

The Good Men Project: Compendium III



Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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The Good Men Project: Compendium III

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Scott

The Good Men Project

Professor Gordon Guyatt on Healthcare in Canada

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 2, 2018

What is the difference between public and private healthcare on various metrics in Canada? Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University talks about it

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the potentials for a private versus public healthcare.

In a March, 2017, Professor Gordon Guyatt talked about private healthcare versus public healthcare. He looked into the distinct advantages and disadvantages of public and private healthcare in Canada.

I reached out to him to become more informed on the topic. When I talked to him, he noted people want to know how to decide on the relative merits of public healthcare funding versus private healthcare funding. A few things arise for people, according to Guyatt.

Some of the questions raised is health outcomes. For example, the impact of people's health, the access to care, the impact on the patient satisfaction, and the impact on autonomy or choice. Then there is healthcare cost or spending too.

Individual Canadian citizens who can afford and prefer private healthcare funding need a primer, first. Guyatt notes the large amount of misinformation. There is a misinformation coming for a number of reasons.

Guyatt states that the mindset as follows: "things aren't working the way they are now. There has got to be a better way, at least with respect to physician and hospital services. Perhaps, we should try something different."

That can be one driver for it. People want something different. They look for something different than the current setup. The benefits or the outcomes of the private versus the public funding will depend on the individual.

If someone is poor or rich, or penurious or wealthy, the considerations and benefits or outcomes become different for people. The changes in outcomes happen across this spectrum. It is also different if a healthcare provider compared to a consumer.

"When I talk to audiences, there are notions that people have about what is affordable. There are notions people have about what it will do to their own income," Guyatt stated, "Those will influence things. Often it starts off with 'public funding of healthcare is not sustainable.' To deal with that, I ask, 'What do you think has happened to healthcare expenditures as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the last 7 years?'"

He begins to give some options of the amount going up over every year, most years, and so on. Many people become surprised at the answer. The amount has stagnated or decline. “So, as a percentage of GDP, healthcare is lower than 7 years ago. Also, they tend to be surprised when you inform them: in 1991, it was 10% of GDP for all healthcare expenditures,” Guyatt said.

At the time of the interview, it was a bit below 11% over more than 25 years. With public healthcare expenditures, it becomes more extreme over 25 years at about 7% to 7.5%. This can shape the perception of people about healthcare.

Guyatt concluded, “In general, that leads people to rethink the unaffordability of public funding of healthcare. Often, that is the first thing in people’s minds.”

The British Medical Journal or BMJ had a list of 117 nominees in 2010 for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Guyatt was short-listed and came in second-place in the end. He earned the title of an Officer of the Order of Canada based on contributions from evidence-based medicine and its teaching.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2012 and a Member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame in 2015. He lectured on public vs. private healthcare funding in March of 2017, which seemed like a valuable conversation to publish in order to have this in the internet’s digital repository with one of Canada’s foremost academics.

For those with an interest in standardized metrics or academic rankings, he is the 14th most cited academic in the world in terms of H-Index at 222 and has a total citation count of more than 200,000. That is, he has the highest H-Index, likely, of any Canadian academic living or dead.

He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. We conducted an extensive interview before: here, here, here, here, here, and here. We have other interviews in Canadian Atheist (here and here), Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Humanist Voices, and The Good Men Project (here, here, here, here, and here).

The Wins from Public Healthcare in the Canadian Healthcare System for Most Citizens

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 3, 2018

Why does public healthcare win out over private healthcare by a large margin on most metrics according to one the world's leading evidence-based medicine researchers, professor Gordon Guyatt of McMaster University?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the big wins from public healthcare compared to private healthcare on most metrics.

Professor Guyatt ran for the NDP four times and lost “honorably” four times. He replied, “I do not know about honorably.” At that point, I laughed because it was a good joke. However, this prefaced some conversation with Guyatt about healthcare.

For example, the New Democratic Party in Canada may more probably work with platform positions and policies leaning more in ways favorable to the general public regarding healthcare. For those on the outside of this slant, they may value choice.

These types value the freedom and autonomy in their healthcare selections. This means the private funding model of healthcare, which benefits the rich. The other, the NDP type mentioned before, represents benefits or interests more for the poor.

Although, simplistic, it represents the split between private and public healthcare well.

“Those are different perspectives. The issue is if one were talking about the values issue. The value comes down to equity versus what people call ‘autonomy’ or ‘choice,’” Guyatt explained, “On the one hand, there are people who say, ‘You should not have financial barriers to high-quality healthcare. Everyone should get the highest quality healthcare that the system has to offer.’ That is one value.”

The other value Guyatt describes is the ways in which people spend money on healthcare similar to other things in their lives, including a better house or an upgrade in a car. That is, the individual Canadian citizen should be able to spend resources in a similar way on their healthcare.

Guyatt stated, “That is a fundamental value and preference divide, which tends to follow a left-right distribution. The folks on the left value equity more. The folks on the right value choice or autonomy more.”

The discussion shifted into an elimination of autonomy as a consideration. The frame of mind or outcomes if one takes choice or freedom as a value within the set of values thought important for oneself.

“Let’s say one thinks it is a good thing to constrain healthcare expenditures and say that you do not want too much GDP going towards health, the dramatic contrast with that concern is the United States and more or less the rest of the high-income countries,” Guyatt said.

Guyatt compared various areas and countries of the world on private and public healthcare. The United States is 45% public and 55% private. Canada is about 70% public and 30% private. France and Germany are about 75% public and Scandinavia tends to be over 80% public and at or below 20% private.

The United States, in developed nations, stands out. It becomes the proverbial sore thumb or a “big outlier with a much smaller proportion public than the rest of the Western world,” Guyatt described.

“Not coincidentally, they take the cake in terms of percentage of GDP spent on healthcare in the vicinity of 18% now. So, the reasons for that is administrative costs are in Canada perhaps 16 and 17% of our healthcare expenditures,” Guyatt stated, “In the US, it is over 30%. As soon as you make people pay privately, everybody has to buy health insurance, then you have *huge* administrative costs.”

That means insurance companies need to be founded and maintained. They make packages. They compete with one another. A large documentation is needed for all health services. This becomes a big administrative cost with the private funding compared to the public funding.

Guyatt concluded, “Government cannot constrain healthcare costs, essentially. They cannot set boundaries effectively within a private funding model. In terms of constraining healthcare costs, public funding is an out and out winner by a long margin.”

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Distinguished Professor Gordon Guyatt on the Canadian Healthcare System

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 3, 2018

What does Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University say about national healthcare?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the big wins from public healthcare compared to private healthcare on most metrics.

Guyatt and I continued the conversations on the societal variables of the United States. Those variables or factors to make the US an outlier compared to other developed nations/rich nations with good infrastructure.

“I think most people would say that the United States in terms of that value that we were talking about earlier. That is, the value one puts on autonomy versus the value one puts on equity or social solidarity. The US public has extremely different values,” Guyatt opined.

The ability to do one’s own thing. The freedom to choose as one wishes. The chance to be an autonomous and self-governing individual. This is a higher value to Americans than Canadians. This plays out in the healthcare system too.

Guyatt stated, “So, that the fact that it could even be an issue that you could legally insist that people purchase insurance for their healthcare in one way or another – by governments making it available to them. It would be inconceivable in Western Europe that that would be a question.

That is, there are influences of the cultural trends on the selection preferences of the population with Western Europe and Canada more towards public healthcare tendencies and the United States towards the private healthcare tendencies.

There is an influence of attitudes – or values and preferences in the evidence-based medicine literature vernacular – on the desired social programs “across the spectrum.

“Social solidarity, equity, support for the disadvantaged, so on and so forth, is much more highly valued in Western Europe and Canada than it is in the United States,” Guyatt said.

With background, I stated, “I see this attached to your work with Evidenced-Based Medicine with the part that was added on later in the research with ‘values and preferences.’ Culture influences values and preferences even to the extent of administrative costs being swallowed.”

Guyatt responded, “Yes, you are absolutely right. Way back in 2002, when Roy Romanow did his work on a recommendation to the government about a healthcare recommendation, he surveyed Canadians in a variety of formats.”

Base on the survey collective data set analysis, Canadians placed equity as a high value and not autonomy; where the United States, they value autonomy more than equity. In terms of the implications of the financing and the things people pay for healthcare, Guyatt argues there is misinformation.

He considers Americans horrified with the possibility of not being able to pay for quicker and better healthcare. For social solidarity and equity in contrast to autonomy, Scandinavian nations and the United States of America differ starkly.

The British Medical Journal or BMJ had a list of 117 nominees in 2010 for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Guyatt was short-listed and came in second-place in the end. He earned the title of an Officer of the Order of Canada based on contributions from evidence-based medicine and its teaching.

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The Exciting Research in Medicine and Critical Thinking About Medical Care

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 4, 2018

What does Dr. Gordon Guyatt state about the research that will most help the low-income and critical thinking about pseudo-medicine?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the research that helps the low income and the critical thinking stance to take on pseudo-medicines or medicine purporting to help but does not in the end.

In 2017, I had the chance to talk with a leading medical research, distinguished professor Gordon Guyatt. He specializes in evidence-based medicine. I wanted to talk about some important research and some practical tips for the public.

Tips for the public to avoid snake oil and bogus remedies. We started on the research and then moved onto the practical tips. When I asked about the research, I focused on the research with the most potential to improve health outcomes for the low income.

On low-income Canadians, Guyatt stated, “The best way to improve the health of low-income folks is to decrease income gradients and that would have far more impact than any particular health interventions.”

That is, if society could stop or reduce smoking, then this would improve the health outcomes of the entire population. Lifetime smokers have seven fewer years of life than non-smokers. That is significant. Who would not pay for another 2,000-3,000 days of life, especially near the end of life?

It is a “far bigger gradient that can come from any particular health interventions. So if we can persuade everyone to stop smoking, that would have an enormous impact on health. While medical innovations have made a big impact on both quality and quantity, there are other things like income gradients, like health habits – in particular, smoking – that have a bigger impact,” Guyatt explained.

As a provincial, national, and, indeed, international expert in evidence-based medicine, this became an important point to convey to me. In particular, the clarity comes from the expertise, knowledge, years in the field, and reading the research.

“Medical treatment has made a big impact on various areas, including cardiovascular disease and treatments and cancer. Those were made because those were the biggest sources of morbidity and mortality in society. That is where I see the biggest continuing potential: certainly, within the area of cancer, our understanding biology has advanced enormously,” Guyatt said.

He states that there will be a steady intake of new preventions and therapies. Many fatal cancers will be chronic diseases in the future. This has been happening. He predicts this will continue

On Gender Roles in Fundamentalist Religion

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 4, 2018

What does the co-founder of a prominent atheist organization in Europe have to say about fundamentalist representations of Islam and gender roles?

Karrar Al Asfoor is the Co-Founder of the United Atheists of Europe. Asfoor is also the Co-Founder of Atheist Alliance – Middle-East and North Africa. United Atheists of Europe is an organization in development, more in theory than in practice, and devoted to the unification of atheist efforts in Europe. Here we talk about Islam and gender roles from Asfoor's perspective.

When I asked Asfoor about the standard gender roles in Islam, Asfoor talked about the complete dominance of men over women. That is, the women are treated as if property or chattel for men. Asfoor considered the most appropriate term “slaves.” Women become slaves for men.

The restrictions for human possibilities are greater for women than for men. “Many women in the Muslim world spend their whole life among four walls,” Karrar stated, “They are not allowed to go out without approval from their families. Many of them never get the opportunity to study or work.”

In addition to these restrictions on women, women spend the first portions of their lives inside of the house and then the second portions of life in the husband's place. They work there. The work includes cleaning, cooking, and raising children.

Karrar said, “This policy is not only unfair for women but also it causes the society to operate in half of its power causing it to collapse and that's why the Islamic world is going backward while the rest of the world is going forward.”

Women lose out; society loses out. I asked about the divinely prescribed gender roles in Islam. Asfoor quoted four verses: Verse 4:34, Verse 4:11, Verse 4:3, and Verse 2:282. “Verse 4:34 in the Quran clearly states that men are dominant over women. They have the right to beat them. Furthermore, Verse 4:11 gives women half the share of men when dividing the inheritance,” Asfoor explained.

Verse 4:3 permitted men to marry up to 4 women including additional sex slaves. Verse 2:282 says two female witnesses are equal to only one male witness. Asfoor considered these indicative of women seen as half-humans or less than half humans within the faith.

I asked for a comparative analysis. That is the perspective on the standards stated before. Then the humanistic standard that has been seen elsewhere in different documents. Do these seem humanistic in general? Do these consider women as full human beings? I wanted to know more.

Asfoor, stating in the negative. Islam seems non-humanistic to Asfoor. He concluded, “Because every self-aware being is actually looking for happiness and rejecting pain, and considering them not to be full humans just because they don't have male sexual parts is something ridiculous, irrational, and not humanistic at all, it causes pain to them and this is an immoral act.”

Asfoor sees these principles and standards set for women as non-humanistic.

He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. He authored/co-authored some e-books, free or low-cost. If you want to contact Scott: Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.com. We published other interviews in Canadian Atheist, Humanist Voices, and Personal Medium account.

Distinguished Professor Gordon Guyatt on Equity and Autonomy in Medical Care

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 5, 2018

What does Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC state about the equity and autonomy variables in medical care?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about equity and autonomy values around the world in medical care. This amounts to part of the evidence-based medicine model with values and preferences considered in medical care within the context of technological advances.

Guyatt, when asked about the aging populations of North America and Europe, responded on the valuation of equity over autonomy, and vice versa. The value judgment depends on values of preferences.

Those values and preferences come from culture. These influence individual and societal medical care decisions. Guyatt included Japan in with the Western world in terms of the aging population, which amounts to a significant problem in the demographics.

“Most of the Western world in terms of the aging population, and also Japan, are substantially ahead of North America. A big thing that people do not realize in terms of healthcare for populations and the aging of the population is that the huge bulk of expenditures comes in the last year of life,” Guyatt explained.

People live longer. Whether we die at 100 or 60, the largest bulk of healthcare expenses come from the last year of life. We get sick. We age. Sooner or later, we die. Guyatt said there has been a good job in the constraining of costs.

The technological advances, according to Guyatt, have raised the costs of healthcare. However, this depends on the costs people feel willing to pay out. The advances in technology can be drugs, surgical devices, and other things.

These improve health outcomes but cost more than before. Guyatt stated, “We live longer, longer, and longer. Yes, we may have to, if we want to take advantage of all of the technological advances that are going to continue even though the last 7 years it has not gone up, spend more of our GDP on healthcare.”

If done efficiently, according to Guyatt, then this will be public expenditures rather than private expenditures. He argues, in the next 100 years, that Canada, as an example, will get close to what the United States spends as a portion of its GDP on healthcare.

The US spends about 18% at the moment. However, I am aware of Moore’s Law in information technologies and the Law of Accelerating Returns. This brought a question to mind for me. I stated, “Technology becomes cheaper over time. Phones were for the rich decades ago. They

Autonomy and Equity Values and Preferences in Practical Terms

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 5, 2018

What would different values in medical care mean in practical terms for Canadians?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the practical terms of equity and autonomy for Canadians in healthcare with a note on national pharmacare.

On the concrete side of the funding, Guyatt reflected on the situation in Canada. I wanted a more practical look at the costs associated with different value sets. Where in terms of values and preferences, Canadians prefer equity more than autonomy.

Although, some Canadians value autonomy too. However, the costs associated with each differ. They differ for different populations. They do not come out the same. Autonomy as the main value preference. It is associated with private healthcare.

It costs less for the rich and more for the poor. Equity as the main value and preference. It is associated with public healthcare. It may cost some more for the rich. However, it costs less for the poor.

America exemplifies the value and preference of autonomy or choice. Canada and Western Europe characterize the value and preference of equity. Canadian citizens value equity more than autonomy.

“People continue to put a high value on healthcare. I would anticipate that if, in fact, the curve starts swinging up again. We could quite reasonably tolerate, for instance, a 1% increase in our GDP devoted to healthcare. People will tolerate that pretty easily,” Guyatt explained.

With the 1% increase, I wanted to probe deeper. What would this mean in practical terms?

“Everyone [Laughing] would have to pay 5% more in tax burden. Of course, it is how you distribute that. If it were in a Trumpian way, the rich would pay less and everybody else would pay more,” Guyatt stated, “Or you could distribute it in various ways. It means a relatively marginal increase in taxes across the population.”

When I queried about the American administration in office now, Guyatt described the current delivery method of healthcare in the US highly inefficient.

“It is clear that the US way of delivering healthcare is extremely inefficient, extremely inequitable. It turns out on average that there are not better outcomes achieved and probably not as good outcomes in many areas,” Guyatt stated, “They are wasteful and poor outcomes. It is not a very good deal.”

Responsibilities Via Recognition of Excellence and Quality Public Speaking

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 26, 2018

What does Dr. Gordon Guyatt say about the responsibilities to the general public with recognition of professional excellence and about good public speaking?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about responsibility to various communities with recognition of professional excellence and the differences between good and bad public speaking.

In the extended 2017 interview in *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal*, Guyatt and I talked about the numerous representations in the media. He gets representation in the news, in interviews, in articles, in peer-reviewed articles, and so on.

The responsibilities come from the influence or the power. The influential garner responsibility by virtue of power. People listen to them. It depends on the community too. Guyatt seems to gain power and so the responsibility to the medical, public policy, and scientific community.

When I asked about it, Guyatt stated, “To behave with integrity, the main responsibility when you disseminate is accuracy. Another specific concern is a conflict of interest. Many people within the medical community who take public stances are conflicted. They get lots of money from industry. It is hard for that not to influence you.”

He talked about other conflicts of interest. These can mean intellectual conflicts of interest. That is, a researcher prefers their own research compared to others. If someone has evidence or research in disagreement with one’s own, then the other person must be wrong.

Guyatt finds this as a universal phenomenon. “There is a responsibility to be aware of one’s conflict of interest. When there are conflicts of interest, it is crucial to make the conflicts clear. Also, there is a responsibility to attempt to minimize the conflicts of interest, and the presentation and interpretation of things,” Guyatt explained.

