, according to the training module, it can only be eradicated through "de-funding and even abolition of the police."

In the final days of the program, participants must admit that their "words and actions are inherently shaped and influenced by systemic oppression" and commit to "doing the inner work to acknowledge how [they] participate in systems of oppression."

After this confrontation with their complicity in racial oppression, employees are encouraged to build a "culture of racial equity."

Bank of America carries the United States in its very name. Yet, far from promoting American core values, the company's executives have adopted radical, pseudo-scientific concepts from Critical Race Theory. They impose ideological messages on their employees, from racist collective guilt and feelings of guilt to demands for the abolition of the police.

Bank of America is not an isolated case. Google, American Express, CVS, Verizon, and Disney have introduced similar re-education programs.

Disney has launched a "diversity and inclusion program" called "Reimagine Tomorrow" that asked employees to complete a "white privilege checklist" and examine systemic racism, white privilege, white fragility, white saviors, microaggressions, and antiracism. (Downey, 2021).

At American Express, several former and current employees said in interviews that they weren't promoted because they had the "wrong" skin color. "I would see these emails showing who got promoted," said one employee who wished to remain anonymous. "I'd say nine times out of ten, it was a Black person in that role."

"You're told, 'If you work hard enough and you do the right things, you can move up in this company,' the ex-employee said. "That's no longer the case at American Express. They're only promoting Black people." (O'Neil, 2021).

According to internal whistleblowers, Google's training states that using evidence in an argument shows "white privilege," and the slogan "Make America Great Again" is an expression of "white supremacy." ("Whistleblower reveals", 2021). Alongside Google's former global lead for diversity strategy Kamau Bobb, 1619 Project editor Nikole Hannah-Jones says in one video that "the first Africans being sold on the White Lion [slave ship in 1619] is more foundational to the American story" than "the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock." Hannah-Jones said she was inspired to spearhead the *New York Times's* 1619 Project to prove her hypothesis that every facet of modern day America is rooted in slavery.

"If you name anything in America, I can relate it back to slavery," she said in the video. Jones then echoed the central theses of progressive author Ibram X. Kendi's book *How to Be An Antiracist*, which argues that only reverse discrimination against white people can rectify the remnants of racism still pervading America.

"If you're white in this country, then you have to understand that whether you personally are racist or not, whether you personally engage in racist behavior or not, you are the beneficiary of a 350-year system of white supremacy and racial hierarchy," she said.

Kendi then spoke in a video about how young people in America are conditioned to be racist by birth. "To be raised in the United States, is to be raised to be racist, and to be raised to be racist is to be raised to almost be addicted to racist ideas," he said.

"The youngest of people are not colorblind—between three and six months, our toddlers are beginning to understand race and see race," Kendi added. As an antidote, Kendi suggested Americans be prescribed anti-racism and "respond in the same way that they respond when they are diagnosed with a serious illness." He reiterated that denial of racism is merely proof of it. "For me, the heartbeat of racism is denial and the sound of that denial is 'I'm not racist,'" Kendi said. (Downey, 2021).

Nutrition and Healthcare: "Racial Correction"

It makes sense, of course, that Switzerland's largest retailer, Migros, banned so-called "Mohrenköpfe" (chocolate-coated marshmallow treats traditionally named "Moor Heads") from its stores. And it is well known that healthcare in many countries also suffers from inequality and stereotypes. But now a petition in England complains about "racist elements" in food served in schools because "too many dairy products are indigestible for 65 percent of the world's population who suffer from lactose intolerance," according to the petitioner in the Brighton and Hove district council. Milk is, as it were, too "white." (le Duc, 2021).

The renowned Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston is considering "preferential treatment based on race" for a patient (Wispelwey & Morse, 2021). If you have the right skin color—namely black or Latinx—then you are entitled to better therapy. (Brigham issued a denial (Brigham and Women's Hospital, n.d). This "pilot initiative" is intended to provide a "reparations framework" that, according to its authors Bram Wispelwey and Michelle Morse, should be launched in hospitals across the United States. CNN calls this "racial correction."

A therapeutic approach based on race would not only be unethical but also illegal. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination," including in "education, health care, housing, social services." (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 1964)

Education on "Complicity With White Supremacy"

Nevertheless, the Department of Education in the U.S. state of Arizona created an "Equity Toolkit" that, among other things, claims that babies show first signs of racism at the age of three months, and white five-year-old children "remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness." (Goins-Phillips, 2022). (In March 2022, the department launched an internal review of its "equity" school materials.) The Departments of Education in California and Oregon plan to introduce a new mathematics program. Among other things, this points out that focusing on recognizing the right answer is an example of "White Supremacy" in the classroom. "Adhering to the idea that there are always right and wrong answers," it says, "perpetuates objectivity as well as fear of conflict." (Graves, 2021).

Another document calls for putting "ethno-mathematics" at the center, creating a "culturally sustainable mathematics space" and supporting students to "reclaim their mathematical lineage."

The faculty of the venerable Princeton University—where Einstein once taught—decided to remove Greek and Latin as prerequisites for their classics students to combat "Systemic Racism." (Wood, 2021).

