

Ask A Genius 97 – Life and Death (12)¹
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Scott: As a systems and institutional analysis, and in my experience in the academic system, and I know it pretty well, if you look at the way that the professorial system is set up and some research by Jonathan Haidt and others, the ratio of liberal-to-conservative thinkers in the departments are 12-to-1 to 18-to-1 (Richardson, 2016; Thorne, 2011; Gross, 2016; Letzter, 2016, Abrams, 2016; Kristof, 2016, Konnikova, 2014; Kay, 2016; Leo, 2016; Smith, 2012; Bunch 2016; Honeycutt, 2016; Chen, 2015; Haidt, 2014; MacDonald, 2015; Smith, 2016; Bouck, 2015). It's cozy with lifetime jobs for the most part (National Education Association, 2015; Enders, 2015; Ginsberg, 2012). You have tenure (Yamada, 2011).² You are around people that believe the same things as you. So in two ways, it's very good. One, you are around people who believe the same things as you. So it becomes akin to seminary, where there might be the occasional Baptist where the rest of the attendees are some form of Catholic or Protestant, or some major branch of Christianity (The Association of Theological Schools, 2017). The second one is if students are going to be coming to you to do an honors project for undergraduate, or bachelor, degrees, or to do a master's or doctoral thesis with you, then they will have juicier bait if they kowtow and pick a topic

¹ Four considerations for the session article:

1. Bold text following and including "Scott:" or "S:" is Scott & non-bold text following and including "Rick" or "R" is Rick.
2. Session article conducted, transcribed, edited, formatted, and prepared by Scott.
3. Footnotes & in-text citations in the interview & references after the interview.
4. This session article has been edited for clarity and readability.

² *What is Academic Tenure?* (2011) states:

Tenure is pretty much unique to educational settings. Attaining tenured status as a professor usually means two things:

First, it conveys an enhanced level of protection for academic freedom, grounded in the conviction that knowledge creation and expression of ideas should be free from intimidation or retaliation.

Second, it provides significantly elevated levels of job security. Generally speaking, tenured professors can be dismissed only for failure to perform essential job responsibilities, serious misconduct, or severe economic necessity. In the United States, only unionized employees with strong collective bargaining agreements enjoy similar job protections.

Tenure is conferred by a single institution; thus, it is not automatically transferable. A tenured professor who wants to move elsewhere typically must negotiate with another institution to be appointed with tenure, or perhaps do what's called a "look see" year as a visiting professor to determine whether a lateral hiring with tenure is a good match.

Ideally, the transition to tenured status transforms the employment relationship from one of contract to that of covenant. In other words, tenure should create a special bond, a mutual investment, between the institution and the professor. Umm, it doesn't always work that way, as the academic workplace can be as full of ups and downs as any other. Nevertheless, most tenured professors take their responsibilities seriously and appreciate the benefits conferred by this status.

Yamada, D. (2011, August 22). What is Academic Tenure?. Retrieved from <https://newworkplace.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/what-is-academic-tenure/>.

that is more aligned with something you're more interested in and something that you're going to be more interested in is going to be politically to the Left (Carleton University, 2017; The University of British Columbia, 2017).^{3,4} I'm not saying better or worse,

³ *Honours Thesis vs. Honours Project* (2017) states:

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE THESIS?

Honours Thesis

The Thesis involves conducting research under the direct supervision of a faculty member. It typically involves:

- *literature review*
- *data collection and analysis*
- *preparation of a substantial document...*

Honours Project

The Project is a regularly scheduled class (1.0 credit) during which students participate in a variety of active learning exercises.

Students will work closely with each other via writing groups, peer-editing exercises, and other elements consistent with a supportive writing community in order to enhance their:

- *writing*
- *critical reading*
- *presentation skills.*

Carleton University. (2017). Honours Thesis vs. Honours Project. Retrieved from <https://carleton.ca/psychology/undergraduate/current-students/thesis-vs-project/>.

⁴ *The Graduate Thesis* (2017) states:

Your thesis will be the final product of your time in graduate school. You should be planning your thesis from the very beginning of your degree program.

A thesis is a substantial piece of scholarly writing that reflects the writer's ability to:

- *conduct research*
- *communicate the research*
- *critically analyze the literature*
- *present a detailed methodology and accurate results*
- *verify knowledge claims and sources meticulously*
- *link the topic of the thesis with the broader field*

A thesis at the doctoral level is called a dissertation, but dissertations and theses are usually referred to collectively as theses. There are some differences between a master's and a doctoral thesis:

- *A master's thesis must demonstrate that the student knows the background and principal works of the research area, and can produce significant scholarly work. It should contain some original contribution whenever possible.*
- *A doctoral thesis must contain a substantial contribution of new knowledge to the field of study. It presents the results and an analysis of original research, and should be significant enough to be published.*

necessarily, but I am saying bias – as this is a systems and institutional analysis (Rothman et al, 2005; Tobin, & Weinberg, 2006; Hudson, 2010; McArdle, 2017; Chisholm-Burns, 2016; Riley, 2014; Gobry, 2014). So there's very much something to what you're saying about the British 'posh' system that Darwin and Wallace had there in terms of who gets a say in what and who gets to claim ownership (Desmond, 2016; Camerini, 2007).^{5,6}

Rick: It's also the deal with Everett (Everett, 2015). He was an evangelist. He didn't start as an evangelist. He started as a white trash street kid, who was kind of—he met a hot young woman who was an evangelist, married her, and became one himself. The deal is that if you want to evangelize part of the world that doesn't speak English then you have to at least make an attempt to learn their language. Anyway—so, he had a white trash, trailer trash, background and then a weirdly religious background. So he didn't have great academic credentials. The situation recreated itself. There's a whole other factor of the clustering of beliefs. If all of the best people are on one side, or have been recruited to one point of view, then they're going to have better arguments and it will make it easier for them to recruit more good people. In the Middle Ages, there were a lot of good arguments—all of the best people were in the religion business. They were either religious people or their work were sponsored by religious communities. So there were a lot of persuasive arguments for religion. Now, all of the most persuasive arguments are made by science.