He also mentioned the responsibility to listen to others and remain open to other perspectives. In the midst of the presentation to the public, there comes the added benefit of public speaking engagements. People with influence and professional respect get speaking engagements.

They are asked to talk to the public and to constituencies in the professional community. In this case, it is in the medical community. I asked about the good public speakers versus the bad ones.

Guyatt said, “There are the same pieces if you’re talking about medicine and public policy, or whether you’re talking about basic clin-epi. We will talk about large group presentations. [Laughing] I run a course on how to teach evidence-based healthcare.”

Professor Anthony Pinn on Gender, Race, and Humanism

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 6, 2018

What does one of the leading humanist public intellectuals have to say about the social construction of gender and race, and humanism?

Professor Anthony Pinn is the Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities at Rice University. He earned his B.A. from Columbia University, and M.Div. and Ph.D. in the study of religion from Harvard University. He is an author, humanist, and public speaker. Also, and this is in no way a complete listing of titles or accomplishments, Pinn is the Founding Director of the Center for Engaged Research and Collaborative Learning (CERCL) at Rice University.

Here we talk about the gender, race, humanistic aesthetics, and more.

Professor Pinn and I talked about gender, race, and humanism. I appreciated the time taken by one of the foremost humanist thinkers in America, especially for a Canadian. When I asked about the manifestations of the more restricted gender roles for men and women, I framed the question within European-American and African-American communities.

Pinn responded from a different perspective. That is, the view of gender roles cutting across the construction of race in social life. He stated, “That is to say, the restricted and restrictive nature of, say, masculinity and femininity are not defined in terms of ‘blackness’ or ‘whiteness’ but rather in terms of the larger social framework of the Western World. The difference is this: for African Americans, for instance, these restrictive gender roles are also tied to certain forms of stigma associated with race and class.”

I then asked about the humanistic outlook. The ways in which humanism may provide a broader set of possibilities for gender roles for men and women.

“Humanism doesn’t necessarily provide a broader set of possibilities for gender roles. This is because humanists live in cultural worlds, just like theists. As a result, humanists can be just as guilty of encouraging restrictive gender roles. The difference is this: humanists don’t attribute this bad thinking to divine forces,” Pinn explained.

Pinn has expertise in multiple areas. One domain seemed like the aesthetic of African-American humanism. He said, “My answer depends on what you mean by ‘aesthetic.’ In a general sense, there is no overarching ‘style’ or ‘mood’ associated with humanism in African American community – just as there is no one way to be ‘black.’”

I wanted to conclude on knowing some the nuanced and updated to the modern period expectations. The ways in which men and women can contribute to North American societies with newer roles suited to the times.

“The key isn’t to simply “borrow” from one group to correct the problems of others. The key is to understand the constructed nature of gender, to privilege healthy life options that promote the freedom to define and perform ourselves in complex and layered ways,” Pinn concluded, “The

goal should be to remove modes of injustice that work against health life options and the beauty of diversity in its various forms.”

He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. We published another interview here.

On Artificial Intelligence and Its Applications

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2018

Why does artificial intelligence remain important at the present and into the future, especially as the science fiction future comes closer?

Dipl.-Ing. Dr. Claus D. Volko, B.Sc. was born in 1983 in Vienna, Austria, Europe. He began to teach himself how to program at the age of eight. He started editing an electronic magazine at the age of 12: Hugi Magazine. After high school, he studied computer science and medicine at the same time.

Eventually, he became a software developer with some work, on leisure time, spent on medical research projects. Now, he maintains the website entitled 21st Century Headlines and founded, recently, Web Portal on Computational Biology. Here we talk about artificial intelligence and then some applications to everyday life for men and women.

Dr. Volko and I discussed the nature of computational intelligence and artificial intelligence. In particular, the system of his expertise, which amounts to evolutionary algorithms and neural networks. These evolutionary algorithms and neural networks become applied to artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence works in numerous movies. It works less functionally in real life in a general sense. However, artificial intelligence functions in many narrow senses in daily life. I asked about the expert consensus definition. Volko stated artificial intelligence as an intelligence displayed by computers and other machines.

“This contrasts with natural intelligence, which is displayed by humans and animals. As there are dozens of definitions of intelligence, there are also many things artificial intelligence may be,” Volko explained, “I like Jeff Hawkins’ definition that intelligence is the ability to make predictions. It is a pretty general definition and it encompasses what is measured by traditional, standardized intelligence tests.”

He mentioned a recent article, which makes a similar comment:

Our brains make sense of the world by predicting what we will see and then updating these predictions as the situation demands, according to Lars Muckli, professor of neuroscience at the Centre for Cognitive Neuroimaging in Glasgow, Scotland. He says that this predictive processing framework theory is as important to brain science as evolution is to biology.

Volko stated artificial intelligence, in a way, amounts to prediction done by computers. The unsupervised learning becomes a form of artificial intelligence. Here, “the machine automatically detects common properties of subsets of the given training data set and is able to classify new data accurately,” Volko stated.

That leads to some more specifics. The nature of a neural network becomes one. According to Volko, the basic premise comes from an artificial neuron in a computer. Each artificial neuron

gets input. Artificial neurons link to one another. The output of one neuron becomes the input of another neuron.

Typically, the processing of the input comes from arithmetical operations, e.g., addition, multiplication, and subtraction.

Volko continued, “So, the way a neural network works is: There is some input; this input is sent to the first layer of artificial neurons; the output of these artificial neurons is then sent to the second layer of artificial neurons, and so on, until we get a final output value.”

One of the learning algorithms used to train a neural network is deep learning. Where a machine learns through modification of the neural network, the algorithm used to accomplish this: backpropagation. Each artificial neuron works with a weight. The weights per artificial neuron change “until the output of the network better fits the expectations. With the term weight I am referring to factors with which the input values are multiplied before they are added or subtracted,” Volko said.

The final two forms, relevant to the article domain of discussion, come in evolutionary algorithms and genetic programming. As a separate paradigm of research, though work is ongoing to merge evolutionary algorithms and neural networks Volko notes, evolutionary algorithms work with a mathematical function.

A mathematical function in need of improvement. “By various operations, you modify this function, generating several variants. Then you test which variants produce the best results. This process is called selection and it is inspired by natural (Darwinian) selection,” Volko stated.

Of the best “variants,” these generate novel variants for experimentation or testing. Volko said variant generation can be done through “mutation” and “recombination.” Both inspired by evolutionary theory. One variant on evolutionary algorithms emerges in the form of genetic programming.

Rather than a specific mathematical function, a whole program gets evolved. “I once wrote a program called “GPgl” which evolves a program that generates graphical output. Some of the results of this are quite fascinating, see: <http://hugi.scene.org/adok/miscellaneous/gpgl.htm>,” Volko said. Then this touched onto some of the applications for everyday people.

One came from dating sites. Volko notes numerous possible applications for the artificial intelligences. He argues the limit will come from the human imagination. He proposes the possibility of a dating site, which asks users to rate possible partners on a 1 to 10 scale.

Or, the users can rate several traits individually. “Based on these ratings, the dating site could compute which person would most probably be the best fit for the user as a partner,” Volko said, “Other applications include natural language processing (e.g. www.deepl.com), facial recognition, games (e.g. chess or Go), medical diagnosis,...”

Artificial intelligence is happening now, at least in a narrow fashion. However, the applications are broad. The continued encroachment of artificial intelligence into our lives needs more attention, especially as technology continues to shake and rattle the fabric of global society – even down to the nitty-gritty of our dating lives.

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Volko earned a score at an intelligence test score of 172, on the Equally Normed Numerical Derivation Tests (ENNDT) by Marco Ripà and Gaetano Morelli. It was on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of 4.80 for Claus, which is a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 1,258,887.

Of course, if a higher general intelligence score, then the greater the variability in, and margin of error in, the general intelligence scores because of the greater rarity in the population.

He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. We published another interview here.

On Tunisian Atheism for a Young Male and the Impacts on Professional Trajectory

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2018

What does a Tunisian ex-Muslim atheist who went to Europe have to say about atheism, religion, and critiques of religious practices?

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Nacer Amari is the Co-Founder of an in-development organization entitled United Atheists of Europe devoted to the united efforts of atheism and atheists in Europe. Here we talk about Tunisian background and the influence on development and work as an atheist, and more.

When I asked Amari about personal and family background, he talked about the southern Tunisian region of youth. This amounts to a region where religion dominates. The customs, social norms, morays, and traditions centre on religion.

Religion equates to life and blood. The nature of being births one's relationship with God through religion. Why not? It would seem natural as an accustomed lifestyle and stance. People have the right to freedom of belief and religion. What happens when this becomes imposed by force on others with a sense of chauvinism and bigotry?

"I grew up in a Berber family with Arab culture where parents are illiterate and not religious," Amari stated, "Usually, it has a negative impact on the child's personality, but I consider myself to be lucky compared to the children where I grew up, even though my parents were illiterate and managed to raise me without being affected by religion."

Sometimes, people can identify a moment of saying, "I am an atheist," or feeling apart from the traditions and the religious community. In such a way, that religion becomes null and void to oneself. Then atheism is found as the proper label, eventually. An atheism prior to knowing one exists as an atheist. Atheism without name, but with form and substance – "sort of, like, kind of, you know?" – as the kids say.

Amari said, "I started to have doubts about religion during the high school. I noticed that my colleagues in the high school were praying, but my family's members were not. This is when I started thinking about the purpose of prayers and religion and the existence of God in general. Then I completely lost my faith in God during the 10th class identifying myself as an atheist."

Then he and a friend, Karrar Al Asfoor, founded a social fraternity for atheists entitled United Atheists of Europe with an intention to unify the efforts of the atheist community throughout Europe.

"It is to bring the European atheists to work together with the ex-Muslim community for a secular world," Amari explained, "In the meantime, it is considered a small-sized social fraternity, but it's open for every atheist who is interested to join. Our future goals are to have the

effective means to challenge religions and protecting secularism in Europe and to empower atheists in the Islamic world pushing it into secularism there.”

In Tunisia, as a small point from an ex-Muslim, Amari commented on not eating during Ramadan. In Tunisia, citizens are banned from eating during Ramadan. You are not allowed to eat due to the old constitution of Tunisia.

“...there was a ban from the Ministry of Interior requiring restaurants and cafes to obtain touristic permits to be able to serve food and drinks during Ramadan with the windows covered. The constitution has been updated after the revolution with a new chapter, which is called ‘the good ethics chapter’ giving the ban legal status,” Amari said.

Amari, as in the prior example with the critique of a single aspect of one religion, talked about the practice of fasting starting about 14 centuries ago. It is associated with ancient religious rites. Those preserved in existence to the present day. He does not consider this commensurate with logical or scientific explanations.

“This is a holy month *par excellence* for Muslims. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, as they believe that the revelation of the Qur’an was a “night of fate” this month, also the only month of which the name appears in the Koran,” Amari explained.

At the end of the month of Ramadan, Muslims then pay alms if they want to be considered among the faithful. Finally, the conversation veered into the topic of the religious climate for religion in Tunisia.

When speaking of religion, Amari claims, within the social environment and borders of Tunisia, the subject immediately links to conflict. The conflict between the political situation and religion. It has been the case since independence for Tunisia.

Tunisia’s context looks social and political on the surface. However, if one plumbs the depths of the environment, then the deeper roots are seen as political and religious. That is, the conflict remains between fundamentalist religion and the state.

Often, we can observe this is secular fundamentalisms in ethnic supremacism and ethnic nationalism or in standard religious fundamentalisms with Dominionist Evangelical Christianity and Islamist ideologies.

Post-revolution, the Islamists in Tunisia took power of the country. The country took a scary turn into assassinations, an increase in terrorism, and terror attacks.

“The freedom to criticize religion in Tunisia is complicated, because in the new constitution, there is a contradiction in the laws, where we find in the first chapter mentioned that ‘Islam is the religion of the state,’” Amari concluded, “However, in chapter six, ‘The State protects the religion (Islam), guarantees the freedom of belief, conscience and the exercise of the cults.’”

Addendum initiative from Nacer

They also have an organization, which is the Neo Illuminati project. It amounts to one devoted for the promotion of secularism to the Islamic world and ex-Muslims in it. It is to help those who risk their lives get a chance to have a better future. These courageous men and women are facing a violent ideology, according to Nacer. These are the most suitable people to deal with Islam.

The more support they get, then the more social change they can make and the faster changes will happen.

The Western world is facing the risk of expanding Islamism (political Islam) in Europe, and to be able to counter Islamism, the best thing we can do is to challenge the main idea of Islam in the birthplace of the ideology. This is why Nacer wants to empower atheists or secular people in their own (Islamic) countries to reduce fanaticism and extremism in Islamic countries and the rest of the world.

During this struggle, ex-Muslims face various types of discrimination. They can be subjected to violence, jail, execution, or even assassination. We as activists try to save ex-Muslims who are at risk, but most of us who live in the West are actually refugees with zero resources and cannot do our work without support. This is the main purpose of this project.

But the project is not limited just to this, it's a social fraternity for atheists inspired by the Illuminati that existed in Bavaria during the Enlightenment Era. Thus, our long-term goal is a secular world as per the Enlightenment. So, it's not only about ex-Muslims and Islam. At the same time, this is the most important issue.

You can support by donations. You can even join the fraternity and support by other means, or we can cooperate if you already have your own project. At the same time, we have four funding programs that you can donate to:

Core funding program: this fund is for the project itself. The donations will be used to improve the structure of this project and implement innovative strategic plans to take it to the next level.

Atheists at-risk program: this program is to save those at risk because of their atheism.

Improve activism program: this program is to improve the exceptional and innovative work of activists and make it more effective, for example, providing technologies and means of an audience to reach out to vloggers and bloggers to help them make more impact in the society.

Support the team program: we would love to work full time on this project, but that's not achievable due to the responsibilities associated with the life of being a refugee. Your help means a lot to us. To join the fraternity, please find the contact details at the very bottom and connect with us. Instructions on how to donate will be added later. Currently, we are in need to move to a premium website. This would cost us around 220 USD (on squarespace) charged from the (core funding program).

He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. Previous interview in Canadian Atheist.

The Personal Background and Professional Work of One of the World's Most Gifted Men

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 8, 2018

What does a psychiatrist, psychotherapist, and the founder of the World Intelligence Network have as a background and to say about personal and professional life?

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D is a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist running his private practice in Thessaloniki, Greece. Having perceived the importance and impact of internet in our lives, he is also professionally active offering online psychotherapy and counseling for Psycall.com and Shezlong.com. He earned an M.D., Medical Doctor Diploma (2000), M.Sc., Medical Research Technology (2003), M.A., Philosophy (2012), and Ph.D., Psychopharmacology (2015), awarded by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Dr. Katsioulis is mostly challenged by expression, thinking and communication. Therefore, he is involved in writing articles, novels, quotes and screenplays. Since 2001, he is the Founder of the World Intelligence Network (WIN), an international organization targeting the detection, development and appreciation of abilities. Feeling a citizen of the world, he currently lives in Thessaloniki, Macedonia, Greece.

On January 1, 2015, we published an interview. Here, we talk about personal views and professional life.

When I asked Katsioulis about the personal background from childhood through adolescence into adulthood, especially regarding the extraordinary giftedness, he stated, “Well, I didn’t have any forehead mark indicating that I have any special abilities, so my childhood was mainly full of activities that I enjoyed, such as reading literature, solving math, logical problems and puzzles, getting involved in discussions with adults and having rather many questions.”

He remarked on a time in childhood. When he was a boy, he made one assumption, reasonable at the time, about sheep. That is, white sheep produce white milk. So, by his thinking, black sheep should make cocoa milk. He spent lots of time alone rather than with friends. This continued into adolescence.

His teachers’ feedback remained “positive and promising at all stages” of his educational experience. “At this point, I should mention that I am very grateful to my parents, both teachers of the Greek language, who provided me a variety of mental stimuli and a proper hosting setting for my interests. During my adolescence, I had a distinction in the national Math exams in 1990 and in the national Physics Final exams in 1993 among some thousands of participants,” Katsioulis remarked.

On the first attempt at the School of Medicine, he was successful in the acceptance based on performance on the entrance examinations in 1993. He remained one of only six successful candidates who went and passed their examinations on their first attempt at it.

Indicative of the performances in scholastic achievements, Katsioulis scored some of the highest intelligence test scores on record, nationally and internationally. In many cases, he scored the highest. On the *Physics National Final Exams* (Greece, 1993), *Cerebrals NVCP-R international contest* (2003), and the *Cerebrals international contest* (2009), he earned the best performance in all three.

These points of the conversation led to the conversation about meeting other ultra-high IQ individuals and then feeling a sense of community.

“My ranking on the Physics National Final Exams is mainly the result of hard work and personal interest in Physics. Having scored quite well in some IQ tests and contests, I joined many High IQ Societies since 2001. I noticed that there were some difficulties in their proper functioning minimizing interactivity and subsidizing creativity,” Katsioulis stated, “Therefore, I took the initiative in 2001 to form a pioneer organization focused on promoting communication and enhancing productivity for the individuals with high cognitive abilities.”

This was the World Intelligence Network. It amounts to an international collective entity for the support of High IQ societies. At the time of the interview, there were 48 High IQ Societies affiliated with the World Intelligence Network. He took the initiative with five other organizations as well. Katsioulis sets a solid example for other gifted men and gifted people in general for perseverance, hard work, and service where little or no help exists.

Those five core organizations are for the 1st through 5th standard deviations, which, on a standard deviation of 15, amount to societies for the IQs of 115, 130, 145, 160, and 175. In order, these are QIQ, GRIQ, CIVIQ, HELLIQ, OLYMPIQ. There are two more for children and adolescents called IQID. Then one only for the Greek people, which is a “Greek NGO for abilities, giftedness, and high intelligence named Anadeixi.”

Dr. Katsioulis earned the best performance in the Cerebrals international contest (2009), best performance in the Cerebrals NVCP-R international contest (2003), best performance in physics for the national final exams in Greece (1993), and third place in the Maths national contest in Thessaloniki, Greece (1989).