At Oxford University, the music faculty wants to change the curriculum after staff complained in the wake of the "Black Lives Matter" movement that the current curriculum focuses on "white European music from the slave era" and is an expression of "complicity with white supremacy." (Brown, 2021).

And Cornell's faculty decided that crime reports on campus must henceforth be colorblind because previous reports had felt "jarringly ignorant of the drumbeat of anti-Black violence," according to the elite university's senate (Dorman, 2021). If you witness a rape, you are no longer allowed to tell the police the skin color of the perpetrator. The same "anti-racist" obstruction of justice is happening at Brown, Illinois, Minnesota, and other American universities. (In the European Union, Great Britain and Switzerland, police are also facing accusations of "ethnic" or "racial profiling.")

Too Much of a Good Thing

Without question, humans have an obligation to uncover and, as far as possible, dismantle their racism, sexism, and other prejudices (completely shedding them would be unrealistic). But when "Black Lives Matter" becomes the exclusive dogma—and musicians who tweet "All Lives Matter" trigger an internet shitstorm and are excommunicated (canceled) because they "trivialize the historic suffering of black people," that is no longer "equity." When enraged mobs in Britain tear down statues of Winston Churchill because he not only defeated Hitler and the Nazis but also represented the Crown's colonial policy as Prime Minister of the then British Empire, that distorts history. When the *New York Times* calls American presidents—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln (to whom the U.S. owes the abolition of slavery) and Roosevelt—racists, while remaining silent about the obvious racism of the founder of their own newspaper, that is hypocrisy. When Chicago's black mayor, Lori Lightfoot, announces that she will henceforth give "priority to POC Reporters" (POC stands for People of Color), that is racist.

When England's Sheffield University teaches aspiring physicists and engineers that Isaac Newton, the grandfather of modern physics, "benefited from colonialism" (Newton once lost a £20,000 investment in the bankruptcy of the South Sea company), such woke teachings are questionable. As the political scientist Dan Shueftan at Haifa University asked: "Are we going too far in the right direction? Could this be too much of a good thing?" (Shueftan, 2018). Such identity politics does exactly what it tries to combat: it sows not a "we," but a "we vs. them": exclusion, division, resentment.

Should statues of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King be torn down too, since he used the now politically incorrect word "Negro"? King also coined the famous aphorism, "You should not judge a person by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." (King, 1963). What would the civil rights activist say to such excesses in the noble name of anti-racism? Should people boycott Beatles songs because the band was composed exclusively of white men and was thus not only racist but also sexist? The accusations would hardly stop. "Ethical reflection has been replaced by indignation and the denunciations of cancel culture," wrote Bernd Stegemann. "Woke moralism has become the moral orientation of our days. (...) For in every moralist dwells an authoritarian character." (Stegemann, 2020).

Anti-racists who insist on "racial correction" would first have to explain why in the United States, the children of African immigrants are on average significantly more successful than those of African Americans; why Asian-American Americans earn an average household income of US\$87,194, about 23 percent more than whites; and why, on the other hand, African Americans have succeeded in both in music and sports—both industries were created by whites—if the cards are stacked against them as activists claim.

Resistance from Parents and Teachers

Some teachers and parents see such activism as neo-racism. Dana Stangel-Plowe left the renowned Dwight-Englewood School in New Jersey in June. "Students come into my classroom," wrote the long-time English teacher, "and accept this theory as fact: people born with less melanin in their skin are oppressors, and people born with more melanin in their

skin are oppressed. Men are oppressors, women are oppressed, and so on." The students "have become rigid and closed," said Stangel-Plowe, "unable or unwilling to consider alternative perspectives." (Will, 2021).

"Anti-racist' training sounds righteous, but it's the opposite," said Paul Rossi, a mathematics teacher at Grace Church High School in Manhattan. "It requires teachers like me to treat students differently based on their race." (Rossi, 2021).

"Students are pressured," Rossi wrote, "to conform their opinions to those generally associated with their race and gender, and to trivialize individual experiences that don't align with these assumptions." Thus, "dependency, resentment, and moral superiority are cultivated in students who are considered 'oppressed.'" Rossi was suspended by the school's principal after his statements.

The school administration had encouraged children to stop using words like "mommy," "daddy," or "parents," as such terms were based on "assumptions" about children's homes. A detailed guide recommends using the terms "adults," "people," "family," or "guardians" instead (Perry, 2021).

Some parents quietly withdrew their children. Others did so less quietly. Andrew Gutmann, whose daughter had attended Brearley School since kindergarten seven years earlier, wrote in an open letter that he had now, with a heavy heart, taken her out of the private girls' school in Manhattan. White children were being taught to feel guilty about their origins. "If the administration were really serious about 'diversity,'" Gutmann wrote, "it would not insist on indoctrinating its students and their families to a single way of thinking that is primarily reminiscent of the Chinese Cultural Revolution." (Dutton, 2021).

Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

Elite colleges in the United States from Columbia to Cornell, have been suffused with an anti-Western ideology that now defines the humanities. At Cornell, faculty members joined in an anti-Israel encampment at the school in the Spring 2024, and a diversity and inclusion officer expressed admiration for the Palestinian "resistance" upon the occasion of the 7 October 2023 massacre and kidnapping by Hamas terrorists on Israeli civilians, hailing the struggle "against settle[r] colonization, imperialism, capitalism, white supremacy, [of] which the United States is the model." (Lowry, 2024).

