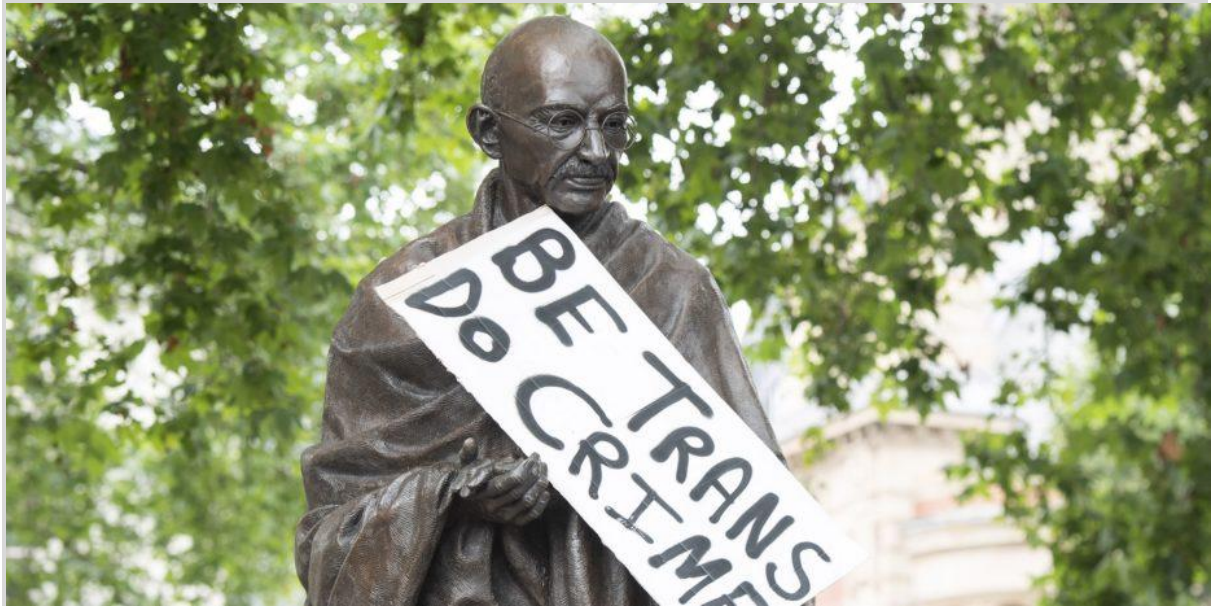


(https://www.hpdetijd.nl/2021-07-28/binaire-en-non-binaire-bullies/?share_code=n5N3xvQQigaM)



BRON: ANP

Binary bullies

Progressive intellectuals have all too easily gone along with a radical new vision of sex and gender in recent years, thinks Jan Kuitenbrouwer. A vision that has crucial intellectual weaknesses and dangerous side effects.

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I had just finished my column for this week when news came that Frederique, a 14-year-old girl from Amstelveen, had been attacked by a bunch of boys who demanded to know if she was a girl or a boy. Frederique refused to say. The boys beat her up and she landed in hospital with a broken nose, jaw and tooth. Frederique “looks gender neutral”, her father says. She “doesn’t know if she wants to be a boy or girl”. “I am who I am and you can be who you want,” she told her attackers. In gender jargon, I think you would have to call her “non-binary”, but whether Frederique herself thinks in those terms is not clear.

My column was about the fear of this subject in progressive circles. Transgenderism, as I call it, is a complicated subject and it is understandable that people are hesitant to speak out about it, but this is not only about transgenderism and the new Transgender Act, this is also about democracy and freedom of expression. And that it should be possible to speak about this subject and to differ in opinion. Surely there

can be no doubt about that in progressive circles, can there? Yet that does seem to be the case.

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A woman draws attention to the fact that this kind of legislation undermines existing women's rights, and she is bombarded with hate, which continues to this day. Her name is J.K. Rowling, she is the author of the Harry Potter books and has so many admirers worldwide that she cannot be cancelled, but there are plenty of less powerful women whose reputations and livelihoods have been seriously damaged because of the same opinion. Employers, universities, governments, publishers, book distributors, scientific journals, (social) media, theatre companies drop women like bricks when they sin against the orthodoxy of the gender movement.