Dr. Katsioulis scored some of the highest intelligence test scores (SD16) on international record with IQ scores of 205 on the NVCP-R [Rasch equated raw 49/54] in 2002, 196 on the Qoymans Multiple Choice #3 [ceiling] in 2003, 192 on the NVCP-E [Rasch equated raw 35/40] in 2002, 186 on the NVCP-R [Fluid Intelligence Index Score] in 2002, 183 on the NVCP-E [Fluid Intelligence Index Score] in 2002, 183 on the Cattell Culture Fair III A+B [ceiling-1] in 2003, 180+ on the Bonnardel BLS4 – 2T [ceiling] in 2003, and 180+ on the WAIS-R [extrapolated full scale] in 2002.

Subsequently, Dr. Katsioulis remains a member in over 60 high IQ societies. In addition, he is the president and founder of Anadeixi Academy of Abilities Assessment and World Intelligence Network (WIN), and OLYMPIQ, HELLIQ, CIVIQ, GRIQ, QIQ, IQID, GREEK high IQ societies. He talked here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.

In one listing, Dr. Katsioulis is listed among other smartest people in the world including Paul Allen, Christopher Michael Langan, Judit Polgar, Marilyn vos Savant, John H. Sununu, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Kim Ung-Yong, Mislav Predavec, Manahel Thabet, Rick Rosner, Chris Hirata,

Steven Pinker, Ivan Ivec, Garry Kasparov, Terence Tao, Scott Aaronson, Nikola Poljak, Alan Guth, Donald Knuth, Noam Chomsky, Magnus Carlsen, Shahriar Afshar, Akshay Venkatesh, Saul Kripke, Ruth Lawrence, Grigori Perelman, Andrew Wiles, and Edward Witten.

Simple Exercise Tips for Men

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 8, 2018

What does the Mayo Clinic have to say about good health with some basic exercise tips?

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The Mayo Clinic Staff mentioned a physical fitness program as one of the best things for health. Any basic fitness regimen scheduled daily, especially outside, can help with the reduction in the probability for ill health.

“...physical activity can reduce your risk of chronic disease, improve your balance and coordination, help you lose weight, and even boost your self-esteem. And you can reap these benefits regardless of your age, sex or physical ability,” the Mayo Clinic noted.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services made some recommendations, which the Mayo Clinic echoed in the article. Healthy adults should include decent amounts of aerobic and strength training exercises into these regimens.

As stated:

At least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity

Strength training exercises of all the major muscle groups at least twice a week

These simple steps do not amount to much. They can benefit whole body health. The work one does earlier on in life to make this a routine can develop a healthy habit to improve health for the long-term.

Not only a potentially longer lifespan but a definite longer health span, the number of years but also the number of quality years of life.

You can look and feel better. A regular exercise regimen helps with the reduction in heart disease and various cancers, strengthens the bones and muscles, and can help with the control of weight.

Which, if you have not noticed, North Americans are beginning to climb in their weight categories.

The *Mayo Clinic* cautions, “But if you haven’t exercised for some time and you have health concerns, you may want to talk to your doctor before starting a new fitness routine.”

Mayo Clinic staff also point to the fitness goals. What are they? How do you intend to develop them? What will you include? What things may be an off day? What will other ones be an on day? And so on.

Others things to bear in mind are the things that you prefer and the things that you do not prefer. Because if you continue to work out at specifics that you hate, then you may find these as barriers to the construction of a routine.

You can track your own personal progress and work to stay on the fitness regimen. It is important to remain on a fitness program. However, you do not need to stress yourself, so pace yourself, pick the good ones for you, and have fun why don't ya!

The Differential Attendance of Men and Women in Computer Science

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 9, 2018

What does a male who grows up gifted and into computer science notice about men and women in the discipline?

Dipl.-Ing. Dr. Claus D. Volko, B.Sc. was born in 1983 in Vienna, Austria, Europe. He began to teach himself how to program at the age of eight. He started editing an electronic magazine at the age of 12: Hugi Magazine. After high school, he studied computer science and medicine at the same time.

Eventually, he became a software developer with some work, on leisure time, spent on medical research projects. Now, he maintains the website entitled 21st Century Headlines and founded, recently, Web Portal on Computational Biology. Here we talk about men and women in computer science from his personal experience.

When I asked Volko about the experience of having more men than women in the computer sciences while a student, he commented on enrolling in university. Then he mentioned not feeling many surprises at there being fewer women classmates.

He estimates about 5% of the students who went the lectures on a regular basis were female, even potentially fewer. He was into computers since his early childhood. He was involved in an international computer art community called the demoscene, “so-called.”

Volko stated, “In the demoscene, there were hardly any girls or women, and most of the few ones were not programmers, but graphic artists or music composers. I actually never had any prejudice about women being less talented at mathematics, for example, which would be an explanation for them having a harder time getting their ideas implemented as programmers.”

He notes that the proportion between the sexes “spoke a clear language.” He did not consider being around mostly other men, as a young man, as the most please thing. Men, Volko said, tend to be interested in women with a desire for women as partners around that age.

That makes men at this age particularly fond of the opportunities to be able to get to know women, especially with the opportunities that may arise to know women interested in computers like them.

“The fact that few women study computer science may also be the reason why computer science students supposedly tend to be single more often than students of other academic disciplines,” Volko explained, “As a student majoring in one field, you usually do not get to meet students of other majors that often, so you are likely to either find your partner among the ones sharing the same major, or to be left without a partner.”

He may be an exception as he was enrolled in both computer science and medical school at the same time, which is a peculiarity in Austrian tertiary education. In the medical school, about

60% of the women were female. That meant it would not have been that hard for him to find a partner compared to his other classmates who were in computer science only.

In his time, he had two female partners. Both worked in computer science. His first was enrolled in medical school at the time. He got to know her there. Then she was also interested in computers too.

Volko said, “That might have been the reason why I chose her as a partner of all the women who had approached me. Soon after we split up, she abandoned medical school without a degree and started studying computer science; in fact she turned out to be far more talented than I had expected, as she now is a proud holder of a Ph.D. degree in computer science.”

His second partner, who he still spends weekends, has a Master’s degree in computer science, which she completed with distinction. The two of them were still students when they got to know one another. His second partner is also a member of Mensa, the world’s largest high-IQ society.

“Yet there were also some courses in her studies that were troublesome for her because she had attended business school prior to studying computer science, at which higher math had not been taught,” Volko explained.

Now, his second partner is involved with a semi-private company, where she works as a Java user interface developer. She is one of the few women who he knows is into programming. Volko does not view her as the typical “nerd” because she also has several other interests including on in Botany.

Volko earned a score at an intelligence test score of 172, on the Equally Normed Numerical Derivation Tests (ENNDT) by Marco Ripà and Gaetano Morelli. It was on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of 4.80 for Claus, which is a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 1,258,887.

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Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis on Educational Systems, the Gifted Population, and Global Problems

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 9, 2018

What does Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D. modern international problems and solutions to these problems?

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D is a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist running his private practice in Thessaloniki, Greece. Having perceived the importance and impact of internet in our lives, he is also professionally active offering online psychotherapy and counseling for Psycall.com and Shezlong.com. He earned an M.D., Medical Doctor Diploma (2000), M.Sc., Medical Research Technology (2003), M.A., Philosophy (2012), and Ph.D., Psychopharmacology (2015), awarded by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

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On January 1, 2015, we published an interview. Here, we talk about the educational systems, the gifted, and the main global problem and its solution.

Katsioulis and I talked about the educational systems of the world and the provision for the needs of the gifted population. In terms of the help for the gifted population, he had a few targeted and direct means by which to improve their educational experience.

“The development of a more personal, more accurate and proper educational system is one of the target goals of Anadeixi. I strongly believe that not even 2 different persons can have the exact same profiles, characteristics, needs, personalities, interests, abilities, backgrounds and goals,” Katsioulis stated.

He directed attention to the diversity and the variety of the pupils’ personal profiles. People remain different from one another through life. They should receive education in a similar manner: individually.

Katsioulis judged, “It is rather an unfair, conforming generalization all of the students to participate in the exact same educational program. There should be an introductory level of the basic sciences offered to anyone and on top of this an additional specialized education program based on the personal needs and potencies of any of the participants.”

Other basics in the educational curricula of the world should include reading, writing, and simple math calculations. Also, students should learn a basic knowledge of geography, history, and the other domains of human inquiry and knowledge.

“However, some of the students have specific preferences and interests and the educational system should take these into consideration and respond accordingly,” Katsioulis stated. He

proposed a hypothetical system through a diagram, a 2-dimensional representation, for this educational system.

Katsioulis explained, “The horizontal axis may include all the special fields of science, knowledge and interests and the vertical axis may demonstrate the various levels of performance and awareness. Thus, any participant can be allocated to the proper horizontal and vertical places based only on his interests, preferences, goals and current expertise and awareness.”

The power in this educational system comes from the lack of a place for restrictions of age or otherwise. The conversation moved into the global problems at the moment and means to solve them.

Katsioulis stated the main problem as an identity crisis. “People lost their identity, their orientation, their life quality standards.” People do not care about their real personality. They create false selves from the mainstream trends and waste their lives to adjust to only a few others’ expectations of them.

Katsioulis continued, “People have neither time nor any intention to realize what life is about. They are born and live to become consistent and excellent workers, minor pieces of a giant puzzle for some few strong people’s entertainment purposes and benefits. Therefore, they don’t care about the quality of their lives, about other lives, about relationships and the society in general, about our children’s future.”

He views this as both a fact and a pity. However, the proper education described before. This may help with “self-realization, awareness, knowledge, mental maturity, overcoming any external restrictions and limitations. As I usually say to my psychotherapy clients, the solution to any problem is to make a stop and one step back.”

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On the Different Interests of Men and Women in Computer Science

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 10, 2018

What are some observations about the different interests in computer science from an expert?

Dipl.-Ing. Dr. Claus D. Volko, B.Sc. was born in 1983 in Vienna, Austria, Europe. He began to teach himself how to program at the age of eight. He started editing an electronic magazine at the age of 12: Hugi Magazine. After high school, he studied computer science and medicine at the same time.

Eventually, he became a software developer with some work, on leisure time, spent on medical research projects. Now, he maintains the website entitled 21st Century Headlines and founded, recently, Web Portal on Computational Biology. Here we talk about men and women in computer science from his personal experience.

Volko and I talked about the reasons for the sex split in the computer sciences. Volko made an opening guess that women tend to have less interest in computers for programming and software development.

“Another reason may be that they are not so self-confident about their computer science skills. Maybe they also think that computer programmers are somewhat lonely and they would rather prefer to work in a team of people,” Volko said.

Then I asked further about the split with women liking graphic arts and music composition with computers more than programming, where men prefer the programming far more. Volko remarked women tend to have little interest in code optimization.

Volko stated, “In the demoscene, code optimization is one of the most important skills because one of the categories of artworks demosceners create is heavily size-optimized intros sized 64 kbytes or even 4 kbytes or less. This requires far more than being just able to write working code.”

He continued to say that a perfectionist attitude is necessary. It is something that requires someone to code for as many hours as possible. The purpose of which is to keep the code as small as possible. Volko commented on a woman programmer he knows from Hungary interested in this form of software development.

“But she is the only women I know who is into this field. I met some women in the demoscene who are actually not totally unskilled when it comes to programming, some of them even earning their income as web developers (employing PHP and JavaScript),” Volko explained, “but still they prefer to compose music or create graphics when it comes to spending their sparetime with computers in a creative way.”

When he reflected on men, they tend to be far more attracted to programming “because men are supposed to be smart, and programming is a way to prove that you are. And apparently, programming is more fun for men than for women.”

Women may find programming as more of a chore needing doing and will try to avoid it if at all possible. However, and by contrast, “many male programmers I know, including myself, actually seem to be enjoying what they are doing.”

Volko knows the psychometric data and statistics around IQs for men and women. For example, the average or mean IQs of men and women are about the same. However, when the detailed data is analyzed, there are differences, more in some areas than others.

“Some people consider it politically incorrect to talk about sex differences in IQ but there are some scientists who have done research into that field. Richard Lynn, for example, published about it,” Volko explained, “He stated that while the average IQ of both sexes is about the same, the standard deviation is different – it is smaller for women, which means that there are (by proportion) fewer women who would have to be considered mentally retarded, but also fewer women who would have to be considered highly gifted.”

Volko notes that if Lynn is correct then this may describe how women tend to have less interest in the computer sciences than men. The average intelligence quotient of computer scientists is very high compared to other professions, according to Volko.

He noted that the average computer science student had an IQ of about 125. “It can, therefore, be assumed that the average computer science graduate has an even higher IQ, of 130 or higher. That makes 50% of all computer science graduates fall at least into the “gifted” range,” Volko described.

He continued to state that Lynn describes how there are fewer women than men in the “gifted” range, which may explain the difference in enrolment in the computer sciences for men and women. “Likewise, it may be that graphic design and music composition are less related to IQ than programming, and that might also explain the sex differences in the preference for activities regarding creative use of computers,” Volko stated.

Volko, as a medical graduate, did comment on the genetics of general intelligence as measured by IQ tests. He noted the genetics of intelligence is not a trait defined by an individual gene, but, rather, something researchers find correlated with many genes on the X chromosome.

He explained:

The special feature of the X chromosome is that healthy women have two of them, while healthy men have only one of them. This may explain the difference in the standard deviation of IQ between the sexes: Apparently a gene variant that would increase the intelligence of a male person already if this male person had only one copy of this gene variant needs to be present in both X chromosomes of the woman to have the same effect. Of course, the probability that both X chromosomes have the same gene variant is lower than the probability that the single X chromosome of the male has the gene variant in question.

Within this framework of an expert in computer science, and who has deep knowledge of medical sciences and intelligence testing, these may provide the basis for an explanation of all,

most, or some of the differences in the different interests and enrolment in the computer sciences. It is not a vantage that I hear often.

Volko earned a score at an intelligence test score of 172, on the Equally Normed Numerical Derivation Tests (ENNDT) by Marco Ripà and Gaetano Morelli. It was on a standard deviation of 15. A sigma of 4.80 for Claus, which is a general intelligence rarity of 1 in 1,258,887.

Of course, if a higher general intelligence score, then the greater the variability in, and margin of error in, the general intelligence scores because of the greater rarity in the population.

He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. We published another interview here, here, and here.

On the Function of Society's Systems Through Plato

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 10, 2018

What does Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D. say about the ways in which to operate a society?

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D. is a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist running his private practice in Thessaloniki, Greece. Having perceived the importance and impact of internet in our lives, he is also professionally active offering online psychotherapy and counseling for Psycall.com and Shezlong.com. He earned an M.D., Medical Doctor Diploma (2000), M.Sc., Medical Research Technology (2003), M.A., Philosophy (2012), and Ph.D., Psychopharmacology (2015), awarded by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Dr. Katsioulis is mostly challenged by expression, thinking and communication. Therefore, he is involved in writing articles, novels, quotes and screenplays. Since 2001, he is the Founder of the World Intelligence Network (WIN), an international organization targeting the detection, development and appreciation of abilities. Feeling a citizen of the world, he currently lives in Thessaloniki, Macedonia, Greece.

On January 1, 2015, we published an interview. Here, we talk about the educational systems, the gifted, and the main global problem and its solution.

When I asked Katsioulis about the interactions of the numerous systems within society, those integrated concepts with common markers or widely accepted bases in everyday life. I wanted to target the ways in which the world functions and fails to work too.

The political life in which citizens want to organize the public life of the country. The economic system under which people buy and sell with one another. The religious practices and beliefs to motivate and inspire people's lives. As per individual motivations, and the *UN Charter*, everyone reserves the right to freedom of belief and freedom of religion.

The corporate monoliths from which multinational and international trade and commerce take place. The educational systems from which values, knowledge, and skills get inculcated and nurtured in the young. Many more interlocked, interrelated, and interdependent systems function in societies.

All topics of intrigue on a large, societal scale. The question related to the proper development of a society from his perspective. Katsioulis opened the response, "I would say no more than what a great ancestor said 25 centuries ago. Plato suggested an ideal society based on the special abilities of the citizens."

A society built on the more suited person for a particular position. The ablest for a particular function in a society should run that position in the society. For example, the strongest should help with the physical needs of the society.

"...a meritocracy should be in place. We should all contribute to the society well-functioning, if we intend to live in the society and benefit out of it," Katsioulis stated, "The definition of one's

prosperity should be defined only in the context of the society prosperity. If we act against our nest, how should this nest be beneficial, protective and supportive for us.”

He laments those who only work with marketing skills and great influence. Those individuals with little to no skill except insofar as they can advertise themselves in a positive light and use power at whim. “We often see people who have no other than marketing skills or powerful backgrounds to guide societies, decide about millions of people, control people’s future, when many capable and talented others live in the shadow,” Katsioulis said.

Katsioulis indicated the importance of the individual in a society. That is, the citizen is the crucial element in any society, who should realize their individual and collective power.

“There is no society without citizens, there are no rules without people to follow them. People can claim their right to live their ideal society,” Katsioulis concluded.

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Time for Rests, Naps, and Sleep

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 11, 2018

Why does sleep make or break our health habits?

Rest okay.

Naps good.

Sleep great, especially in the proper amounts.

The *Mayo Clinic* commented on the need for a minimum of 7 hours of sleep per night for optimal health. In that, this amount of sleep for a healthy adult sets the rest of the day's decisions on a particular course, e.g. more effective decision-making.

A bad sleep can affect one's overall tone of day. The inability to focus on daily tasks can be a problem of this too. It affects the body and the mind in different but severe ways. A common experience of the overworked comes in the form of sleep deprivation.

As the article states, "Sleep deprivation can have a significant impact on both your mind and body. In addition to perpetuating serious health conditions, lack of sleep can negatively affect your mood and temperament, as well as your ability to focus on daily tasks. Plus, lack of sleep influences what and how much you eat."

That is, the hormones throughout the body get regulated through proper sleep. That means the hunger hormones move into the outer reaches of the Kuiper Belt. You become hungrier, even hangrier.