In September 2024, a welcome dinner for Hillel students at the City University of New York (CUNY) was disrupted by a hostile mob shouting antisemitic slogans (Benedek, 2024). The confrontation escalated to the point where protesters blocked the entrance, physically intimidating students and staff.

Ilya Bratman, head of Hillel at eight CUNY and SUNY universities, argued that at academic discourse has been replaced by indoctrination, with faculty promoting a singular ideological agenda. According to Bratman, "It's fascist. It's 1984, and it must be said very, very clearly." Bratman asked that we put ourselves in the shoes of a student: "You send your 18-year-old kid to school, right? They're an impressionable, young, scared person, anxious. They come to class, their professor says, 'In the class, you're going to take on a queer identity, or the role of an oppressor.' So what can the kids do?" (Benedek, 2024)

"What we have seen is a purge of dissenting views," said Shai Davidai. "The ratio of registered Republicans to registered Democrats in the Humanities is about 1:15. Now, I'm not Republican and I'm not Democrat, I'm Jewish," the assistant professor at Columbia University added. "But the fact that we have lost that diversity of thought—forget Israel, forget the Jews, we are just the litmus test—what happens when the next thing comes? Take gun laws. You cannot debate gun laws in the United States in colleges, because everyone is on one side. By the way, I'm on that side as well. If you don't have people on the other side, you become lazy, your thoughts become lazy, and your ideas become stupid." (JNS TV, 2024)

For example, the historian Wolfgang Benz argued that Islamophobia should be treated as a secondary form of Antisemitism (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024), which would distort reality, since Islamophobia stems from real actions—terror attacks—by radical Islamists since the late 20th century, while Antisemitism does not stem from any actions by Jews, has existed for some 2,000 years and is most recently propagated by those same radical Islamists.

Transphobia and (Anti-)Sexism

LGBTQ activism reaches even into sexuality. In New York State, the legislature is considering a bill called "Sex Education for Change." If the law passes, eight-year-olds will be taught about puberty, masturbation, and the idea that there are no longer male and female, but several, fluid gender choices.

A Canadian court ruled in 2020 that teenagers can henceforth choose their gender reassignment—against their parents' will: "Where a health care provider assesses a young person to be capable and concludes that the treatment is in their best interests, the young person alone has authority to consent to or refuse treatment." (Findlay, 2022). A court in Switzerland followed suit in 2023, ordering a 15-year-old to be removed from her home after her parents objected to giving her puberty blockers (McFall, 2024). This imposes a heavy responsibility on minors for likely irreversible actions whose long-term consequences they can hardly foresee today.

Britain's Huddersfield University warned music professor Jonathan Best for "transphobic" tweets. The 50-year-old professor was charged with "sexual, homophobic, racist or other unlawful harassment of a student." He was said to have violated the university's social media and transgender equality guidelines. In one tweet cited by the prosecution, Professor Best said: "Every trans woman is part of the same gender class as me. We are all men." (Somerville, 2021).

University officials summoned the music teacher to a disciplinary hearing. Later they claimed he may have been "offensive" and disrespectful of others' feelings. (The professor appealed, successfully; the independent adjudicator for higher education directed the university to apologize and pay the teacher £800, about \$1,066.)

A cabaret artist was disinvited from the Hamburg Literature Festival due to accusations of "racism" and "anti-Semitism." (Frank, 2020). And fans burnt books by J.K. Rowling because of her alleged "transphobia." (Nolan, 2020). The *Harry Potter* bestselling author had dared say that female or male sex was not a social construct but real.

Even though book burnings evoke eerie memories of Nazi practices, the underlying ideology is by no means that of a fringe group. In March, CNN wrote: "It is not possible to know a person's gender identity at birth." There are "no uniform criteria for assigning gender at birth." (Cole, 2021).

The international TV station promptly received the receipt on social media. Twitter user Craig Seymour suggested a simple solution: "I'm not a doctor, @CNN, but if you look below the waist, you might get an insight."

Europe: Justice is Blind—or One-Eyed

Those who think such things happen only in the United States are wrong. The Berlin branch of Germany's Social Democratic Party recently discussed whether the term "clan crime" should be removed from the vocabulary as racist. Following this logic, one would then also have to eradicate the term "mafia" as it could stigmatize all Italians (or Russians) (Syeda & Molkenbur, 2023).

When it comes to violence, sexism, racism, or crime, for example, the media or police often no longer name the perpetrators—if they have a migration background. This became clear after New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne, when the police president announced that men

"from appearance largely from the North African or Arab world" had committed "a very large number of sexual assaults," but local and national news media reports suppressed the origin of the men who had sexually assaulted women (2016). Even in the case of anti-Semitic and homophobic acts of violence, police officers or journalists often pretend to know nothing more specific about the perpetrators, unless they are either "White" nor right-wing extremists.

