

Preface of the book “Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and the Threat to Academic Freedom”¹

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The last 30 years have witnessed radical changes in academia. The politics and ideology of diversity, inclusion and equity (DIE) have gradually come to influence or even dominate what can be talked about, researched and taught at institutions of higher education. The size of the problem has manifested itself recently in the formation of large networks of scientists committed to upholding the principles of free speech and independent research: the *Academic Freedom Alliance* (AFA, USA), *Academics for Academic Freedom* (AFAF, UK), *Academic Rights Watch* (ARW, Sweden) and *Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit* (Germany)—to name just a few.

There can be no doubt that discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion or political beliefs should not be tolerated. This is true, in particular, for academic research and education where individuals applying for an educational programme or an academic position should be assessed purely on the basis of their academic merits and achievements. One would therefore expect policies emphasizing DIE not only to embrace scientific standards in academia, but to promote adherence to them. Surprisingly, however, this is far from always the case. In recent years, such policies have increasingly led to quite the opposite result, namely a situation in which, for

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example, allegiance to a “group identity” is increasingly considered relevant when evaluating an individual’s suitability for academic study or research—quite in contrast to the famous dictum of civil rights leader Martin Luther King that we all deserve to be judged not by skin colour, but by content of character.

This unfortunate development, which contradicts the very spirit of research and higher education, has been accompanied by an unprecedented attack on freedom of speech—another cornerstone of professional scholarly activity without which universities as we know them will slowly but surely suffocate. Whereas the principles of DIE suggest *prima facie* fundamental tolerance towards all viewpoints, DIE has increasingly placed science in general under suspicion of being an instrument of the allegedly ubiquitous power struggle between the (multiple) sexes and various races. The criteria by which the allegedly prevailing discrimination by gender or race is deemed tangible (or even systemic) are often founded more on subjective sensibilities than on any sound, empirically evidence-based arguments. Inevitably, any proponent of DIE politics must at least in part resort to biased research or censorship as their arguments are, through their renouncement of empiricism, in consequence less and less accessible to rational thought.

The DIE principles have now been incorporated in universities’ policies and fundamental values all over the world, practically forcing researchers and teachers to avoid subjects and suppress results that could be seen to violate these policies. Any criticism risks being seen as compelling evidence of non-compliance with those very policies. The effect is a culture of silence in which academics are increasingly reluctant to speak out against DIE policies for fear of possible consequences.

To accomplish their educational missions, universities and research institutes need to be politically neutral and adhere strictly to established scientific standards. The current undermining of these fundamental precepts is not a problem that will eventually fix itself. Rather, we strongly believe that coordinated action is now urgently needed to counter the excesses of identity politics in academia and that such action needs to involve people across the political spectrum.

Many have spoken out recently about these problems. Our purpose here is to pull together some of the most remarkable cases in a single book, with original or republished materials, so that the reader can see we are dealing with a ubiquitous trend and not just isolated complaints. The essays contained here show personal experiences

and observations, illustrating the abuse of power, censorship and witch-hunts at many universities and research centres around the world.

This book contains 26 chapters by 25 co-authors and one research team from 11 different countries. The great majority of the authors describe their personal experiences working in academia, while a few others touch on the sociological problems of science and academia in general. The contributions are written in a journalistic style accessible to a wide public, rather than as technical papers for specialists. They are not *scientific* demonstrations of a given hypothesis, since ideologies or their refutations cannot be *demonstrated*; they present, rather, a panorama of the absurdities and human suffering to which these developments in our western society have given rise.

This book is divided into five thematic blocks or sections, although this division is not strict and many of the chapters also touch on topics handled in other blocks. In order to help the reader with the classification of the different chapters, we have labelled each of them with a list of topics covered. Please note that our mission as editors was to collect articles related to the topic and that we do not endorse all of the points of view reflected in the various chapters. The authors were, of course, totally free to express their opinions and we have avoided any interference in their messages.

