

Book Reviews

From Transgender to Transhuman: A Manifesto on the Freedom of Form, by Martine Rothblatt, softcover, 56 pp, \$7.93, ISBN-13:978-0615489421, Martine Rothblatt, 2011.

Martine's given name is Martin. After fathering four children, he decided to become "a kind of transgendered woman. Why? Because there was a lot more to my soul than the masculine person I had become. There was a woman who needed to be expressed," he explains. Martin's children still call him "Dad."

The planet's latest billionaire, according to *Forbes* magazine,¹ has a very impressive series of accomplishments. He is a helicopter pilot, the cofounder of Sirius Satellite Radio, and founder and CEO of United Therapeutics. He launched the biotech firm in order to find a way to save his daughter, who has pulmonary artery hypertension. The company has \$2.1 billion dollars in sales, largely from selling five FDA-approved drugs to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension. Its subsidiary Revivocor produces genetically modified pigs, which are intended to provide xenotransplantation of kidneys, hearts, and livers. Rothblatt is one of a handful of billionaires funding the LGBT movement.²

Rothblatt's previous book *Apartheid of Sex* (1995) has been called the foundational text of the emerging gender-rights movement. This book is an updated second edition. A reviewer on Amazon called it "one of the most important books in the past century, leading to the reformation of human society.... Every person on earth should read and contemplate the message of this volume. Here you will find, elaborated on complete social, legal, engineering detail, how a new, ethical, society of true equality can be built on the bones of our presently decayed one." This self-published book is available free online.³

Although he is identified as "a founding father of the transgender empire" and he has been central to creating the "gender identity" bills currently being passed around the world from the 1990s onward, Rothblatt's ideas of desexing the body are in a sense the opposite of those pushed by today's transgender activists.⁴ He says nothing about puberty blockers or "gender-affirming" procedures.

The premises of the book include that the earth is overpopulated, and that science has replaced religion as the source of truth.

Rothblatt asserts that "sex began acciden-

tally." He points out that many species of animals are hermaphroditic and can produce either male or female gametes depending upon the environmental circumstances. He states that sexual differences are no more important than racial differences and exist on a continuum. Instead of a binary male and female, he suggests a spectrum of colors, ranking persons on three important traits: aggressiveness, passiveness (or nurturing), and eroticism.

Transgenderism is nothing new, he claims. He asserts that "Joan of Arc, who favored male apparel, was given the choice to cease wearing men's clothes or be burned at the stake. She chose to die on her feet, transgendered to the end." Rothblatt's scholarship on history⁵ is apparently as dubious as on science. Centuries later, some speculate that Joan may have had a disorder of sexual development (DSD) because she reputedly did not menstruate. But to all appearances, examinations, and perceptions, including her own, she was "the Maid."

Transgender ideologues seize upon the spectrum of rare DSDs to try to support their claims. But DSDs do not show the existence of "more than two sexes" and do not indicate that sex can be changed at will. They merely show that binary sex can be affected by a wide range of pathologies.

As to St. Joan, Mark Twain wrote, after extensive study, that "she is easily and by far the most extraordinary person the human race has ever produced."⁵ Rothblatt reduces her to less than one dimension, a single point, and a false one at that.

Rothblatt states that women can do all the jobs that men can do, even in combat. He overlooks details like the size of their feet, which must support all the weight of the soldiers' gear over a much smaller surface area. He suggests that the only reason for sex segregation in the Olympics is to spare men the humiliation of being defeated by women! This seems particularly ironic in view of the current controversy over an intersex boxer in the 2024 Olympics. Rothblatt suggests simply differentiating the categories in the Olympics by weight, with many more divisions than currently exist—neglecting the numerous other differences between men and women such as fat composition, lung capacity, bone density, tendon resistance, cardiac output, punch power (162% advantage to males!), and muscle mass.

Rothblatt states that even the nurturance of a child is not an absolute biological imperative of "any one subclass of humans." He

notes that abdominal pregnancies have been successful. Citing Dr. John Money, he writes that zygotes have "implanted themselves in the small intestine [*sic*] and grew [*sic*] their own placenta—with the implication that a man could have carried the embryo as well."

Denying the importance of biology, he states that "sexual apartheid" may have begun in ancient civilizations to enable men to oppress women. "Genderized language," he writes, "was probably taught as a way of reinforcing class distinctions." He suggests some pronoun neologisms, and the possibility that sexually dimorphic words will have an inclusive meaning in the future. One might say, "Mike was lonely, so she went to her friend's house." The ambiguity "makes talking more interesting." Sex-specific nouns will be replaced by "gender-liberated" ones. A husband and a wife will both be a "spice."