The philosopher Kathleen Stock at Sussex University in the United Kingdom was mobbed by colleagues because she—like the author J.K. Rowling—had asserted there were biological men and women, and had criticized new laws according to which "female" and "male"—as in the United States passport—are freely chosen categories (Woolcock, 2021). The transgender lobby collected 600 signatures and accused Professor Stock (who is a self-confessed lesbian and a feminist) of transgender baiting and "harassment of non-gender-conforming people." When Stock was then invited as a speaker by the Royal Institute of Philosophy, the group launched a petition with 5,000 signatures to remove her from the conference. The organizers did not let themselves be intimidated. Oxford University Press did: it canceled a book project with Stock, who resigned from Sussex University in October 2021.

The consequences of such transgender politics are not trivial: transgender women—including some ex-sex offenders—end up in women's prisons. Transgender women with male bodies participate in sports events as women. No matter your biological sex: If you declare that you feel like a woman inside, you are allowed to go to places that are exclusively reserved for women, including saunas or changing rooms. The dangers are obvious. *Nota bene:* These changes were made in England without consulting 50 percent of the population, namely women.

Literature: Some Are More Equal Than Others

The young Black poet Amanda Gorman became world-famous with her spoken-word poetry at the inauguration of U.S. President Biden, and her poem was subsequently translated into several languages. In consultation with Gorman, the Dutch publisher Meulenkamp commissioned Booker Prize winner Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, 29, white, non-binary, for the Dutch translation. Three days later, Black activist Janice Deul criticized the selection in *De Volkskrant*: "Nothing against Rijneveld's qualifications," Deul wrote, "but why not choose for a writer who — just like Gorman — is a spoken word artist, young, female, and: unapologetically Black?" (Deul, 2024).

After Deul's criticism and a storm on social media, Rijneveld said she was "shocked by the uproar" and gave up the assignment: "I understand the people who feel hurt by Meulenhof Publishing's choice to ask me." (Flood, 2021). She had seen it as her most important task to capture Gorman's strength, tone, and style. "However, I realize that I am in a position to think and feel that way, where many are not." The publisher eventually hired a team of translators.

Why can't a White person translate a Black person's work? (My book *The Rabbi and the CEO* was translated into German by a non-Jewish woman—the translation was just as good as the English original, if not better.) It is not the identity but the empathy of a translator that makes for a good translation.

Academia: Anti-Racist Inquisition

In academia, especially in the German-speaking world, a cancel culture is rampant that amounts to a new inquisition (Documentation – Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit, 2023). The first example came in 2014 when activists disrupted a lecture by Malte Brinkmann, professor of education at Humboldt University Berlin, attacking his uncritical treatment of Immanuel Kant's "racist" writings.

The following year, anonymous bloggers set up "Münklerwatch," a blog on which they branded out-of-context quotes from the lectures of Herfried Münkler, professor of political theory, also at Humboldt University Berlin, as sexist or racist.

A research group on "Black Knowledges" led by Sabine Broeck, professor of American Studies at the University of Bremen, submitted an application to the German Research Foundation—and promptly an international campaign formed against them. According to a group of German and American representatives of Black Studies, it was a scandal that the planned research project entitled "New Black Diaspora Studies" consisted exclusively of whites. The implicit assumption of the applicants that they could claim the "color-blindness" applicable to scientific work also for Black Studies was rejected as an attempt to "structurally and personally reconstitute the claim to white definitional power." The research group responded by dissolving itself: "We accept this criticism." The group had become aware that in its current form it was "more a part of the problem of racism than a part of its solution."

In 2021, Helmut Bley, professor emeritus of Modern and African History at Leibniz University, was to give a lecture entitled "Thinking Colonial History from Africans." But in the run-up, the "Initiative for Discrimination Sensitivity and Racism Criticism" protested against "an old white man" wanting to speak about African history. Such a person could not "think and empathize with African conditions." The city of Hannover canceled the event, as the intended discussion format had proved not to be viable: "As an organizer, it is important to us to enable an open and liberal discussion culture. But this must be wanted by all sides." (Documentation – Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit, 2023).

Self-censorship is spreading: A university in Berlin painted over a poem by Bolivian-Swiss poet Eugen Gomringer in 1951 on its façade because it was deemed "sexist." The poem, titled "avenidas," translates as: "Avenues / Avenues and flowers / Flowers / Flowers and women / Avenues / Avenues and women / Avenues and flowers and women and an admirer." (Grenier, 2018). Even for a #MeToo activist it is hard to see what made the poem so offensive as to be removed.

A professor apologized to black students for her white skin. Several universities in German-speaking countries, such as Göttingen, Kassel and Vienna, have lowered grades if students fail to use "gendered" language—an unlawful invasion in the students' freedom of science (kei, 2022). The Vienna University of Applied Sciences cut grades for essays by 10 percent for "non-gendered" essays.

Scientists are disinvited because their alleged "racism," their views or their research do not correspond to the politically correct dogma. Students prevented U.S. General David Petraeus from appearing at ETH (Federal Institute of Technology Zurich) (Kriegstreiber Kapituliert Kampflös, 2017). Freedom of speech applies only to those whose views are politically acceptable. "Right-wing" books by Jean Raspail or Martin Lichtmesz are considered "potentially inciting" by the University Library of Freiburg and are no longer lent out (Documentation – Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit, 2023).

