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I was Jordan Peterson's strongest supporter. Now I think he's dangerous

By **BERNARD SCHIFF** Special to the Star

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Several years ago, Jordan Peterson told me he wanted to buy a church. This was long before he became known as “the most influential public intellectual in the Western world,” as he was described in the pages of the New York Times a few months ago. It was before he was fancied to be a truth-telling sage who inspired legions, and the author of one of the bestselling books in the world this year. He was just my colleague and friend.

I assumed that it was for a new home — there was a trend in Toronto of converting religious spaces, vacant because of their dwindling congregations, into stylish lofts — but he corrected me. He wanted to establish a church, he said, in which he would deliver sermons every Sunday.



Jordan Peterson, a University of Toronto psychology professor turned influential YouTube philosopher, at an event in Toronto, in May. A former colleague of Peterson's says he is alarmed by his now-questionable relationship to truth, intellectual integrity and common decency. (MARK SOMMERFELD / THE NEW YORK TIMES)

“(He) spread his influence across the country and around the world through a combination of religious conviction, commanding stage presence and shrewd use of radio, television and advanced communication technologies.”

This could have been written about Jordan Peterson. The language echoes the tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of words, that have been devoted to the man — ranging from fawning adoration to critical dismissals — since [his rise to public prominence starting in 2016](#) when he declared he would not comply with a proposed amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act which was, coincidentally, about the power of words. But that quote is taken from Billy Graham's obituary that appeared in the Times after the American pastor died in February.

Jordan found his pulpit on YouTube and his congregation on social media. His followers have a Bible — *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* — which has sold more than one million copies around the world since it was published in January. He lectures to sold-out crowds, at home and abroad, more like a rock star than a middle-aged academic.

I thought long and hard before writing about Jordan, and I do not do this lightly. He has one of the most agile and creative minds I've ever known. He is a powerful orator. He is smart, passionate, engaging and compelling and can be thoughtful and kind.

I was once his strongest supporter.

That all changed with his rise to celebrity. I am alarmed by his now-questionable relationship to truth, intellectual integrity and common decency, which I had not seen before. His output is voluminous and filled with oversimplifications which obscure or misrepresent complex matters in the service of a message which is difficult to pin down. He can be very persuasive, and toys with facts and with people's emotions. I believe he is a man with a mission. It is less clear what that mission is.

In the end, I am writing this because of his extraordinary rise in visibility, the nature of his growing following and a concern that his ambitions might venture from stardom back to his long-standing interest in politics. I am writing this from a place of sadness and from a sense of responsibility to the public good to tell what I know about who Jordan is, having seen him up close, as a colleague and friend, and having examined up close his political actions at the University of Toronto, allegedly in defence of free speech. When he soared into the stratosphere he became peculiarly unknowable. There is something about the dazzle of the limelight that makes it hard to see him clearly. But people continue to be who they are even in the blinding overexposure of success. I have known Jordan Peterson for 20 years, and people had better know more about who he is.

There is reason to be concerned.



Peterson found fame on YouTube and social media, where his following grew so large he became more like a rock star than a middle-aged academic. (MARK SOMMERFELD)

I met Jordan Peterson when he came to the University of Toronto to be interviewed for an assistant professorship in the department of psychology. His CV was impeccable, with terrific references and a pedigree that included a PhD from McGill and a five-year stint at Harvard as an assistant professor.

We did not share research interests but it was clear that his work was solid. My colleagues on the search committee were skeptical — they felt he was too eccentric — but somehow I prevailed. (Several committee members now remind me that they agreed to hire him because they were “tired of hearing me shout over them.”) I pushed for him because he was a divergent thinker, self-educated in the humanities, intellectually flamboyant, bold, energetic and confident, bordering on arrogant. I thought he would bring a new excitement, along with new ideas, to our department.

He joined us in the summer of 1998. Because I liked him, and also because I had put myself on the line for him, I took him under my wing. I made sure he went up for promotion to associate professor the following year, as the hiring committee had promised, and I went to the dean to get him a raise when the department chairperson would not.

