

Covenant

I want to begin by reminding everyone that the Eliot Covenant directs us to “Consider the diverse perspectives and experiences that individuals bring to Eliot,” and to “Listen deeply to appreciate other people’s needs and points of view.”

But the Board’s new *Gender Diversity Policy* is in danger of breaking that longstanding covenant if it is interpreted as requiring not only tolerance and respect for those who believe in gender ideology, but a *lack* of tolerance and *lack* of respect for those who don’t.

An even more dangerous interpretation of the new *Gender Diversity Policy* would hold that disbelievers must adopt the language and customs of gender ideology while stifling all reasoned, respectful, science-based critique. We’re in serious trouble if, like Winston in the novel *1984* who was forced to say $2 + 2 = 5$, disbelievers are compelled to remain silent or even to speak against their conscience: in other words, to lie.

Where the Eliot Covenant directs us to “Consider the diverse perspectives and experiences that individuals bring to Eliot,” and to “Listen deeply to appreciate other people’s needs and points of view,” we assume this includes the perspectives, experiences, needs and point of view of critics of gender ideology. Otherwise, it rings hollow.

What’s more, we submit (and we can demonstrate) that gender ideology threatens women’s rights, gay and lesbian rights, children’s health and safety, and democratic rights more generally. In this way, gender ideology contradicts much of what the Eliot Covenant, Eliot and UUs proport to stand for.

Compelled Speech

In general, aside from Unitarian Universalism, people attending Eliot camps embrace elements of various religious and personal philosophies—from Christianity, Judaism, Islam and atheism, to astrology, Marxism and veganism. All such beliefs are tolerated and respected. But no one is required to adopt the practices, traditions and language of any philosophy they don't personally hold. This is as it should be.

Now, it seems, the board wants to carve out an exception for gender ideology. For this philosophy alone, non-believers are to be compelled to talk and act as if they were believers.

“It is a crucial principle, in human rights law, that only the right of people to hold a belief is protected, not the belief itself... [H]uman rights law does not impose on individuals the duty to respect any particular set of beliefs, but only to respect the right of people to hold them.” ([Link](#)) Now, before someone argues that Eliot is not bound by human rights law, it would be wise to consider what it means to go down that road.

Safety

Some use the language of “safety” in an attempt to ban ideas and curtail speech. This is dangerous and duplicitous. Actions may threaten safety; ideas do not. Claiming otherwise is to embrace censorship. And the act of censorship is the quintessential threat to safety because it precludes any rational response to irrational ideas.

This appeal to “safety” also promotes fragility and authoritarianism: Fragility because it [infantilizes people as it] assumes that people attending camp could not possibly tolerate others having beliefs different from their own. And Authoritarianism, because it weaponizes that fragility to insist that others must be silenced.

As we speak, a genocide is being committed in occupied Palestine. Students and others peacefully demonstrating against that genocide are slandered as

antisemites and told their words make Jews feel “unsafe”. As a Jew myself, having participated in many of the pro Palestine protests with large contingents of other Jews, I can tell you these charges are baseless and outrageous. It’s an old playbook that the powers-that-be use to try to shutdown dissent. So, the Eliot board should take care: If it holds that disagreeing with gender ideology is transphobic, and that reasoned, rational arguments against gender ideology make proponents of that ideology feel “unsafe”, Eliot is embracing the oligarchs’ and warmaker’s playbook.

In the parable of The Emperor’s New Clothes, the little boy who tells the truth is supposed to be the hero. Sadly, the Eliot Board’s current trajectory on gender ideology would cast that boy as the villain.