

There is a 2018 episode of The Channel 4 News from the United Kingdom that has become rather infamous. Canadian psychologist and professor Jordan Peterson is interviewed by Cathy Newman about his book *12 Rules of Life*, feminism and gender identity.

Peterson has become very popular among those to the extreme right of the political spectrum. He has also been demonized by many on the far left.

Some would characterize the 2018 interview as one where Peterson proved to the left that they were wrong and he was right, but I find that view rather narrow.

Newman had done her homework before the interview. She was aware of the criticisms of Peterson and she zeroed in on those arguments. It was clear that she made Peterson uncomfortable, and at one point he even stated that fact.

Newman demonstrated her greatest skill as a journalist, however, when she allowed Peterson to respond to her queries. She gave him time to think and to articulate himself, and she responded by further challenging his views.

At one point, Peterson made his point so clear that Newman did not have a counterargument. While she did appear a bit embarrassed by this turn in the discourse, she graciously moved on to a new topic.

What is particularly interesting, however, is the public response after the interview. While Peterson was being celebrated, Newman received death threats and insults.

This is unfortunate because both Peterson and Newman did an excellent job in promoting civil, public discourse. Some have argued that Newman was not actually listening to Peterson, but kept repeating the same questions, distorting what he had actually said for the sake of promoting her own agenda.

While I cannot speak to the interviewer's intention, I sincerely appreciate her willingness to engage in a public debate with a very intelligent and well-spoken individual, and even to risk looking foolish.

In our very polarized world, many of us have become very defensive of our views. This is evidenced in social media, on television and even in our educational institutions. We seem to think that acknowledging the legitimacy of someone else's argument makes us weak or stupid.

The most confident and competent people among us, however, are also the best listeners. They know that their ideas do not define who they are as human beings, that their ideas can change but their intrinsic value does not.

It is actually magical when we engage in intelligent and respectful debate with others. Our views are challenged, so we have to articulate our perspectives more clearly. Ideally, the other party is doing the same. We may have to take a break and gather evidence to strengthen our arguments, but isn't that all part of the excitement?

I recently discussed my attitudes toward this sort of discussion with my 88-year-old father. As I was growing up, we shared many differing perspectives. I was a young socialist and he was an executive with a multi-national corporation. Behind our often loud and heated disagreements there was always a love and respect, an appreciation of the other person and where their views were coming from. I trusted my father enough to doubt my own views, and this honest humility has served me well.

My family still engages in boisterous debates, and I am forever grateful for this loving discourse.

The world is full of problems and questions, and no one has all the right answers, not even Jordan Peterson. I think that even he would agree, however, that the greatest legacy we can leave for the world is not being right but showing respect for our neighbour and thus bringing humanity a little closer to the truth.