When he was renovating his house I invited his family to live with mine. For five months, they occupied the third floor of our large house. We had meals together in the evening and long, colourful conversations. There, away from campus, I saw a man who was devoted to his wife and his children, who were lovely and gentle and for whom I still feel affection. He was attentive and thoughtful, stern and kind, playful and warm. His wife, Tammy, appeared to be the keel, the ballast and the rudder, and Jordan ran the ship. I could not imagine him without her, and indeed I see that she is now with him wherever in the world he goes.

On campus, he was as interesting as I had expected him to be. His research on alcoholism, and then personality, was solid, but his consuming intellectual interests lay elsewhere. He had been an undergraduate in political science in Edmonton, where he had become obsessed with the Cold War. He switched to psychology in order to understand why some people would, as he once told me, destroy everything — their past, their present and their future — because of strong beliefs. That was the subject of his first book, *Maps of Meaning*, published in 1999, and the topic of his most popular undergraduate course.

He was, however, more eccentric than I had expected. He was a maverick. Even though there was nothing contentious about his research, he objected in principle to having it reviewed by the university research ethics committee, whose purpose is to protect the safety and well-being of experiment subjects.

He requested a meeting with the committee. I was not present but was told that he had questioned the authority and expertise of the committee members, had insisted that he alone was in a position to judge whether his research was ethical and that, in any case, he was fully capable of making such decisions himself. He was impervious to the fact that subjects in psychological research had been, on occasion, subjected to bad experiences, and also to the fact that both the Canadian and United States governments had made these reviews mandatory. What was he doing! I managed to make light of this to myself by attributing it to his unbridled energy and fierce independence, which were, in many other ways, virtues. That was a mistake.

Another thing to which I did not give sufficient concern was his teaching. As the undergraduate chair, I read all teaching reviews. His were, for the most part, excellent and included eyebrow-raising comments such as “This course has changed my life.” One student, however, hated the course because he did not like “delivered truths.” Curious, I attended many of Jordan's lectures to see for myself.

Remarkably, the 50 students always showed up at 9 a.m. and were held in rapt attention for

an hour. Jordan was a captivating lecturer — electric and eclectic — cherry-picking from neuroscience, mythology, psychology, philosophy, the Bible and popular culture. The class loved him. But, as reported by that one astute student, Jordan presented conjecture as statement of fact. I expressed my concern to him about this a number of times, and each time Jordan agreed. He acknowledged the danger of such practices, but then continued to do it again and again, as if he could not control himself.

He was a preacher more than a teacher.

Eccentricities notwithstanding, I didn't regret having worked to secure his position. His students were exposed to new ideas and were as devoted to him as he was to them. I continued to be one of his strongest supporters at the university and thereafter.

In 2001, three years after Jordan arrived, I took early retirement and left the university. I stayed in touch with Jordan and his family, and while our contacts might have been infrequent, they were always familial and affectionate.

Always intense, it seemed that, over time, Jordan was becoming even more so. He had periods of incredible energy when, in addition to his academic work, he ran a business selling the personality assessment tools that he had developed. He actively collected Soviet, and then Mexican art, on eBay. He maintained a clinical practice. He was preoccupied with alternative health treatments including fighting off the signs of aging as they appear on the skin, and, one time, even shamanic healing practices, where, to my great surprise and distress, he chose to be the shaman himself. And he did all of that with the same great fervour and commitment.



Peterson's home in Toronto is decorated with Soviet art, which he told the New York Times serves as a reminder of oppression. (MARK SOMMERFELD)

At the same time, his interest in political issues became more apparent. We disagreed about

most things, but I don't ask of my friends that we agree. What was off-putting was his tendency to be categorical about his positions, reminiscent of his lectures where he presented personal theories as absolute truths. I rarely challenged him. He overwhelmed challenges with volumes of information that were hard to process and evaluate. He was more forceful than I, and had a much quicker mind. Also, again evocative of what I saw in the classroom, he sometimes appeared to be in the thrall of his ideas and would not, or could not, constrain himself and self-monitor what he was saying.

That was OK. He was eccentric. There was, however, something about his growing fierceness that unsettled me. Always a man of extremes, it seemed to me that the highs and the lows of his emotional range had increased. But he was hurting no one and my affection and loyalty for him were undiminished.

That all changed, soon enough.

Jordan's first high-profile public battle, and for many people their introduction to the man, followed his declaration that he would not comply with Bill C-16, an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act extending its protections to include gender identity and expression. He would refuse to refer to students using gender neutral pronouns. He then upped the stakes by claiming that, for this transgression, he could be sent to jail.