"The heaviest attacks come from the scientific establishment itself," according to the German historian Egon Flaig. "The freedom of science is threatened by pseudo-scientific currents that have become firmly rooted in several cultural sciences: genderism, postcolonialism, anti-racism, diversity." (Flaig, 2021)

Dogma is the opposite of science. If science is the handmaiden of ideology, the answer is a foregone conclusion, science stops being science, and scientists become activists or politicians. If the woke agenda—or any other ideology—rules as dogma, research is no longer a fundamental right. Science is no longer free but belongs to those who conform to the prevailing ideology.

Of course, we could dismiss all this as intellectual excesses in the theoretical ivory tower. But what begins in educational institutions often ends up in society. "These are no longer individual scientists," said migration expert and president of Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit (Network for Academic Freedom) Sandra Kostner, "but activists mobilizing public opinion." (Thomas D. Zweifel, personal communication, July 30, 2021).

Woke and Cancel Culture: Causes and Drivers

How could all this come about? How could woke and cancel culture ideologies enter the mainstream culture across society? Five causal factors or drivers can be distinguished. One trigger was certainly the unnecessarily brutal killing of the black small-time criminal George Floyd by a white policeman. But the causal trends are older. Globalization and the internet have long softened the identity of ethnic groups. All this in a context often called "VUCA": a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambivalence. In short, VUCA has led to a general disorientation to which some groups respond with identity politics to finally create a clear identity for themselves through demarcation from others.

Second, the #MeToo movement has roots dating back to 2006 when activist Tarana Burke first used the phrase "Me Too" to raise awareness about sexual abuse and assault, particularly for women of color. However, it became a viral phenomenon in October 2017 when actress Alyssa Milano encouraged women to share their experiences of sexual harassment or assault on social media using the hashtag #MeToo, in response to allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. The movement quickly gained momentum, with millions of people sharing their stories across various social media platforms. It spread beyond the entertainment industry, exposing systemic issues of sexual misconduct in workplaces, academia, politics, and other sectors. The #MeToo movement's impact has been far-reaching, leading to high-profile resignations, policy changes in many organizations, and broader discussions about gender and power.

A third, older factor are several ideologies that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in academia with the ascent of interdisciplinary studies, such as post-colonialism, radical feminism, and critical race theory. Post-colonialism arose as former colonies gained independence. It examines the lasting impacts of colonialism on cultures, societies, and knowledge systems. Radical feminism, a second wave of feminism, views patriarchy as the fundamental system of oppression in society. Radical feminism challenged existing academic paradigms and led to the establishment of women's studies programs in many universities. Critical race theory (CRT) originated among legal scholars and gained prominence in law schools before spreading to other disciplines. It argues that racism is systemic rather than just individual prejudice.

The foundation of these ideologies is older. It comes from the Marxist and co-founder of the Italian Communist Party Antonio Gramsci (1897-1937), who coined the term Cultural Hegemony (Gottlieb, 1989, pp. 113-119). Gramsci argued that consent to the rule of the dominant group is achieved by the spread of ideologies—beliefs, assumptions, and values—through social institutions such as schools, churches, courts, and the media, among others. These institutions socialize the masses into the norms, values, and beliefs of the dominant social group. As such, the group that controls these institutions controls the rest of society.

In short, Gramsci held that the ruling class has created a consensus that other classes blindly accept because they believe this is also in their interest—but it only serves the interests of the ruling class. The working class must produce intellectuals who can break with the consensus and represent the interests of the workers. Despite Gramsci's conviction that all people are intellectuals, his theory denies self-determination to the working population and rather sees them as pawns of the powerful. Whether consciously or unconsciously: today's activists for hyper-justice have internalized Gramsci's ideology.

Fourth, the influx of significant funding provided to Western universities by governments such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia or China, which systematically financed and established “cultural institutes” universities, has strengthened the ascent and/or renaissance of these ideologies. In 2020, an investigation by the US Department of Education revealed billions of dollars in unreported foreign gifts to American institutions of higher education from foreign countries. Most of the donations found came from Qatar, which donated \$4.7 billion to American universities between 2001-2021 (Romano, 2024)

A fifth and final factor has been the rise of social networks like TikTok and X, combined with the ubiquity of mobile phones (7.33 billion people, or nine out of ten inhabitants on Earth, own one today), which multiplied these trends by giving countless people the opportunity to like and share contents at zero marginal cost. Users post over 700,000 messages on WhatsApp and 500 hours of video on YouTube—per minute. Much of these messages is fake news—recipients no longer know which news or media they can trust. And the Covid-19 pandemic forced countless people into isolation and intensified the use of social media. This last factor has compounded the other four factors.

Conclusion

Together, these factors cross-fertilized and led to a mix of woke and cancel culture. This ideological mix is non-trivial; it can be a matter of life and death. The woke culture contributed, for example, to the catastrophic implosion of the submarine "Titan" and the death of all occupants, as the founder and CEO of OceanGate, Stockton Rush, didn't want to hire "50-year-old white guys" but "inspiring young people." (Zweifel, 2023). One of these 50-year-old engineers who criticized the quality of the submarine wall and demanded stricter underwater tests was summarily dismissed. With that, Rush sealed his own death sentence.

