

A Book Review of
***The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity* (Douglas Murray)**
by Dr Conrad Vine.

Currently the #1 bestseller in Amazon's Cultural Policy book category, Murray provides a piercing and provocative (i.e. politically incorrect) analysis of the devastating impact on western society of radical secularism in the areas of race, gender, technology and sexuality. The book is a compelling read, providing an insightful critique of the impact of radical secularism in all areas of modern western society.

According to Murray, an openly gay ex-Anglican, the grand meta-narratives of the past have collapsed. Those provided in the religious sphere collapsed in the 19th century, and those provided in the political sphere collapsed in the 20th century. In the West, we are now the first society in history living without a grand meta-narrative that gives meaning, explains purpose, and provides hope. We cannot remain "the first people in recorded history to have absolutely no explanation for what we are doing here, and no story to give life purpose" (p. 1). As nature abhors a vacuum, into this spiritual and theological vacuum has flooded what is essentially a new "religion," i.e. radical atheism as manifest in social justice activism, identity group politics and intersectionality.

Murray helpfully explains what he means by these terms. "Social justice" is an attractive sounding term. Who, after all, would be in favor of "social injustice?" More on this term will come later in the book.

Identity politics "atomizes society into different interest groups according to sex (or gender), race, sexual preferences and more. It presumes that such characteristics are the main, or only, relevant attributes of their holders and that they bring with them some added bonus" (p. 3).

Intersectionality is the idea that we must spend the rest of our lives working out every identity and victimhood and vulnerability claim in our midst in a "perpetually moving hierarchy." This system is "not just unworkable but dementing, making demands that are impossible towards ends that are unachievable" (p.3).

The impact of these changes is far reaching and to date we have no understanding of just how our society will be broken by this rapacious ideology that rejects the very concept of truth as being a manifestation of white supremacy and racism. Social tripwires abound. Accusations of racism, homophobia, islamophobia, transphobia, sexism, misogyny, prejudice and bigotry are levelled at all who don't fall in line with this new secular religion. The responsibility of a man to protect and provide for his family is now decried as "toxic masculinity." Feminists protest and rage at the "patriarchy" and insist on unlimited abortion on demand. These changes are happening with breathtaking speed because how might we demonstrate "virtue" in this new system? By being an "ally" to whatever happens to be the marginalized group that is the current focus of the Social Justice Warriors (SJWs).

Murray argues that what we are witnessing now is a modern-day phenomenon of the "St George in retirement" syndrome (p. 7). What is this? Having slain the proverbial dragon, St George can't seem to rest on his laurels, but finds himself stalking the land looking for more dragons to slay. Without those dragons, can he remain St George? Eventually he finds himself fighting invisible and imaginary dragons. Thus, while women's rights have advanced to the stage where almost every barrier has been removed and women enjoy full legal and social equality in society, with the advent of 4th Wave Feminism we have galloped off to fight battles around gender identity, gender fluidity and transgenderism. While the formal racial barriers have progressively fallen as a result of the Civil Rights movement and the sacrifices of so many, being black is now shifting from being an ethnic to an ideological identity, and under the hammer-beat of the fake-news media, more and more are convinced that racism is a major problem in the West.

Murray provides major discussions of some of these key ideological changes. First, he addresses the issue of gay rights. What is interesting is that he addresses this question from the perspective of an ex-Anglican, openly

gay individual. He is not approaching this discussion from a biblical worldview. Throughout the book, he discusses issues relating to the gay community, and tensions within the LGBTQ community, with the insights that only a member of that self-same community can have. According to Murray, virtue signaling throughout the media, Hollywood, and popular culture provides positive gay role-models all around us. To be socially acceptable requires one to be a vocal ally of the LGBTQ community. Indeed, so fast has this change happened that the LGBTQ movement is now demonstrating consistent symptoms of totalitarianism and the social destruction of any voices raised against their domination. Many examples of this are provided. Most critically, Murray discusses the debate about hardware and software. What is this? Hardware is “something that people cannot change and (so the reasoning goes) it is something that they should not be judged on” (p. 29). Software, however relates to how we actually choose to live our lives, and thus “can be changed and may demand judgments – including moral judgments – to be made” (p. 29). Despite the fact that DNA studies have shown absolutely no evidence of there being a “gay gene,” the cultural zeitgeist in the West insists that gay persons are born gay, that being homosexual is not a matter of lifestyle choice or sexual preference, but is something that one is genetically hardwired to be. In this worldview, one cannot “repent” of being gay or turn away from the homosexual lifestyle – for it is who one intrinsically is, and this must be accepted by society as part of the beautiful diversity of the human condition.