People may stuff themselves with bagels and muffins in order to quell the increased cravings. The cravings arising from the lack of sleep, the sleep deprivation. This sleep permits the body and the mind to recover from a full day's work. It becomes highly important for health.

"Furthermore, sleep allows time for your mind and body to recover from the day's work, and these important processes are cut short when you don't get ample shut-eye. During the rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep," the *Mayo Clinic* explained, "your brain sorts the important information from the unimportant and files long-term memory. If this stage of your sleep cycle is shortchanged, your mental focus and acuity may decrease."

You can become ill-tempered and irascible as a result. With less than 7 hours of sleep per night, an individual can, over time, begin to suffer from depression, diabetes, high blood pressure, and weight gain. Other health consequences as ensue.

"In addition, when you don't get enough sleep, you may experience increased body aches and pains, reduced immune function and impaired performance at work. All of these problems can have a ripple effect on your daily habits," the *Mayo Clinic* said.

However, if an individual can make a habit of sleep as part of their daily routine, even with some forgiveness and room for slipping up or a late night work or school assignment, then health can improve.

The improvement would be on the all the above-mentioned health risks. It would be a reduction in them. Some tips from the staff at the *Mayo Clinic* include the setting of a sleep goal of a regular time and sleep duration at the recommended amount for your sex and age.

The next is to make a routine of the bedtime. Honor and respect yourself with the proper sleep goals. The next is to eat less processed food, have more fruits and vegetables and lean meats, and feel better with the healthier diet, and then feel better with the improved sleep from the good sleep due to not feeling hungry when going to sleep or waking up. Hunger interrupts sleep.

Another recommendation is to ease into your sleep regimen in order to feel better and more comfortable when finally finding the time to rest and catch some z-shaved sheep while counting them.

On the flip side, making sleep a priority can help you achieve your other wellness goals, such as stress management. When your body and mind are well-rested, you'll be able to respond to life with greater perspective and understanding. Try these tips for getting better sleep and creating the foundation for your overall wellness.

Some Notes on Weight Training for Kids

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 11, 2018

Does weight training help kids?

Let's talk about weight training for the kiddos today.

Do the accrued health benefits for health span, how long you stay able and capable – healthy, from weight training for adults help kids in the same or even a similar way?

It seems like an important question with the increased obesity of the population, especially the younger and the upcoming generations of kids and adolescents.

The *Mayo Clinic* reports that the strength training does, in fact, maintain some benefits for children with some caveats, justifications. It can, first and foremost and most important in the value structure of North American society, improve the way one looks and feels.

Kids want that, potentially even more than the adults. It would seem so with the adolescents. If the habits are inculcated early enough, then the kids may actually develop habits for a longer and healthier lifespan. They can stick around longer and walk and lift things while they do it.

The article states, “Don’t confuse strength training with weightlifting, bodybuilding or powerlifting. These activities are largely driven by competition, with participants vying to lift heavier weights or build bigger muscles than those of other athletes”

If a young person paces too much strain on the functional structure of their body, it can have long-term impacts, e.g. damage to the muscles, tendons and cartilage of the young person. The point is proper training, especially if going over the top with the amount of the weight for the young person.

“For kids, light resistance and controlled movements are best — with a special emphasis on proper technique and safety. Your child can do many strength training exercises with his or her own body weight or inexpensive resistance tubing. Free weights and machine weights are other options,” the professionals recommend.

If done with the proper technique, pace, and weight for the kid, this can, improve the endurance and strength and performance in a sport, strengthen the bones, protect muscles and joints from various sports-related injuries of the kid, even give them better technique and form for the future — as these properly developed techniques in early life.

In terms of the ‘right’ time to start with the training, the Mayo Clinic explained, “During childhood, kids improve their body awareness, control and balance through active play. As early as age 7 or 8, however, strength training can become a valuable part of an overall fitness plan — as long as the child is mature enough to follow directions and practice proper technique and form.”

Even with the preparedness of the child in terms of their mind set, it is important to bear in mind the forms in which damage or stress to their young tissues can take place. A parent or guardian should take caution in the potentials for injury, which may last a long time.

Not only this, the child should be warned in an assertive, caring, and compassionate manner as well, especially tone. You are the parent after all.

Some of the basic instructions from the article include the seeking of proper instruction for your child, a warm up and cool down series for the exercises – like an on and off switch, maintaining a light load, emphasizing the proper technique, supervision of the child while they lift heavy weights, and then the rest between workouts with the attitude of keeping this fun. More details in full below:

Seek instruction. Start with a coach or personal trainer who has experience with youth strength training. The coach or trainer can create a safe, effective strength training program based on your child's age, size, skills and sports interests. Or enroll your child in a strength training class designed for kids.

Warm up and cool down. Encourage your child to begin each strength training session with five to 10 minutes of light aerobic activity, such as walking, jogging in place or jumping rope. This warms the muscles and prepares them for more-vigorous activity. Gentle stretching after each session is a good idea, too.

Keep it light. Kids can safely lift adult-size weights, as long as the weight is light enough. In most cases, one or two sets of 12 to 15 repetitions is all it takes. The resistance doesn't have to come from weights, either. Resistance tubing and body-weight exercises, such as pushups, are other effective options.

Stress proper technique. Rather than focusing on the amount of weight your child lifts, stress proper form and technique during each exercise. Your child can gradually increase the resistance or number of repetitions as he or she gets older.

Supervise. Adult supervision by someone who knows proper strength training technique is an important part of youth strength training. Don't let your child go it alone.

Rest between workouts. Make sure your child rests at least one full day between exercising each specific muscle group. Two or three strength training sessions a week are plenty.

Keep it fun. Help your child vary the routine to prevent boredom.

Results won't come overnight. Eventually, however, your child will notice a difference in muscle strength and endurance — which might fuel a fitness habit that lasts a lifetime.

Biology, Machines, and Mind and Reality to a World Famous Psychiatrist

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 12, 2018

What is the future of biology and machines, and the ultimate relationship between mind and a reality to an internationally renowned intellect?

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D. is a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist running his private practice in Thessaloniki, Greece. Having perceived the importance and impact of internet in our lives, he is also professionally active offering online psychotherapy and counseling for Psycall.com and Shezlong.com. He earned an M.D., Medical Doctor Diploma (2000), M.Sc., Medical Research Technology (2003), M.A., Philosophy (2012), and Ph.D., Psychopharmacology (2015), awarded by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

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On January 1, 2015, we published an interview. Here, we talk about the potential for the merger between biology and machines, and the ultimate relationship between mind and reality.

Asking Katsioulis about the future of biology and machines, and the potential for the merger of the two, he remarked on the control of machines by humans. Although, we remain bound to biology, to the capacities and so limitations of our natures.

The machines may help with the replacement of some dysfunctional biological components or missing ones. As he stated, “We do control machines (for now), however we cannot control or overcome biological rules. Machines could substitute some missing, mistaken or dysfunctional biological structures, however we are in no position to support artificial life at least for now.”

Humans control the machines. The machines can help with the healthy and functional living of biological life, presumably our own mainly. Regardless, we seem in an unfit position to support said artificial life. In a way, we marginally handle ourselves – remaining barely kept from nuclear catastrophe, destruction of the climate and environment for decent human life, and so on.

Katsioulis continued, “Having in mind the science progress and knowledge advancement within the last century, we may soon manage to understand much more about life and even copy biology principles creating a kind of life.”

The target of the question came from the observation of the integration of biological systems and artificial systems. Noting a common interest, Katsioulis, with a tone of inquiry and insight about the interviewer (and humor), stated, “There are no limits in this integration. From your question, I could assume that we both like science fiction movies.”

When I turned attention from biological systems and artificial systems into the deeper question about the ultimate relationship between mind and reality, Katsioulis mentioned the mind as an information processor to help us. It seemed like a concrete definition with a psychological orientation for the definition.

Bearing in mind, the basis for Katsioulis, as a life work, comes from the desire to know the soul of a person, a human, or humankind. That is, this harkens back to the original goal of psychiatry with the intent to know the soul or the entire makeup of a person, a human, or humankind, not only the narrowed focus on the behavioral and the mental as in, for example, psychology.

“Mind is an advanced personal processor, responsible for the perception, reaction and adjustment in reality. We need mind to live our reality. I suppose we all know what is the condition of a body with a non-functioning mind,” Katsioulis elaborated, “Reality is an objective and independent set of conditions, events, happenings, incidents, people, principles, facts.”

The mind, to Katsioulis, amounts to something to make the objective something subjective. Katsioulis continued, “Our mind personalizes this objective information to a subjective representation in us. Mind function is influenced by factors, such as perceptual ability, reasoning, previous knowledge and experiences, psychological status and mental state.”

He notes the presence in an event, the comprehension of oneself and others, the difference in those states of perception of the same event, and the impacts these have on individual lives.

“For instance, we have all been present in an event and our understanding of what happened may significantly defer from what anyone else present states. So, we need mind to live our reality and we need reality to use our mind,” Katsioulis concluded.

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Guth, Donald Knuth, Noam Chomsky, Magnus Carlsen, Shahriar Afshar, Akshay Venkatesh, Saul Kripke, Ruth Lawrence, Grigori Perelman, Andrew Wiles, and Edward Witten.

The Traditional Nigerian Masculinity and Femininity

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 12, 2018

What does the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement state about the traditional gender roles in Nigeria?

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Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. On August 16, 2017, we published an interview. Here, we talk about gender roles.

Dr. Leo Igwe and I talked about the Nigerian Humanist Movement founded by Igwe and the traditional masculinity and femininity in Nigeria. Igwe, in the response, cautioned about the common and ever-present possibility of the misinterpretation of responses.

That is, the misunderstanding of talking about men and women in Nigerian meaning all men and all women in every context when referencing “men” or “women” rather than the statistical nature of the representation of the traditional masculinity and femininity.

“There is always a risk of conflation in responding to a question such as this because any answer could easily be taken to be all embracing and applicable to all. Definitely, an understanding of traditional masculinity or femininity that applies to over 170 million people in Nigeria with various cultures and beliefs presents a challenge,” Igwe stated.

His personal opinion of the nature of traditional femininity and masculinity within a highly diverse and populated society such as Nigeria. It is simply the idea handed down from the past. Some from a before when these were not necessarily highly scrutinized.

Igwe said, “This idea of what it is to be a man or a woman draws its moral and binding force from the fact that it was handed down to a generation that assumes it is expected to observe it, comply with it and pass it on without revision or alteration.”

It becomes a tradition with the sacrosanct nature of the maleness and femaleness. It becomes designated as the standards in social life or the norm for nurturance and cultivation in males and females – a social and cultural overlay on top of the sex differentiated characteristics.

“It is important to note that the idea of manliness and womanliness which people regard as the norm because they are handed down from the past differ from community to community, and sometimes from family to family, in fact from individual to individual. It is difficult to pin it down,” Igwe opined.

In Nigeria, the masculine is seen as something with leadership, power, strength, and toughness; the feminine with weakness and vulnerability. Male seen as the head of the home and society. Some strong and capable. Some who can absorb pain and not cry. The man must be defense. Because he is needed to protect family against the dangers and threats of the world.

“Womanliness,” by contrast, “is associated with ‘weakness’ and vulnerability. Marriage, childcare, child bearing and domestic duties are also linked to womanhood,” Igwe explained, “Persons are brought up to fit into these roles and expectations. Unfortunately, the emphasis is often, on women and their designated subordinate and subjugated roles.”

Igwe noted the forgotten facts about males being raised by parents who include the mothers, and other family members such as nieces, sisters, and aunts who have them (the males) fit into some institutionalized, limited, gender roles.

Igwe, in that response, concluded, “They are pressured sometimes against their will to be manly. These designated manly and womanly roles are well spelled out and mainly applicable in rural areas and among uneducated folks, or in religiously conservative environments. In such situations and circumstances, ruralness, lack of education and faith constrain the ability of males and females to break away from the traditions.”

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. He is among the most prominent African non-religious people from the African continent. When he speaks, many people listen in a serious way. He holds a Ph.D. from the Bayreuth International School of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, having earned a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Calabar in Nigeria. We have talked or I have written on Dr. Igwe here, here, here, here, here, here.

He talked here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.

Indigenous Nigerian Gender Roles Rooted in Supernaturalism

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 13, 2018

Why do the Indigenous African spiritualities and the colonial Abrahamic faiths influence the designated gender roles in Nigeria?

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. On August 16, 2017, we published [an interview](#). Here, we talk about gender roles.

I asked Dr. Igwe about the designated roles from the Abrahamic traditions, which he corrected to the supernatural traditions. Why the expansion in the terminology? The intention was to extend into the Abrahamic “codifications” and the traditional pre-colonial traditions in the area known now as Nigeria.

This point extends to the whole of the African continent’s diaspora. He notes the supernatural definitions for the supported qualities of the masculine and the feminine, of the femaleness and the maleness of a particular individual.

Igwe stated, “In fact, traditional masculinity and femininity are embedded in indigenous religions that predate Abrahamic religious traditions in Africa. What we have in contemporary Africa is a situation where the faiths of Christianity and Islam only reinforce pre-existing religious and traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.”

Now, as Igwe founded an entire movement in humanism, the next natural query would follow into the humanistic. He had some interesting views on the traditional gender roles and the humanist perspective on this.

“A humanist perspective is the same with the traditional viewpoint in the sense that they are all human creations and constructions. They are all attempts by humans to define, designate and assign roles and duties,” Igwe explained, “Humanist and non-humanist ideas of manliness and womanliness are devices to make sense of human associations and interactions. But the humanist perspective is different because it is a product of critical evaluation, not of revelation or blind faith.”

This makes the supernatural elements in the traditional gender roles overlaid on biological sex differentiations less relevant. Because they do not become considerations. The humanistic perspective on the masculine and feminine, according to Igwe, becomes non-dogmatic.

Gender roles subject to challenge and critical questions. He considers the perception of a male and a female as something informed by human rights, reason, and science, which means non-conformist (to tradition) and non-orthodox (to the Abrahamic religions, for an example).

Igwe concluded, “Like traditional masculinity and femininity, humanist masculinity takes cognizance of the outlined duties and responsibilities. However, the humanist idea of manliness

and womanliness is not cast in stone. The qualities and functions are subject to revision and rejection in the light of knowledge and individual freedom.”

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. He is among the most prominent African non-religious people from the African continent. When he speaks, many people listen in a serious way. He holds a Ph.D. from the Bayreuth International School of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, having earned a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Calabar in Nigeria. We have talked or I have written on Dr. Igwe here, here, here, here, here, here, and here.

He talked here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.

On a Humanist Masculinity with Dr. Leo Igwe

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 13, 2018

How does the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement define a humanist masculinity?

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. On August 16, 2017, we published [an interview](#). Here, we talk about gender roles.

Igwe and I had an extensive conversation on the nature of gender roles in the context of modern Nigerian. The sub-text of the conversation came from modern and Indigenous spiritualities of the African continent, the colonial religions seen in Islam and Christianity, and with the pre-text of humanism rejecting these Indigenous and colonial supernaturalisms to define gender.

When we began to talk more, the emphasis of the conversation focused on the humanist masculinity. What is it? What defines it? How is it constrained, defined, and set about in practical terms?

Igwe stated, “It is the idea of maleness that emphasizes the humanity of men and males, the fact that men are human like their female counterparts. That males have emotions, entertain fear and suffer pain like their female counterparts. Simply humanistic masculinity stands for maleness as humanness.”

There comes more emphasis on the care, compassion, and the cooperation of the masculine in a humanistic framework. That, as human beings, men can act in cruel, mean, domineering, and oppressive way.

That these can be cross-gender, or occurring in any gender, traits, which tend towards the personally and socially destructive. “The whole idea of humanist masculinity is vital in clearing this mistaken impression that associates ‘masculinism’ or masculinity with the subordination of women. There are cases of male oppression of women but is that masculinism? No, not at all,” Igwe said.

The idea being that basis for the humanistic man, the masculine self grounded in the philosophy and life stance of humanism, comes from the concrete rather than the supernatural and the non-subjection of women.

In modern vernacular, this means the empowerment of women and the inculcation of the notion and actuality of equality for men and women. Of course, as seems historically and presently the case, most males act masculine in one form or other; most females act feminine in one form or other. There should be flexibility within the humanistic frame while acknowledging some connections between the biological sex differences and the associated tendencies in thoughts and behaviours in genders. However, the bigger category remains human.

“Being manly should be within the ambient of humanity not without. Women do oppress men too but is oppression of men feminism? No. Subordination of men should not be identified as feminism. It is an aberration of feminism,” Igwe explained, “Just as feminism does not imply the oppression of men, masculinity should not be equated with the oppression of females. Thus

humanist masculinity is – and should be—about the expression of hu-maleness or hu-manliness and not the humiliation and subordination of females.”

The conversation concluded on the ways in which to inculcate this other modern masculinity. Igwe lamented, “Unfortunately, this goal cannot be realized in the form of education we have in Nigeria at the moment. The educational process is manipulated to preserve certain religious and traditional values and interests. The educational system is used to reinforce notions of masculinity and femininity that are incompatible with humanist and human rights values.”

It leaves questions about an overhaul to the fostering and furtherance of a humanist or humanistic oriented educational system with the best interests of the child in mind.

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. He is among the most prominent African non-religious people from the African continent. When he speaks, many people listen in a serious way. He holds a Ph.D. from the Bayreuth International School of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, having earned a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Calabar in Nigeria. We have talked or I have written on Dr. Igwe [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

He talked here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.

The Responsibility in Public Recognition of Excellence

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 14, 2018

Why does responsibility come with public recognition of excellence? Because it means more power, Spider-Man.

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. On May 27, 2018, we published an interview. Here, we talk on the responsibility that comes with public recognition of excellence.

Dr. Igwe and I were conversing on the subject of the widespread recognition in Nigeria and African, especially the non-religious and humanist communities for founding the movement.

The Nigerian Humanist Movement, the first person to enact this formal movement out of tens of millions. He is an ever-active activist for the non-religious and a spokesperson for the equality of men and women, of the need for the implementation of human rights, and the importance of critical thinking and scientific education.

