# Episode #03: Left-wing bias in academia with Andreas De Block

**Language of conversation**: English

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**Darian:** Good morning, Constance.

**Constance:** Good morning, Darian. And good morning, everyone. Welcome to our podcast “Woke as Science”. We are trying to unpack some of the many associations the term woke has come to carry in our academic community. And today we tackle a very particular association, and that is the idea that in recent years, polarization and ideological hostility have increased. In academia, it seemingly increased, especially against those scholars who identify or are identified as conservative. Is the university to left?

**Constance and Darian**: Da-da-da-dam [dramatic tone of voice]

**Darian:** Yeah. Well, speaking as someone who considers themself to be on the left, but as I get older, I increasingly feel more and more conservative. I get this, but I'm also pretty confused. So, I'm glad we've got a great guest here to help us today to try to make some sense of this situation.

Andreas de Block, welcome to the show. It's great to have you all the way from the wild west of Leuven, where you are professor of the philosophy of science. I think you're really the man we need to help us out here today because you are currently writing a book, and I guess the working title is, “Is the Left Smarter?”, and you're focusing on, I'm quoting you here, “how non epistemic values shape science and how the underrepresentation of right wing researchers has epistemic costs within the university and for science”. The book is coming out in September. We're looking forward, but we're hoping to get a sneak peek into its arguments today. And you know, we've discussed this before, but I have a long-standing view that science has a left-wing bias because reality has a left-wing bias. So, I'm really interested to understand how left-wing values, whatever those are, I guess you'll tell us, might actually be harming science. Tell us a little bit about your project.

**Andreas:** Okay. Thank you for having me, Darian and Constance. It's great to be here from the Wild West. So, the book is, it's actually a Dutch trade book it's called “Is links gewoon slimmer?”. So, in English it means something like, is the Left Just Smarter? Simply Smarter?. And the idea there is that, well many academics and even uh, left-wing activists admit that there is a kind of over representation of the, of the left in academia, but they say that , it is best explained by what Stephen Colbert famously calls the facts that have a well-known liberal bias. And that idea that you already, came up with or, formulated Darian, that reality has a left wing bias, comes in many variations. For instance, the left is simply smarter. And in the first chapter, I discuss whether academia is actually, disproportionately left wing. Second chapter, I go into different explanations and I try to argue based on empirical evidence, even though I'm a philosopher, I'm using empirical evidence as well. Uh, that's the idea that, the main reason for it all is that as soon as you become a scientist, you have to be left-wing because that's the only way to be a good scientist. And I think, that that idea is simply not supported by the facts, by the evidence that we have. Probably the factor that explains this over-representation of the left in academia is mostly self selection. And the idea among right-wing people that they don't, don't fit in academia. And they have that idea because actually they don't fit in academia, because academia is left-wing, there is this over-representation. They're not very, very welcome. They don't feel at home. They're, they're not comfortable expressing their views, they don't think it's something for a smart right-wing conservative individual to be professionally. And hence when they're smart, when they're interested in science, they do something like become a dentist. physician, work as a scientist for the industry, but not go into academia. So that's probably the factor that is mostly responsible for this overrepresentation of the left in in academia, and of course, that is aggravated or strengthened by different forms of direct and indirect discrimination. Yeah. The, the distinction between self selection and indirect discrimination is conceptually quite clear, but in the fact it's, well, very closely linked of course, this, this indirect discrimination, the fact that, many left-wing academics will say, well, we actually don't like rightwing people here. They, they're simply not good researchers. They're not open minded enough, et cetera, et cetera. Well, that sort of indirect discrimination creates this atmosphere where right wing or conservative smart people don't feel at home at the university.

Now, in the third, fourth and fifth chapter, I go into relation between values and science. And I argue that science is inevitably value laden. Unlike what many conservative critics of academia argue, it is intrinsically value laden. It's not a bad thing that science is value laden. So, we have science because we think it's, it will make the world a better place. Still, I think that the of representation or the, the fact that, science is almost exclusively shaped currently, and especially the social sciences and the humanities is almost exclusively shaped by leftist norms and values that poses a serious problem for science as science. So, science is two left-wing for its own good, uh, so to say. And then I also explore what sort of solutions can be given for the, for this problem. So that's the main idea there.