I have a trans daughter, but that was hardly an issue compared to what I felt was a betrayal of my trust and confidence in him. It was an abuse of the trust that comes with his professorial position, which I had fought for, to have misrepresented gender science by dismissing the evidence that the relationship of gender to biology is not absolute and to have made the claim that he could be jailed when, at worst, he could be fined.

In his defence, Jordan told me if he refused to pay the fine he could go to jail. That is not the same as being jailed for what you say, but it did ennoble him as a would-be martyr in the defence of free speech. He was a true free speech "warrior" who was willing to sacrifice and run roughshod over his students to make a point. He could have spared his students and chosen to sidestep the issue and refer to them by their names. And if this was truly a matter of free speech he could have challenged the Human Rights Act, off-campus and much earlier, by openly using language offensive to any of the already-protected groups on that list.

Perhaps this was not just about free speech.

Not long afterwards the following message was sent from his wife's email address exhorting recipients to sign a petition opposing Ontario's Bill 28. That bill proposed changing the language in legislation about families from "mother" and "father" to the gender-neutral "parents."

"A new bill, introduced in Ontario on September 29th, subjugates the natural family to the

transgender agenda. The bill — misleadingly called the 'All Families Are Equal Act' — is moving extremely fast. We must ACT NOW to stop this bill from passing into law."

This is not a free-speech issue so Jordan is wearing a different political hat. And what does a "transgender agenda" have to do with a bill protecting same-sex parents? What is this all about?

Jordan has studied and understands authoritarian demagogic leaders. They know how to attract a following. In an interview with Ethan Klein in an H3 Podcast, Jordan describes how such leaders learn to repeat those things which make the crowd roar, and not repeat those things that do not. The crowd roared the first time Jordan opposed the so-called "transgender agenda." Perhaps they would roar again, whether it made sense or not.

But why "transgender" in the first place? In that same interview, Jordan cites Carl Jung, who talked about the effectiveness of powerful emotional oratorical skills to tap into the collective unconscious of a people, and into their anger, resentment, fear of chaos and need for order. He talked about how those demagogic leaders led by acting out the dark desires of the mob.

If we have a "collective unconscious" there is a good chance that it would include our primitive assumptions about gender and biology. Transgender people violate those assumptions. There is an historical example of how upset our species gets about gender ambiguity in other species. The female spotted hyena is larger than, and dominant over, the male and has a clitoris so enlarged as to have the external appearance of a penis. In the bestiaries of the Middle Ages they were reviled, described as "neither faithful or pagan," "brutal thugs," "sexual deviants" and "not to be trusted." Sir Walter Raleigh excluded the hyena from Noah's Ark in his *History of the World* (written in 1614) because he believed that God had saved only the purely bred. That historical lesson tells us how deeply disturbed many of us might be in response to gender ambiguity in human beings.

Transgender people appear early in human history but in these socially progressive times, which worry Jordan so much, they have become more visible. Consciously or not, Jordan may have understood that transgender people tap into society's "collective unconscious" and would become a lightning rod for attention loaded with anger and resentment. And it did.

More recently, when questioned about the merits of *12 Rules for Life*, Jordan answered that he must be doing something right because of the huge response the book has received. How odd given what he said in that same interview about demagogues and cheering crowds. In an article [published in January in the Spectator](#), Douglas Murray described the atmosphere at one of Jordan's talks as "ecstatic."

I have no way of knowing whether Jordan is aware that he is playing out of the same authoritarian demagogue handbook that he himself has described. If he is unaware, then his ironic failure, unwillingness, or inability to see in himself what he attributes to them is very

disconcerting.



People line up for an appearance by Peterson this month. (MARK SOMMERFELD/THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Following his opposition to Bill C-16, Jordan again sought to establish himself as a “warrior” and attacked identity politics and political correctness as threats to free speech. He characterized them as left-wing conspiracies rooted in a “murderous” ideology — Marxism. Calling Marxism, a respectable political and philosophical tradition, “murderous” conflates it with the perversion of those ideas in Stalinist Russia and elsewhere where they were. That is like calling Christianity a murderous ideology because of the blood that was shed in its name during the Inquisition, the Crusades and the great wars of Europe. That is ridiculous.