With regards to the responsibility that comes from the public recognition for Dr. Igwe, he stated, “The widespread recognition means more responsibility and more work. It obligates me to exert more efforts and sustain the momentum to further humanist ideals and values. It entails devising new and more potent strategies to make humanism flourish, and mainstream the rights and interests of nonreligious persons.”

It means the sign of the improvement in performance and a track record for Igwe. It amounts to thanks for the public service and an identification of the excellence of the public service. He notes this as an enhanced sign of the importance of his life’s work: humanism.

“...an indication that a long forgotten, long overlooked need for a positive non-religious outlook is now being fulfilled. In a country such as Nigeria, religion has an overwhelming influence,” Igwe explained, “So it can be very difficult for humanist activists to make any significant impact because such an impression chips away on the rock of overbearing religions.”

He considers the recognition of excellence welcome. Igwe feels that this is a sign of hope and that this “should propel” him and other activists to work harder than before. Because the progress won to date took a long time.

It was something not in the realm of the possible centuries ago, but became one recently. That makes the consolidation of the progress never certain but easier to maintain than originally acquire in the first place.

The recognition of the peers and the youth makes this an especially important point of contact in his career, as, seems to me, he works from a harder vantage in Nigeria than in other countries such as Canada, where humanism has a long tradition.

“It means striving to ensure that humanism takes its rightful place on the table of religions, philosophies or life stances, and that humanists and other non-religious people can live their lives and go about their everyday business with less and less fear,” Igwe stated.

He continued to state that this means the end of the persecution and the discrimination of the non-religious people in the country and the region in order to secure a greater secularity in Nigeria.

Igwe said, “In Nigeria, those who identify as having no religion are in the minority; they are not reckoned with. Non-religious persons suffer systemic marginalization. For too long, persons without religion have been identified as a silent and sometimes, a non-existing minority.”

He feels the and thinks strongly that the mistreatment of the non-religious is unacceptable. He wants to work for a world where these people are not discriminated against.

“In the coming years, I want to work to ensure that Nigerians grow up understanding that religion is an option, and knowing that they can leave religion; that they can criticize religion. I want to make sure that people in Nigeria are aware that humanism and atheism as options that they can explore and embrace,” Igwe concluded.

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The Maximization of Happiness and Life Satisfaction

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 14, 2018

Why is life a continuous claim of happiness and satisfaction for us?

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, M.D., M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D. is a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist running his private practice in Thessaloniki, Greece. Having perceived the importance and impact of internet in our lives, he is also professionally active offering online psychotherapy and counseling for Psycall.com and Shezlong.com. He earned an M.D., Medical Doctor Diploma (2000), M.Sc., Medical Research Technology (2003), M.A., Philosophy (2012), and Ph.D., Psychopharmacology (2015), awarded by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Dr. Katsioulis is mostly challenged by expression, thinking and communication. Therefore, he is involved in writing articles, novels, quotes and screenplays. Since 2001, he is the Founder of the World Intelligence Network (WIN), an international organization targeting the detection, development and appreciation of abilities. Feeling a citizen of the world, he currently lives in Thessaloniki, Macedonia, Greece.

On January 1, 2015, we published an interview. Here, we talk about awards and happiness.

Katsioulis earned a number of awards. Of course, along with the various awards and recognition from the prizes, the awardee is expected to provide some form of commentary relevant to themselves and the focus of the award.

He had a statement, wherein he said:

I believe in the power of human mind and my works contribute to the facilitation of mind expressions, promotion of creativity and enhancement of productivity for a better life quality for everyone. Maximizing outcomes based on the appreciation and utilization of people's potentials for the benefits of any individual and humanity in general.

Katsioulis describes the ways in which people can improve the life satisfaction of their lives. The ways in which individuals can maximize their lives, and how he can be a part of this in collaboration with others in the high general intelligence community.

I do not sense an arrogance or conceit around it. I noted a sense of service based on acknowledge of greater ability and so higher levels of duty to work on common problems. I asked about the motivation to help others.

Katsioulis stated, "Life is a continuous claim of happiness and satisfaction. There are plenty of distractions and attractions in life which can mislead and redirect people causing disorientation, targeting fake goals and resulting to low life quality. I am passionate with people and communication and that is the main reason I chose to be a Psychotherapist, Psychiatrist and a Founder of some communities and networks."

All the aforementioned high-IQ – and other gifted and talented – societies function on this basis. To serve the gifted and talented population as identified by various means, and to cater to their needs, they then serve the general public, often in ways others cannot.

He continued, “I believe in self-awareness, self-appreciation, self-confidence and self-determination. Offering people an opportunity to look into themselves and grab the chance to evaluate their lives, attitudes and interests, is a challenge for me.”

Katsioulis went through these processes too. That is, he speaks from personal experience. He wants to provide the same psychological services for others. It seems to come from the same sense of duty. It feels as if a moral-bound, ethical, foundation.

“I support people and I believe in their abilities, talents and specialties. Psychologically speaking, I may provide what I would appreciate to have been provided,” Katsioulis elaborated.

In reflection on the statement in the award, I quoted him, “Humans are biological beings, life is a mystery, creation is still unknown. We live a miracle and we can only maximize this miracle’s impact in every single moment of our existence.”

That formed the basis for the conclusion of the interview with some final questions. He mentioned “miracle,” which raises hopes in some minds, anxiety in others, and discontented question marks in still others. Also, though more directly apprehended, the idea of the maximization of the moments of our lives was mentioned by him.

Katsioulis clarified, “Allow me to clearly mention that I do not wish to support any specific religion with my statement. I have the feeling that the advanced and complicated structure and function of life, considering even only a single cell, is itself a miracle.”

It becomes more concrete without support for a specific religion. As a background context, living in Greece, the majority religion remains Eastern Orthodox Christianity or the Greek Orthodox Church tradition within the Eastern Orthodox Church. This faith comprises about 90% of the population.

“I am using the word ‘miracle’ since mathematicians have proved that it is rather impossible all cell components to accidentally find themselves in the proper position and start functioning as a cell within the total duration of universe existence,” Katsioulis explained, “So the time elapsed since the creation of universe supports the non-accidental, thus miraculous nature of life.”

As noted in the response, Katsioulis seems to note a transcendent sentiment. Something external to and containing the natural and physical. The sense of the miraculous in the statistical improbability of functional life.

Katsioulis continued, “The specific rational for this miracle, a specific power, God, destiny, even the nature itself, has been a fascinating topic for many other specialists throughout all human history.”

He concluded on the idea of happiness and the operation of its maximization, or optimization. “The maximization of our life moments is a quality term, used to define appreciation of our time, life satisfaction and happiness. Since we know nothing about the reasons of our existence,” Katsioulis concluded, “we may solely take advantage of the fact that we are alive and experience the most out of it. In this context, we need to define what makes us excited and content and we should target and claim satisfaction and happiness.”

Dr. Katsioulis earned the best performance in the Cerebrals international contest (2009), best performance in the Cerebrals NVCP-R international contest (2003), best performance in physics

for the national final exams in Greece (1993), and third place in the Maths national contest in Thessaloniki, Greece (1989).

Dr. Katsioulis scored some of the highest intelligence test scores (SD16) on international record with IQ scores of 205 on the NVCP-R [Rasch equated raw 49/54] in 2002, 196 on the Qoymans Multiple Choice #3 [ceiling] in 2003, 192 on the NVCP-E [Rasch equated raw 35/40] in 2002, 186 on the NVCP-R [Fluid Intelligence Index Score] in 2002, 183 on the NVCP-E [Fluid Intelligence Index Score] in 2002, 183 on the Cattell Culture Fair III A+B [ceiling-1] in 2003, 180+ on the Bonnardel BLS4 – 2T [ceiling] in 2003, and 180+ on the WAIS-R [extrapolated full scale] in 2002.

Subsequently, Dr. Katsioulis remains a member in over 60 high IQ societies. In addition, he is the president and founder of Anadeixi Academy of Abilities Assessment and World Intelligence Network (WIN), and OLYMPIQ, HELLIQ, CIVIQ, GRIQ, QIQ, IQID, GREEK high IQ societies. He talked here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.

In one listing, Dr. Katsioulis is listed among other smartest people in the world including Paul Allen, Christopher Michael Langan, Judit Polgar, Marilyn vos Savant, John H. Sununu, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Kim Ung-Yong, Mislav Predavec, Manahel Thabet, Rick Rosner, Chris Hirata, Steven Pinker, Ivan Ivec, Garry Kasparov, Terence Tao, Scott Aaronson, Nikola Poljak, Alan Guth, Donald Knuth, Noam Chomsky, Magnus Carlsen, Shahriar Afshar, Akshay Venkatesh, Saul Kripke, Ruth Lawrence, Grigori Perelman, Andrew Wiles, and Edward Witten.

The Weight of Men's Anxiety

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 15, 2018

What is the weight of anxiety for men? How can they deal with it?

Anxiety_BC talked about the role of generalized and acute anxiety in the lives of men.

The organization spoke about the personal experience of one man named Bruno Feldeisen who was aged 34 at the time of a first anxiety attack. He lived in New York. He was a chef with a solid reputation. He won competitions and awards, and the respect of colleagues and friends.

Feldeisen stated, "The light dimmed, my vision got narrow, I couldn't breathe... I thought I was having a heart attack." Feldeisen has left his French home country for America several years earlier.

What was the source of this man's stress and strife? It came from the mind. He was an abused child by a drug-addicted mother.

"While Feldeisen had learned to suppress his trauma, the past caught up with him. Even though the cardiologist reassured him his heart was fine, Feldeisen couldn't stop worrying about his health," the article explained.

Feldeisen talked about the mind focusing on the tight chest and the dizziness. The physical symptoms of the panic attack. These symptoms would in turn cause a panic attack. He continued to search for an illness on his body.

It is noted that his old life "melted away. He stopped going out in public because restaurants made his back spasm and busy streets caused hyperventilation. He quit his job, drifted, and eventually went bankrupt. 'I didn't enjoy life anymore,' he said."

These are common stories for men with anxiety. Men report anxiety half as much as women. This is according to the research director in the Thomson Anxiety Disorder Center at Toronto's (Ontario) Sunnybrook Hospital, Dr. Neil Rector.

The article explained, "Data from the Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada show that one in four Canadians will have at least one anxiety disorder during their lifetime, which translates to one in six men, all of whom may suffer the same crippling consequences as Feldeisen: they can lose their jobs and damage their relationships, said Dr. Rector."

This led to an internal question about the sex differences. The reasons for why women have less anxiety than the men. Dr. Mohamed Kabbaj, Professor of Biomedical Sciences and Neurosciences at Florida State University, stated, "For men, the male hormone testosterone protects against anxiety."

The role of testosterone in the reduction of anxiety results from neurotransmitter load differences based on the interactions of the male typical hormone with the brain. It boosts GABA and serotonin. Those two neurotransmitters are found in the low anxiety people.

It also reduces the level of activity in the fear center of the brain, the amygdala, important for the fight-or-flight phenomena. This means a reduction on several levels from a neurological and biochemical position. These lead to lower anxiety.

The article continued, “Additionally, it diminishes fear and anxiety by dampening the activity of the circuit linking the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis with the amygdala. Finally, testosterone modulates the release of the hormone cortisol, in response to stress.”

Lower fear, lower stress, and lower anxiety for men who tend to be higher in testosterone, men who do feel anxiety, though, feel something unbeknownst to the women, which is shame.

Dr. Rector said, “If you’re male and have been socialized to be active and controlling, anxiety is (perceived) as a sign of weakness.” Men have an internal dialogue oriented around weakness with viewing themselves as failing and vulnerable. This creates an embarrassment.

From that embarrassment, the men do not want to reach out. So, when men do reach out to the professional help, their condition appears far worse than the women.

For example, Feldeisen elaborated, “I was ashamed and disappointed in myself... I was not a masculine man (anymore)... If a man says ‘I have a mental illness’, that’s equal to craziness.” Can’t have that, men *must* be strong, so goes the narrative.

Men restrict themselves. Those around them may exacerbate this because they do not want to hear about this as well. It is not a judgment of the family and friends or on the men, but in the culture created through expectations and historical inertia.

“Many men with anxiety express similar feelings as Feldeisen. Instead of seeking help, 30% of men with anxiety turn to substances as a way to cope with their symptoms, said Dr. Jeffery Wardell,” *Anxiety BC* stated, “post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto. Men’s greater impulsivity also accounts for their higher reliance on substances.”

Women have fewer positive beliefs about alcohol. Men have higher positive beliefs about alcohol. The anxious women will turn to female friends in time of needing some substances while anxious.

The women will limit consumption because of the greater expectations and judgments on them. Men, in other words, are seen as engaging in male behaviour if they drink, even if it as a masculine self coping mechanism.

Dr. George Koob, Director of the US-based National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, said, “People suffering from anxiety take substances in an effort to self-medicate.” Alcohol and similar substances of common overuse are ones that naturally hijack the reward centers of the brain, the mesolimbic dopamine reward system built for the pleasurable stimuli from food and sex.

There is an extra high from the substances. The user feels pleasure and so uses the substance more and more to quell greater and greater levels of anxiety. This is, apparently from the prior points, particularly true of the men.

“The ingestion of substances including alcohol, opioids, marijuana, and nicotine produces identical pleasure effects. When endorphins (the chemicals responsible for the “runner’s high”) are released by natural stimuli or by substances,” the reportage explained, “they bind to the same

receptors as morphine, dulling emotional pain and calming the mind. It is this type of relaxation that people with anxiety are seeking when they turn to substances.”

Mr. Feldeisen went to the common one: alcohol. He drank two full glasses of wine at dinner in order to feel numb. Why numb? He wanted to rid himself of the anxious feelings after the first panic attack. It became an exogenous assistance in the prevention of coping with the anxiety.

The article continued, “While many men are reluctant to admit their anxiety, making it difficult for loved ones to find out what’s going on, there are some tell-tale clues, said Dr. Martin Antony, Professor and Chair in the Department of Psychology at Ryerson University in Toronto.”

“If the man in your life starts to avoid things he used to enjoy or becomes irritable, these can be signs of an anxiety disorder. Anger is more acceptable for some men than anxiety,” Antony stated.

Men suffer too. However, they do not reach out. They reach out in silence. They experience anxiety and depression, like women, and even commit suicide at times, too. For those concerned about the men, they should look into the trouble in concentration, the difficult in sleeping, and the loss in an interest in sex as symptoms of potential anxiety of the men in their lives.

The men we all know and love, but who can, at times, be not succeeding all that well in coping with anxiety. Dr. Maureen Whittal, who is a psychologist in private practice in British Columbia, suggested, “Instead, reassure him that his condition is extremely common... Tell him ‘It doesn’t have to be this hard’. Find him a family doctor when he’s ready, and you can offer to accompany him. Suggest you treat the visit as an experiment, and don’t ask for a commitment to treatment.”

Feldeisen lacked a partner to motivate him. He has a son. However, the son was not at the age of being able to help him at the time. Feldeisen stated, “I told myself enough is enough... We need to fix this. My son needs me to be the best person I can be... My therapist is one of the best in Canada.”

Dr. Rector talked about the hope for the future for men. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is an important methodology to help with some distorted thinking patterns. It is a first defense or intervention in the combatting of anxiety disorders.

Apparently, it works about 60-70% of the time. Rector said, “Some patients can also be treated with medication, while more severe cases may require both counseling and pills.”

Now, Feldeisen is a thriving person. That, potentially, makes him a better chef as a boss or colleague and a better dad. He concluded, “You don’t need to be ashamed of the life you’re living—by seeking treatment, you could fully live the life you want.”

The Rise of Single Fathers

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 15, 2018

What is behind the surprising rise of single dads?

The *Pew Research Center* reported on the rise of the single father rates. Apparently, the number has increase as much as 9 times in the last 5 or 6 decades, or since 1960. 8% of the households with minor children in the United States has a father as a sole head of the household.

It was only 1% in 1960. This is based on the analysis done by the Pew Research Center through the Decennial Census and American Community Survey data.

The report stated, “The number of single father households has increased about ninefold since 1960, from less than 300,000 to more than 2.6 million in 2011. In comparison, the number of single mother households increased more than fourfold during that time period, up to 8.6 million in 2011, from 1.9 million in 1960.”

That makes for more men as the heads of single parent households with a drastic increased in their numbers. There are still differences between the single mothers and the single fathers out there.

“Single fathers are more likely than single mothers to be living with a cohabiting partner (41% versus 16%). Single fathers, on average, have higher incomes than single mothers and are far less likely to be living at or below the poverty line—24% versus 43%,” the report explained, “Single fathers are also somewhat less educated than single mothers, older and more likely to be white.”

The single fathers tend to be younger while also less educated and financially less well off than their women single parent counterparts; their single mother counterparts. The fathers were men aged 15 and older, so quite young all the way to the much older.

“Fathers who are living in a household headed by someone else are excluded from the analysis, as are fathers whose children are not living with them,” the article stated, “The term ‘single father’ includes men in a variety of family circumstances.”

Half of them are divorced, separated, widowed, or never married. They are not living with a cohabiting partner either. About 40% or 2/5ths are living with a non-marital partner. One small share of them are married while also living away from their spouse.

The article continued, “Cohabiting single fathers are particularly disadvantaged on most socio-economic indicators. They are younger, less educated and more likely to be living in poverty than are fathers who are raising children without a spouse or partner in the household.”

About 2/3rds of the houses in the United States with children have two married parents, which is a drastic decline from the 9/10ths seen in 1960. There seem to be a number of factors associated with the decline in the number of married parent households.

The big one is the significant increase in the number of non-marital births. This may mean that marriage has less of a pull for the current generations compared for the several decades prior

generations, where each subsequent generation saw marriage as less integral to the basis of having a child in the first place.

“And even though divorce rates have leveled off in recent decades, they remain higher than they were in the 1960s and 1970s,” the article explained, “Some experts suggest that changes in the legal system have led to more opportunities for fathers to gain at least partial custody of children in the event of a breakup, as well.”