**Darian:** Thanks for that. So, let's try to unpack a few of the things that you, that you just said. For one thing, maybe this notion of value-ladenness or an epistemic value, or a non-epistemic value. I think I use those terms in my, in my introduction and you talked about science always being value laden, even though there's sometimes this idea that science should be somehow value free. Can you explain a little bit what that means?

**Andreas:** Yeah. Well, those are of course the sort of terms and concepts that philosophers use, like epistemic phenomena, epistemic values. Values basically means whatever we find important, and science has a lot of values. Obviously, epistemic values, scientific values, like they strive for objectivity, for truth, for understanding. Those are also, coherence, whatever, accuracy… Those are all the standard scientific values. Of course, science is value related in that sense. Nobody denies that. And those are epistemic values.

What is more controversial is that values, ethical values such as goodness, safety, equity, equality, et cetera, that those values shape science and should shape science. And the idea that I defend is that actually they are intrinsically connected with science as a collective endeavor so that we cannot get rid of them, and that it wouldn't be ideal if we could. So we should keep those non-epistemic, those ethical values in science, but we should actually diversify them. More diverse values than the ones that we're actually using now. But I will speak about values during the rest of this podcast. It will be almost always about those moral, political values not about those epistemic values, not about aesthetic values such as beauty and, and simplicity or whatever. It's gonna be about moral values, honesty, loyalty, et cetera.

**Darian:** So I joked at the beginning that reality has a distinct left-wing bias, and as you said, I took that joke from Stephen Colbert's sort of famous remark that I think I, I can't remember if we said reality or the facts.

**Andreas**: The facts.

**Darian**: The facts have a well-known liberal bias, which he, he made that joke, uh, during a speech he gave at a White House press correspondent dinner where he was sort of roasting, uh, George W. Bush. As you said, it seems that a lot of people seem to agree with this, or a lot of scientists, or a lot of leftist scientists at least, or leftist within the university, seem to agree with this. Can you just explain what, what it means to say that or what it is that the people you've spoken to, the people you've interviewed mean when they, when they say that?

**Andreas:** Of course that's, that's a recurring remark among academics and I think that the idea that reality has a left-wing bias, of course, when you look at reality from a left-wing perspective, confirmation bias quite well understood, and we see confirmation for our priors everywhere. Yeah, that's, that's how our mind works. So, we see everywhere confirmation for the beliefs that we have, the values that we hold, et cetera. And, and it's a recurring idea that reality has a left-wing bias among, surprise, surprise, left-wing academics, uh, for instance, Leslie Green, an Oxford's famous philosopher. He wrote an OpEd saying that universities are left-wing because they are universities. He, he lists a couple of points and he says, well, science has shown that, uh, species arose through natural selection is one. Secondly, homosexuality is a normal variance in human behavior. Human activity is a significant cause of climate change. The United States has worse public health than countries with nationalized healthcare. Those are four points that actually show that reality has a, has a liberal bias. I think that's, these are interesting examples to unpack because I, I know a few, not too many because there aren't too many. I, I know a few conservative academics and all of them would agree with at least two of those, those points, and most of them would agree with all four. So I don't see why you, you should be liberal to acknowledge these as, scientific facts. On the other hand, one of the examples is really interesting is the, the example of homosexuality is, is a normal variant of, of human behavior. Now, that's not a scientific claim in the sense that it's actually a normative claim. There, there are no clear empirical facts that can help us to decide whether it's normal or abnormal. It's quite telling that, yeah, I've done a lot of work on, philosophy and the history and the philosophy of the sciences of sexual orientation, and it's interesting to see that in, the 1970s when they decide to remove homosexuality from, the psychiatric textbooks, that was actually decided by a vote within a scientific association. So, it wasn't decided based on any empirical observations say that, uh, can be homosexual too, or that, many homosexual people can be happy or whatever. It wasn't decided on that it was decided based on a vote because they basically agreed that whether or not it's a disorder, whether or not it's normal, it cannot be decided by the facts.