In Jordan’s hands, a claim which is merely ridiculous became dangerous. Jordan, our “free speech warrior,” decided to launch a website that listed “postmodern neo-Marxist” professors and “corrupt” academic disciplines, warning students and their parents to avoid them. Those disciplines, postmodern or not, included women’s, ethnic and racial studies.

Those “left-wing” professors were trying to “indoctrinate their students into a cult” and, worse, create “anarchical social revolutionaries.” I do think Jordan believes what he says, but it’s not clear from the language he uses whether he is being manipulative and trying to induce fear, or whether he is walking a fine line between concern and paranoia.

His strategy is eerily familiar. In the 1950s a vicious attack on freedom of speech and thought occurred in the United States at the hands of Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. People suspected of having left-wing, “Communist” leanings were blacklisted and silenced. It was a frightening period of lost jobs, broken lives and betrayal. Ironically, around this time the Stasi were doing the same to people in East Berlin who were disloyal to that very same “murderous” ideology.

Jordan has a complex relationship to freedom of speech. He wants to effectively silence those left-wing professors by keeping students away from their courses because the students may one day become “anarchical social revolutionaries” who may bring upon us disruption and violence. At the same time he was advocating cutting funds to universities that did not protect free speech on their campuses. He defended the rights of “alt right” voices to speak at universities even though their presence has given rise to disruption and violence. For Jordan, it appears, not all speech is equal, and not all disruption and violence are equal, either.

If Jordan is not a true free speech warrior, then what is he? The email sent through his wife’s account described Bill 28, the parenting bill, as part of the “transgender agenda” and claimed it was “misleadingly” called “All Families are Equal.” Misleading? What same-sex families and transgender people have in common is their upset of the social order. In *Maps of Meaning*, Jordan’s first book, he is exercised by the breakdown of the social order and the chaos that he believes would result. Jordan is fighting to maintain the status quo to keep chaos at bay, or so he believes. He is not a free speech warrior. He is a social order warrior.

In the end, Jordan postponed his plan to blacklist courses after many of his colleagues signed a petition objecting to it. He said it was too polarizing. Curiously, that had never stopped him before. He appears to thrive on polarization. I have no idea why he did that.

I have been asked by some if I regret my role in bringing Jordan to the University of Toronto. I did not for many years, but I do now.

He has done disservice to the professoriate. He cheapens the intellectual life with self-serving misrepresentations of important ideas and scientific findings. He has also done disservice to the institutions which have supported him. He plays to “victimhood” but also plays the victim.

When he caused a stir objecting to gender neutral pronouns, he thanked his YouTube followers who had supported his work financially, claiming he might need that money because he could lose his job. That resulted in a significant increase in monthly donations.

There was no reason to think he would lose his job. He was on a sabbatical, and had not even been in the classroom. The university sent him a letter asking him to stop what he was doing because he was creating an environment which would make teaching difficult, but there was no intimation that he would be fired. I saw that letter. Jordan may have, however, welcomed being fired, which would have made him a martyr in the battle for free speech. He certainly presented himself as prepared to do that. A true warrior, of whatever.

Later, when his research grant was turned down by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Jordan told the world he was being punished for his political activities. There was no such evidence. The review system is flawed and this has happened to other academically renowned and respected scholars. (For instance, Prof. Anthony Doob, the former director of the Centre of Criminology at U of T, a member of the Royal Society of Canada and a recipient of the Order of Canada, was funded continuously from the late 1960s until 2006, when he was turned down by the SSHRC. The next year, essentially the same proposal was funded.) These things happen. Jordan, however, took this as an opportunity to rail, once again, against the suppression of free speech by oppressive institutions and into a public relations triumph in the eyes of his followers.

The Rebel, Ezra Levant's far-right online publication, raised the funds to replace that grant.



Peterson at home with pieces of Indigenous art. This March a writer questioned Peterson's claim that he had been inducted into an Indigenous tribe, eliciting criticism from the professor. Peterson's publisher subsequently removed references to the claim in promotional materials for his book. (MARK SOMMERFELD)

This past March, Pankaj Mishra wrote in *The New York Review of Books* an informed and thoughtful critique of *12 Rules for Life*, provocatively titled “[Jordan Peterson and Fascist Mysticism](#).” Jordan’s immediate response was a flurry of angry, abusive, self-righteous tweets, some in response to Mishra’s questioning Jordan’s induction into an Indigenous tribe by referring to it as a “claim.”