The first section discusses “feminism and gender mainstreaming”. Salzman tells us that feminists are allowed to negate academic freedom, to deny publication of scientific evidence and to bully scientists and suppress scientific conclusions that they do not like. Arpi depicts how Swedish universities are willingly turning themselves into a commissariat for a one-sided and simplistic vision of social justice rather than adhering to the search for truth. In his review on music academia and orchestras, Malmgren thinks that lobbying groups and activists try to achieve gender equity utopia by replacing historical discrimination in one direction with contemporary discrimination in the other. Goldstuck and Polychronakos illustrate in separate chapters their years of experience as researchers and professors in health areas. Goldstuck remarks that wokism, especially feminism and transsexual identity but also race identity, are gaslighting western societies and pushing against reason and logic. Polychronakos is amazed that genital organs not clearly identifiable as male or female cannot be called “disorders” anymore, but “differentiation”. He also points out, for example, that raising a child as a boy or as a girl is considered to represent “outdated and stereotyped conceptions of gender and childrearing”. Our editor, Todd, describes how transgender activists have turned on “gender-critical” feminists, chasing them out of office because

they adhere to the principal of dimorphous/binary sex. We could ignore or criticize these ideas, but the problem, Yafaev notes, is that the freedom to ignore or criticize them is highly restricted. Woke has progressively and insidiously taken hold in academia over the last decade and has now become a dominant doctrine; it genuinely holds sway in academia and is accepted as an article of faith, says Yafaev in his chapter about *#metametoo*, who compares the situation with the old regime in his country when it was part of the USSR. Only a few countries in western civilization have been spared this ideologization of academia: Hungary, for instance, took the drastic decision to remove gender studies from a list of approved masters programmes, arguing that it serves no purpose and is based in ideology rather than science. In a thought-provoking contribution, Fiamengo considers the case for other western countries to follow suit.

A second section is dedicated to the topics of race and ethnicity, another issue on which many intellectuals have feared to speak in the face of politically correct prejudice. But there are authors who say enough is enough in the conformity to a lie, such as Mac Donald, who describes a pessimistic panorama in which universities admit, hire and promote as many black students as it possibly can without regard to their merits or qualification, an effect of the fierce bidding war among colleges for underrepresented minorities. As Krauss observes, not only are people without merits hired simply because they belong to a minority group, but there are highly productive scientists whose grants have been rejected not on the basis of science, but because their diversity proposals were insufficiently detailed. Researchers are also removed from their positions when they decide to study issues that include how human genetics might be linked to cognitive ability. Nonetheless, not every place on our planet is dominated by these ideological movements. Forest and Agoh point out some interesting notes of optimism in Japanese society, where wokism, radical feminism and critical race theory do not have much future, possibly due to the very different philosophical and religious background of that society.

The third section describes the DIE programmes in the academic world and the distortions of reality that they inspire. LaBelle reminds us that the DIE ideology does not see people as individuals, but as members of groups compartmentalized according to immutable traits. In the process, they support and implement measures that are themselves the epitome of discrimination. DIE programmes actually promote divisiveness, exclusion and inequity based on immutable traits. Furthermore, Fiamengo in her second contribution discovers in analysing some documents at universities like

Berkeley that there is an intent to purge non-left-wing individuals, including women and people of colour, from college campuses. Another example of exclusion in the name of inclusivity comes from one of the editors, López-Corredoira, who explains that the IAU (*International Astronomical Union*; the most important association of astronomers worldwide) has imposed a woke ideology, leaving no leeway for astronomers who do not accept it. All of these political actions lead, writes Saltzman, to the death of meritocracy and to admittance of underperforming, weak students to universities, who are funded, because their sexuality, or race, or gender, is statistically “underrepresented” in relation to their presence in the general population. Is this good for science and academia?