**Constance:** Well, the decision to include homosexuality in the psychiatric textbooks in the first place wasn't based on the facts. Because some decisions that we perceive of as scientific decisions are about values and not unequivocal empirical evidence.

**Andreas:** It's interesting that Green gives that example because it shows how his biases actually form his idea of what science has shown us. Now, moreover, there are still many, many open questions in science. How do we know that the answers, the conclusions, of our studies on these questions, that those conclusions will actually show that our left-wing ideas, our liberal ideas will be confirmed by the conclusions since we don't know those conclusions now. Moreover, there are quite a few disciplines, say literary theory, say philosophy. In philosophy, we've been doing research. Yeah, we call it research, but well, we've been thinking for 2,500 years, and how many very well established truths did we find so far? None. Yeah. Basically none.

**Constance:** The example you gave about, homosexuality is quite an interesting one because it makes me think that in the end when you talk about, it's the endeavor of finding truth, that actually shows that it is not always the endeavor of finding truth. It is also the endeavor of doing what we consider in a certain moment in time to do what is right. Is that what is meant with reality as a left wing bias? Well, or is that my own bias?

**Andreas:** I, I do believe immoral truth, in a way and even in moral facts. And there, there is a long standing debate on that issue in philosophy and as, as often, it has become super boring. But, it's not clear that there are no moral truths so that what is right and what is, what is correct morally might have something to do with truth. But, but it's definitely not just easily observable. What is the truth? So, if you're saying, well, isn't it often more about what is morally right and what is objectively uh, how the world is. Sometimes it might be about that, and I see no problem there. Now the idea is, of course, if you ask that question, the idea is, well, of course, because the left is right on moral issues. So, if it's about being right, then uh, the left should definitely dominate. Now, maybe it probably won't surprise you that most conservatives think that they are right on, on moral issues as well. So, claiming that, well, universities in academia should be left wing because they are right on each and every moral issue, uh, that you can think of again, shows kind of confirmation bias. And we have long struggled with moral disagreements. I mean, long, historically, we have long struggled with moral disagreements and it, it's not easy to solve. And in our societies, in our democratic societies, we have democracy and democratic procedures to handle this sort of moral disagreement. And because we assume that it can be solved through endless debate, of course we, we try to deliberate, to debate, et cetera, to, to find some sort of agreement. But if you can't find it, we still have to proceed. And how do we proceed? Well, one, by giving people individual liberties to pursue the life that they think is good and to do things that they think is good and avoid things that are bad. And two, we have voting procedures to aggregate the preferences, of individuals and to to form some sort of policy. Now, if people on the left say, well, we're, we're obviously, morally right unlike the, the conservatives, then that seems to reflect a bit of a, a lack of moral humility that I think is central to our democratic society that we, well, of course, we all think that our values are the real values and that the, the out group, yeah, is just full of vicious people, evil persons. But that's how politics works. Yeah and we need to solve it. And, and the the solution is probably not, yeah, we are definitely right and they're definitely wrong.

**Constance:** So help me with my moral humility for a moment .You know, we have been talking now about right wing, left-wing, conservative, liberal, lots of words are in the room. As a self-identified, left wing person in academia, I have, an idea of what my moral values are, that would shape uh, the work that I'm doing. What are then the conservative or right wing moral values that I should feel a certain humility about?