Jordan called Mishra a “sanctimonious prick,” “an arrogant, racist son of a bitch,” “a peddler of nasty, underhanded innuendo,” said “fuck you” and expressed a desire to slap him. (As it turns out Jordan had not been inducted into that tribe, and his publisher removed references to the claim in promotional materials as reported in *The Walrus* by Robert Jago in “[The Story Behind Jordan Peterson’s Indigenous Identity](#).”)

Jordan is seen here to be emotionally explosive when faced with legitimate criticism, in contrast to his being so self-possessed at other times. He is erratic. One of his colleagues at the University of Toronto, Prof. Will Cunningham, said [in a recent Esquire article](#): “There’s my friend Jordan Peterson, who is this amazingly compassionate person who genuinely wants to help people. And then there’s Twitter Peterson, getting placards demanding he be fired immediately. Even I want to get a placard.”

Jordan exhibits a great range of emotional states, from anger and abusive speech to evangelical fierceness, ministerial solemnity and avuncular charm. It is misleading to come to quick conclusions about who he is, and potentially dangerous if you have seen only the good and thoughtful Jordan, and not seen the bad.

Shortly after Jordan’s rise to notoriety back in 2016, I emailed him to express my upset with his dishonesty and lack of intellectual and social integrity. He called in a conciliatory voice the next morning. I was reiterating my disappointment and upset when he interrupted me, saying more or less the following:

“You don’t understand. I am willing to lose everything, my home, my job etc., because I believe in this.” And then he said, with the intensity he is now famous for, “Bernie. Tammy had a dream, and sometimes her dreams are prophetic. She dreamed that it was five minutes to midnight.”

That was our last conversation. He was playing out the ideas that appeared in his first book. The social order is coming apart. We are on the edge of chaos. He is the prophet, and he would be the martyr. Jordan would be our saviour. I think he believes that.

He may be driven by a great and genuine fear of our impending doom, and a passionate conviction that he can save us from it. He may believe that his ends justify his questionable means, and he may not be aware that he mimics those figures from whom he wants to protect us. But his conviction makes him no less problematic. On the contrary.

“What they do have in common is ... that they have the answers and that their instincts are good, that they are smarter than everybody else and can do things by themselves.” This was Madeleine Albright, the former secretary of state in an recent interview with the New York Times referring to the authoritarian leaders discussed in her new book, *Fascism: A Warning*. It sounds familiar.

Currently, Jordan is the darling of the alt-right. He says he is not one of them, but has accepted their affection with relish. Andrew Scheer, the leader of the federal Conservative party, has declined any further appearances on The Rebel, but Jordan continues to appear.

Jordan is not part of the alt-right. He fits no mould. But he should be concerned about what the “dark desires” of the alt-right might be. He could be, perhaps unwittingly, activating “the dark desires” of that mob.

I was warned by a number of writers, editors and friends that this article would invite backlash, primarily from his young male acolytes, and I was asked to consider whether publishing it was worth it. More than anything, that convinced me it should be published.

I discovered while writing this essay a shocking climate of fear among women writers and academics who would not attach their names to opinions or data which were critical of Jordan. All of Jordan's critics receive nasty feedback from some of his followers, but women writers have felt personally threatened.

Jordan presents a confusing picture, and it's often hard to know what he is up to. In one of his YouTube videos, Jordan said that if you are not sure of what or why someone is doing what they are doing, look at the consequences. They could be revealing.

That keeps me up at night.

Given Jordan's tendency toward grandiosity, it should not be surprising to learn that he is politically ambitious. He would have run for the leadership of the federal Conservative party but was dissuaded by influential friends. He has not, however, lost interest in the political life.