Murray insightfully explains the profound contradictions to be found within the so-called “LGBTQ community.” It is not a community within any reasonable understanding of a community. It is really a coalition of different groups with radically opposed understandings of human sexuality and personal agendas. These understandings and agendas rarely agree. For instance, “gay men and gay women, meanwhile, have a famous amount of suspicion towards people who claim to be “bisexual.” The “B” in LGBT is a source of occasional angst within the gay media....Gay men tend to believe that men who claim to be “Bi” are in fact gays in some form of denial (“Bi now, gay later”) (p. 35). Murray discusses the philosophical differences within the LGBTQ community. For instance, are gays fighting for personal equality, e.g. the right to marry, or are they fighting to tear down a society built on Judea-Christian foundations in order to erect a utopia in its place? What place respectability, exhibitionism, irony or irresponsibility in Pride marches? Should those in same-sex marriage (i.e. without the cementing factor of having their own biological children) have the same social expectations as those in heterosexual marriages that are cemented together by their own biological children? Are people seeking equality, with equal responsibilities or equality plus a “little gay bonus” (p. 40) which gives equality without equal social responsibilities?

Concluding his discussion of the gay movement, Murray discusses the question of whether being gay is a political rather than sexual identity. Examples are provided, e.g. Peter Thiel, who spoke at the Republican National Convention in 2016, later being condemned in the LGBTQ media. Is there a difference between gay sex and Gay? In aligning himself with the Republicans, Thiel had allegedly separated himself “from gay identity” (p. 45). Murray concludes his discussion of the gay movement by arguing that homosexuals present a fundamental perceived threat to many in the dominant heterosexual because of their blurring of the lines between, and experiences of, men and women.

Murray then provides the first of three brief interludes, this one being on the Marxist foundations of modern SJWs and social progressivism. He argues convincingly – and is certainly not the first to make this connection – that SJWs and social progressivism is a modern-day form of Marxism that is built on the writings of Marx and Foucault. In the new ideology, society is not a system of trust and traditions that have evolved over time, but we are to understand everything through the prism of raw power. Everything in life is now understood to be a political choice and a political act. The role of SJWs is to see through the web of power in society and to deconstruct it in order to identify and rectify oppression. Of course, as anyone who has studied deconstructionism knows, deconstructionism was first applied in literary theory and philosophy after WWII, and died a welcome death as its intrinsic absurdities became evident. In my personal opinion, having failed in the literary world due to its inherent absurdities, deconstructionism now looks to deconstruct society, which will lead to social chaos and multiplied human misery. However, SJWs insist that we must deconstruct society and

all social relationships, atomizing society into individuals with intersectional characteristics that determine where they are in the relative power pyramids and interlocking oppressions of society.

In the new SJW worldview, Western society is viewed as being intrinsically sexist, racist, misogynist, transphobic etc. etc. etc., and must be torn down. As Murray aptly points out, “their ideological children in identity politics and intersectionality seem content to inhabit an ideological space littered with contradiction, absurdity and hypocrisy” (p. 58). Murray concludes this interlude by narrating the hoaxes perpetrated by Boghossian and Lindsay. They published via an academic journal a now infamous paper entitled “The Conceptual Penis as a Social Construct” in which they proposed that “the penis vis-à-vis maleness is an incoherent construct. We argue that the conceptual penis is better understood not as an anatomical organ but as a gender-performative, highly fluid social construct” (p. 61). This, and subsequent hoax papers were published in respectable academic journals, and exposed the fact that utter nonsense, if written using the dense, provocative and ideological language of the SJWs and their Marxist allies in the ivory towers of tenured academia, can gain the approval of modern-day academics who are so steeped in their Marxist worldview and immune from the consequences of unfettered illegal immigration and the socio-economic consequences of their teaching and theories by virtue of their tenured positions, that they can no longer distinguish between that which is true and that which is absurd.