**Andreas:** Yeah. Well, values is a pretty broad concept. And one thing that you can think of is just basically every single policy issue where the left and the right are divided over. Yeah. And basically, each and every of those single, single issues and we all know what the leftwing views are and what the rightwing views are on these issues. More generally, I, I'm not a political psychologist and I'm, I'm not a political scientist, but it does seem that the values on the left seem to be more concentrated around harm and care and fairness and, equality. Whereas people on the right also care about harm and fairness. But they, on top of all that they think loyalty is important, they think sanctity is important. They think purity is important, traditions are important, authority is not something to be looked down on, but actually something that well, we should respect. So those are the kind of right-wing values that would make our, our science ideologically richer I think. It's probably smarter to involve more conservative researchers, conservative rightwing academics, in processes, starting with you know, what kind of topics are we research? Are we study? But also, what sort of methods are we gonna use? How are we gonna assess the quality of research and how are we gonna implement it? So, those different steps in the scientific process should actually involve more, conservative or right wing researchers. And that's probably a less revolutionary step, more cautious step, in the direction that might already deliver the goods that, I think that, a more diverse, academia can deliver.

**Constance:** When you say more, do you mean at this moment we need more, or is there, when I look into the history of science, is this phenomenon a recent phenomenon you are sketching so that the, the lack of value diversity in, academic work, or is that something that we can observe in the history of academia?

**Andreas:** Yeah. Interesting question. At the very beginning you said that ideological hostility has increased over time. I don't think we have any data to, to show that. What is clear though is that academia is left wing and has been left wing for over a century now. It probably, according to Neil Gross, one of the big authorities, it probably started all at the end of the 19th century in Harvard, and then with the prestige of Harvard it spread over the US and then it came to Europe, partly through American pop culture. But what we do have data on is that academia has actually become more left-wing, and in general in politics as well. People underestimate it because they always talk about the problem of polarization, and it doesn't seem that there is more ideological polarization, most studies at least don't really show that. What is true is that there is more affective polarization, so that we seem to hate our political opponents more than ever, on both sides. So, we don't just disagree, but, , the other people there, but what I said fishes evil evil people, we should discriminate against them because they're bad. And so that has increased. ideological polarization hasn't increased. Actually both the left and the right, have moved to the left. So, with some confidence, I can say that the culture war will be won by the left. Because that's what we've seen basically on most issues for the last 50 years.

**Constance**: That's not because that's the better thing to do, but that's because of the confirmation bias?

**Andreas**: People struggle to explain that. So, one way to explain that is through some sort of philosophical intuition then you have to hard boiled moral realist who thinks that we have this kind of faculty that intuits what is morally right and the more we debate it the more we find this moral truth. The other idea is, of course that there are particular biases and particular environmental factors that make people in the West, in industrialized democratic societies more liberal. So, I think that the second explanation is, is the better one because I don't, I'm not an intuitionist.

Has academia become more liberal? Yes. Uh, so there are data on that. So, for instance, in the US and in the UK, those are the, the regions that are best researched in the US at the end of the 1960s approximately 35% self-identified as liberal or left wing. So, in 2001, that had increased to 72%. So, it's not about photo registration as Democratic or Republican, it's about self-identification as left wing or, or liberal. So, it had doubled over the course of three decades. Similarly in the UK in the 1960s, this is based on voting for particular parties. In the 1960s, the Tories got almost 40%, during the elections within academia. And in 2015, in the Miliband versus Cameron election, only 8% of the academics voted for Cameron, more than 40 voters for Miliband. Guess who won the elections? Cameron. So that basically shows how disproportionally left academia has become whereas in 1960s, labor did win quite a few elections.

**Darian:** we're talking now about these, I mean, we've, we've kind of gone back into talking about more, let's say concrete politics or more electoral politics and talking about the ways in which we make these distinctions and make these oppositions in politics between left and right, conservative and progressive.

But the other thing that's happening and I think is relevant and interesting within our cases is that a lot of the disputes that are happening, I think within this university community or within the broader academic community, are not disputes that I would characterize necessarily as between left and right, but are disputes that are happening within the left. And so I think this idea about the dangers of woke or the threat that wokeness presents to academic freedom, yes, it's picked up within the broader, let's say political spectrum or the broader political debate as a left versus right, argument. But I think within the university, it's a left-left argument actually. So, the people who seem most concerned about the effect that certain political commitments associated with wokeness have, are those people that would consider themselves to be left wing, traditionally right. And consider themselves to hold traditional left-wing values. I think many, many of the ones that you mentioned, so, fairness, equity, also sort of universal commitment to solidarity, let's say an emphasis on, class is an important category. I mean, we need these kind of distinctions between, you know, progressive, conservative, liberal conservative, left to right. But I'm wondering, how confusing this is becoming, and I'm wondering how helpful these distinctions still are.