A change or alteration in the standard gender roles is important to consider as well. Men are not only seen as breadwinners. Women are not only seen as child caregivers. Women are further along in the dual-basis of a full life with childcare and work; whereas, men are getting there, but slower.

The reportage continued, “Analysis of long-term time use data shows that fathers are narrowing the still sizable gap with mothers in the amount of time they spend with their children. And Pew Research surveys find that the public believes that a father’s greatest role is to provide values to his children, followed by emotional support, discipline and income support.”

When it comes to the specific characteristics or traits of the single fathers, they are like the single mothers in being less educated and not as well-off. They are younger and tend to be less white. The single father households are better off financially in contrast to the single mother households.

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The single fathers are much younger than the married fathers while also older than the single mothers. For example, only 8% of the married fathers are young than 30 years old. The number of much different for the single fathers and the single mothers – 18% and 23%, respectively.

However, 47% of the single fathers are over 40 years or older. This becomes 59% for married fathers and 38% for single mothers. It is a much different story for each demographic.

“Single father householders are more likely to be white than single mother householders, but less likely to be white than married father householders. Just over half (56%) of single fathers are white, as are 45% of single mothers and two-thirds (66%) of married fathers,” *Pew Research Center* elaborated.

Single fathers are less likely to be black at 15%, especially compared to black single mothers (28%). Hispanic single mothers is about 22% and the Hispanic single fathers is about 24%, about parity in fact.

The report continued, “The educational attainment of single father householders is markedly lower than that of married father householders. About one-fifth (19%) of single dads lack a high school diploma, while just 10% of married fathers lack one.”

The single mothers have it at about 15%. The Median annual adjusted income for the single fathers is \$40,000 and for the single mothers it is \$26,000. This compares starkly with the \$70,000 of the households headed by the married fathers.

“The same pattern is reflected in poverty status across these household types. Almost one-fourth (24%) of single father households are living at or below the poverty level, compared with just 8% of married father households and fully 43% of single mother households,” the *Pew Research Center* explained.

The number of single fathers continues to decline with age. However, most younger single fathers will be cohabiting, for example. Poverty is a high positive correlate. If someone is a single father, or a single mother for that matter, then will quite likely be a poor or in the poverty line as well.

“Since 1990, the Census Bureau has collected data not only on the marital status of household heads, but also information regarding whether the head was living with a non-marital partner. This allows for a further differentiation of single fathers—those who have no spouse or partner living with them and those who are cohabiting,” the reportage continued.

The big rise in the single father rates, about 8 or 9 fold, leads to higher rates of poverty among the single fathers themselves and their families, but, even so, those men tend to be far poorer than their counterparts who are married across ethnicities but also richer than their single mother comparisons.

Bicycling Can Save Lives Across Canada

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 16, 2018

Why can bicycling save several thousand lives every year and improve personal health?

Statistics Canada reported on bicycling in Canada.

Physical activity, moving, is an important part of a healthy day. That is to say, a good day comes from the workout in nature ideally too. It can come from walking, weightlifting (though hard to do outdoors), and the playing sports.

There are many ways to get it. But there for some, there are limitations in what they can do. For some, that can mean a limitation in the ways in which they are able to handle themselves in a sport where they do not have the skill.

They may have a tendon or ligament injury at the time, or surgery from years prior, that can limit their ability to play the sport with friends. Weight training can be similar, but can also be the source of injury.

As we age, we become less and less able physically and mentally to bounce back from the traumas. In terms of the physical traumas, to muscle, bone, ligament, and the like, we need to keep in mind the limitations of current physicality and of age.

There was a good article with lots of notes by *Statistics Canada* on the benefits of lower impact exercises found in a regular upright or recumbent biking or bicycling. The article bleakly opened on the note of the level of obesity in the general population.

“In an era when nearly a third of children and youth and just under two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese, cycling for leisure or transport is a valuable form of exercise,” the report stated, Cycling is also good for the environment—commuting by bicycle helps to alleviate road congestion and noise pollution and reduces emissions.”

The benefits are for the health folks and for the environmentally minded. Not everyone is one or the other let alone both. However, there are noted risks with bicycling. Those include the possibilities of crashes.

“Strategies to protect cyclists include infrastructure such as bicycle paths, dedicated bike lanes and traffic calming; side guards for heavy trucks; driver behaviour, with an emphasis on sharing the road; and cyclist behaviour, including increased visibility and helmet use,” *Statistics Canada* explained.

It has been a rather quiet national debate. However, people care about the environment in a similar way in which they care about the health of themselves in general. One of the main concerns for Canadians is health care. It may be the big one for the population, especially with an aging population approaching the concerns of the Western European and East Asian nations.

The report continued, “Some resist legislated helmet use, at least for adults, on the grounds that helmets offer minimal protection and encourage risk-taking, and that such legislation impinges

on personal freedom and reduces ridership; others dispute these claims. Medical, public health and other sectors recommend that all-age helmet use is legislated and enforced across Canada.”

The analysis showed the helmet and bicycle use of the Canadians aged 12 and older in 1994/1995 and 2012/2013. There was also some analysis of the cycling fatalities for the 1994-2012 period.

The behaviors of helmet users and non-user had examination and analysis as well. They were drinking alcohol, getting flu shots, seatbelt use, and smoking. A common and good methodology and analysis to see if people are healthier in their habits in general if they also use something health-wise or not.

“In 2013/2014, an estimated 12 million Canadians (41%) aged 12 or older reported that they had cycled in the previous year,” the article stated, “Cycling was more common at younger ages—82% among 12- to 14-year-olds versus 27% by age 50 or older—and among people in higher-education and -income households.”

Education and income reflect the cycling levels. It also may reflect residence. The neighborhoods with lower traffic due to particular traffic reduction implementations, bicycle paths for the ability to easily bike, and the perception of crime levels.

There may be more crime in some areas, but the individual residents may not feel as though there is as much crime in the area. Men bike more than women. Those in the cities were more probable to bike than the rural folk. It has a certain logic to it.

Although, women reported the amount of traffic as a boundary to full participation in the bicycling world.

“The decrease in cycling was evident in most age groups. Cycling was more common in Quebec (48%) and Manitoba (46%) than in the rest of Canada,” *Statistics Canada* explained, “It was less common in the Atlantic Provinces (from 18% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 32% in New Brunswick), Saskatchewan and Ontario (both 38%), and Nunavut (23%).”

According to the 2013/2014 estimations, about 7 million people biked in the previous 3 months, which is up about 500,000 people since 1994/1995. Could that be due to the increase in the total population, so a similar percent?

Statistics Canada stated, “Despite this numerical increase, cyclists comprised a diminishing percentage of the population: 24% in 2013/2014 versus 29% in 1994/1995 (Figure 1). Even when the aging population was taken into account, the decrease persisted: if the age structure had remained unchanged during the two decades, an estimated 25% of the population would have reported cycling in 2013/2014.”

With the apparent decrease in the physical activity, it seems important for Canadians to get back on their butts because general health can be improved through some simple aerobic activity on their inside recumbent or on an upright bike down the local bike trail. Do it!

On Mentors, Mentoring, and Mentees

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 8, 2018

Why does the world need more mentors mentoring mentees?

Marilyn Price-Mitchell Ph.D. in *Psychology Today* talked about the importance of mentorship. The benefits to the mentee who receives the mentorship. A single adult who shows care and concern for a young person can change that young person's life for decades. I know; other knows.

In fact, I know from both perspectives. Someone to listen your stories. A person to confide in. An individual to give guidance. To give and receive these gifts can be extraordinary, heartfelt, and life changing, I have been blessed to be able to mentor and lucky enough to have been mentored.

If the fit is right, the mentor-mentee relationship is extraordinary at times.

Price-Mitchell stated, "We understand the benefits of mentoring young people when we hear the powerful stories of teens whose lives have been changed by a single, caring adult. If you listen, those stories are everywhere."

She relayed a similar great experience of being mentored by someone. Where the positives of the relationship accrued over time, she does have a doctorate after all.

"What we know about mentoring is that it matters to positive youth development. Now, one of the largest mentoring studies ever conducted continues to support this thinking and links mentoring to a reduction in bullying," Price-Mitchell said.

There was a study done by Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada over five years. The children with the mentors were more confident with fewer behavioural problems.

Price-Mitchell continued, "Girls in the study were four times less likely to become bullies than those without a mentor and boys were two times less likely. In general, young people showed increased belief in their abilities to succeed in school and felt less anxiety related to peer pressure."

This is all to the good. It shows the benefits for the mentorship that accrue compared to the control or no mentoring. These relationships require some finesse and remained quite complicated in their structure because every kid or adolescent is an individual.

"In my own research with teens who became engaged citizens, all of the young people in the study had naturally developed mentee-mentor relationships with adults sometime during their middle and high school years," Price-Mitchell explained, "None were matched by organizations. Nonparent mentors – teachers, clergy, and civic leaders – were highly instrumental in how these teens learned to believe in themselves and tackle challenging goals – much like those in the Big Brothers Big Sisters study."

The teens without typical help, e.g. poor whites, blacks, Native American kids, and especially currently boys. They then can benefit from these interventions. It can make a huge benefit to the

other people in the process too. The mentors can grow individually in learning to give to others too.

She recounted research, “A study conducted by North Carolina State University showed that youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely to attend college when they have a mentor, particularly a teacher.”

Those kids going through the greatest hardships can benefit the most from the interventions of others, especially because many minority kids and single parent kids can be subject to worse social and emotional development.

They can suffer from discrimination, family stressors, and abuse.” Price-Mitchell stated, “While many studies have focused on the effects of mentoring disadvantaged teens, we know that ALL teens reap big developmental dividends from nonparent mentoring relationships during their high school years.”

If you want to grow as a person, whether in giving or receiving, a mentoring relationship can really change a life – for others and yourself. The qualities of a good mentor with youth, according to Price-Mitchell, are being supportive, an active listener, assertive in pushing the kid enough but not too much, having an authentic interest in the kid, working to foster self-decision making, and then also lending perspective and insight from an older person.

Aron Ra on the Early Life of a Male Atheist

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 17, 2018

Why is the life of an early atheist different than other kids who remain in a faith or formal religion?

Mr. Aron Ra was born in Kingman, Arizona. He was baptised as a Mormon. He is the ex-President of Atheist Alliance of America. He is a public speaker, secular activist, and an advocate for reason in education. He hosts the Ra-Men podcast with Dan Arel and Mark Nebo of BeSecular. Here we talk about his early life as a young male non-believer.

Ra and I talked about early life for him. He was born in Kingman, Arizona. He was baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or the Mormons. Although, to remain polite, the term “Mormon” within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints gets taken as an epithet or invective, not a term of endearment.

As a short social lesson, I would suggest, though may be wrong, not using the term “Mormon” in conversation or in the description based on the tone and perceived derision in the term “Mormon” to some or many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. However, I will use the term here, simply for ease and not for offense.

When we began the discussion, and as Ra remains one of the most prominent popularizers and speakers on mainline atheism and New Atheism in particular, which amounts to an outspoken form found in at least two subgroupings with Dr. Richard Dawkins in Militant Atheism and with David Silverman in Firebrand Atheism.

He stated, “Well, my family background largely identified as Mormon. Although, most don’t know what that means. We have some people in the family that do the whole magic underwear thing. Some even to the point of not drinking coffee or eating cinnamon, but those are very, very rare. Most Mormons are disciplined for the most part. And most of my family are (way) not.”

I laughed “way” part. He continued to speak on the family identification with Mormon. A lot of individuals within the family still identify as Mormon. The family members identify as Christian. Other denominations of Christianity do not view the Mormons as Christian.

Many do not view the Catholics as Christian, or the Eastern Orthodox as Christian. It comes from the same trend, of which Ra described to me.

“This was an advantage for me growing up. I got to see the interdenominational bigotry within Christianity,” Ra continued, “When we lived in places like New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado that were Mormon dominant, they were places that the Mormons controlled everything. And if you were not a Mormon, you were not employed, at least not if you were white. There were places that were like that. Utah is rife with them. When we moved to other places, and I moved a lot as a kid, I moved an awful lot – up to 8 times a year.”

He would switch between parents moving from one house to another. There were different places. He moved to the Los Angeles area at one point. He found the Mormons did not control the area. Someone asked the question about faith to him.

He noted two issues there. One with individuals caring about his faith. Another with the ensuing or upcoming argument based on it. Because the assumptions in the statement about the title of a faith matter to people, especially in America – as the nation ranks off the spectrum in adherence and degree of religiosity compared to other advanced industrial nations.

Ra, based on the conversation from the question of personal faith, opined, “Mormons do believe ridiculous things... Every religion does, to be completely honest. But the Mormons have their own collection of ridiculous things that are exclusively Mormon that are not the same ridiculous things that other Christian denominations believe, but the accusations these people were making were ridiculous things that my family, so far as I could tell, did not believe – none of them. So my mum was always the most devout of all of the Mormons in my family that I could talk to.”

When he would invite them into the home to explain to his mother the things believed by them, they would always reject the invitation for some reason.

Ra said, “They would always refuse the invitation. The refusal of the invitation seemed telling. It shows that they know what they are telling me is not true. They knew how quickly it is that I could refute all of that. I have been involved in the religion versus anti-religion argument unknowingly my entire life.”

Furthermore, he remembered a series of conflicts with people because of religion at the ages of 5 and 8. Ra did not realize it. That is, this became a consistent theme throughout the entire life for him. He would ask about how Jesus Christ made water into wine and other things.

“But as it turned out, when I grew up I looked it up. It is only the difference of a carbon atom. The molecules are much more complex. But they involve oxygen, hydrogen, and some additional carbons. That’s it. But all I knew at the time, water is H₂O, and alcohol and fruit juice are something else,” Ra explained, “How does Jesus turn water from H₂O into H₂O and whatever else? I thought someone would give me some kind of intelligible answer. Like how Jesus does that, whether he uses telekinesis or whatever he does.”

Ra found a consistent phenomenon. The individuals in conversations did not seem to want concrete, naturalistic explanations.

The common notion within the community emerged in the form of the stereotyping of skeptics. That is, they get seen as cynics. That can create problems. It can become a conversation stopper. Something to restrict full conversations in a healthy way, for the inter-belief conversations.

If someone prays, in other words, and if another person looking on doubts its efficacy, the doubter gets seen as a cynic rather than a skeptic. It amounts to an assertion about the other person problem. This happens to the non-religious community, often.

“They should’ve paraphrased this: People that make up stuff and call it truth have the power to imagine all kinds of nonsense. But that’s what it is all about. It really is make believe, and it took me the longest time to figure that out. I thought, honestly, naively, even into middle age. I was in my 30s before I realised there were some people who do not believe what they do for a reason,” Ra lamented.

He continued to state, “If you ask anybody, ‘Why do you believe X?’ They are going to give you a reason why they think X is true. I thought this was true for everyone. I thought that you couldn’t believe something for no reason because that’s stupid. You wouldn’t believe something against all reason. I have had people tell me exactly that. I get into more and more arguments

moving into my 30s. I would identify as an activist since then, since around Y2K. I got into these arguments heavily on the internet, on Usenet.”

He was at a period of life with the unlimited use of the internet time. He has a 12 hour per day job. It permitted the use of the internet to learn and become obsessive about the topic of religion, atheism, and belief superstructures and metanarratives. The ways in which people’s total beliefs structure themselves and religious narratives orient people’s entire lives.

Ra stated, “And I get into these discussions, in-depth discussions with professional scientists and professional theologians on both sides. They are both giving me references to look into. So I did for a number of years. It was almost obsessive the amount of time that I dedicated to this subject, this argument. When I came across people and asked them, ‘Why do you believe this?’ I had never really bothered to ask them this. The answers people give are, ‘I believe this because I want to. I believe this because it makes me happy.’”

He sees the answer to the searches there. People believe what they do not think as true, tacitly. They state this as a truth. They act in certain ways. However, they feel an uncomfortableness about the entire endeavor of faith practices. That seems like a common realization in the earlier life of Ra.

Then when he points this out, he gets criticized.

Ra said, “They’d say, ‘Why can’t I believe what I want to believe?’ Why would you say that about something that I just proved is not true? Why would you want to believe something after finding out it is not even possibly or even probably true, in either case? It is not possibly true. It is not probably true. It is not indicated by anything. It is disputed by everything. There is no possibility here. This did not happen. There are no two ways about it. What the hell are you going on about? ‘But I want to believe that.’ Why [Laughing]?!”

Ra joked, “[Laughing] I want to believe I’m a multimillionaire. I do. I want to believe that I have time travel capabilities. Great! But that doesn’t make anything real. And it is insane to imagine that. It took me forever to realise that. I actually said this myself ahead of Peter Boghossian. He famously did a video on ‘faith is pretending to know what you don’t know.’ As if people know they don’t know it, and they’re pretending on purpose. But yes, I said something similar on video prior to that.”

The quote or statement was as follows:

But faith is often a matter of pretending to know what you know you really don’t know, and that no one even can know, and which you merely believe – often for no good reason at all.

Ra talked about how he did not make as much money from the particular statement. However, he does consider faith to be nothing more than make-believe in a literal way. He considers the belief in God and miracles magic.

That is, if someone believes in a higher power with omnipotence and similar traits and if the individual beliefs in the abrogation of the laws of nature, then, in Ra’s view, this amounts to the belief in magic. He considers this within the definitions of miracle and magic from a variety of dictionaries.

“You will discover that if you compare the definitions between a miracle and magic, you will see that they are both the ‘evocation of supernatural forces or entities to control or forecast natural

events in ways which are inexplicable by science because they defy the laws of physics, meaning they are physically impossible,” Ra explained, “That’s what both miracle and magic mean. So miracle is the same things as magic in the same way a boat is a yacht is if it is big enough.”

He compared murders and assassinations and miracles and magic. If a murder is a very important person, then it is an assassination. A miracle amounts to that for the magical world.