Murray then turns to discuss women. He outlines and illustrates the puzzling trends of the rejection of the objectification of women as sexual objects with the parallel trend towards sexual aggressiveness and exhibitionism among high-profile actors and feminists in which sexual exhibitionism such as exposing oneself on live TV is somehow now viewed as a “feminist” act (p. 72). These contradictions are on full display across popular culture. An example is to be found in the music video by Nicki Minaj for her song “Anaconda.” She wiggles and moves provocatively throughout with deeply suggestive wording (the chorus is a long repetition of the phrase, “Oh my g_sh, look at her butt”), and she concludes by writhing suggestively around and over a seated male. When he raises his hands in response at the end of the video, she walks away in disgust at his inexcusable behavior. This music video presents what Murray argues is “an unresolvable challenge and an impossible demand” (p. 79). This is the demand that women be as sexy and as sexual and as provocative as they please (flaunting their sexuality as a demonstration of militant feminism), but they in turn cannot be sexualized.

After discussing the impact of SJW ideology on power relationships between men and women in the workplace, Murray discusses the rapid onset of the unconscious bias training based on Harvard’s Implicit Association Test (IAT). Murray succinctly discusses the profound philosophical and absurd practical consequences of buying into this kind of ideology across society. He then discusses the so-called “war on women” alleged by many feminists in the 1990s onwards, which has morphed, according to Murray, into a war on men. Men are trash. All men are rapists. Toxic masculinity. Male privilege. The #MeToo movement. Mansplaining. The patriarchy. The net social impact is two-fold: fewer and fewer wish to identify as being feminist, and there is a crisis of manhood among men in the West.

In essence, Murray argues that whereas the gay rights movement sought to convince society that homosexuality was not software, i.e. lifestyle choices and social roles, but a hardware issue, i.e. people are born gay and must be therefore fully accepted, feminism has taken women in the opposite role, i.e. being a woman is not a matter of hardware, i.e. being a woman is not related to biology / DNA / chromosomes, etc., but being a woman is a social construct, of “reiterated social performances” (p. 106). Thus everything we as humanity have learned about the differences between men and women, in biological, social, emotional, psychological and physical terms, are all to be denied. As a result, the relationships between men and women are profoundly suffering. Utter confusion reigns.

Murray then comes to the second of his three interludes: the impact of technology. He discusses the profoundly negative and consequential impact of social media. There is no longer private speech or public speech events. What is done is private can now be broadcast to billions, context free. To speak up on any issue today will lead to condemnation from some intersectional group tomorrow, so people are cowed into silence, pre-emptively, for

fear of social consequences tomorrow from the rapacious march of intersectionality. The “ferocious winds of the present” (p. 110) force social compliance. Murray discusses the impact of the SJWs’ control of Silicon Valley, machine learning fairness, i.e. the algorithms that dictate our search results and the ideology behind these algorithms. The net result of these algorithms is that the truth is being sacrificed for ideology in pursuit of the SJW political goals. “Where diversity and representation are found to have been inadequate in the past, this can be solved most easily by changing the past” (p. 120), i.e. via search engine algorithms. Via the search engine algorithms and their machine learning fairness strategies, we are entering the era of Orwell’s 1984, where history can be infinitely rewritten to accommodate today’s values, priorities and perspectives.

After this brief interlude, Murray next turns to a detailed discussion of race. He begins by affirming the principles contained in Dr King’s famous speech, in which he dreamed that one day his children should “one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” (p. 121). However, SJW ideology has moved much further than Dr King’s vision. First, “Black Studies” started popping up alongside the other metastasizing SJW areas such as “Women’s Studies” and “Queer Studies.” “Black Studies” courses were intended to emphasize a particular aspect of history, literature, culture and politics that had been previously neglected. However, just as popular feminism evolved from celebrating women to demonizing men, so a portion of “Black Studies” scholars evolved into demonizing those who are not black. The focus has now evolved into attacking those who are white.

And so modern-day cultural-Marxist academics are pushing concepts such as whiteness studies, the problem of whiteness, white privilege, privilege preserving epistemic pushback, white denial, implicit bias, unconscious bias etc. The aim, as one such scholar proudly writes, is “disrupting racism by problematizing whiteness” (p. 124), or more simply put, to “problematize” hundreds of millions of people (p. 124). As Murray points out, to “problematize” a people group simply and exclusively due to their racial characteristics is a textbook definition of racism. However, as we see elsewhere in Critical Theory, in the victimhood hierarchy, racism only flows downwards, from the alleged hegemonic power of cis-gender heterosexual and heteronormative white males, the ultimate oppressors in modern society.