And also, I mean, I think you alluded to that yourself a moment ago. When we actually look at the broader political spectrum or the broader political scene, although we see increased affective polarization on issues, oftentimes on specific issues there seems to be agreement across the political spectrum, especially actually there's agreement often at the extremes of the political spectrum. Right? So those that would be considered the far left are actually agreeing with many of the points that are being made by the far right. Especially, with regard to the, the influence of large corporations in the political process, that we could go on and on. Or, or the voters at both ends -

**Darian and Andreas**: Anti-Globalism. Exactly.

**Darian**: Yeah. Pervasive, both extreme. Yeah. that voter voters at both ends of these extremes actually tend to agree with each other on many, many things. So how do we make sense of this?

**Andreas:** Yeah. Well, there's a lot to unpack there. And there is this Horseshoe Theory that you are alluding to where the extreme right or extreme left often agree on issues like the influence of big corporations. Identity politics seems to be something of the extremes of the political spectrum. And I also agree that what is left and what is right, that, that it's often unclear. That what was once seen as, left-wing policy is now not seen as a left-wing policy anymore. And much of our politics, isn't very, is pretty tribal actually, which entails, and there are quite a few really interesting studies showing that, which means that we are not super ideologically coherent in our political views. We just adhere to whatever the people on our side believe, whether that coheres with all the other values and views that we have. So, if you tell a person that well, a particular view is defended by Biden, even though it's actually defended by DeSantis, or Trump, well, democrats will then say, if Biden thinks that, yeah, I, I agree with it, I think that we should actually support that and I'm willing to strike, et cetera, et cetera. Conversely, yeah, if a republican hears that Biden defends that view he will or she will reject that particular view. So that means that we are more tribal than, really, ideologically coherent thinkers, when it comes to politics and, that often makes these labels left and right, yeah. difficult, difficult to to use. And again, I'm not a political scientist. I'm not a political philosopher either. So I, don't have too much to say about this, but what is relevant for my project is that. people self-identifying as left-wing are the majority and the large majority within academia., and that affects how research is done. So that's the main point.

Now that there is a lot of disagreement between the left and maybe we can talk about it later. That probably, it is amplified within academia because there are basically the only ideological diversity there is, is on the left because there are only leftwing people, well, most of, most of the writing people are, are in the closets. Like, like gay people were a few decades ago. They, yeah, they hide. They, they don't speak out. Some of them do. And probably they sometimes give the, the other conservatives a bad name. And are are another reason why some conservatives are right people, stay in the closets because they don't wanna be associated with these loud mouths or, yeah. But I think that a lot of say the debate or the controversy over wokeness within academia is actually between different fractions, but different fractions on the left. And then of course there are two issues there. One, there is out group homogeneity bias. We often think of the out group as just homogeneous, whereas it isn't. So, the left says, yeah, the right, they don't fight among each other, they're all the same. Basically, if we have one right wing people, we, we've seen it all. They agree on, basically everything. But we, the in-group, there are so many interesting variations, ideological variations. We have a lot of ideological diversity already in academia because we all subscribe to the different strength of leftism. Yeah. We have Trotskists and we have Lenists and what ideological riches are you actually wanting? And we already have all that. And, then of course there, there is this, I have to admit that there is this tradition on, definitely on the radical left, to split and and split and never lump again. Which I can't explain, but, which is interesting and hard to deny.

**Constance:** So, what does the current discourse at this university, and I assume also at many other universities, actually this, intra ideological dispute of, you know, we now said in the beginning of this episode is the university to left. I think many people would have wanted us to make an episode on is university to woke. What does this inter ideological dispute mean for the argument that you actually wanna make in your book?

Is it conducive to your argument or does it actually take away the space to have the conversation about right wing values that are missing?