Policies based on the woke agenda may also have been a factor in a recent aviation incident. After a cabin section of the Boeing 737 Max blew off in mid-flight and the plane with 177 people on board had to make an emergency landing, it came to light that Boeing had changed its incentive system and not only rewards performance and safety, but also "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI). The incident begs the question, Is Boeing sacrificing the safety of its airplanes—and passengers—at the altar of identity politics? (Zweifel, 2024).

In the woke view, I can no longer shape my life, my choices are constrained, since I am a product of my skin color, my ethnicity, my birth, and ultimately my past. On the other hand, in the wake of gender fluidity, I can choose my gender identity like an avatar. My gender is à la carte. If I, as a 15-year-old, want a gender reassignment because I feel like a boy in a girl's body—as a court in Canada ruled—then my parents have nothing more to say about this decision.

With such zealous hyper-liberalism, our society (and the West in general) runs the risk of forgetting our foundations in the face of dogma and "racism correction." If a person's origin or skin color counts more than their work, performance, creativity, and innovation, then we fall back behind the achievements of the last centuries—Enlightenment, self-determination, equal opportunity, self-realization, freedom, pluralism, and tolerance, to name but a few core values. As American philosopher Victor Davis Hansen said: "How much ruin do we have left?" (Hansen, 2021). How many pillars can we give up before we lose ourselves as a society?

The geopolitical consequences are incalculable. For the enemies of the West have no scruples about their totalitarianism, racism or sexism. They oppress women, they incarcerate homosexuals or throw them off buildings, they hold Uyghur Muslims in labor camps, they execute dissidents without batting an eyelid. They can afford intolerance and inquisition, xenophobia and misogyny, pogroms and extermination of "infidels"—their imperialism and

racism are undisguised and unregulated. And they laugh up their sleeves while the West consumes itself in self-doubt.

The President of France himself, Emmanuel Macron, thought it necessary to intervene against woke: "I see our society is becoming increasingly racialized." Several cabinet members also expressed anti-woke views, not least Elisabeth Moreno, the Minister for Equality and Diversity who hails from Cape Verde. "The woke culture is something very dangerous, and we shouldn't bring it to France." (Samuel, 2021).

Will this trend pass like a fad, or are we talking about a seismic change that will be irreversible and cement itself in new laws and societal norms? The decision, Sandra Kostner suspects, will fall in the next five to ten years. "The young tend to rebel against what is." Kostner describes herself as an optimist: "The hope would be that they push back against it." She trusts that reason will eventually prevail. "If people in the middle stand up, the other side can't get away with it." (Thomas D. Zweifel, personal communication, July 30, 2021)

But this is by no means certain. Once culture is institutionalized in explicit laws and norms, it becomes cemented. How can Western societies counter the trend towards uniformity of opinion and dogma in educational institutions and in the media?

This is of course a normative question with political, cultural, and economic dimensions. The question goes to the foundation of reality: What do we call "true"? Where do we get our "knowledge"? Which media do we trust to convey reality? "I get my 'reality' as broadly as possible and read many media," Kostner said, "but the day only has 24 hours. I'm experiencing an ever-increasing loss of trust." (Thomas D. Zweifel, personal communication, July 30, 2021)

And the answer to "What to do?" depends on the addressees: Are they students? Children? The academic chairs? The political parties? "Society" as a whole? The interventions and messages would have to be tailored to the target groups.

"The advantage the other side has over us," says Kostner, "is that they are believers." Belief is emotional, not recognized as an interpretation, considered as "reality" ("That's how it is") and hence difficult to refute. One must carefully analyze: What are the arguments and the underlying beliefs that need to be addressed?

"You have to take the sting out of the whole thing," says Kostner. And "education is the core because that's where the young are socialized and get their values as future leaders." One remedy would be the introduction of evidence-based critical thinking in all curricula so that young adults learn to separate facts from fictions and to meet the jumble of information, dogma, and fake news in social media. The same goes for academia: "You have to organize to make it visible and document it," said Kostner, co-founder and chairwoman of the Network for Academic Freedom. This only works if people committed to evidence-based inquiry join forces. "We can receive support. You are not alone. I'm not alone because I'm wrong, but I'm alone because my colleagues don't support me.' That's how we can create counter-pressure." (Thomas D. Zweifel, personal communication, July 30, 2021).

Such pushback gathers strength when one doesn't simply accept myths and lies, but drags them into the light and publicly questions them. "Their arguments are not valid, so they target the person," said Kostner. "Just forcing them into debates is already something." (Thomas D. Zweifel, personal communication, July 30, 2021).

Financial pressure can also be effective. "Donors are incredibly important," said Kostner. "A large part of public relations is financed by the identity left." If academics or schools put dogma above science, sponsors could withdraw funds—or at least credibly threaten to do so.

Ultimately, however, the debate will have to take place in the broader public, as is customary in democratic societies. "We need to organize the silent majority more strongly,"

Kostner believes. "The more it affects them, the more they will resist." (Thomas D. Zweifel, personal communication, July 30, 2021).

A great remedy for disarming woke and cancel culture excesses might be humor. The British comedian Ricky Gervais ("The Office") in his Netflix series "SuperNature" joked about "old-fashioned women. They're the ones with wombs. Those fucking dinosaurs. I love the new women. They're great, aren't they? The new ones we've been seeing lately. The ones with beards and cocks." (Cain, 2022).