This thinking has evolved to the place where Black activists are claiming that for whites to stand for the concept of diversity of thought is in and of itself a manifestation of white supremacy. Indeed, going further, SJWS are now arguing that truth itself is an artificial construct of the Euro-West, a myth and tool of white supremacy. As Murray succinctly asks, if “the “Truth” is a white thing, then what is everyone else meant to live in and to strive towards?” As events at Evergreen and other US college campuses have demonstrated, if dialogue, discussion, debate, reason, reflection, research and seeking the truth are tools of white supremacy, and to be rejected, what is left? Violence. Mob-rule. A bleak prognosis.

Murray then moves to so-called “cultural appropriation.” He identifies a central contradiction: one the one hand, we are taught that diversity is our strength, that all cultures have unique insights and strengths and contributions that are to be celebrated. Theoretically, we are to learn from each other with humility and openness. On the other, those cultural differences can only be crossed under certain circumstances. So, a white woman selling burritos on a college campus is now an act of cultural appropriation and overt racism. For a person of non-Chinese descent to wear an oriental style dress to a prom is treated likewise, an act of cultural and ethnic oppression. In popular culture, we see this cultural conflict played out with public handwringing and virtue signaling / shaming on social media over what costumes are appropriate at Halloween, whether we can celebrate Thanksgiving, or even Christmas itself. Other race-related issues are then discussed, including questions of the measurement of IQ, the manipulating of entrance gateways into ivy-league universities to boost “diversity” and the concept that to be Black means one must vote Democrat. Blackness is thus becoming a political identity over and above a biological reality, e.g. the curious case of Rachel Dolezal, and the demonization of black celebrities such as Kanye West and Candace Owens for inviting African-Americans to leave the so-called “Democratic plantation” and think for themselves.

Ultimately (and tragically), we are reversing the vision of Dr King. No longer should someone be judged on the content of his or her character rather than in an aggregate group according to the color of their skin. To be evaluated and judged and appreciated in any society by one's character rather than by one's race is now viewed as dangerous. What matters now is the color of one's skin, which for SJWs determines one political worldview, voting patterns, experience of life, and life pathway. Thus, in the SJW worldview, for an African-American to vote for President Donald J Trump in 2020 will be viewed as an act of betrayal to the color of his / her skin.

Murray now turns to his final interlude – a discussion of forgiveness. With the arrival of social media, we are moving beyond the possibility for public or private forgiveness. “Context collapse” is the term used for when a private conversation leaks into the public sphere, without the public having any idea of the original context. The opportunities for misunderstanding, and public outrage, shaming and hatred abound. On the internet, many are now seemingly addicted to the pleasure of public shaming, tearing someone apart professionally and personally, and thus gaining a sense of self-righteousness that comes from joining virtuously in the punishment of an alleged transgressor.

And how is forgiveness possible in an era when the internet stores every story forever? Nothing can be erased. Your past is forever with you. The past is hostage to any internet-archaeologist with a vendetta. Cancel culture is eliminating people's professional and personal viability due to alleged sins from previous tweets or social media postings. As the list of alleged sins shifts by the day, it is impossible to know whether one is viewed as moral and socially acceptable today will lead to you becoming a social pariah in 10 years' time. Your sins as a teenager will be held forever against you for the rest of your life. Unsurprisingly, repeated studies show a staggering increase in mental health problems, particularly on college campuses, which are witnessing an epidemic of anxiety, depression and mental illness among young people.

Thus, with the rise of social media, we live in an era where forgiveness is not possible. We still live with concepts of guilt, often a heritage from the fumes of our Judeo-Christian heritage in the West, but we have no possibility of redemption or forgiveness. How do we respond? Rather than engaging in society, sharing ideas, debating concepts, and engaging in the give and take of healthy discourse, we are retreating into sullen and fearful silence, afraid to speak up. This is how the new totalitarianism works. People are jumping onto the bandwagon of political correctness and embracing its ever-changing dogmas because no questions are allowed and no questions are to be asked. Perhaps the fastest moving dogma is that of transgenderism, to which we now turn.

This is Murray's last major chapter. He describes the history of the rise of Transgender ideology, focusing initially on the biological reality of the fraction of the population born with inter-sex disorders, i.e. with both male and female genitalia, or ambiguous genitalia. Famous cases such as Robert Cowell and Bruce Jenner are discussed and analyzed, together with their social impact, and a detailed discussion of autogynephilia. The Transgender issue really focusses our minds on whether this is a hardware or a software question. A biological male is hardwired to be a man. However, what if he believes he is a woman. That would be a software question – one of social role, gender constructs, reiterated social activities and expectations.