**Andreas:** Yeah, I'm actually not focusing, on that issue. And I have to think more about it. So I already mentioned the survey that we've done a couple of years ago, and it actually showed that many people, moderate left liberal people, felt pressures to conform with more radical left-wing people, and were afraid to speak out, were actually avoiding political topics during academic events. And so, there's something going on there as well. On the other hand, I think that's, when it comes to research and evaluation of research and, and choosing particular topics that moderate left-wing segment of society is really still very well represented, even overrepresented. Those who identify as moderate left-wing in academia that's still far over 40%, whereas in general population in no country, in Europe, nor in the us self identifies as moderately left wing. No, no way that that's ever gonna be 40%. So, it is still overrepresented. But the issues there are obvious, but I don't really go into that because I don't think that's currently a big problem for what I'm talking about, the epistemic cost of the lack of diversity. Since this diversity is still there, it it might have implications for other aspects of academic freedom and like what is called cancel culture. And, and I know that quite a few people who say that they are canceled, self-identify as liberal or left wing. And it does have an effect for, for those issues. But I don't, that’s not central to my project. Of course, I have ideas about what “woke” is and what, “anti-woke” is, but, but those are just, yeah. My, my personal speculation not super interesting I think.

**Darian:** I want to ask about this question of self-identification a little bit, and also, I mean, you talked about, well, Constance asked you earlier, you know, when did the university make this left turn? And you said, well, yeah, at the, I I think you said at the end of the 19th century it started in Harvard and due to the sort of a, authority of Harvard and then the kind of cultural authority or cultural imperialism of the, the United States, it's spread out. And I, I think there are a number of kind of problems or questions here, right? So, on the one hand in the United States, you have a sort of binary political system, right? So, to be on the left in the United States means that you are either affiliated explicitly or somehow implicitly with the Democratic Party. And on the other side, to be, you know, to consider yourself a conservative or right wing means that you are affiliated, you know, explicitly or implicitly with the Republican party.

Now, I think that division doesn't track well in Europe, for example, right? Where I think you have to go pretty far towards the right wing of the European political spectrum before you start to get into what looked like, accepted or mainstream Republican party positions. Right? So, by that account, I would say that although self-identification wise, it may not work. Right, but by that account, yeah. The majority, if not the large majority of the European electorate would fall within the so-called left in the American spectrum.

**Andreas**: Mm-hmm.

**Darian**: And I think that makes it quite tricky to figure out, right? At the same time, well, maybe I stop there. Yeah. I mean what do, what do you think about that?

**Andreas:** Yeah, it's something I struggled with, to be honest. And I added, a really long section about differences, local, regional differences in ideology and political affiliation. And then the publisher said, this is a trade book. Nobody's gonna read that. Get it out. But I do remember some of the things that I, I wrote in that section. And one is of course, that there is no neutral point on the political spectrum that can be defined absolutely without any context. So that means that definitions of what is right and what is left will vary between different regions and of course on, many issues. I think you're right there. The, democratic party in the US defends positions that are defended by centrist or even moderately right-wing parties in Europe. On other issues though, like the, their, views on abortion, they're more left wing so to say, than any even left-wing, super left-wing, political party in Belgium would. And I don't know about the situation in, in the Netherlands, but definitely in Belgium on, on some of these issues, democrats are way left of even, even the radical, left. Still, I, I grant you that point, but if you look at voter registration in the US, the situation is, even more extreme. Yeah. So, among the highest ranked colleges, there are basically no registered republicans. Even among the top 10 economic departments within the big or one research universities, there are basically no registered Republicans, which is still a weird thing because in the US republican party is almost as big as the democratic party. Uh, it's called a G O P for, for a reason. So, why are they so underrepresented in academia? But that, doesn't tell the whole story because if you then look at how left wing American academics is, well, it's actually way more left wing than just be this Hillary Clinton supporting democrat who's actually a bit on the right. No, it's really more, combination of Chomsky and Bernie supporters. That's the sort of average American academic. So even in the US it's not that they're all democrats. Well, yes they are, but actually they call themselves very liberal. Like, I just checked the survey among American grad students in philosophy, more than 50% describe themselves as very liberal and more than 35% describe themselves as liberal. So that leaves like less than 15% moderates, conservatives, and very conservative.