Humor or not, language is the house of being, argued Martin Heidegger (Heidegger, 1984). So can we perhaps turn back language regulation? The problem is that whoever attempts this will be attacked as a reactionary who wants to reintroduce the status quo.

There is also the danger, as the linguist and teacher Tomas Kubelik called it, of a "euphemistic treadmill": We change our language regulation, but that doesn't change the circumstances. Has the fact that we have replaced words like "Negro" or "cripple" with more politically correct terms improved the circumstances of Black people or the disabled? That is debatable.

According to Kubelik there are languages with three genders (for example German, with he/she/it) or those with two (the Romance languages or Hebrew, with he or she). Since Turkish knows only one gender, Kubelik says, "Turkey would have to be particularly equal." (Kubelik, 2015). This is of course not quite the case. *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

References

- Benedek, E. (2024, September 11). New York City's Laboratory for Hate. *Tablet*. https://www.realeclearpolicy.com/2024/09/13/new_york_citys_laboratory_for_hate_1058190.html
- Brigham and Women's Hospital (n.d). *Addressing Disparities in Heart Failure Admissions*. <https://www.brighamandwomens.org/about-bwh/newsroom/addressing-heart-admission-disparities>
- Brown, L. (2021, March 30). Oxford wants to scrap sheet music over complicity in 'white supremacy'. *New York Post*. <https://nypost.com/2021/03/30/oxford-wants-to-ban-sheet-music-over-complicity-in-white-supremacy/>
- Cain, S. (2022, May 25). *Ricky Gervais Netflix special condemned by LGBTQ groups for "anti-trans rants masquerading as jokes."* The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/may/25/ricky-gervais-netflix-special-condemned-by-lgbtq-groups-for-anti-trans-rants-masquerading-as-jokes>
- Cole, D. (2021, March 30). *South Dakota's governor issues executive orders banning transgender athletes from women's sports*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/30/politics/south-dakota-transgender-sports-kristi-noem/index.html>
- Deul, J. (2024, February 25). *Opinie: Een witte vertaler voor poëzie van Amanda Gorman: onbegrijpelijk*. Volkskrant.nl. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/opinie-een-witte-vertaler-voor-poezie-van-amanda-gorman-onbegrijpelijk~bf128ae4/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>
- Documentation – Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit. (2023). Netzwerk-Wissenschaftsfreiheit.de. <https://www.netzwerk-wissenschaftsfreiheit.de/documentation/>
- Dorman, S. (2021, April 12). Cornell faculty approves resolution removing race from crime alerts. *Fox News*. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/cornell-faculty-race-crime-alerts>
- Downey, C. (2021, September 6). *National Review*. <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/google-launches-antiracism-program-teaching-that-america-is-a-system-of-white-supremacy/>

- Dutton, J. (2021, April 20). What Andrew Gutmann Letter to Brearley School Decrying Anti-Racism Policies Said. *Newsweek*. <https://www.newsweek.com/what-andrew-gutman-letter-brearley-school-decrying-anti-racism-policies-said-1584918>
- Findlay, B. (2022). Legal rights of transgender youth seeking medical care. *British Columbia Medical Journal*, 64, 2, 65-68
- Flaig, E. (2021). Umstrittene Wissenschaftlichkeit und Wissenschaftsfreiheit. Unpublished manuscript
- Flood, A. (2021, March 1). 'Shocked by the uproar': Amanda Gorman's white translator quits. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/mar/01/amanda-gorman-white-translator-quits-marieke-lucas-rijneveld>
- Frank, A. (2020, August 5). *Angst vor Eskalation: Kabarettistin Lisa Eckhart von Literaturfestival ausgeladen*. Spiegel.de; DER SPIEGEL. <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/hamburg-lisa-eckhart-vom-harbour-front-literaturfestival-ausgeladen-a-ab18855d-0381-4e13-a232-2c9e00ef031b>
- Goins-Phillips, T. (2022, March 23). Arizona Dept. of Education Reviewing 'Equity' Toolkit Claiming Babies Are Racist. *CBN*. <https://cbn.com/news/us/arizona-dept-education-reviewing-equity-toolkit-claiming-babies-are-racist>
- Gottlieb, R. S. (1989). *An Anthology of western Marxism : from Lukács and Gramsci to socialist-feminism*. New York Oxford University Press.
- Graves, L. (2021, February 21). Debate emerges over racism and white supremacy in Oregon math instruction. *KATU*. <https://katu.com/news/local/debate-emerges-over-racism-and-white-supremacy-in-math-instruction>
- Grenier, E. (2018, January 25). *Berlin college to remove mural deemed "sexist."* Dw.com; Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/en/berlin-college-to-remove-mural-poem-deemed-sexist/a-42300838>
- Hansen, V. D. (2021, April 22). How Much Ruin Do We Have Left?. *National Review*. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/04/how-much-ruin-do-we-have-left/>
- Heidegger, M. (1984). *On the way to language*. HarperOne
- JNS TV. (2024, September 23). *Shai Davidai EXPOSES Campus Hate | The Quad Interviews*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM70smpNz-Q>
- kei, F. K. (2022, July 9). *Warum Unis Studenten nicht zum Gendern zwingen dürfen*. Neue Zürcher Zeitung. <https://www.nzz.ch/international/warum-unis-studenten-nicht-zum-gendern-zwingen-duerfen-ld.1692319>
- King, M.L. (1963, August 28). *I have a dream* [Speech audio recording].
- Kriegstreiber kapituliert kampfflos*. (2017, November). Zürcher Studierendenzeitung. <https://www.zsonline.ch/2017/11/01/kriegstreiber-kapituliert-kampfflos>
- Kubelik, T. (2015). *Genug gegendert!: Eine Kritik der feministischen Sprache*. Projekte Verlag
- le Duc, F. (2021, June 8). Schools and council offer 'racist' food because it includes dairy, says campaigner. *Hove News*. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2021/06/07/schools-and-council-offer-racist-food-because-it-includes-dairy-says-campaigner/>
- Lowry, R. (2024, September 16). *Cornell hate prof is a stain on the academy — and there are hundreds just like him*. <https://nypost.com/2024/09/16/opinion/cornell-hate-prof-a-stain-on-the-academy-and-fits/>
- McFall, C. (2024, September 27). *Swiss court takes trans child away from parents over their objections to puberty blockers*. <https://www.foxnews.com/world/swiss-court-takes-trans-child-away-from-parents-over-objections-puberty-blockers>
- Nolan, E. (2020, September 16). J.K. Rowling Book Burning Videos Are Spreading Like Wildfire Across TikTok. *Newsweek*.