Ra stated, “Let’s imagine that there’s some form of technology sometime in the future that can detect the essence of God and can measure it. We can confirm God exists, and importantly whose God it is. All of these people are making claims about this personal God and calling it Allah, or Krishna, but failing to call it Jesus. Jesus isn’t the only personal saviour out there. There’s a bunch. All of these people making absolute statements about what they know for absolute certain about this absolute God.”

He concluded on the idea that the beliefs are not mutually exclusive but, rather, mutually inclusive and so cannot be all true or all wrong. One of the belief systems has to be right and the other has to be wrong. Ra views the beliefs of the formal believers who grew in the religions as having been lied to their whole lives through propaganda.

Fatherless Sons – The Facts, The Figures

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 17, 2018

Why do dads matter?

Dr. Edward Kruk wrote a decent article in *Psychology Today* on fatherlessness. In particular, I want to take some of the discussion in the article with some quotes and paraphrases for commentary on Father's Day about the impacts of fatherlessness on sons.

Most reasonable people perceive a problem with the lives of modern boys and young men. Sometimes, they frame this from the compassionate view about boys and young men. Other times, and more often, they frame this in an ideological perspective directed towards the wellbeing of women.

How will the decline of boys and young men impact the lives of young women who want families and husbands? Answer: they may not want to have children based on the failures of men around them. Women also may choose to become single mothers. However, neither case, even combined, creates an enduring, lasting, and robust culture, historically speaking.

I want to frame this within the other perspective, though the declines do affect most women's wellbeing and remain a concern and a valid perspective. However, how will fatherlessness impact boys and young men who become men?

Kruk said, "According to the 2007 UNICEF report on the well-being of children in economically advanced nations, children in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. rank extremely low in regard to social and emotional well-being in particular."

He directed attention to several theories about it. The problems for the boys. The main issue of fatherlessness. The theorizations of the experts, who spend professional lives in care study. They sit. They wait for data. They do experiments. They compare data. They hypothesize other theories.

They examine other cultures. This is done for decades. Some theories point to child poverty, race, and social class as the variables for the problems in, for instance, boys. Father absence damages kids.

"First, a caveat: I do not wish to either disparage single mothers or blame non-residential fathers for this state of affairs. The sad fact is that parents in our society are not supported in the fulfillment of their parental responsibilities," Kruk cautions, "and divorced parents in particular are often undermined as parents, as reflected in the large number of 'non-custodial' or 'non-residential' parents forcefully removed from their children's lives, as daily caregivers, by misguided family court judgments."

The importance of proper policy and laws to change the landscape of North American culture and several advanced industrial technologically advanced societies becomes more than noteworthy.

This can become a crucial linkage from the theories and evidence to the practical improvement of our lot. Children need mothers, as is known. They need fathers too, as is less acknowledged as an important factor.

Kruk stated, “More often than not, fathers are involuntarily relegated by family courts to the role of ‘accessory parents,’ valued for their role as financial providers rather than as active caregivers.”

He notes this with the fact of fathers sharing caregiving responsibilities with the mother prior to divorce in two-parent, intact families. Kruk continued, “This is both because fathers have taken up the slack while mothers work longer hours outside the home, and because fathers are no longer content to play a secondary role as parents.”

Modern dads continue to love the idea of being active, involved dads. Dads of prior eras may have wanted to become more involved with their children, but could not. They, in a sense, felt forced or compelled to work. They failed to be fathers by culture.

Women failed to be professionals by culture. Think about the lost time, love, care, and the vast regrets of those old, and now those dead and gone, fathers who wished to be fathers before they grew old, but could not. All of them gone – time and them. Distant memories and generations colored by regret.

“Most fathers today are keen to experience both the joys and challenges of parenthood, derive satisfaction from their parental role, and consider active and involved fatherhood to be the core component of their self-identity,” Kruk opined.

However, the institutional structures and supports of the culture do not permit the ability of parents to be fully engaged parents, argues Kruk. Children who lack fathers undergo a severe cascade of life tragedies and character failures.

He explained, “...children’s diminished self-concept, and compromised physical and emotional security (children consistently report feeling abandoned when their fathers are not involved in their lives, struggling with their emotions and episodic bouts of self-loathing).”

The children will have behavioral problems. We see this especially in the prison populations with the men who were troubled, fatherless boys and young men. The men who work to show off machismo as a mask for their real selves.

“...truancy and poor academic performance (71 per cent of high school dropouts are fatherless; fatherless children have more trouble academically, scoring poorly on tests of reading, mathematics, and thinking skills; children from father-absent homes are more likely to play truant from school, more likely to be excluded from school, more likely to leave school at age 16, and less likely to attain academic and professional qualifications in adulthood),” Kruk elaborated in depth.

The impacts of fatherlessness extend into the realm of delinquency and youth crime as well. With the 8% number of youth in prison having an absent father, the adults come from the same house arrangement. Fatherlessness becomes a predictor of being a prisoner.

This impacts the promiscuity and pregnancy rates too. “...fatherless children are more likely to experience problems with sexual health, including a greater likelihood of having intercourse before the age of 16, foregoing contraception during first intercourse, becoming teenage parents, and contracting sexually transmitted infection,” Kruk notes.

The shows in girls with an “object hunger” for males. They experience emotional loss of fathers, especially those who egocentrically reject them. Women become exploitable by the adult men in their lives. One may surmise the men become the exploiters with similar backgrounds, possibly.

The fatherless do drugs, drink, and smoke throughout life more than those with fathers. 90% of runaway children have an absent father. The majority of the homelessness are men. The exploitation and abuse probability rise as well.

Kruk explained, “...fatherless children are at greater risk of suffering physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, being five times more likely to have experienced physical abuse and emotional maltreatment, with a one hundred times higher risk of fatal abuse.”

Psychosomatic illnesses emerge more from the fatherless children too, e.g., asthma, chronic pain, headaches, and stomach aches. This comes to the mental health disorders too. Anxiety, depression, suicide, and mental health problems emerge from the fatherless sons.

If alcoholism amounts to a family disease, and if depression equates to an individual psychological disease, and if criminality is a moral and behavioral failing or disease in a way, and so on, then this would seem to imply fatherlessness as a total life disease along statistical and probabilistic lines based on the aforementioned risks.

“...life chances (as adults, fatherless children are more likely to experience unemployment, have low incomes, remain on social assistance, and experience homelessness),” Kruk explained, “... future relationships (father absent children tend to enter partnerships earlier, are more likely to divorce or dissolve their cohabiting unions, and are more likely to have children outside marriage or outside any partnership).”

It creates a cycle of lower lifespans too. Child die sooner. The fatherless live four years shorter over the lifespan. These problems of individuals, families, and societies correlate fatherlessness more than any other factor.

“...surpassing race, social class and poverty, father absence may well be the most critical social issue of our time. In Fatherless America, David Blankenhorn calls the crisis of fatherless children “the most destructive trend of our generation,” Kruk described.

Some identify this as a public health issue. That is, a society-wide problem of serious consideration now. The problem seems more pertinent for focus on during Father’s Day.

Leonard Sax, Philip Zimbardo, Nikita D. Coulombe, Christina Hoff Sommers, Hanna Rosin, Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, Andrea Dworkin, and many unlisted others commented, in the past and present, on different facets – from sometimes vastly different angles – directly or indirectly associated with these problems of boys and young men and the men who they become in their futures.

“Many fathers’ advocates have stressed the need for fast, low-cost, effective ways for non-residential parents to have their court-ordered parenting time enforced,” Kruk said in a concluding statement, “While access enforcement is important, legislating for shared parenting would be a more effective measure to ensure the ongoing active involvement of both parents in children’s lives.”

This becomes the presumption of shared parenting as important with the primary parenting done by not one or the other parent, but both. Parents need respect and consideration. In particular, they need this in order for the best interests of the child, even if the parents separate. They can

amicably deal with the shared responsibilities as the next generation, and their legacy, develops at any rate. We owe that to them: fathers, mothers, and sons and daughters.

Religion According to a Leading American Atheist

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 18, 2018

How is religious faith different than atheism in the United States?

Mr. Aron Ra was born in Kingman, Arizona. He was baptised as a Mormon. He is the ex-President of Atheist Alliance of America. He is a public speaker, secular activist, and an advocate for reason in education. He hosts the Ra-Men podcast with Dan Arel and Mark Nebo of BeSecular. Here we talk about religion from the vantage of a prominent atheist.

When Ra and I talked back in May of 2017 for *Conatus News*, Ra emphasized the situation in arguments with him. His life is marked by continual, non-stop debating with theists as an atheist. He is not the norm, but atheists do tend to debate.

For Ra, the nature of the debate format takes on a more informal flavor with him. Because of the nature of his ways in which to talk, discuss, and converse with believers of various formal and non-formal religions.

He, in the context of the personal predicament, explained, “When you’re talking to someone who, like me, knows both sides of the argument, when you start talking to someone like this about why they don’t believe, you have to make a choice whether to remain honest or whether to remain creationist, because it is no longer possible to be both.”

This means the renunciation of the creationist claims as fallacious or the creation of falsehoods to defend the faith. It amounts to a choice. Some will choose one path. Others will choose another by implication of Ra’s logic.

“There was a movie that came out a couple of years back I happen to have been in, which was in called ‘My Week in Atheism.’ It was made by a Christian named John Christy who was only pretending to be an atheist for a week,” Ra stated.

The person in the film travels to an atheist conference. He makes an analogy to what happens at the conference trip for the movie as to what happens in the churches. Described how people seem to see an even presentation with everyone on equal sides.

But there is the person at the end, who is purportedly not a plant. That person then proclaims how their mind has not been changed at all. Even going so far as to say, that their faith is even stronger now after the interaction with the atheist.

Ra takes this as a completely false front. He exclaimed, “This is pretend! That was the game in the first place! That it doesn’t matter what anybody says. You’re going to continue to believe. This is what I bring up in my book. If you look up any of the leading creationist organisations – creation.com, Creation Moments, Answers in Genesis, Institute for Creation Research.”

These organizations have a statement of faith. The basic purpose of the statement of faith, according to Ra, is the prevention of critical thinking about the articles of faith. In short, it provides the basis for not having to question fundamental beliefs. One’s at odds with the vast majority of the practicing biologists, for example.

Ra related, “One of them put it that ‘wherever science and the Bible conflict, the science is wrong. The Bible is right.’ Another one says, ‘Whether it is archaeology, history, or any fact at all. If it refutes the Bible, it can’t. The Bible is always right.’”

Based on the personal narrative of Ra, this becomes the life experience for him. He related the debate viewed millions of times. The one between Bill Nye and Ken Ham. Bill Nye known as a science educator. Ken Ham known as a creationist educator.

“The leading apologetic debater makes the same argument. That whenever there is an obvious conflict between theology and science that science is wrong,” Ra stated, “It is like Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis said when they asked him and Bill Nye, ‘What would it take to change your mind?’ Bill Nye said, ‘Evidence.’ Ken Ham said, ‘Nothing.’ He’s going to believe what he wants to believe no matter what.”

The basis of the disagreement between fundamentalist beliefs and Ra’s atheism split there, deviate at that point. On the one, the respect of empirical information to inform, piece by piece, the framework for comprehension of the world.

On the other, the use of revelation and inspired writing in the purported word of God in the Bible as the foundation for knowledge of the world and then the empirical information will become conformed to the pre-existing, extant pattern of the text.

Hence, evidence changes one mind; revelation informs and conforms another.

The World of Mr. Aron Ra, Ex-Mormon and Famous Atheist

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 18, 2018

Why are outspoken atheist voices important for both the non-religious and the religious?

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Mr. Aron Ra was born in Kingman, Arizona. He was baptised as a Mormon. He is the ex-President of Atheist Alliance of America. He is a public speaker, secular activist, and an advocate for reason in education. He hosts the Ra-Men podcast with Dan Arel and Mark Nebo of BeSecular. Here we talk about religion.

Ra began to challenge the religious people in his life. He has done so throughout his life. But as he began to experience the droll of the common and poor responses to religious faith, he wanted to challenge what he viewed as dangerous and bad ideas.

“So I started making a challenge to people: ‘Can you show me anything in your religious belief that you can show to be more accurate than any other religious belief?’ I would stress for people not just to show me where other religions are wrong, but to show me where theirs is right! So I have to define my terms very rigidly all the time.”

Ra was left to investigate the definition of Truth. To him, he found people, in conversation, they were less deep than they thought about the definition of truth. He sees truth as that which corresponds to reality. Facts amount to data points, which can be verified.

“A lot of people hate these definitions because it completely undermines their theology. They can’t make the assertions that they want to by saying anything is the absolute truth, because under the definition of either word no you don’t!” Ra exclaimed.

He views people more often pretending to believe something. He does not work to pretend to know something. However, if someone makes large-scale claims based on a theistic metaphysical view, in which a Theity – an intervening God – exists, then Ra challenges it.

The questions arise about the individuals holding the views less and more about the ideas and the premises in larger arguments. That seems to make the emphasis on ideas and arguments more than individual people.

“That’s the problem. People want to say what they know only what they believe. They pretend. There’s not a part of it that is honest. My biggest sticking point is that the only value that any information can have is however accurate you can show it to be, and if you can’t show that it is accurate at all then that information has no value at all. So it is just an empty assertion.”

He requires, in a discussion or debate format, the substantiation of claims made by religious believers. He will not accept any less than that.

Ra explained, “I can show you the truth of evolution. I can show you the facts of evolution. I can show you the positively indicative and physical evidence that is exclusively concordant with one conclusion over any other. I can do that all day, but religion can’t. No religion can because they’re all just made up. They don’t have any truth at all in them, none of them.”

He considers the best evidence given by religion is the anecdotal responses and then the citation of logical fallacies. He gave an example in the case of Kent Hovind's son, Eric Hovind, who made the statement, to the effect, that if the Bible contains it then it is true.

"He said that we don't need science to back us up. Wow!" Ra exclaimed, "That's a hell of an admission. I do need science to back me up. They have to do this reversal of the burden of proof. If I don't believe that claim that you're making, that positive claims require positive evidence and the burden of proof is always on the person making the positive claim."

He continues with the burden of proof line of thought. That the emphasis is on the person make the claim, according to Ra, to prove it or support it. Because the argument for the position comes from an assertion. If no assertion, then no burden of proof.

However, the believer asserts several premises for Ra to believe, which he does not agree with at all – or mostly.

He stated, "If you use religion for your reason for any action or a position, then you still haven't given a reason because religion isn't one. It is as far against and away from reason as one can possibly be. When people use religion as their only reason for whatever laws they want to impose of people or on other things, these are always mostly unjust."

He cited the restrictions of everyone else's freedom based on the brand or sect of one particular religion. The encroachment of religion into the public arena. At that point, it becomes an issue for the public of other religions, other religious sects and traditions, and the non-religious.

As an outspoken atheist, Ra will have issues with this because this limits his freedom, when religion becomes imposed in the public to restrict the lives and rights of the atheists in the United States.

If bad ideas or arguments go unchallenged, and without the public engagement work of individuals including Mr. Ra, then other religious faith believers and the non-religious can have their freedoms, rights, and liberties curtailed in the United States. That's why these conversations matter for every concerned party.

Getting Into Stretching

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 19, 2018

Is yoga the gateway drug to stretching?

Jamie L. Friend wrote a good article in the *Mayo Clinic* on yoga. The ways in which to become involved in it. The benefits from it. The use of it. Friend relayed the experiences of students who come to yoga. They reflexively state their inability to turn into a pretzel.

They have a point. First of all, Friend would need a big oven. Second, that would take a lot of salt. The students feel as if they cannot stretch that much. Maybe, they are right. At the same time, maybe, they are wrong.

Much of yoga focuses on the breath. It improves the mindset of the individual and overall wellbeing. If one starts at any age, they can, in proportion to age and health expectations, probably improve their flexibility with the introduction of even light yoga practice.

Friend stated, “Thinking that you need to be flexible is a common misconception about yoga. The truth is, yoga is an ancient practice that encompasses many different elements beyond the poses you may be familiar with.”

The article goes on to the focus about yoga on the breathing, where the breathing is as important as of the functioning of the body and the relaxing of the mind.

“The foundation of yoga is deep, steady breathing. The reason: Your breath connects your mind and body. Here’s an example of how it works: Let’s say you’re sitting in a work meeting, and it’s not going well. Maybe deadlines aren’t being met or you don’t have enough resources,” Friend explained.

It reads as if the proper breathing techniques amount to dials for the relaxation of the mind and well-being of the body. The slow inhale, pause, exhale, inhale from the diaphragm, pause longer, exhale from the chest, and repeat, but deeper, and deeper, and longer.

The heart slows, the neck unwinds, the shoulders lower, and the jaw relaxes as the body becomes used to the activity of the breathing. The body works as a whole, so the activity in one system can impact another operation in the body.

“When you see photos and videos of yoga, you’re probably seeing the most complicated poses performed by experienced yoga teachers. But the beauty of yoga is in the basics,” Friend said, “Establish a strong base of movements that you can do with steadiness and ease. Some basic poses to start with include child’s pose, cat and cow pose, mountain pose, warrior two pose, bridge pose and tree pose.”

Those basic poses, apparently, add to a functional routine for yogic practices, which seems especially relevant for the novices. Even with the breathing techniques, you find relaxation and stress reduction on demand.

The importance of a teacher was noted as well because working “with a teacher can be a great support when you’re new to yoga, no matter what your fitness level. A teacher can also be a great resource to help explore other aspects of yoga beyond the poses.”

In terms of finding a classroom for you, Friend recommended looking into the classes available. I would add to it. You may want to look into the details of the exercise if you feel more conscientious.

However, if you want to take a partner and jump into the class, then you can print a list, pin the paper to the wall, and throw a dart from across the room. These can help out. When you feel comfortable in one relationship with a teacher, then you may want to think about maintaining a positive relationship with them.

Also, if you do not find a class worth your time at the moment, then you can skim through the menus online and take sample classes or introductory versions of the types of yoga classes out there.

Some classes may drain you. Others may empower you. You feel regenerated and energized after them. It depends on you. Your feelings and your understanding of your body. If you hurt, you can discontinue it.

Try something else.