**Darian:** We, we should say, I mean, you're the sense of the word, not in not in the European sense so as a sort of generic term for left wing or something.

**Andreas:** Yeah. I use terms used in that survey yeah, yeah.

**Darian**: I mean, I have an explanation maybe for the first part about the discrepancy in party registration, and I'm not sure if it holds up, so you can tell me. I mean, we've been talking up until now largely about what we called non epistemic values, right? So, in the beginning you explained what some of the epistemic values that we attach to scientific research are. We said, okay, well, everyone sort of agrees that those values should hold when it comes to, when it comes to science, when it comes to scientific research. And then there's a question of, you know, having this diversity of non epistemic values, but is it not the case, at least in the United States, that if we look at the policy proposals, if we look at the pronouncements, if we look at the speeches, the discourse of the Republican party, they seem increasingly detached from anything that would resemble the epistemic values that we think are important to carrying out science or carrying out, research such that the, I mean, let's say the world as represented by scientific research and okay, we can still say yes, that's of course still value laden and we understand looks very different from the world that is presented in the discourse of the Republican Party and the kind of things that researchers or academics we seem to all agree should care about. Like consistency, coherence don't seem to hold when it comes to talking about policy on the right. And I think that holds, especially in relation to the American, political scene, maybe also in Europe, I am not so sure.

**Andreas:** Also, the Dutch, I think.

**Darian:** Okay. Yeah, sure.

**Constance:** That I think would explain when you look at self-identification of academics, why even those who carried the kind of non epistemic values you mentioned before as, loyalty or tradition, they wouldn't self-identify as conservative in that sense because indeed they wouldn't subscribe to the epistemic or the lack of epistemic values that we see in some of the policy decisions. Right?

**Andreas:** Yeah. Well, Dun & Shields, two right-wing, American academics did interviews with conservative academics and they have this kind of implicit, typology, in their book. And it, seems that some of these conservative academics actually wanna, wanna distance themselves from the, the Republicans and also the stereotypes that are held by left-wing academics about the right. Yeah. So, when I say that I'm interested and, uh, the underrepresentation of conservatives or right-wing people in academia, they say, oh, so you want, so you think it's good that we have more sexist and racist in academia? I said, yes, exactly. That's what I meant. Just kidding. Uh, that's not what I mean. But it shows the, what sort of stereotypes exist among left-wing academics and probably that's caused by how, politics have -

**Constance:** I just want to say it also shows the reality of some of the policy making decisions we see coming from the Right.

**Andreas:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Constance:** It's not just the bias of the left.

**Andreas:** No, no, no. no. But that's, that's why no, no, that's why the, the conservatives wanna distance and so they wanna show, well, we, I'm actually polite, smart person. And I subscribe to those epistemic, values that you have and the methods that we're using. And I, I'm nice to interact with. So that's one of the, of the types. So, they wanna show well, we can actually also be good at academics, even though you, think of of how right-wing people as part of this homogeneous, group with all the same ideas. Now in the US I think that there is an anti-intellectual strand to a lot of right-wing politics in the US and even increasingly so in Europe. And part of it is probably explained to an internal dynamic within for instance the republican party. But I think that, academia is also partly to blame. And left-wing politics is also partly to blame. Yeah. We all remember, or we all know about Thatcher’s ‘There is no alternative’ idea. Well, the way that different left-wing parties or for instance, democrats, if you don't wanna call them, left-wing or liberal, have actually politicized science is, is is part of the reason why the right has become more an anti-intellectual over time.