The hype in transgender identifications is still to a large extent misunderstood, there is a great need for facts, but unwelcome facts are fiercely contested by the gender movement. However, not with counterarguments, but by deplatforming and cancelling, woke euphemisms for smears. The fear of cancellation is so deep-rooted that even an organisation like the American Booksellers Association (ABA), a bastion of free speech, you might say, will fall to its knees. Recently, the ABA ceased distribution of the book *Irreversible Damage, the transgender craze seducing our daughters*, by Abigail Shrier. Schrier is a journalist with the Wall Street Journal and travelled all over America talking to doctors, therapists, researchers and parents of transgender girls. The book contains a wealth of information, not only about the transgender wave but also about the society in which this is taking place, the role of the Internet and social contagion, the heavily protective upbringing of middle-class children today, which isolates them and makes them insecure, the education that stirs up gender doubts and leaves parents out of the picture, a commercial, deregulated health care system, the (excessively) strict privacy laws – she puts all these pieces of the puzzle together. As with every journalistic product, it's possible to criticise this book. For example, Shrier did not talk to the transgender girls themselves; we have to make do with the accounts of their parents. And sometimes her anger can be heard between the lines, however understandable that may be, given the mainstream media's deliberate avoidance of this subject. This was reaffirmed after the hardcover edition appeared in 2020 when hardly any prominent news media wanted to review it.

This is how it works: there is no sorting out of the valuable and less valuable elements in such a book, no. One “wrong” element is enough to make it anathema, to chase the

author out of town with tar and feathers and to boycott media that “give it a platform”.

It is ironic: gender activists always know how to point out methodological weaknesses in research that doesn't fit their style, no matter how small. One wishes they had done the same from time to time with the gender, queer, and critical race writings from which they themselves derive their ideas, often unreadable, hermetic, “literary” concoctions devoid of verifiable facts. You can write a satire in that vein and a gender-studies journal will print it, as proven by three researchers in 2018. This post-modern form of magical thinking is undermining the social sciences and is already beginning to make inroads in medical science.

Anyone who questions transgender ideology, left, right, male, female, young, old, is 'transphobic'. That goes for J.K. Rowling, it goes for Abigail Shrier, it goes for [Voorzij](#), the only Dutch women's organisation that opposes the transgender law, it goes for [Peter Vasterman](#), who argued in NRC for more attention to the trans hype, and it goes for me too, of course. We are not wrong. No, in fact, we should be banned from publication. The term 'transphobia' is an example in itself of the demagogic style of debate. A phobia is an anxiety disorder. So: the critic does not have a different opinion, no, he has a disorder, for which he should seek treatment. And, of course, you do not have to take the words of a patient seriously. However, it may be advisable to strap a bell to him so that everyone can stay away from him.

Ha! I honestly don't know what's frightening about trans people. Although, I would rather not run into one of those fashionistas with a baseball bat and a Kill The Terfs t-shirt in a dark alley. But that's not transphobic, that's just old-fashioned universal fear of death.

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The report of Frédérique Brink's assault had not yet been put online before woke Twitter trolls were holding me responsible. “Is that what you wanted?” “You're responsible for this.” “You have blood on your hands.” And so on. Grotesque, but in the gender church it is like in all churches: the notables sit on the front bench, and right behind them are the bigots and zealots. One can always appeal to them to expel a heretic. But who in the Netherlands has spoken out openly against the attacks on J.K. Rowling? That you simply cannot treat people like that, no matter how much you disagree with them? Nobody, as far as I know. The front pew of the church is as quiet as a mouse.

But there seems to be a change of heart. Two new books on the trans boom, *Material Girls* by Kathleen Stock and *Trans* by Helen Joyce, both highly critical, are already

attracting more attention, and are pulling Schrier's book along after all. Three authors, who each in their own way show how progressive intellectuals have in recent years far too easily gone along with a radical new vision of sex and gender, a vision that shows crucial intellectual weaknesses and has dangerous side effects. How they entrenched themselves in a new, hip sameness, closed the shutters and turned a deaf ear to dissenters.

Meanwhile, poor Frederique lies in hospital. She still had the courage to resist the binary bully. I am who I am and you may be who you are'.

Amen to that.

As Shrier, Stock and Joyce describe, that is part of the problem: we can no longer cope with the indeterminate. Children are no longer allowed to be different, strange or peculiar. A diagnosis must be made and a treatment started. Then Frederique will be called Fred and order will be restored.