Beyond gender freedom comes freedom of form for transhumans as they hybridize themselves with computational technology "as part of humanity's effort to control its evolutionary destiny." We will need to avoid an apartheid of form as pernicious as the racial and sexual cognates. "We must adopt a mindset of receptiveness to diversity and of openness to unifying ourselves across the substrates": people who have substituted implantable computer circuitry for a large percentage of their minds, or who have downloaded all their minds into such circuitry, or who are born as computer-consciousness, pure code. We must respect the personhood of any entity that "thinks consciously, therefore I am conscious." Just as we must respect the sexual identify of any being that "feels his gender, therefore I am this gender."

Rothblatt suggests the possibility of immortality in the sense that anyone who is alive during the epoch of humanity's full-fledged merging with computation will always be alive, if they wish, via computer substrate, he writes.

Since the book was written in 2011, vast advances have occurred in computer capabilities, and science fiction is becoming reality. This book goes far beyond *Brave New World*—and it is not intended to be fiction.

Rothblatt envisions a total radical transformation of the world. Man still wants to become as God.

Jane M. Orient, M.D.
Tucson, Ariz.

REFERENCES

1. Chang RJ. Meet the new biotech billionaire putting pig hearts in humans. *Forbes*, Jul 24, 2024. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardjchang/2024/07/18/meet-the-new-biotech-martine-rothblatt-billionaire-putting-pig-hearts-in-humans/>. Accessed Aug 12, 2024.
2. Van Maren J. How a handful of billionaires created the transgender “movement.” Jennifer’s Newsletter; Mar 18, 2024. Available at: <https://jbilek.substack.com/p/how-a-handful-of-billionaires-created>. Accessed Aug 23, 2024.
3. Rothblatt M. *From Transgender to Transhuman*; 2011. Available at: https://transreads.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-12-23_61c4e86ac7091_FromTransgendertoTranshuman_AManifestoontheFreedomofFormPDFDrive.pdf. Accessed Aug 14, 2024.
4. Cleckley D. Techno-idolatry in transhumanism. *Ovarit Beta*; May 2, 2022. Available at: <https://ovarit.com/o/GenderCritical/85716/techno-idolatry-in-transhumanism-by-donovan-cleckley-for-the-11th-hour-blog>. Accessed Aug 14, 2024.
5. Phillips J, Fallon B, Majeed S, et al. Undiagnosing St. Joan: She does not need a medical or psychiatric diagnosis. *J Nerv Ment Dis* 2023;211(8):559-565. doi: 10.1097/NMD.0000000000001654.

The Canceling of the American Mind: Cancel Culture Undermines Trust and Threatens Us All—But There Is a Solution, by Greg Lukianoff and Rikki Schlott, hardback, 464 pages, \$23.29, ISBN-13: 978-1668019146, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2023.

Although *The Canceling of the American Mind* appears to have been written in a hurry and could have benefited from some editing and wordsmithing, it is worth reading for its many examples of how colleges and other institutions have been captured by people who are not only illiberal but completely irrational.

Warning: It is difficult to endure reading example after example of America’s version of China’s Cultural Revolution without becoming infuriated and pessimistic.

Anyone who claims that the danger of wokeness and cancel culture is right-wing hyperbole will be disabused of the notion after reading the book, assuming that the person’s mind has not been sealed shut from spending too much time on shallow news media or even shallower social media—or from getting a degree from a college of illiberal learning.

The authors are not right-wingers, or conservatives, or Trumpers, or white supremacists, or racists, or fascists, or election deniers, or climate deniers, or vaccine deniers, or deplorables, or jingoists, or any of the other pejoratives used by the cultural revolutionaries to silence opposing views—the same revolutionaries who claim to deplore racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender stereotypes.

Greg Lukianoff is a self-identified classical liberal and the president of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a non-partisan organization devoted to free speech that, among other endeavors, rates colleges on their commitment to free expression and

their aversion to ideological orthodoxy. Coauthor Rikki Schlott, a member of Generation Z and a research fellow at FIRE, is a classical liberal with libertarian leanings.

Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt authored the 2018 book *The Coddling of the American Mind*, which was based on their 2015 article by the same title in the *Atlantic*.

In the interest of fairness, Lukianoff and Schlott lambaste illiberal conservatives who try to ban speech they disagree with or try to cancel speakers. For sure, Trumpers will not like what they say about the former president. But most of the book focuses on the illiberalism on the left, because that is where the most egregious violations of free speech can be found, especially on college campuses, where Democrat faculty far outnumber Republican faculty.

The book cites studies that give the ratios of Democrat to Republican professors in academe. The overall ratio is eight to one, but in most disciplines, it is much more unbalanced. For instance, no Republicans could be found in anthropology. Engineering and chemistry are the only disciplines in which Republicans outnumber Democrats.

At the same time, one in four professors identifies as socialist. It is doubtful, however, that they will be giving up their tenure, short hours, and cozy working conditions to show solidarity with the proletariat.