Andrew Scheer, the current leader of that party, echoed this proposal which appeared with Jordan's photo on the front page of the Toronto Sun: "Free speech Prof says cut University funding by 25 per cent until politically correct cult at schools reined in." [In a Toronto Star profile](#), Vinay Menon reported that Peterson saw a potential starring role when Patrick Brown stepped down in Ontario: "I thought about running when the PC party blew up here, I thought that's a catastrophe and maybe I can bring some depth to the leadership race." Doug Ford won the leadership on March 10. On March 19, Jordan was in the Toronto Sun saying that Premier Kathleen Wynne "is the most dangerous woman in Canada." There was nothing new in the article, but those words are signature Jordan, the language of fear. On May 8, the day before the campaign began, Ford announced that he would scrap Ontario's sex-ed curriculum and tie funding of post-secondary schools to free speech. This echoed, once more, Jordan's call to make protection of free speech a condition in the funding of universities. Is Jordan involved with Ford's political campaign? I have no idea, but it's not impossible.

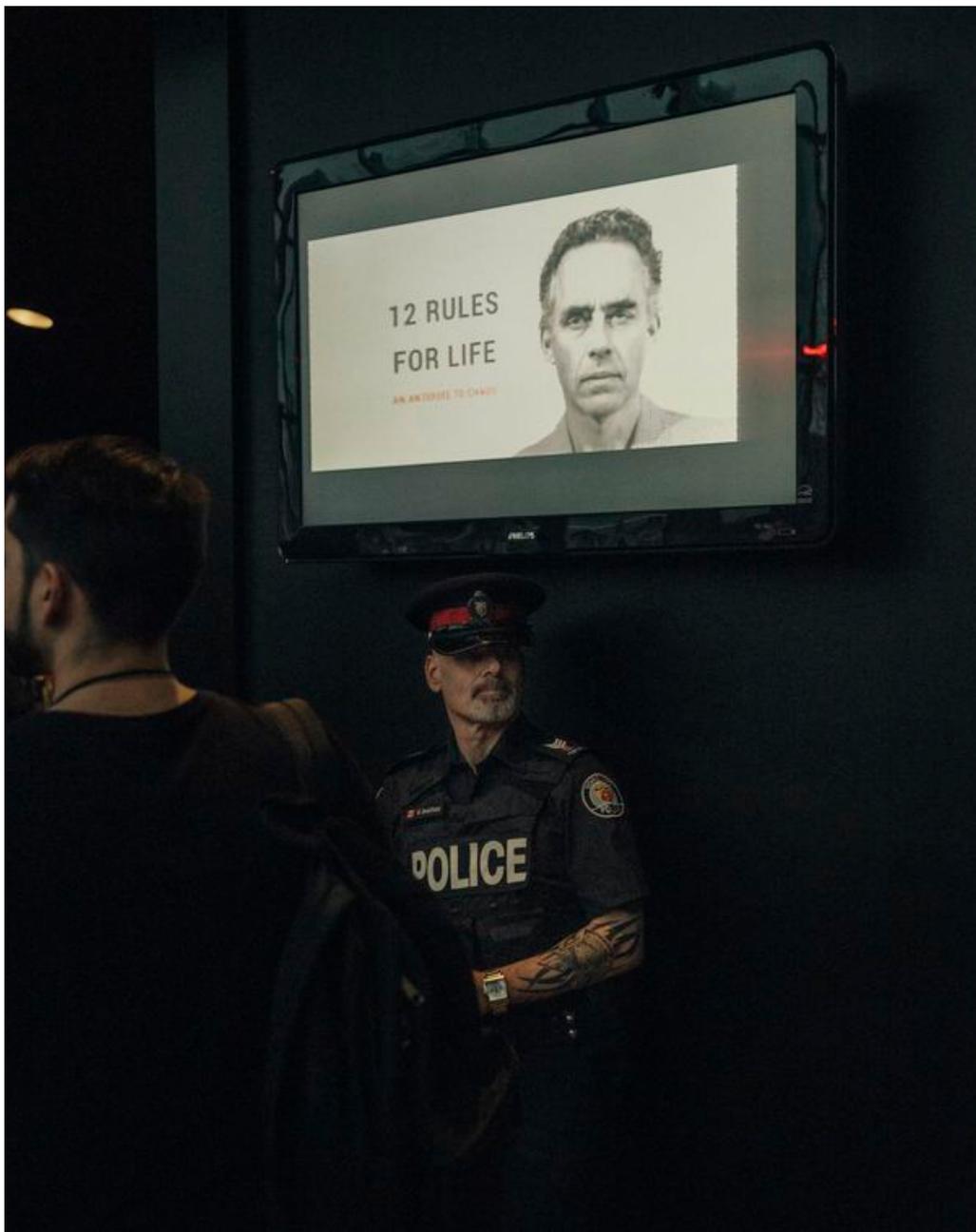
Jordan is a powerful orator. He is smart, compelling and convincing. His messages can be strong and clear, oversimplified as they often are, to be very accessible. He has played havoc with the truth. He has studied demagogues and authoritarians and understands the power of their methods. Fear and danger were their fertile soil. He frightens by invoking murderous bogeymen on the left and warning they are out to destroy the social order, which will bring chaos and destruction.