- O'Neil, T. (2021, September 9). *Fox Business*. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/american-express-reverse-discrimination-white-people-former-employee>
- Perry, T. (2021, March 17). New York private school shows students how to refer to non-parental guardians in the most inclusive way. *Upworthy*. <https://www.upworthy.com/private-school-asks-students-to-avoid-calling-parents-mom-or-dad>
- Romano, J. (2024). Tuition of Terror? How Much Does Qatar's Money Affect American Academia?. *Mid.East Journal*
- Rossi, P. (2021, April 13). NYC teacher: We're damaging kids with 'Critical Race Theory'. *New York Post*. <https://nypost.com/2021/04/13/nyc-teacher-were-damaging-kids-with-critical-race-theory/>
- Rufo, C.F. (2021, August 18). Bank of America. *City Journal*.
- Samuel, H. (2021, July 1). Emmanuel Macron warns France is becoming "increasingly racialised" in outburst against woke culture. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/07/01/emmanuel-macron-france-becoming-increasingly-racialised-outburst/>
- Shueftan, D. (2018, July 4). *The Rise of Populism in Western Democracies - The Contribution of Run-Away Liberalism*. Lecture Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung. <https://www.wzb.eu/en/events/the-rise-of-populism-in-western-democracies-the-contribution-of-run-away-liberalism>
- Somerville, E. (2021, March 7). Student wins payout after "transphobic" tweets inquiry. *The Sunday Telegraph*.
- Stegemann, B. (2020, July 5). Keine Macht den Denunzianten und Reinheitsfanatikern der Kulturszene!. *Schweizer Monat*. <https://schweizermonat.ch/keine-macht-den-denunzianten-und-reinheitsfanatikern-der-kulturszene/>
- Syeda, S., & Molkenbur, T.(2023). *Mainstream and Far-Right Islamophobia: A UK-Germany Comparison*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- TheLocal.de. (2016). <https://www.thelocal.de/20160104/refugees-blamed-for-mass-sexual-assault-in-cologne>.
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d (1964).
- US congressman who said 'amen and a-woman' prayer hits back at critics. (2021, January 5). *The Guardian*.
- U.S. Department of State—Bureau of Consular Affairs (n.d). *Selecting Your Gender Marker*. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/need-passport/selecting-your-gender-marker.html>.
- Whistleblower reveals 'antiracism training' at Google. (2021, September 9). *Reward Strategy*.
- Wikipedia Contributors. (2024, July 17). *Wolfgang Benz*. Wikipedia; Wikimedia Foundation.
- Will, G.F. (2021, June 23). A teacher pushes back against K-12 critical race theory indoctrination. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/23/teacher-pushes-back-against-k-12-critical-race-theory-indoctrination/>
- Wispelwey, B., & Morse, M. (2021, March 17). An Antiracist Agenda for Medicine. *Boston Review*. <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/michelle-morsebram-wispelwey-what-we-owe-patients-case-medical-reparations/>
- Wood, G. (2021, June 9). Princeton Dumbs Down Classics. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/06/princeton-greek-latin-requirement/619136/>

- Woolcock, N. (2021, October 8). *Professor hits back in “toxic” transgender row*. Thetimes.com; The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/professor-hits-back-in-toxic-transgender-row-ddcg952k7>
- Zweifel, T.D. (2023). Sunk Sub: Looking Under the Hood. *Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics*, 6(2), 55-63.
- Zweifel, T. D. (2024, January 17). *Vielfalt auf Leben und Tod*. Weltwoche.ch. <https://weltwoche.ch/story/vielfalt-auf-leben-und-tod/>