The book abounds with examples of how unhinged mobs have stopped speech that was counter to their world view, kept those with different views from speaking, viciously attacked ideological heretics with verbal abuse and threats of physical violence, and destroyed the heretics’ careers in the process.

The revolutionaries see themselves as morally superior, and come across as thin-skinned, self-absorbed, and self-righteous. They have a childish take on complex issues, have temper tantrums like spoiled children, and claim that their safety and very identity are threatened by views that differ from their ideological uniformity. Having made it to Volume II of a twelve-volume set of knowledge and wisdom, they believe that they are fully educated, have nothing new to learn, and are far smarter than those who have only made it to Volume I.

Even students at prestigious and obscenely expensive colleges parrot in unison all the vogueish clichés, banalities, and sophistries about undefined minorities continuing to suffer from White privilege, patriarchy, racism, oppression, and colonization. They ignorantly believe that Whites are homogeneous, come in one skin shade, do not have wide variations in ethnicity and socioeconomic status, and have not suffered from injustices.

Projecting their own sheltered childhood experiences onto all Whites, the wealthiest and most privileged among the revolutionaries are the most neurotic about White guilt and the

most eager to embrace discriminatory and exclusive forms of “diversity” and “inclusion.”

It is impossible to have rational conversations and constructive debates with the revolutionaries, as illustrated by an example from the book, an incident that happened in 2015 at Yale.

The trigger was Hallowe’en costumes. The uproar began when university administrators issued guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate costumes. Erika Christakis, the associate master of Yale’s Stillman College, took exception to the guidelines in a community-wide email, saying that while she deplored insensitive costumes, she did not think that a bureaucratic, paternalistic decree was the proper way to handle the matter. Her preference was to trust that students were mature enough to self-police and to address any insensitive fellow students and handle any conflicts in a way that would be a learning experience for everyone.

She had overestimated the maturity of Yale students. They became outraged over her email. She was excoriated in a letter signed by 700 students, faculty, and alumni. The letter said: “To ask marginalized students to throw away their enjoyment of a holiday, in order to expend emotional, mental, and physical energy to explain why something is offensive, is—offensive.” The letter concluded with the bizarre statement that the signers simply wanted their “existences not to be invalidated on campus.”

Marginalized students? Yale is one of the world’s most expensive, selective, and prestigious universities, a university where graduates go on to become captains of industry, investment bankers, senators, presidents, Supreme Court justices, and so on.

Invalidated existences? If an email disagreeing with a policy on Hallowe’en costumes can invalidate a student’s existence, the individual needs counseling or needs to go to parts of the world where people worry about having enough to eat to continue their existence, or worry about their existence being ended by extremists killing them in their sleep.

The persecution of Erika Christakis continued after the letter. Students engaged in a three-hour confrontation with a Yale College dean while making outrageous demands. Some students demanded that they be warned before Christakis entered the dining hall. Others demanded the firing of not only Erika but her husband, Nicholas Christakis, who was also a Yale professor.

An angry mob of about 100 students surrounded Nicholas in a courtyard, demanding his apology and cursing him. Graduating students later refused to accept their diplomas from him. Erika eventually left Yale, and Nicholas resigned from Stillman College but stayed at Yale as a professor.

In 2022, FIRE ranked Yale near the bottom in free speech, a lowly 198th out of 203 colleg-

es. Yet the university has more applicants than ever, and parents are more desperate than ever to do whatever it takes to get their children into Yale and other Ivy League schools, as was seen in the recent tuition bribery case. Once admitted, students run little risk of not getting good grades and not graduating. And after graduation, they are almost certain to have a life of privilege, power, and wealth.

This Halloween incident is just one of many examples in the book of the tactics of the cultural revolutionaries, not only the revolutionaries in academia but also the ones in media and industry.

The authors advise on how to fight the cancel culture constructively and how to deal with ad hominem attacks without resorting to the same tactics in self-defense. I agree with the advice and have followed a similar strategy for years. But I am not optimistic that it will change anything, given that two generations of Americans have been steeped in the precepts of the cultural revolution, and that the thinking permeates just about every American institution.

The revolution will have to run its course until the revolutionaries get devoured by the political monster they have created.

Look on the bright side: It took only 10 years for China's Cultural Revolution to end. On the other hand, it took 70 years for the Soviet Union to collapse and end the Bolshevik Revolution.

Craig Cantoni
Tucson, Ariz.

The Medical Matrix: One Physician's Story Maneuvering the Minefields of Medicine, by Aysun Alagoz, softcover, 216 pp, ISBN-13; 979-8869279330, Tribune Publishers, 2024.