A common response by proponents of DIE to any questioning of their arguments is deplatforming, censorship or even workplace intimidation. This is illustrated in Part IV of our book: Strumia’s talk at CERN (*Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire*) in 2018 that led to his suspension from research work there (narrated by himself); the rescindment of a visiting fellowship initially offered to Peterson at Cambridge University (UK), in solidarity with the DIE activists (narrated by himself); deplatforming of a speaker, Flemming Rose, invited to give the 2016 academic freedom lecture in South Africa (in the chapter by Benatar); a talk by Abbot cancelled by MIT following social media pressure, which makes him think that woke ideology is essentially totalitarian in nature: it attempts to corral the entirety of human existence into one narrow ideological viewpoint and to silence anyone who disagrees; attempts to censor a conference organized in Germany on family and domestic violence showing how domestic violence is a symmetrical phenomenon, perpetrated equally by both sexes (described in the chapter by the initiator of the event, Amendt, and the organizer, one of the editors, Todd); Boghossian resigned his position at Portland State—as he describes in his autobiographical chapter—after continuous sabotage to his freethinking intellectual activity by the social justice faction at his university. Nonetheless, in the last chapter of this block, Domingos gives cause for some optimism by showing that most cancellation attempts end in failure. The real Achilles’ heel of the cancel crowd is its short attention span. Once they have bullied someone into submission, they move on to the next victim.

A final block of chapters discusses more general aspects of the suppression of academic freedom. The Civitas Research Team makes a highly useful analysis of UK universities, showing that most of them experienced some kind of repression of academic freedom in

connection with DIE issues—Cambridge, Oxford, London and Imperial College of London being among the most restrictive. We are in grave danger when those who wield political power impose upon society beliefs and rules of conduct grounded in the former, according to González Quirós and Díaz Pardo de Vera. Gibert Galassi tries to understand the reasons why victimhood culture has been installed in academia, and the confusion of democracy with mediocracy. He writes about academia in Chile, but his thoughts might be well considered globally relevant. Finally, Erik Olsson (also editor) explains his view on of the present decrease of academic freedom in a culture dominated by feminine, soft values. Olsson’s paper was presented as an invited lecture at a renowned research institute. Ironically, only two hours after being published, Olsson recalls in a postscript, the video recording was taken off *Youtube* for violating the institute’s equity policies, in direct confirmation of his main thesis.

We know there are many more people who have expressed similar ideas, and many others who would like to voice their opinion but for the greater part do not dare to do so, for fear of possible recrimination or jeopardizing their careers. We hope these chapters help all of us to realize that we are not alone in our observations, and to encourage other lecturers and researchers to express their reservations about the machinations of DIE lobbyists within academia. Fear of retaliation is not an option in a world in which silence lends consent to the monster’s growth, promoting the potential for totalitarian state systems comparable to Orwellian dystopias. We believe there is a clear and present threat to academic freedom and that we should use the legal instruments still available to us to protect it, or live to regret it and be silenced.

In the end, we will not solve the problem only by documenting the state of affairs, but doing so will serve: 1) to manifest that in our academia there are also people, apart from social justice warriors, who observe and think and will not be coerced by them; 2) to create awareness of and resistance to ill-conceived DIE policies based on radical versions of identity politics which have little, if anything, to do with academic values and scholarly integrity. We believe that university and research institutes must be politically neutral and should adhere strictly to established scientific methods.

We would like to emphasize that our intention is not to promote one ideological stream of thought over another. Although woke ideologies originate primarily in left-wing politics, we are not making a stand for any position on the political spectrum. In fact, we would argue that we need to remedy the politicization of academia and encourage the supremacy of an enlightened, evidence-based and rational discourse that is not afraid to

discuss any dimension of thought. A political agenda that prevents this will eventually have the opposite effect it intends; the key to anti-discriminatory society is an open discussion of all the factors that may *or may not* contribute to discrimination. To silence any such debate is to eliminate the path to insight into factors benefiting or detracting from social justice.

As the acronym indicates, the present-day version of “DIE” ideology will not be eternal. We hope that this book will be a useful contribution, together with other similar works, that may inspire a new epoch of changes within the academic world.