When we now think of conservatives, we don’t link them to conservation. Well, for a large part of the 20th century yeah the Republican party was in favor of all sorts of environmentalist measures that we would now link to the democrats and left-wing. And it seems that the big break was actually Al Gore. Yeah. So, if you wanna politicize this kind of science, well the, the result will be that your political enemies will actually reject science and what you see in the US but also in Europe, the kind of anti-vax movement on the right, well we're gonna have a new pandemic and we are, we are gonna need vaccines and it's super dangerous, but it's partly due to the lack of trust that right-wing people have in science. And that lack of trust has to do with the underrepresentation of conservatives in, in academia. So, yeah. yeah. You're all an anti-science and so we don't care about you anymore. That's the kind of inhumane view that we should actually actively reject and we should try to get a back in. Yeah. We, we should show them that the institution of science is really important and it's actually a truth finding endeavor that we all need as citizens left or right. And, if we lose this whole group of people who are, who are becoming anti-science then it's bad. And, and we shouldn't just blame them.

**Darian:** Yeah, but, okay. I mean, a moment ago, so you said the, the strain of anti-intellectualism within the Republican party, for example, or more broadly within those who identify as conservative or right wing has something to do with the politicization of science, by the other side. And you gave Al Gore as an example, right? But if science at some point, or the findings of science have to be transferred or translated into policy, it has to be politicized, right? We are not going to be just able to say okay, we've got all this climate science. Great, we trust the climate science, but we're not gonna translate that climate science into policy because that would be to politicize it and that's dangerous and that's gonna have this ramifications. So how do we deal with that?

**Andreas:** Yeah. Well, we don't want more technocrats. And I think that's, while political parties have a particular responsibility there, just telling people science is on our side and just tribalized science through that is the wrong thing. There's always a gap between a particular scientific finding and a policy measure and there's always an alternative, always a choice. So, I think that if you can, you can tell people well, climate change is real. We have different scenarios with different levels of uncertainty attached to it. We've made these great, these reports are really great also from a philosophy of science perspective. But then we still have, have to make decisions. There are different options that we have if we wanna reduce the, the risk to nil, it's gonna cost us a lot in terms of economic growth, but then of course we know that we will have it under control, et cetera, et cetera. If the political parties explain what the different options are and how they are actually not mandatory given the science that we have. They're, not scientific solutions. They're political solutions for a problem that is detailed and that is analyzed and explained by scientists. But, the problem can be analyzed and can be described by science, but the solution has to be political. And, just to confuse the two willingly and knowingly, what happens a lot through bulletin on the left and on the right, but more so on the left, I think science is on our side. Trust the science and all that. Yeah. That's a bit of a problem.

**Constance:** So, to wrap up, basically what you're saying is the increasing representation of left-wing ideology in academia leads to the affective polarization that we see now, leads to the alienation of more right-wing people really in academia, but also outside of academia. So basically, you're saying it's all our fault?

**Andreas:** No, no, I'm not saying that. I, think that self selection, has to do with values. And of course, these values differ across the political spectrum. Also, existential values. What sort of life do I want? And there are always particular professions that will be more attractive to one ideological group than to another, say, going into the army or into the police seems to be something that a right-wing person would prefer over going into academia. And hence the right is overrepresented in the military and, and the left overrepresented in academia. And as such, uh, there's not too much of a problem there in my view. The main problem is that it has an epistemic cost. And rather than blaming people for doing that, we should just look for solutions. And there, there is a kind of nexus fallacy where we really have to understand what the main causes are of, of all this. I think, well, we can develop solutions independent of what exactly the causes are of this underrepresentation of, of the right. And I don't think that it's just left-wing people who are to blame, even though there is a tendency to discriminate, against right-wing people. Yeah. Still most academics say that they won't discriminate based on, ideological grounds.

**Darian:** Thanks so much, Andreas. I mean, one sort of positive thing that I take away from the picture that you are drawing for us is you seem to have a deep underlying faith in the capacity of democratic processes to deal with problems, whether it's within science or whether it's more broadly. That's not something I probably would have said coming into this. And it's something that I'm a bit surprised at, uh, coming out of it. What do you think?

**Andreas:** Period.

**Constance:** That's so mean. That's so mean. [Laughter]

**Andreas:** Fuck you.

**Darian:** I'm glad we got that [Laughter]

[End of recording]