Dr. A, as she was addressed by her patients and friends in her obstetrics gynecology practice in a small city close to San Antonio, is Turkish-born and raised. Her vividly described life story is remarkable and somewhat chaotic before her entry into medical education and training.

The book was prompted by the catastrophe she experienced as a target of predatory and abusive peer review after years of successful obstetrics and gynecology practice. She describes in detail the episode and the subsequent long tortuous effort she was forced to take on to find a way to practice medicine, even if not able to practice her surgical, hospital-dependent specialty.

Dr. A also tells the tale of two obstetric malpractice cases that clearly have left indelible marks. Physician readers who have been malpractice defendants will be reminded of their own unhappy memories of the experience. Her way of revealing herself and her reactions to events is attractive and remarkable. The book is a rollicking, intense story.

One effort to escape from the consequences of the termination of her hospital-based practice by the peer-review action was to practice ob-gyn in equatorial Africa. But because she wanted to return to America, she sought out and found a position in the office practice of general medicine. She is now self-declared to have found satisfaction and happiness. She overcame because she persevered.

The author makes some good observations about how to overcome difficulties and disappointments. She was determined to make the best of her opportunities. Looking back, she posits that faced with peer-review difficulties, you must be careful about the choices you make.

This Journal regularly addresses the problems of abusive peer review and the risks it creates for physicians in the context of hospital practice and licensure. Here is a first-hand account by a physician for whom things went badly, but who survived and is now practicing medicine.

John Dale Dunn, M.D., J.D.
Brownwood, Texas

The Brain Death Fallacy, by Heidi Klessig, M.D., 178 pp, paperback, \$15.99, ISBN-9798863485003, Yulee, Florida, Good Samaritan Books, 2023.

There was a time when the definition of death did not require consensus among theologians, philosophers, physicians, ethicists, and attorneys. Lack of sentience, pulse, respiration, and warmth, coupled with muscle rigidity and putrefaction, made it clear that the person was no longer alive. Complications arose with technological advances including mechanical ventilation, the introduction of intensive care units, and especially with the medical breakthrough of organ transplantation.

Dr. Klessig is a retired anesthesiologist who came to master the intricacies of this development. During her first year of residency training, she was assigned the task of bringing an organ donor patient from the ICU to the operating room, and keeping that patient anesthetized during the procedure. Her findings on examination of the donor patient were no different than those of other critically ill patients she would see in the ICU who were on their way to the OR for surgery. Likewise, the donor's response to surgery and need for anesthesia did not differ from other patients. She takes us through the history of the concept of brain death and its role in attempting to establish a bright line between life and death, which is essential for physicians and family members who want to feel confident that they are not causing death when life support is discontinued, and organs are harvested.

The first successful kidney transplant was performed in 1954, and the first heart trans-

plant took place in 1967. In 1968 a committee was convened at Harvard Medical School, which established that patients in a state of irreversible coma were brain dead, and that brain death was equivalent to death. Organs were kept viable and were a "gift of life." In 1981 a model law called the Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA) was formulated with input from the American Medical Association (AMA), and some form of it was subsequently adopted in all 50 states. Subsequently the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published guidelines for the bedside diagnosis of brain death. The author makes clear that these guidelines do not meet the requirements of the UDDA-based laws. In response to a lawsuit based on this disparity, one state legislature rewrote its law to match the AAN guidelines and stipulated that the law would adapt to any future changes in those guidelines.

Klessig opens the concept of brain death up for debate. It is important to note that she has also co-authored a book entitled *Harvesting Organs and Cherishing Life*. She is not against organ transplantation. She is averse to an oversimplification of the definition of death that facilitates organ donation from patients who may still be alive. She takes us through each of the important variables and presumptions, presenting research, autopsy findings, and clinical findings to demonstrate whether UDDA and guidelines can actually be followed with confidence.

Prior to the introduction of brain death, it was the function of the cardiovascular system that defined life. This change was made by fiat and intuitively accepted. Patients were expected to have "respirator brain," but autopsy findings showed that only 40 percent had these changes. Even EEG findings and lack of brainstem function are fallible measures. The apnea test, which is required to make the diagnosis of brain death, may in fact damage the brain.

Third-party intrusion has become a factor as well. Hospitals are incentivized to use ICU beds for patients other than those who are comatose, and physicians are placed in a position of taking care of the comatose patient vs. the patient on the transplant waiting list who is awaiting an organ.

This book is a compelling read. The author is completely familiar with texts, academic journals, findings of councils and committees, as well as legal proceedings on the topic of brain death, and she has written and presented widely on the topic. Her goal in writing this book was to synthesize and summarize this knowledge in a way that would be useful for the general public. She has accomplished this and then some, moving from the bedside to the halls of academia, legislatures and courtrooms. I recommend *The Brain Death Fallacy* to you and your patients.

Janis Chester, M.D.
Dover, Del.