If all else fails, you can throw on a track suit and head to the fields and do some good old sit on your butt, spread the legs, and reach fingertips to toe tip. At any rate, that would be a start.

For Men: The Benefits of Regular and Proper Bench Pressing

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 19, 2018

Why is bench pressing good for health if done right?

Healthy Living wrote on the health benefits of bench pressing. Think about the big guys and gals lifting the bar with so much weight that the metal bends from the sheer pull from gravity on the weights. It is impressive feats.

Humans evolved to have muscles for movement, defense and attack. Our ancestral environments permitted and necessitated more exercise in the outdoors. However, our lives were short and violent on average.

Now, less so, the modern world comes with the development of conveniences. The car, the train, the plane, fast food, video games, and the like, each helps and entertains us. In the process of helping and entertaining, these made us travel with our muscle less and sit and lie down more.

These modern comforts are good. However, they limit the range of the possible for us. These conveniences can make us less healthy over time. That means, we need to take it upon ourselves to become healthier through conscious activity, by conscientiously engaging in an activity.

The article stated, “While the exercise chiefly works to build upper-body strength, some of the benefits of bench pressing – which range from improved cardiovascular health to a reduced chance of developing common diseases – may come as a welcome surprise.”

The bench press is one such exercise with benefits to upper body strength and overall health. The main muscle exercised in this form of workout is the pectoralis major muscles of the chest. If this is done with some regularity, then the pectoralis major muscle set will grow.

They will become thicker, more toned, and robust in the definition. Bench presses can help with the deltoids and the triceps as well. They act as, apparently, synergists of the muscles that help some of the other muscles to be able to develop.

“Additionally, this exercise also works the biceps, which serve as dynamic stabilizers by countering the force of the press. Finally, the bench press engages the rhomboids, rotator cuff and serratus anterior as secondary muscles,” the article continued.

There appears to be benefit to the bone and joint health from these weight training exercises too. The weight training helps with the increase in muscle mass, a decrease in fat, the strengthening of the bones and the flexibility of the body to a degree.

It also helps with the bone density. It is important, especially for the people who are getting on in years then, too. Regular training can reduce osteoarthritis.

“The positive effects of bench presses don’t end with the muscles and bones. In addition to increasing overall endurance, resistance training exercises such as the bench press lead to a reduction of “bad” cholesterol and an increase in “good” cholesterol levels,” the article

explained, “according to the American Council on Exercise. Regular weight training helps the body process sugar, leading to a reduced risk of diabetes.”

This path of exercise should come with some cautions including overdoing it. Take into account age, current fitness, diet, time of the day, pre-existing conditions, and so on, bench pressing can help with health, but needs to be considered among other factors too.

The article concluded, “Practicing proper form – including keeping your feet firmly planted, maintaining a straight back and keeping your shoulders and glutes flat on the bench at all times – helps prevent these injuries. Seek the guidance of a certified trainer to learn proper form before incorporating the bench press into your regimen.”

Happy and Healthy in Nature

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 20, 2018

Why is nature good for mental and physical health, and general wellbeing?

The *Mayo Clinic* wrote a short article and produced a video emphasizing the benefits to health from living in the midst of nature. One study cited in the article indicates living by a “green space” can improve health span and life span. For example, for women, it can improve their mental health too.

Not associated with the research but Dr. Vandana Bhide, a Mayo Clinic internal medicine specialist, in terms of the research explained, “This was a large survey of nurses who were asked about where they live and how much green space nearby... Results suggest people who live in the greenest areas actually had a lower death rate.”

The argument by the research publication’s authors is that the men would have a similar reaction to the women. Jeff Olsen talks more in the video in the article here.

Sedentary Early Grave Guarantee

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 20, 2018

Why is too much stationary life bad for you?

According to the *Mayo Clinic*, the negative health conflicts in sitting can be profound.

A sedentary life is a guarantee of a premature death. If you are sitting most of the day, then your total energy burning will be less than it could be overall. In fact, you could develop a series of comorbid conditions including higher blood pressure, obesity risk, blood sugar, body fat on the wait, and highly abnormal cholesterol levels for the makeup of metabolic syndrome.

It can be a serious issue.

“Too much sitting overall and prolonged periods of sitting also seem to increase the risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer,” the *Mayo Clinic* stated, “Any extended sitting — such as at a desk, behind a wheel or in front of a screen — can be harmful. An analysis of 13 studies of sitting time and activity levels found that those who sat for more than eight hours a day with no physical activity had a risk of dying similar to the risks of dying posed by obesity and smoking.

So watch yourself, you never know when too much sedentary behaviour can increase the risk for a lower quality of life and healthspan.

With a study of over 1 million people, which is an enormous sample size, 60 to 75 minutes of moderate physical activity can counter the effects of sitting down too long in the say. For those most active, sitting did little for mortality difference for the most active people.

That means get active! Motion and aerobic exercise to have the body work properly is important for overall health. You can get up and watch around during work. You can have a weight set by work. You can take a walk into town for lunch. Lots of little things add up.

However, unlike some other studies, this analysis of data from more than 1 million people found that 60 to 75 minutes of moderately intense physical activity a day countered the effects of too much sitting. Another study found that sitting time contributed little to mortality for people who were most active.

The article concluded, “The impact of movement — even leisurely movement — can be profound. For starters, you’ll burn more calories. This might lead to weight loss and increased energy. Also, physical activity helps maintain muscle tone, your ability to move and your mental well-being, especially as you age.”

The Physical, Mental, and Social Health of Men

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 22, 2018

Why are all areas of male wellbeing important? Why is it important for them to take responsibility and community to positively encourage them?

Men's health is something of a personal responsibility to each and every man. It encompasses physical, mental, and social health, where mental includes emotional (no brain, no emotions).

At the same time, it is a place where we can help them.

It deals with their exercise routine for each day. It deals with their stress management strategies. It deals with their social life. More young men continue to fall in each of those categories of health with increases in obesity, depression and suicide, and lack of friends and social connectivity.

It is about self-management, self-care, and public presentation. How do I look to the outside world of my peers? It is also about the best men's by which to remain healthy in spite of difficult circumstances.

If a man remains unkempt, unwashed, uncouth, and unwarranted, that amounts to his own problems, but with spillover issues to others around him. Without dietary and exercise discipline, a man can grow around the waist and lose muscular definition.

Lacking proper mental self-care, men can wander into the yonder woods of mental life with isolation and subsequent depression and anxiety issues. With poor efforts in building on the ties and relationships with others, professionally and personally, men can lose friends, even family.

Nothing in life is free. Same for family member ties and friendships. The ties can fray and the ships can sink.

Think about social life: sometimes, it is not pleasant to be around a rude person. Other times, the person is not rude but acting in an inappropriate way for a particular venue, though some overlap with rudeness there. This amounts to a certain social health.

So, this becomes a question for the men. Do you want to be any of these types of guys? The one with weight and so health issues. No one should be shamed for their weight. However, we should not deny the effects of higher BMI on health.

Same with the diet. Diet is important. Imagine all the empty calories consumed in this culture leading to lower life spans and shorter health spans.

That is today, even if a man lives longer than the average, he will live even unpleasantly for those short number of years.

Also, men live shorter than women as men's poor health habits lead to shorter lifespans than women's, too.

Mental health is being talked about more and more. It is helping provide a sense of being part of a larger community of caring individuals. Men need more of that.

Males with masculine identities work best in male company and with male therapists for men's mental health problems.

But men need to get out into the world of these three areas, as at the end of the day these are their personal responsibilities.

If part of a faith community or if part of a secular church, then these amount to their own responsibilities.

On top of that personal responsibility, which many masculine males prefer and even need (need to feel needed), communities and families can work proactively with men and boys to work on these issues in their lives.

Most people notice issues with men. Once past the socially dysfunctional, personally abusive, and socially degenerative epithets thrown against men's characters, the veneer of mockery gives way to non-functional young men.

We need them. They need to know it. They have begun, sadly and unfortunately, to opt out in various domains after the slow deterioration in their motivation for integration into the society at large.

If we work to help them get some bearings on social life, in mental life, and in physical life areas, we can begin to reverse an unhealthy trend.

A trend, typically, indicative of an increase in crime associated most often with males, failure in school, unemployment, the burden on the social safety nets, and damage to families and with all the aforementioned damage to communities.

The Iranian Kurd Human Rights Case of Ramin Hossein Panahi

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 22, 2018

Why is Iranian Kurd Ramin Hossein Panahi sentenced to death?

United Nations (UN) human rights experts have been working to save the life of Ramin Hossein Panahi from execution.

They continue to call for the annulment of the death sentence for the Iranian Kurd. He is only 24-years-old. The news reports have been speaking to Panahi being killed after the end of the month of Ramadan.

The original execution date was set for May 3. However, the date was postponed. The Iranian Supreme Court rejected the calls for a judicial review in late May. Following this decision, the Iranian Supreme Court referred to the decision made by them to the office responsible for the completion of the penalty.

“The Iranian authorities must now halt the execution of Mr. Panahi and annul the death sentence against him,” the UN human rights experts stated. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, talked about the issues for Panahi.

One of the main ones being the mistreatment connected to no fair trial. It was stated that he was tortured.

“While acknowledging the postponement of the sentence in May, we regret that Iran seems intent on executing Mr. Panahi, disregarding previous calls to annul the death sentence, and ensure he is given a fair trial,” Callamard explained.

Protests took place in Erbil, Kurdistan region. The protestors spoke out against the torture and mistreatment of Panahi. The statement talked about the gathering together to call on the United Nations to put strong pressure to halt the verdict against Ramin Hossein Panahi.

The charge that will result in his death if not stopped. They view the execution as an unjust verdict.

It should be added. Panahi was denied access to a lawyer and medical care. He was held incommunicado. He was mistreated and tortured and not given a fair trial. The UN human rights experts share the same sentiments as the protestors.

They showed concern over the charge of Panahi. The ways in which they did not meet the international standards. That the death penalty should be limited to the cases of intentional killing. However, Panahi was arrested. Why?

He joined a Kurdish nationalist group called Komala. Then he was convicted of “taking up arms against the State.” The Revolutionary Court then sentenced him to death in January 2018.

Fish Oil as a Targeted, Partial Heart Health Support

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 23, 2018

Does cardiovascular health improve with some omega supplements?

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Many people throughout developed nations, especially North America, intake supplements. Supplements, drugs, and prescription medications get used a lot. Questions arise about the efficacy of supplements.

Do these help?

Can they be harmful?

What degrees of help? In what areas?

These important questions arise in the free choices of North Americans and others about the effectiveness of supplements. One prominent case emerges with fish oil or omega-3 fatty acid supplements. Our bodies need omega-3 fatty acid for muscle activity, cell growth, and other things. Without this crucial portion of a diet, we do less well.

The *Mayo Clinic* states, “Omega-3 fatty acids are derived from food. They can’t be manufactured in the body. Fish oil contains two omega-3s called docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Dietary sources of DHA and EPA are fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel and trout, and shellfish, such as mussels, oysters and crabs. Some nuts, seeds and vegetable oils contain another omega-3 called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA).”

The standard forms for the omega-3 supplements are capsule, liquid, and pill. For those with a risk of heart attacks and strokes, high triglycerides and blood pressure, they may want to take these based on some evidence to help reduce the risks to health.

Mayo Clinic explained, “Heart disease. Research shows that eating dietary sources of fish oil — such as tuna or salmon — twice a week is associated with a reduced risk of developing heart disease. Taking fish oil supplements for at least six months has been shown to reduce the risk of heart-related events (such as heart attack) and death in people who are at high risk of heart disease. Research also suggests that the risk of congestive heart failure is lower in older adults who have higher levels of EPA fatty acids.”

The article continued to talk about many studies speaking to the “modest reductions in blood pressure” for the individuals who take the fish oil supplement. Some greater effects for those suffering from moderate to severe hypertension compared to those with only mild hypertension.

“High triglycerides and cholesterol. There’s strong evidence that omega-3 fatty acids can significantly reduce blood triglyceride levels. There also appears to be a slight improvement in high-density lipoprotein (HDL, or “good”) cholesterol, although an increase in levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or “bad”) cholesterol also was observed,” the report explained.

It comes with some similar benefits for rheumatoid arthritis. The fish oil supplements help to reduce pain, relieve the stiff of the morning and may reduce the need for some anti-inflammatory medications. The Mayo Clinic gives the green light to the fish oil supplementation market,

apparently, with the benefit for those oils coming better from broiled or baked fish and not fried fish, but the supplementation is good as well.

The article concluded, “Fish oil supplements might be helpful if you have cardiovascular disease or an autoimmune disorder. Fish oil also appears to contain almost no mercury, which can be a cause for concern in certain types of fish. While generally safe, too much fish oil can increase your risk of bleeding and might suppress your immune response. Take fish oil supplements under a doctor’s supervision.”

For more information on safety and side effects, please see the article link for further information.

A Plan to Quit Smoking

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 23, 2018

How do you stop inhaling noxious fumes out of fixed habit and addiction?

According to common sense and the *Mayo Clinic*, tobacco is a killer drug comprised of poisonous chemicals. The people who smoke set themselves on the line for a shorter life.

The article stated, “People who smoke or use other forms of tobacco are more likely to develop disease and die earlier than are people who don’t use tobacco.” Lovely.

How can we begin to work as a society to reduce our smoking levels and eventually quit? It takes time. People have legitimate worries about health. They feel concern about the consequences to long-term health.

These are valid issues and concerns for health. As far as I can tell, smoking wears down the lungs and then constricts the circulatory system.

As noted in the article, “If you smoke, you may worry about what it’s doing to your health. You probably worry, too, about how hard it might be to stop smoking. Nicotine is highly addictive, and to quit smoking — especially without help — can be difficult. In fact, most people don’t succeed the first time they try to quit. It may take more than one try, but you can stop smoking.”

Every journey of quitting an addiction begins with a first step. It is like the old Dick Gregory bit, “Confucious say...” But less vulgar, the point is the importance of working on one stage at a time.

Most alcoholics and addicts quit one step at a time. They get a community. They get supports in other words. Those can help them develop in their capacities. One of the first steps is setting a quit date. So, let’s make a pact together, even though I do not smoke: take a piece of paper or your Google Calendar and add one day, one week, and one month, and one year if needed, then let’s call that the quit date.

There are resources to help you, too. The *Mayo Clinic* continued to talk about the residential treatment centers, the tobacco treatment specialists, and friends and family who want you to look and feel better.

It takes will and time, and a plan. Maybe, this can be a special first step. Plus... you promised!

On the Moral Education of Males: Men Should Attend to Women's Rights as Human Rights

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 24, 2018

Why should males pay attention to the importance of pushbacks, retractions, and denials in women's rights around the world in 2018 and into the future?

Women's rights are partially overlapping but sufficiently distinct from human rights. The rights stated in the *UN Declaration of Human Rights* and in other documents.

Women's rights encapsulate reproductive health rights as well. Some forms of reproductive health rights not for biological males. On occasion, the world undergoes reversals in the considerations of women as equal.

Men should care about women's rights. Why? Men, as with women, are our fellow human beings, haven't you noticed. The denial of rights for one sex implies the denial for the other, eventually. As with the use of war machines against enemy states, those methodologies of war come to the home turf in surveillance apparatuses and force against the home civilian population. Protection of rights implies self and collective interest.

According to *UN News*, there exist "alarming pushbacks" based on the description of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice. The working group stated the forces working against women's rights include an "alliance of conservative political ideologies and religious fundamentalisms."

This was noted in a report sent to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

The working group stated, "Practices such as polygamy, child marriage, female genital mutilation, so-called honor killings, and criminalizing women for sexual and reproductive behavior, have no place in any society...there is no acceptable justification for waiting for the elimination of discrimination against women."

The reasons come from the rise in authoritarianism, economic crises, and the increase in inequality in societies becoming unhealthily stratified. There are positive changes including the Irish referendum for the repealing of the almost total ban on safe and equitable access to abortion.

In those prior circumstances, women go underground to acquire abortions. Thousands die and thousands more are injured for life as a result of the illegality and unsafe provisions of abortions. If abortion is safe and equitable in terms of access, which is a fundamental human right as noted by Human Rights Watch, then abortion rates go down, fewer women and infants die, and women and families, and babies are happier and healthier.

Therefore, as per the empirical support for the pro-choice argument, the true pro-life – and pro-family for that matter – individuals who want to lower the numbers of abortions – on only that singular focus and narrow ethical conceptualization of an important issue to innumerable people

around the world – would support the legalization of safe abortions with equitable access to them too.

The working group continued, “Through popular vote as well as legislative and judicial actions, efforts are being made, in particular, to secure reproductive rights, which is encouraging in a global context of retrogressions in this area.”

Other countries work to close the gender gap and to strengthen the criminalization of sexual violence, misconduct, and rape. These are wins, not to be ignored or diminished in the long fight for equality.

However, the march of social and political conservatism connected to religious fundamentalisms amount to the main methodologies or grounds for techniques of social control against host populations. These then clamp down on women’s progress through denial of women’s rights.

The UN report talks about the culture, family, reproductive health, and sexual health as the biggest battlegrounds, where the lines are continually being redrawn internationally in the struggle for equality.

“For 70 years, women’s equality has been enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; nearly 40 years ago the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted,” *UN News* explained, “... 25 years ago, on Monday, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action established that women’s rights are an indivisible part of human rights.”

The discrimination against women has not been eliminated in any country in the world, according to the experts’ report. This leaves room for vast improvement in the quality of life conditions for women in the world.

The further stated, “This should not be tolerated or normalized. There is an urgent need to protect past gains, and move forward to secure equality for women everywhere.”

As stated by John Stuart Mill, not exactly a fool, – and Harriet Taylor Mill, who he claimed was smarter than himself – in *The Subjection of Women*, on “The moral education of men,” stated:

My first answer is: the advantage of having the most universal and pervading of all human relations regulated by justice instead of injustice. That bare statement will tell anyone who attaches a moral meaning to words what a vast gain this would be for the human condition; it’s hardly possible to make it any stronger by any explanation or illustration. All of mankind’s selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, are rooted in and nourished by the present constitution of the relation between men and women.

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