Murray explores the issue of Transgenderism primarily from the perspective of a gay man. As he makes clear, despite the protestations of love and unity and inclusiveness at Pride and other such events, there is actually no love lost or shared philosophy between the G and the T components of the LGBTQ community. Rather, there are profound philosophical differences and utter confusion. For instance, if a biological woman identifies as a man, is a biological man who is attracted to other men (i.e. is a homosexual) to be considered bigoted and transphobic for refusing the possibility of a date with said trans-man? Likewise, if a biological female is attracted to other women (as understood throughout history, i.e. an adult biological female), i.e. is a lesbian, should she be compelled to be open to the possibility of dating a trans-woman, i.e. a biological male with male genitalia but who identifies as a woman? Confusion and acrimony are the result of such philosophical chaos. As Murray points out, there is no metric for measuring truth or respective “privilege” and one's place in the victimhood hierarchy. Is the daughter of President Obama, raised with incredible earthly advantages, a victim of

the unemployed son of a white logger in a dying town in northern Maine? How do we evaluate privilege between a handsome or an ugly person, a fit person or a morbidly obese person? What if the ugly person is a prince, and the handsome person is a pauper? What happens if Prince Charles of the House of Windsor suddenly announces that he is a transgender person of color? Does that mean he is now a victim of the oppression caused by allegedly homophobic cis-gender heterosexual African-American preachers?

In the crossfire between L, G and T-groups, feminists have suffered immensely. Some of the most famous feminist writers of the 20th Century such as Julie Bindel and Germaine Greer have been “cancelled” due to their insistence on speaking up for biological women as opposed to trans-women. As Murray succinctly puts this, “just as Peter Thiel was no longer gay, and Kanye West no longer black, so Germaine Greer was no longer a feminist” (p. 215). Ideological purity demands the public cancellation and demonization of any who stray off the ideological reservation.

In my personal opinion, in what Murray is describing, we are now witnessing a replay of the madness of the Terror of the French Revolution and of Mao Zedong’s Chinese Cultural Revolution. Both of these tragic periods in history involved the intentional elimination of the Christian presence from society, massive bloodshed, social disruption on a scale previously unseen, untold suffering, and the demand for political correctness to today’s ideology. America should take note!

At the end of the day, Murray argues that in the rush to adopt the Transgender ideology, we are at risk of causing untold damage to countless children, who are confused and in the midst of childhood suddenly announce they are of another gender. They are then put on steroid and surgical pathways that irreparably change their physical and psychological being – all without any real understanding of what is happening.

On a personal note, a sermon I preached on the question of the Transgender ideology and experience is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZOSwQC68G8>. This sermon includes a brief history of the Transgender ideology and how we may respond with Christian love and grace to those caught up in this experience and ideology.

Murray now turns to his conclusions. Although raised an Anglican, he now describes himself as a “cultural Christian” or as a “Christian Atheist” and is openly gay. Hence, his conclusions are not those that come from a biblical worldview. He argues that SJWs argue via intersectionality and identity politics that society is inherently and irredeemably racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and misogynist etc. The West is fundamentally flawed. Essentially, we need to cancel the USA! Yet, the various demands of the competing intersectional groups are irreconcilable and mutually exclusive. They represent philosophical confusion, logical impossibilities and socio-cultural chaos. The battle lines are always changing. Today’s ideology is tomorrow’s hate speech. As Truth is no longer a possible concept, everything is relativized and atomized. In short, society comes to the brink of collapse or to enforce total equality of outcome for every micro-group we end up with a totalitarian Marxist state.

What is the solution to this? Murray concludes with a call for the return of free speech (and free thinking), identifying and sharing common values, and for sanity to be restored in an era of internet and ideologically driven mass hysteria.

It is to be noted that SJWs and cultural Marxists and those invested in the exploding cottage industry of diversity and inclusion have condemned Murray for being a right wing conspiracy theorist and provocateur. Yes, Murray’s writing is provocative, but his history-telling is accurate, his cultural analysis is incisive, and his book is well worth reading, if only for Adventists to better understand the times in which we live and to better respond to the cultural-Marxism and functional atheism being promoted in our NAD colleges via the diversity and inclusion delusionaries on our NAD campuses.