The University of British Columbia. (2017). The Graduate Thesis. Retrieved from <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision/graduate-thesis>.

⁵ Charles Darwin (2016) states:

Charles Darwin, in full Charles Robert Darwin (born February 12, 1809, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England—died April 19, 1882, Downe, Kent), English naturalist whose scientific theory of evolution by natural selection became the foundation of modern evolutionary studies. An affable country gentleman, Darwin at first shocked religious Victorian society by suggesting that animals and humans shared a common ancestry. However, his nonreligious biology appealed to the rising class of professional scientists, and by the time of his death evolutionary imagery had spread through all of science, literature, and politics. Darwin, himself an agnostic, was accorded the ultimate British accolade of burial in Westminster Abbey, London.

Desmond, A.J. (2016, June 10). Charles Darwin. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/CharlesDarwin>.

⁶ Alfred Russel Wallace (2007) states:

Alfred Russel Wallace, byname A.R. Wallace (born Jan. 8, 1823, Usk, Monmouthshire, Wales—died Nov. 7, 1913, Broadstone, Dorset, Eng.), British humanist, naturalist, geographer, and social critic. He became a public figure in England during the second half of the 19th century, known for his courageous views on scientific, social, and spiritualist subjects. His formulation of the theory of evolution by natural selection, which predated Charles Darwin's published contributions, is his most outstanding legacy, but it was just one of many controversial issues he studied and wrote about during his lifetime. Wallace's wide-ranging interests—from socialism to spiritualism, from island biogeography to life on Mars, from evolution to land nationalization—stemmed from his profound concern with the moral, social, and political values of human life.

Camerini, J.R. (2007, November 13). Alfred Russel Wallace. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alfred-Russel-Wallace>.

It's not to say the religion and science are equally true. One reason the best arguments are made by science is because science reflects external reality. It certainly doesn't help religious arguments that most of the smartest people are going to be more attracted to science than religion. In this country, we've fallen into the deal where Republicans were encouraged, have been encouraged, to pander to dumb people for about 30 years or more, since before Reagan, because dumb people are more manipulable. This has led to people who don't like dumb arguments being more attracted to non-Republicans and systems. You have more smart people on the Democrat side than the Republican side, which leads to better arguments made by the Democrats and dumber arguments made by the Republicans. It leads to this situation we have now. Where it has pissed off smart people on the Liberal side and pissed off people on the Republican side, with the relatively few smart conservatives, their voices are lost in piles and piles dumbshittery. It is not a good situation.

S: This goes back to the similar phenomenon in the Wolfe and Chomsky case (Kirsch, 2016; Siegfried, 2016).

R: Yeah—well, yes and no. Orthodoxy does serve a purpose besides maintaining the status quo. There are non-cultural reasons. There empirical reasons why some orthodoxies dominate. For instance, believing in both flavors of Einstein's Relativity is an orthodoxy, believing in Quantum Mechanics is an orthodoxy, before that, 120 years ago, believing in Newtonian Mechanics as the pinnacle of physics was the orthodoxy and it wasn't because of the cozy clubs of physicists (Moring, 2001). It was because these orthodoxies were supported by a bunch of scientific success. Theories that turned out to be closely matched to the real world. And the lack of theories that weren't as good at that point than the existing orthodox theories. Orthodoxies tend to be too hide-bound and a little too resistant to new theories. At the same time, they do keep out a lot of crap theories. There are obvious pluses and minuses to the natural orthodoxies that form, which is all laid out pretty much in Kuhn structure of scientific revolution (Kuhn, 1970)?

S: That's correct.

R: Which itself has been kind of—that thing is old now. It itself used to be revolutionary. Now, it has been subject to revised analysis. Anyway. You hear a saying in Liberal circles a lot lately that "reality has a Liberal bias." That anytime the dumb Right runs into facts it doesn't like. Now, they yell, "Fake news!" That's phenomenon is only about 6 months old. I am hoping that it goes away, personally. That's it.

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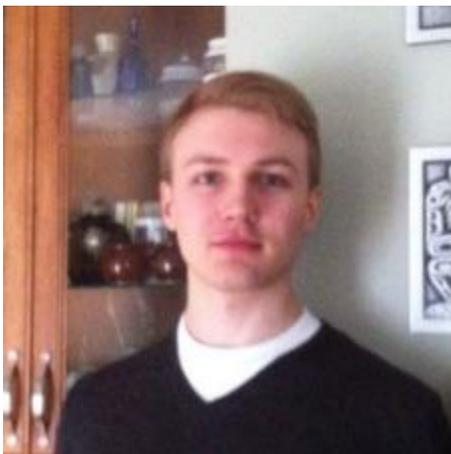
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