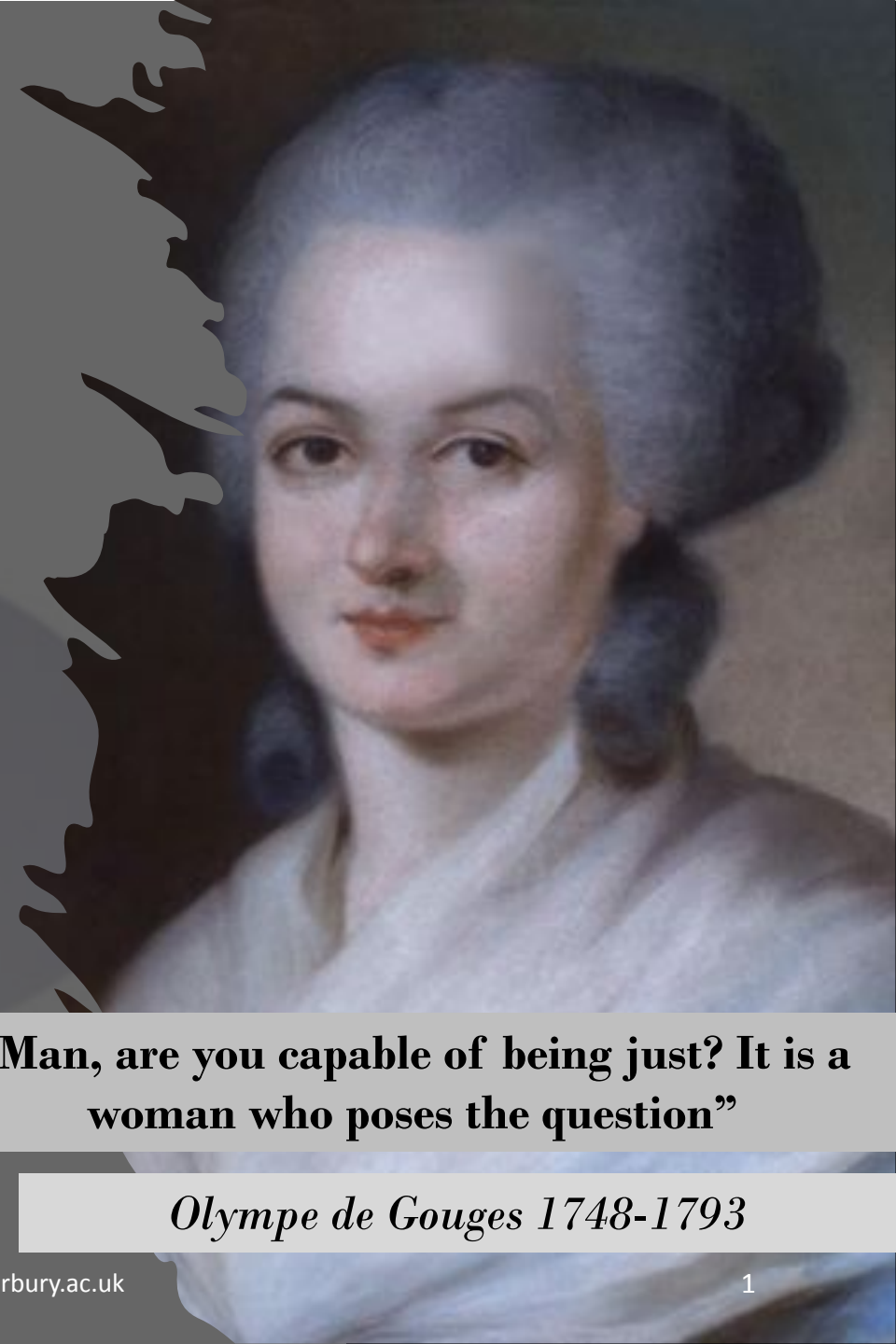


Research Space
Lecture

0 Sapere Aude
Beighton, C.

**Sapere Aude:
Enlightenment
ideas, values
and slogans
and academic
cancel culture**



“Man, are you capable of being just? It is a woman who poses the question”

Olympe de Gouges 1748-1793

Queen's speech on 11th May 2021

- promise to “strengthen and renew democracy”
- Higher education: free speech and academic freedom



Gavin Williamson

“creeping culture of censorship” (p. 5)?

- has produced a “**chilling effect**” on academic freedom



“there is a growing atmosphere on campuses that is antithetical to constructive debate where differing opinion is respected”. (pp.18-19)

some caveats (1)

Caveat 1

- Only “a tiny proportion” of events have actually been cancelled in recent years:
- [a recent briefing paper](#) = actual incidents of “no platforming” are **rare**.