Jordan's view of the social order is now well known.

He is a biological and Darwinian determinist. Gender, gender roles, dominance hierarchies, parenthood, all firmly entrenched in our biological heritage and not to be toyed with. Years ago when he was living in my house, he said children are little monkeys trying to clamber up the dominance hierarchy and need to be kept in their place. I thought he was being ironic. Apparently, not.

He is also very much like the classic Social Darwinists who believe that “attempts to reform society through state intervention or other means would ... interfere with natural processes; unrestricted competition and defence of the status quo were in accord with biological selection.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018.) From the same source: “Social Darwinism declined during the 20th century as an expanded knowledge of biological, social and cultural phenomena undermined, rather than supported, its basic tenets.” Jordan remains stuck in and enthralled by *The Call of the Wild*.

We should be concerned about his interest in politics. It is clear what kind of country he would want to have or, if he could, lead.



Police act as security at an appearance by Peterson, author of 12 Rules for Life. A former colleague of the bestselling author says Peterson has failed to live up to several rules he laid out in his book. (MARK SOMMERFELD)

What I am seeing now is a darker, angrier Jordan than the man I knew. In Karen Heller's [recent profile in the Washington Post](#) he is candid about his long history of depression. Depression is an awful illness. It is a cognitive disorder that casts a dark shadow over everything. His view of life, as nasty and brutish, may very well not be an idea, but a description of his experience, which became for him the truth. But this next statement, from Heller's article, is heartbreaking: "You have an evil heart — like the person next to you," she quotes him as telling a sold-out crowd. "Kids are not innately good — and neither are you."

This from the loving and attentive father I knew? That makes no sense at all.

It could be his dark view of life, wherever it comes from, that the aggressive group of young men among his followers identify with. They may feel recognized, affirmed, justified and enabled. By validating them he does indeed save them, and little wonder they then fall into line enthusiastically, marching lockstep behind him. That is unnerving. The misogynistic attacks on the British broadcaster Cathy Newman, after she was humiliated and left speechless by Jordan in the infamous “gotcha moment” of their TV interview, were so numerous and vicious that Jordan asked his followers to back off. These devoted followers are notorious for attacking Jordan’s critics, but this was different. It was more persistent and more intense. That was not outrage in defence of their leader who needed none; she was the fallen victim and it was as if they had come in for the final kill. Jordan’s inflammatory understanding of male violence for which “the cure ... is enforced monogamy” as reported by [Nellie Bowles in the New York Times](#) is shocking. This is upsetting and sad if you are, or were, Jordan’s friend. But it is also frightening.

We would be foolish to not pay close attention and to not take Jordan and his impact seriously. Do I overstate a possible danger? Maybe. I really don’t know. But for historical reasons, silence is not a risk I am willing to take.

“When someone claims to be acting from the highest principles for the good of others, there is no reason to assume that the person’s motives are genuine. People motivated to make things better usually aren’t concerned with changing other people — or if they are they take responsibility for making the same changes to themselves (and first).”

I did not write this, although I might have. It’s taken from *12 Rules for Life*. These are Jordan’s words.

I believe that Jordan has not lived up to at least four of his rules.

Rule 7: Pursue what is meaningful (not what is expedient)

Rule 8: Tell the truth — or, at least, don’t lie

Rule 9: Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don’t

Rule 10: Be precise in your speech

Heller observed that when Jordan slumped, violating Rule 1 (Stand up straight with your shoulders back), his wife cajoled him to correct that. It may be absurd to take that seriously, but the stakes are real, given Jordan’s stated obligation to have changed himself first. He has done a poor job of that.

I knew Jordan when it was possible to know him up close. He was always a complicated man.

Even then, it was hard to get a fix on what he was doing. But some things were clear and consistent. In retrospect, I might have seen this coming. I didn't.

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