Caveat 2

- attributable to a **very small minority** of individual **students or staff**



More seriously...(2)



Caveat 1: negativity

- shambolic and negative
- handmaiden to capitalism (i.e. a measure of (online) productivity, not behaviour or values.)
- Sad puritanism (resentful scolding and threats)

Caveat: 2: positivity

- Fear of CC is itself a moral panic (pomo irony? Or “right wing myth”)
- ritualized mimicry of the judicial process
- *“Ambition makes rational debate impossible, even when our freedom to speak remains perfectly intact.”*



Self-censorship

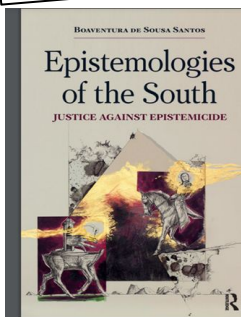
1. perceived hostility from peers
2. fear of harming the reputation of the organisation
3. anxiety about damaging career prospects by daring to exercise **the public use of reason.**

Although threatening **fines** for 'no-platforming' may have the 'very same effect' as banning controversial guests

Cancelling the Enlightenment?

“...Western philosophy, for which the subject-object dialectic, the Cartesian viewpoint, and the absolute I-know-it-all attitude still hold massive sway.”

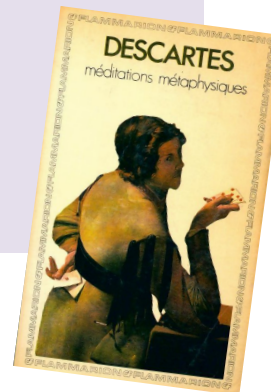
- “Cartesian doubt is a systematic process of **being skeptical about the truth of one's beliefs**”
- "*dubito ergo cogito, cogito ergo sum*"
- (wikipedia)
- even the *cogito* is undermined by Evil Genius Doubt.



Gender, Development, and
Post-Enlightenment Philosophies of
Science

SANDRA HARDING

Recent "gender, environment, and sustainable development" accounts raise pointed questions about the complicity of Enlightenment philosophies of science with



Enlightenment: values or slogans?

Descartes /
Spinoza
Hobbes /
Rousseau
Leibniz /
Voltaire
Hume / Kant

- Lots of (anachronistic?) controversy,
but
 - Deus sive natura (BdS)
 - No man has any natural authority over his fellow men. (JJR)
 - Cultivate your garden. (V)

Sapere aude.
"Have the courage to use
your own understanding."



And of course...

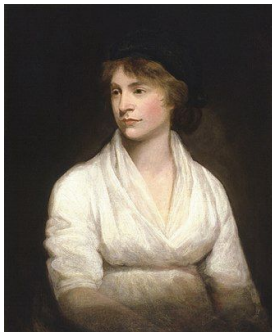
- “...I have no need to think, if only I can pay” I. Kant.



So enlightenment values = escaping nonage

- Olympe de Gouges
- Mary Wollstonecraft
- Catharine Macauley

- "the only limit to the exercise of the natural rights of woman is the perpetual tyranny that man opposes to it"
 - "All the sacred rights of humanity are violated by insisting on blind obedience."
 - *"I have no desire to see the residence of the tyrants"*



Coffee houses,
salons,
debating societies:
public use of
reason

Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793)

**“The tocsin of reason
resounds through the
whole universe:
recognize your rights.
The powerful empire of
nature is no longer
surrounded by
prejudices, fanaticism,
superstition and lies.”**



"They never forgave her, and she paid for her carelessness with her head." (in 1793)

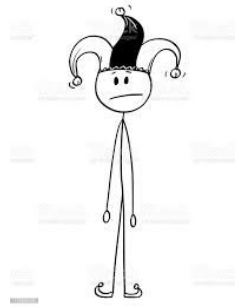


Just one example...

“The difference between the European savages and the American consists chiefly in the fact that while many tribes of the latter are entirely eaten up by their enemies, the former know how to make a better use of their captives than to roast and eat them. They use them to increase the number of their subjects and thereby the number of instruments for still more extensive wars.” (IK, [1795](#))



Slogans for fun...



“To study and not think is a waste.
To think and not study is dangerous.”

To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.

Wollstonecraft – Rousseau – Kant?



Enlightenment is a *concept*,
not a time, place or object

“To study and not think
is a waste.
To think and not study is
dangerous.”



*To suppress free speech is
a double wrong. It violates
the rights of the hearer as
well as those of the
speaker.*



Reading

background

And if you read only one...

<https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/post/liberal-epistemology/>

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3810704?seq=1>

https://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/resource/Epistemologies_of_the_South.pdf

<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>

